

CHAPTER – II

PROFILE OF MIRAJ TALUKA



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2.1 General Information about Miraj:¹

Miraj, lying between 16° North latitude and 74.35° East longitude, is 9.65 kms (six miles) north of Sangli, the district headquarters, and 48.28 kms. (30 miles) east of Kolhapur. It is the headquarters of the Taluka of the same name. The town has office of the Prant Officer, Mamlatdar and Panchayat Samiti. There are two Civil Courts, one Judicial Magistrate's Court, three branch Post and Telegraph Offices, one Sub Post Office, a Police Station, a Telephone Exchange, a Rest-house, Civil and Veterinary Dispensaries and a maternity home. Besides the health institutions maintained by the Government and the town municipality, there are many private hospitals and dispensaries, including the famous Wanless TB Sanatorium.

In respect of learning and education, the town has very good facilities within the municipal limits. There are three Montessories, 27 primary schools, five highschoools, two training schools and one technical school. The Institutions noted above include those run by the Government as well as by private bodies.

Within a radius of 8 kms. (five miles), taking the

Willingdon College as the centre, Sangli-Miraj Area has educational facilities in Arts, Science, Commerce, Medicine, Engineering and Training, barring only agriculture. Thus, there are two Arts and Commerce Colleges and one Science College, one Engineering College, two Colleges of Education and one College of Physical Education. Miraj is a wellknown medical centre in South-Maharashtra. In collaboration with the Miraj Medical Centre, the Government has established a Medical College at Miraj. The town has two private Libraries.

Miraj is a large trading town, dealing chiefly in grains. There is a sub-market yard. An Industrial Estate is soon going to be set up. There are quite a few Banks and Co-operative Societies, offering advance finance to agriculturists for purchasing fertilizers and modern agricultural implements. The weekly Bazar is held on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Miraj town is centrally situated in respect of the means of transport and communications. It is an important junction on the Poona-Bangalore route of the South Central Railway. From Miraj, trains run to Pandharpur, as also a shuttle service to Sangli, which is only 9.65 kms. (six miles) off. Besides the Railway, there is city bus service between Miraj and Sangli, buses plying every ten minutes to and fro. Miraj has extensive betel-leaf orchards in the

surrounding villages and these leaves are sent to places like Bombay, Pune, etc., by rail.

2.2 History of Miraj:²

Miraj passed on to the Silaharas of Kolhapur when that house declared independence towards the close of the tenth century. Jattiga-II (circa 1000-1020 A.D.), the fourth ruler of this dynasty, has been mentioned by his son Narasimha (circa. 1050-1075 A.D.) in his Miraj plates dated Saka 980 or A.D. 1058. He was succeeded by Gonka, who has been described in the same plates as the conqueror of Karahata (karhad). Mairinja (Miraj) and Konkan. But the Hotur Inscription 1037 A.D. records that Panhala, the capital city of Silahara Jattiga-II was conquered by Vacanrasa, the General of Calukya Jayasimha-II. The Miraj Plates of 1024 A.D. reveal that Jayasimha-II issued the grant when he was in his victorious camp near Kolhapur. This goes to establish that Panhala was capture before 1024 A.D., either at the end of Jattiga's reign or in the beginning of his son Gonka's reign. It seems that the Silaharas were allowed to retain their territory. There is no doubt that Gonka submitted to Calukya power but the fact that he is described as the conqueror of Konkan may mean that either he was appointed as the administrator or was allowed to penetrate beyond his territory. In 1216 A.D., Miraj, along with other territories of Kolhapur, Silaharas fell to the

onslaught of the Yadavas, who retained their hold upto A.D. 1318, when it passed on to the Bahamanis. He gave it on the authority of the Tazkirat Mulk that Hasan, the founder of the Bahamani Dynasty was in the employ of the Saikh Muhammad Junaidi at Gangi near Miraj, where he found treasure with which he raised an army and marched on Miraj and captured the fort after defeating and imprisoning one Rani Durgavati, who was its Subhedar. In view of his first victory, the name of the town was changed to Mubarakabad at the wishes of Saikh Muhammad. This event took place in 748 Hijri or A.D. 1347. As to who built the Fort of Miraj is not known. Some say that it was built by one of the Bahamani Sultans; but this view is untenable as the Fort was in existence even before the establishment of the Bahamani Dynasty. Bahamani Sultans may have only carried out some repairs to it. The first mention of Miraj in Ferrist occurs in the account of the revolt of Bahadur Gilani in A.D. 1494, which was quelled by Sultan Muhammad-II (1482-1518). The Sultan had received a complaint from his counterpart in Gujarat and wanted to punish him. He invested the Fort which was surrendered by its Governor Buna Naik, after some resistance. He was honourably received by the Sultan. The troops of Bahadur Gilani were given the alternative of either joining his own or leaving the Fort. It is said that nearly 2,000 cavalry left the fort and joined Bahadur Gilani. Those who preferred to enter Sultan's were accepted and rewarded

