

CHAPTER - I

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THE EVOLUTION AND GROWTH OF MIRAJ CITY

1. Introduction
2. Location
3. Historical background of the city
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References

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1. INTRODUCTION :

" Modern geographic literatures deal with the spatial system as the total representation of spatial processes and spatial interaction which form the spatial pattern. More complex form of this pattern can be visualised in a unit of large population and activities. Where organizational and transactional components assume distinct identity. This is the main characteristics of an urban habitat ", (R.L.Singh, 1976).

In this chapter an attempt has been made to study the spatial pattern of the Miraj city which is known as a multifacet prospering urban centre of South Maharashtra. This is the city of a great antiquity which has been able to maintain its ancient celebrity and distinction along with continuity. Miraj is a very ancient centre having long historical background of its evolution.

2. LOCATION :

Miraj, a capital of former princely state, now acts as a tahsil headquarter and regional railway junction in the Sangli district of Maharashtra, lies on the left flank of the river Krishna at the height of 604 metres above the mean sea level. It is located on 16°49' North latitude and 74°45' East longitude (Fig.1.1). Miraj is an important transport node and transshipment centre located in Southern Maharashtra.

LOCATION MAP OF MIRAJ CITY

SANGLI DISTRICT

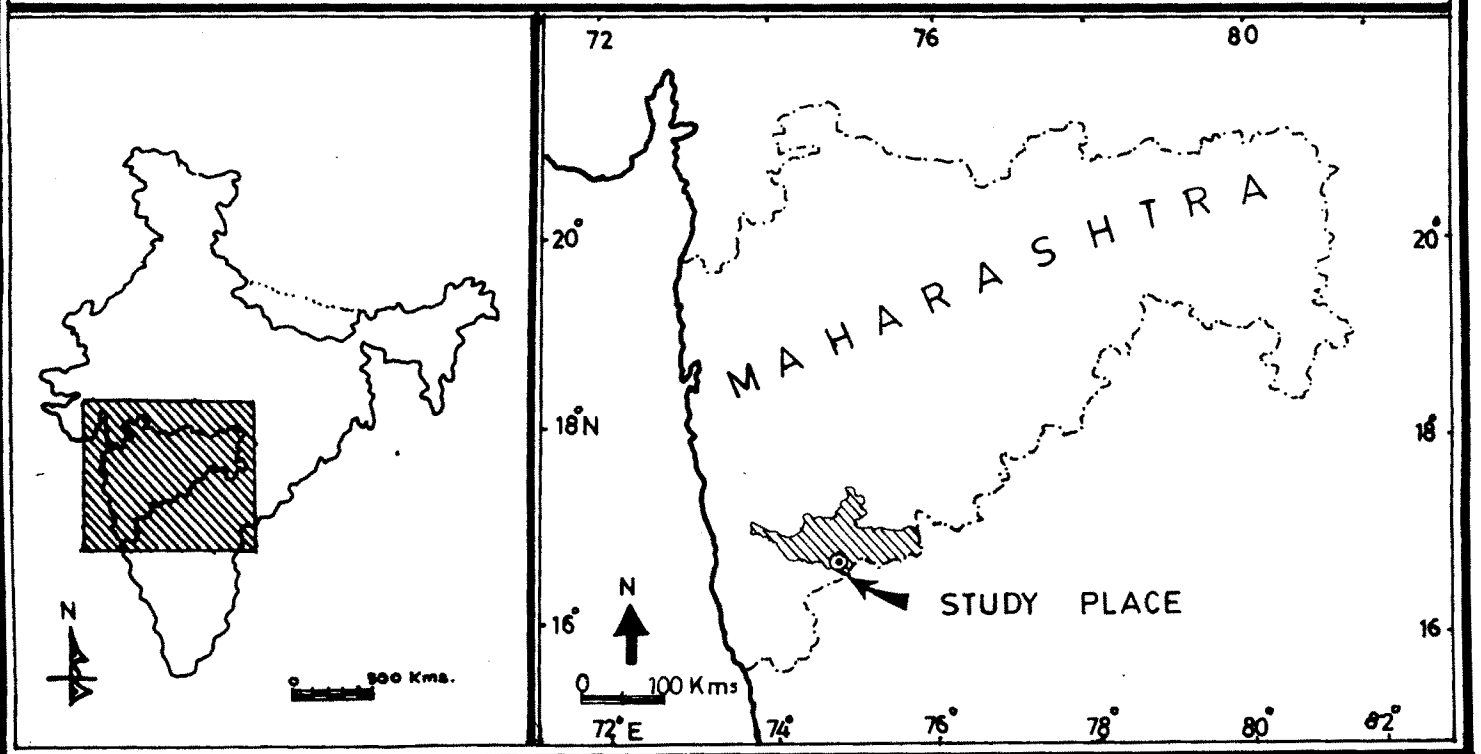
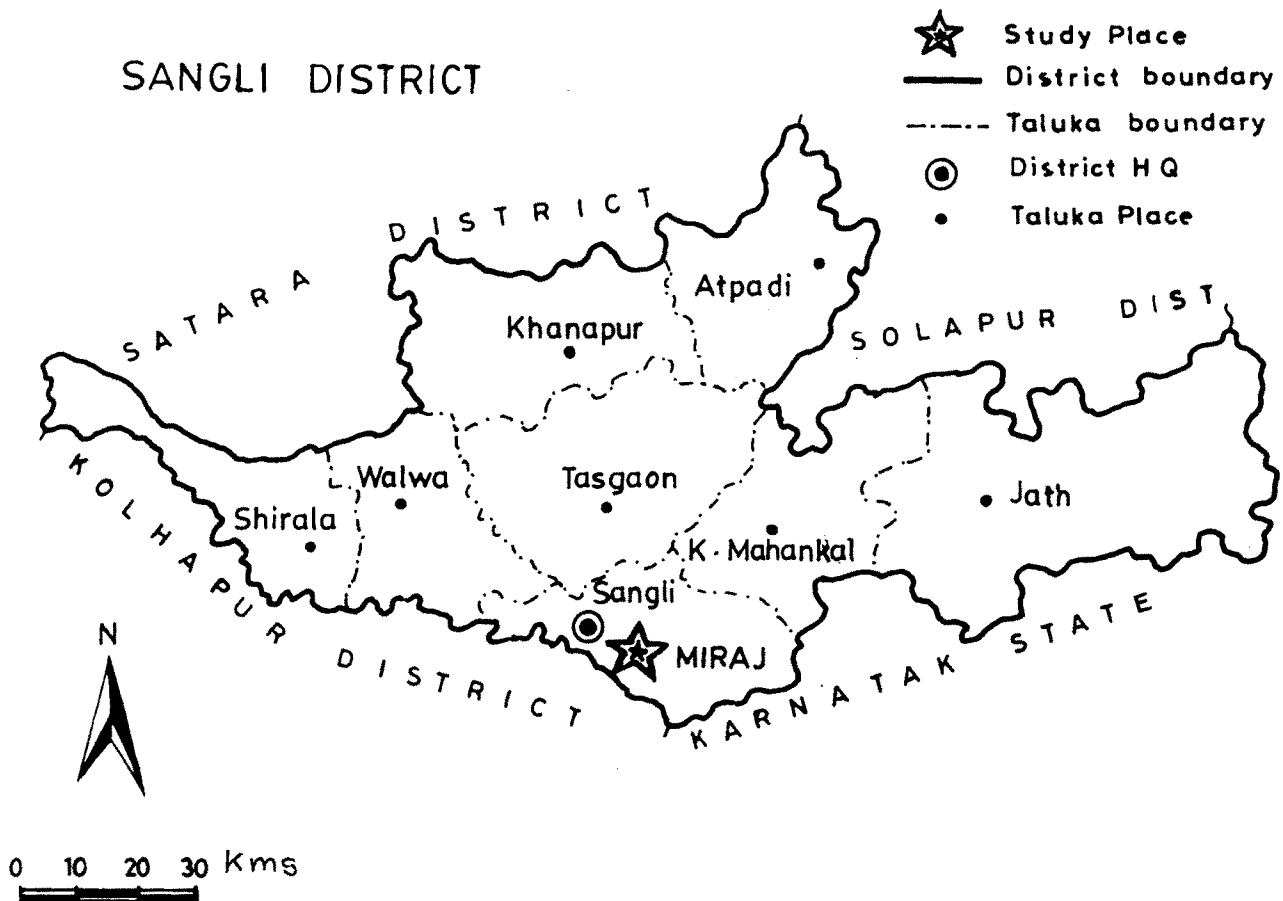


FIG. 1.1

By rail it is 250 kms to the south of Pune, 140 kms to the north of Belgaum and 48 kms to the northeast of Kolhapur. By road it is 61 kms from Kolhapur, 128 kms from Bijapur, 192 kms from Solapur, 128 kms from Pandharpur and just 11 kms from Sangli.

