CHAPTER TWO

ICHALKARANJI AS A TEXTILE CENTRE

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Ichalkaranji is an important industrial town in Maharashtra State. The town has developed into a prosperous weaving centre popularly known as the Little Manchester of India.

It is situated on latitude 16°-40' north and on longitude 74°-32' east. The city lies on the left bank of river Panchganga about 1.6 Km. to the north of the river. It is about 29 Kms. to the South-east of Kolhapur city and 26 Kms. to the South-west of Sangli city. Three roads branching from Kolhapur-Sangli road enter the town, one from west and the other two from north. From the South Ichalkaranji is approached by road running from Nipani and Chikodi towns of Karnataka State. Hatkanangle is the nearest railway station for Ichalkaranji, situated towards the north at a distance of 9.6 Kms.

The total area under the jurisdiction of the Municipal Council is 2,038 hectares. The town being situated in the rain shadow region, is comparatively dry and has a moderate rainfall. The range of temperature between the maximum and minimum is comparatively small. The maximum temperature in hot season is 40°C and the minimum temperature in cold season rarely falls below 10°C.

THE BEGINNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF COTTON TEXTILE INDUSTRY AT ICHALKARANJI

Important historical events took place between 1882 and 1892 which had far-reaching effects on the economic development of Ichalkaranji. The most important event was that of Shrimant Narayanrao Babasaheb Ghorpade ascending the "Gadi" (throne) in 1892. It was the vision of Babasaheb to turn agricultural Ichalkaranji into industrial one. Till 1921 this small town lacked the basic amenities essential for industrial growth viz., raw material , transportation, power, skilled labour, banking etc. The development of textile industry at Ichalkaranji despite the lack of the said factors can be explained for as follows.

In 1895, 25 looms in Ichalkaranji manufactured superior Sarees of Solapur varieties. The ruler of Ichalkaranji, Shrimant Narayanrao Ghorpade took cognizance of this activity and availability of people with gifted qualities and decided to encourage cotton textile weaving industry in the town to make it a major industrial activity. In view of this skilled craftsmen and handloom weavers were provided all possible incentive to permanently shift from surrounding weaving centres such as Rabkavi, Banhatti, Rendal etc. to Ichalkaranji. They were given all assistance to start with handloom weaving. Land and housing facilities were made available to the craftsmen at nominal cost or even free of cost. Finance was also made

available on easy terms and conditions. No taxes were levied. Some weavers were sent to Japan at the expense of the Treasury. These incentives had far-reaching effects and the weaving industry grew with leaps and bounds.

In 1904, the first powerloom was introduced in the industry by Shri Vyankatrao Datar. It was certainly a risky venture to set up powerloom in an isolated place where facilities of processing the gray cloth and repairing the machinery did not at all exist. The new entrants, who adopted this weaving technology, had little resources for investment and being technocrats themselves, they struggled hard for existence by installing discarded powerlooms and making them fit for efficient operation. Technically, powerloom, in comparison with handloom, produced more and could offer better wages in relation to wages available in the agricultural sector. In the initial stages, the number of powerlooms was limited, and they were producing mainly the varieties of coarse dhoties. As the time passed, techniques were developed to produce coloured sarees in fine and superfine qualities which were commonly used by middle-class women. These Sarees had distinguishing marks as against the Solapur varieties and became much popular throughout the Bombay Province. The coloured Saree of Ichalkaranji won the fame far and wide. As a consequence, the number of looms gradually increased with increasing demand as entrepreneurs even from communities other than traditional weavers were attracted towards powerlooms. This initial upsurge was, however,

halted by the onset of the Great Depression in the early nineteen thirties. It crippled down the weaving industry of Ichalkaranji to such an extent that the working of almost all the powerlooms came to a standstill. This posed a serious problem to the industry. However, entrepreneurs took up the challenge and devised a system of providing sized warp-beams and weft yarn for weaving Dhoties and mulls. Diversification in production proved to be a boon and helped considerably in pulling the industry out of the slump. Second World War provided a booster dose and rejuvenated the industry. All these developments led to the emergence of a new class of persons, viz., the master weavers who were financially better off to hold on till cloth was processed. Gradually, because of theif financial strength, the master weavers assumed strong control over the local industry. Their capitalistic attitudes and policies, however, kept the small weavers dissatisfied. Active leadership of the locality was on its toes, and in order to ameliorate the conditions of the small weavers, promoted co-operative weaving units. The weaving industry of Ichalkaranji was, thus growing, and at the time of Independence it had established its name as a cotton textile centre.