suitably. Whether this leniency of character of the Sultan or was the result of the growing weakness in the Sultanate following Gavan's death may be best left to the imagination of the reader. Be that as it may, the importance of Miraj as a base of operation for the expeditions against south-Konkan and Goa clearly envisaged by the Bahamani Kings and there are not a few reference to the place being used as a camping ground for the purpose.

The Bahamani Empire disintegrated due to a succession of weak rulers who could not put down the turbulences of the powerful provincial Governors. Thus, in 1490, the Governors of Ahmednagar, Golconda, Bijapur, etc., declared their independence and on the fall of the Bahamani Dynasty, Miraj passed into the hands of Bijapur Sultans. Ali Adil Shah was kept there under surveillance during the latter years of the reign of Ibrahim Adil Shah, his father, and on the death of the latter, it was turned into a point d'appui in the operations undertaken to possess the throne. The garrison took part afterwards in the revolt of Ismail against Ibrahim Adil Shah-II.

At the time, Shivaji was fast rising into prominence and had carved out a separate principality at the cost of the Muslim Dynasties that were gradually waning in power and losing hold over their dominions. His growing power was felt by the Moghals and the Bijapuris, who relent-

lessly tried to suppress him though without any success. Within eighteen days of Afzal Khan's (Bijapuri Sardar) death at Pratapgad, Panhala, the capital of the Western Adil Shahi district, was taken by Annaji Datto through negotiations on 28th November, 1659. Panhala and the surrounding district of Kolhapur, Vasantgad, Khelna, Rangana and other minor Forts quickly capitulated. While yet Shivaji was camping at Kolhapur, he sent Netaji Palkar to besiege Miraj Fort. In January 1660, Shivaji arrived in person to press the siege, which had continued for two to three months, when the news of Siddi Johar and Fazal Khan invading his territories urgently called him to Panhalgad. Under these circumstances, Shivaji had to give up the siege and make arrangements to meet the challenge posed by the Bijapur Sardars. In the regnal period of Sambhaji, Maratha Generals Santaji Ghorpade and Dhanaji Jadhav, had chosen the Fort of Miraj as a safe custody for their families, while they were engaged in carrying on guerilla warfare against the invading hordes of Aurangazeb, the Moghal Emperor. With the fall of Bijapur in 1687, Miraj passed into the hands of the Moghals and remained so until it was captured by Sehu on 3rd October 1739 in a personally led campaign lasting for two years. Thus, the remnant of the old Moghal power almost bordering on the Maratha Capital was wiped once and for all. It was one of the many pockets of the Moghals which threatened the Maratha dominions, the others being Raygad, Gopalgad, Govindgad, etc. In 1761, the Fort of Miraj with some Thanas,

was assigned by Peshwa Madhavrao to Govindrao Patwardhan for the maintenance of troops. The forefathers of the Rajas of Miraj and Sangli, the Patwardhan Sardars made their names in the campaigns that the Peshwas led against Holder and Tipu of Mysore.

2.3 Physical Features of Miraj Taluka:³

The physical features of Miraj Taluka are given as below:

(a) Physical Setting:

Miraj Tahsil is located in the rainshadow area of Sangli, one of the districts in Southern Maharashtra. It is bounded on the west and south-west by Kolhapur districts; on the north, by Tasgaon Tahsil; on the north-east, by Kavathe Mahankal Tahsil; and on the South and South-east, by Belgaum and Bijapur Districts of Karnataka State. According to 1981 Census, there are 66 villages and three urban settlements, namely, Sangli, Miraj and Madhavnagar, in Miraj Tahsil.

(b) Area:

The Tahsil measures about 57 kms. from west to east and 30 kms. from north to south. The Tahsil is having an area of 909.6 sq.kms.