GROWTH OF THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY DURING POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

It seems that the march of the industry was rapid in

post-Independence period. Table-1 provides a testimony to this.

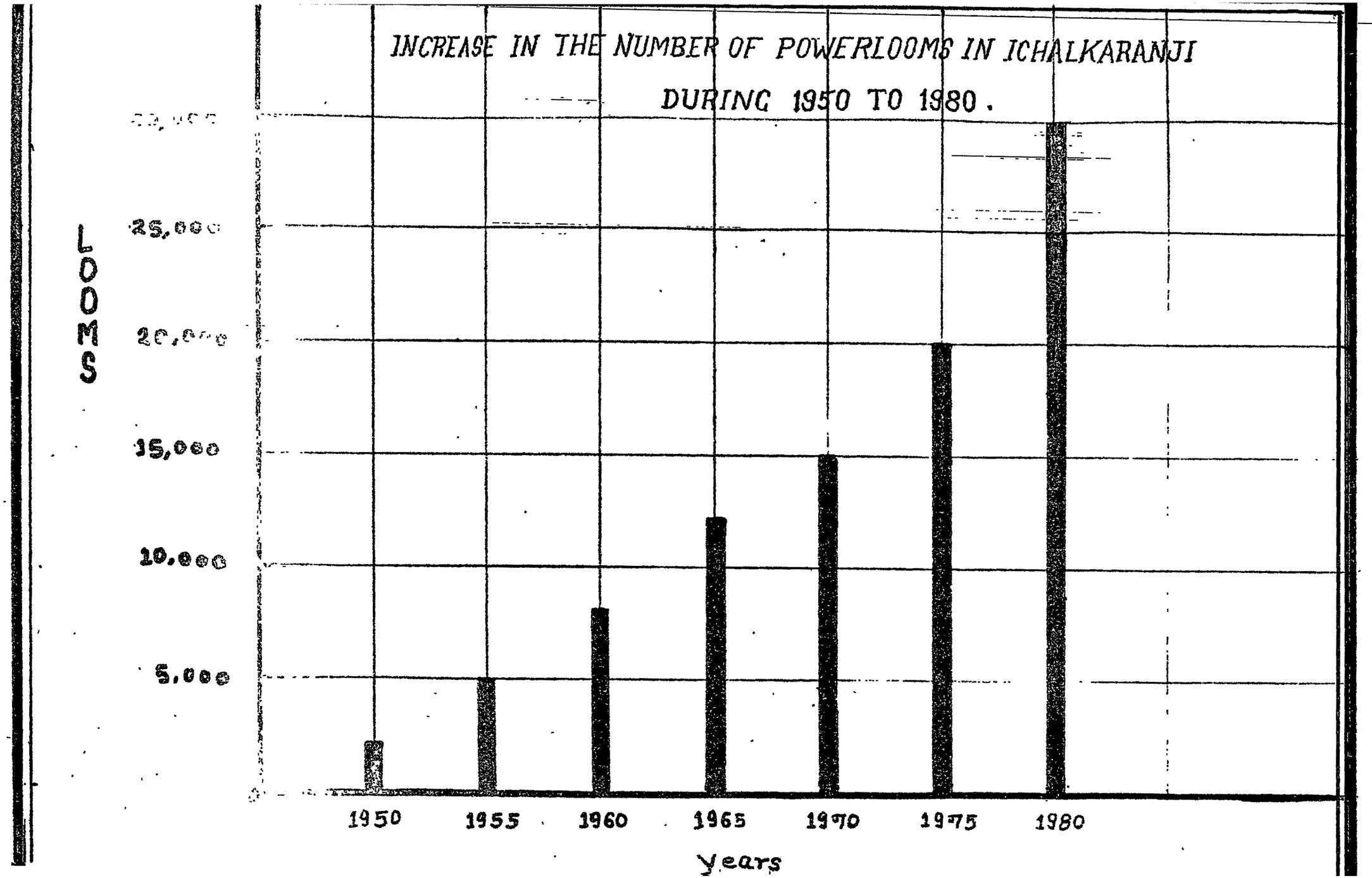
Table-1

Growth of weaving activity in Ichalkaranji during 1950 to 1980

Year	No.of powerlooms	Population of Ichalkaranji
1950	2,000	27,754
1955	5,000	
1960	8,000	50,954
1965	12,000	
1970	15,000	87,727
1975	20,000	
1980	30,000	1,50,000

Source: A status report on powerloom industry of Ichalkaranji, 1980, published by Yeshwant Co-operative Processors Ltd., Ichalkaranji.