(c) Topography & Soil:

The topography of the Tahsil is undulating towards the

north-east because of the existence of Dandoba Hills. Towards west and south-west, the area is more or less plain, as the area falls in the Krishna valley. To the east also, the area is plain. Towards north-east, the most high area is about 850 metres and it gradually decreases to the west at Krishna river. The general slope of the area is towards south-west.

Geological formation in the Tahsil is Deccan Trap. The soil is derived from basalt rocks. Towards the west and south-west and east, in general, the black cotton soil is found. Especially towards west, i.e. in the proximity of Krishna river, the depth is about ten metres. Towards north-east, the area consists largely of granular black soil. Such soils are useful for the cultivation of Jawar, Pulses. In the irrigated areas, sugarcane is predominant crop. In a few villages, betel-leaves and grape gardening is developing.

(d) Rainfall:

Major portion of rainfall occurs during the monsoon period. The average rainfall of the Tahsil is 635 mm. The rainfall in the Tahsil shows a considerable variation from year to year. The varying ability is about 28%.

(e) Climate:

The climate of Miraj Taluka is, on the whole, agreeable and is characterized by general dryness during the

major part of the year. The cold season is from December to about the middle of February. The hot season, which follows, lasts till the end of May., June to September is the south-west monsoon season and the two months, October and November, constitute the post-monsoon or retreating monsoon.

(f) Temperature:

Mean maximum temperature is about 40° centigrade and the mean minimum temperature is about 9° centigrade. May is the hottest month and December is the coldest month in this area. The Miraj Tahsil comes in the rainshadow area and it is often affected by the draughts.

(g) Rivers:

The west of the Tahsil is bounded by river Krishna, which measures about 28 miles and on the north-west, the Tahsil is bounded by Verala river, and the remaining small part of the Tahsil is dependent upon the rainy season only. The river Krishna is very useful for irrigated sugarcane farming. A number of lift irrigation schemes are functioning on the west. Miraj Tahsil is responsible for sugarcane cultivation.

(h) Vegetations (forest):

The natural vegetations (forest) area is about one percent of the total area of the Tahsil. The vegetation is sparse and the trees are of dry deciduous and thorny bush-type.

Neem, Babhul, Tamarind and Mango are the major trees found in this area. In the eastern parts, especially on the Malran, thin grass is found.

(i) Crops:

In the Tahsil, Jawar, Bajra, pulses and oil seeds are the major dry-farming crops. Sugarcane, grapes, betel-leaves, chillies, turmeric, tobacco are the major irrigated and commercial crops.

(j) Population:

According to 1981 Census, population of Miraj Taluka is 5,06,320.

(k) Industries:⁴

The MIRAJ M.I.D.C. Area was recognized and came into existence in the month of November, 1971. The area of this industrial belt is to the extent of 403.01 hectares, out of which 301.25 hectares comprise private sector while 128.76 hectares is that of the Government sector. The total number of sheds constructed is 41 in number. The manufacturing activity is undertaken by 253 units at present. The overall investment in all the organizations is Rs.1,940 lakhs. The employment generated by these organizations and the present number of the workers employed is 2,358. The annual turnover from these organizations is Rs.5,570 lakhs. The number of plots created by the M.I.D.C. is 641, of this 603

plots have been allotted to the various enterprises. Taking into consideration the development of the industries in this area, it is found that 94 new units are expected to commence their productivity activity in the near future, which is due to the fact that these 94 units' construction activity is in progress.

In Miraj Taluka, considering all the units, there are 8,104 employees working with the total number of large and medium scale units, ranging upto 18 units. As per the Government Policy for the Industrial Development upto the year 1987-88, the target of various industries for Miraj Taluka M.I.D.C. was 153 units constituting of engineering, chemicals, textile, processing, horticulture, construction equipment manufacture, etc., With these given targets, the actual achievement in the period 1983 to 1988 was 712 units in total, which has exceeded more than four-fold.

REFERENCES

1. Gazetteer of India, Maharashtra State, Sangli District, Bombay, 1969, pp.707-8.
2. ibid., pp.708-11.
3. ibid., pp.1-33.
4. Government of Maharashtra, Directorate of Industries, District Industries Centre, Sangli, "Action Plan : 1988-89 & 1989-90", Source Material.