Table-1 shows that the number of powerlooms in Ichalkaranji has increased rapidly in the last three decades. In 1950 they were 2,000 with 27,000 population, whereas now they have crossed 30,000 and population of the town is 1.50 lakhs. Seen decadewise, the number of powerlooms registered a four-fold increase during the fifties, while population of the town nearly doubled. The sixties attained 75% increase in the


INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF POWERLOOMS IN ICHALKARANJI
DURING 1950 TO 1980.
LOOMS
25,000
20,000
15,000
10,000
5,000
0
1950
1955
1960
1965
1970
1975
1980
Years

number while the seventies had 100% increase. Population of the town increased by nearly 37 thousand during 1960-70, and by 63 thousand during 1970-80. The latter is remarkable. This close interrelationship between growth of powerlooms and the population also establishes the fact that Ichalkaranji is essentially a place of powerloom owners and weavers.

Dispersal of ownership of 30,000 powerlooms is such that over 25,000 looms belong to those having not more than 1 to 4 each. Secondly, quite a large number of powerloom owners are from communities other than traditional weavers. Many of them are primarily from the farming community and from the families engaged in liberal professions. Bulk of the powerloom owners, thus, come from the entrepreneural communities. This is one of the important factors that has contributed to the growth of this industry.

Cloth production

All these looms invariably work round-the-clock and manufacture cotton fabrics only. Dhoties, mulls, cambric are some of the common popular varieties produced out of count group of 44^s, 60^s, and 80^s of the cotton yarn. Special sorts are also manufactured from other count groups but its proportion in the total production does not exceed 20%. This depends on the financial capacity of the concerned loom-owners.

Every loom produces, on an average, 60 metres of cloth

per day. Therefore, based on the modest assumption of 300 active days a year, and all the 30,000 powerlooms are working, the total production of cloth is around 540 lakh metres. Although Ichalkaranji accounts for only 10 per cent of the total number of powerlooms in the country, it shares nearly 25 per cent of the production of powerloom cloth ! This is indicative of the fact that these powerlooms are better organised and more productive.

Consumption of yarn

At present the annual consumption of yarn is nearly 45 million Kgs. Table-2 gives countwise yarn intake proportions by the powerloom industry of Ichalkaranji.

Table-2

Countwise yarn intake by the powerloom industry of Ichalkaranji (as on March 24, 1980)

Sr.No.	Counts of yarn intake		Percentage
1	100^S to 120^S	...	3 %
2	60^S to 99^S	...	60 %
3	20^S to 59^S	...	37 %
		Total	100 %

Note: Given percentage of yarn intake is approximate.

Source: Office of the Ichalkaranji Powerloom Weavers' Co-operative Association Ltd., Ichalkaranji.

Table-2 shows that weaving industry of Ichalkaranji requires

mostly yarn of counts 60^s to 99^s and 20^s to 59^s. It rarely requires high counts of yarn, that is, 100^s to 120^s.

Sizing units

Special feature of the decentralised weaving industry is the horizontal integration of pre-weaving (i.e. winding, warping and sizing) and post-weaving (i.e. processing) activities. With the increase in the number of local powerlooms such units extending preparatory and processing services have come up. At present there are 63 sizing units. Recently, a high speed sizing unit has been started in the private sector.

Processing houses

Cloth manufactured on looms required calendering, bleaching, mercerising, and chemical processing before it is sold in the market. Such processing facilities were initially not available at this centre and in the absence of the same weavers were deprived of certain benefits. Therefore, a processing plant equipped with calender, bleaching, dyeing and mercerising machines and modern equipment such as Famatex Stenter Screen Printing etc., has been organised and started since 1965 under the name and style The Yeshwant Co-operative Processors, Ltd.

Of the 540 million metres of cotton cloth annually produced, one-third, that is about 180 million metres is processed in the processing houses situated in and around

Ichalkaranji. Bulk of processing is done by the Hand Processors. There are about 15 hand-processors and 5 power-processors, of which, 3 and 2 respectively are co-operatives.

Marketing

Regarding marketing, powerloom industry is exposed to unfair competition from its rival, the organised mill sector. In case of the latter, they have adequate financial support to have free and easy access to wholesale and retail outlets in the metropolitan markets of Bombay, Ahmedabad, Calcutta etc., and retail outlets in rural areas. In the absence of such essential facility of wholesale and retail outlets,powerloom weavers are denied their legitimate share in the textile market. In order to improve upon this, Powerloom Co-operative Cloth Market has been established in the year 1976 to develop a marketing complex at Ichalkaranji on the lines of Surat and Ahmedabad. The construction work of the building spread over nearly 7 acres of land, is almost complete. It consists of 300 shops to be allotted to powerloom owners and their co-operatives. The entire project is expected to cost about Rs. 3 crores and will be complete by the end of 1981. At the peak of its activity, marketing of cloth worth Rs. 100 crores is expected to take place in the complex annually.

Spinning industry

Weavers in the decentralised textile industry were often

exploited by private composite mills by providing yarn inferior in quality and exorbitant in prices. Solution to this problem was to establish yarn consumers' (i.e. weavers') Co-operative Spinning Mills. Accordingly, local weavers organised and registered in the year 1960 a spinning mill, namely, the Deccan Co-operative Spinning Mills, Ltd. Success of this mill inspired its organisors to undertake expansions and also encouraged other co-operators throughout the State to establish a number of such spinning mills at their places. So far as Ichalkaranji is concerned, two more spinning mills, viz., the Kolhapur Zilla Shetkari Vinakari Sahakari Soot Girni, Ltd. and the Ichalkaranji Co-operative Spinning Mills, Ltd. sprung up in the years 1964 and 1974 respectively. Spindleage and production of the local co-operative spinning mills is given in Table-3. It can be seen from this Table that the local spinning mills together produce about 7.5 million Kgs. of yarn per annum. Their total installed spindleage capacity is 1,71,208. Both the Deccan Co-operative Spinning Mills, Ltd. and the Ichalkaranji Co-operative Spinning Mill, Ltd. have installed their licensed spindleage fully, whereas with the installed capacity of 62,928 spindles the Kolhapur Zilha Shetakari Vinakari Sahakari Soot Girani, Ltd. is short of its licensed capacity of 75,000 spindles. The establishment of the co-operative spinning mills has, on the one hand, filled at least to some extent an important gap in the industry, and on the other hand, provided impetus to the

further growth of weaving activity in Ichalkaranji.

Table-3

Spindleage and production of the local co-operative spinning mills of Ichalkaranji as in 1980

Name	Year of registration	Licensed	Installed	Production Kgs (1979-80)
1) The Deccan Co-operative Spinning Mills, Ltd.	1960	79,552	79,552	32,01,810
2) Kolhapur Zilla Shetkari Vinakari Sahakari Soot Girani, Ltd.	1964	75,000	62,928	22,03,204
3) The Ichalkaranji Co-operative Spinning Mills, Ltd.	1974	28,728	28,728	21,87,562
Total		1,83,280	1,71,208	75,92,576

Source: Annual Reports of the Spinning Mills and Production Registers (1979-80).

Table-4

Present position of textile industry of Ichalkaranji (1980)

Sr.No.	Category of unit	Number of units
1	Powerlooms	30,000
2	Hand Processors	15 (3)
3	Power Processors	5 (2)
4	Co-operative Spinning Mills	3
5	Sizing units	63
6	Co-operative Cloth Marketing unit	1

Note: Figures in brackets show co-operative units.

Source: A Note on powerloom industry of Ichalkaranji, 1980, published by Yeshwant Co-op. Processors, Ltd. Ichalkaranji.

To conclude, the present position of the textile industry of Ichalkaranji stands as in Table-4.

From the above Table it is seen that Ichalkaranji has certainly turned into an industrial centre. Thus, the vision of past ruler Shrimant Narayanrao Babasaheb Ghorpade has materialised. Till 1954, Ichalkaranji was called 'Little Manchester of Maharashtra', but now-a-days it is aptly called 'The Second Manchester of Maharashtra'.

Before we close, it will be interesting to note some distinguishing features of the Ichalkaranji textile centre vis-a-vis other textile centres in the country.

1) Most of the cotton textile centres in the country developed to that stature mainly due to the availability of raw cotton in the vicinity, markets and transport facilities, besides humid climate. Nothing of this favoured Ichalkaranji. Rather, entrepreneurial abilities of the people, local talent and active support of the rulers contributed in the making of Ichalkaranji.

2) Elsewhere, normally spinning activity has preceded weaving activity. In case of Ichalkaranji, the course is other way round; development of spinning activity has followed the weaving industry.

3) Most of the spinning mills in India are located in

the vicinity of cotton-growing belts. Ichalkaranji has no such advantage. Furthermore, the political aspiration and rivalries of the local leaders has contributed to the establishment of spinning mills in the past as also three new proposals in the pipeline, unlike other places where the entrepreneurial zeal was at the root.

4) At other places, normally there is concentration of ownership of the textile units. At Ichalkaranji, it is mostly dispersed in the hands of a large number of people.