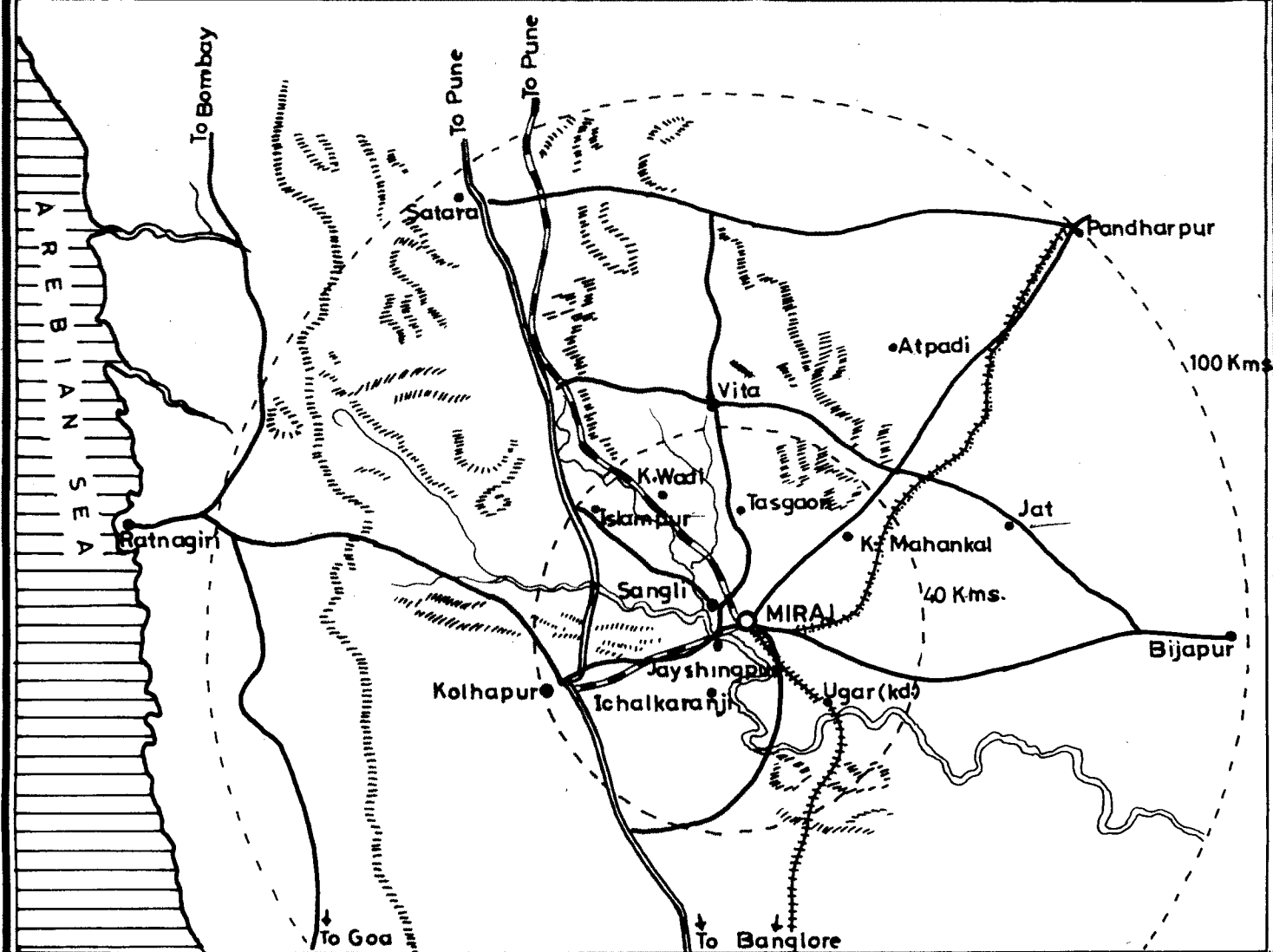
Miraj is well connected by road and rail to important urban places and market centres of both the states of Maharashtra and Karnataka (Fig.1.2). During the last three decades it has developed in respect of area and population. The city commands such important position that has attracted the attention of geographers, urban planners, economists and sociologists to study this urban complex.

The city occupies 42.68 sq.kms area consists of an old and new municipal limits with a population of 105,455 (1981) and a population density of 2,470 persons/sq.km. Presently the city is known for the regional market centre, railway junction, a great centre for health care, emerging industrial complex and a centre of learning and education.

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CITY :

Miraj is very ancient city having long historical background. The city was governed by various rulers such as Dravidians, Shakyas, Chalukyas, Mogals and Marathas. In the detailed study of historical monuments such as Miraj Fort, we have to look into the history of 13th century. The construction of famous Miraj fort dates back some hundreds of years before

REGIONAL SETTING OF MIRAJ CITY



N



10 0 20 30 40 50 Kms.

REFERENCE

- | | | |
|---|-------------------|-------|
| 1 | National Highway | ===== |
| 2 | State Highway | ===== |
| 3 | Railway | |
| | i) Broad guage | ===== |
| | ii) Metre guage | +++++ |
| | iii) Narrow guage | +++++ |

FIG 1.2

13th century. It indicates that the period of construction of fort is very ancient. There is a mention that the Miraj fort was repaired by Sardar Sadakhan of Vijapurkaras in 13th century. In the 13th century Miraj was conquered by the ruler of Vijaynagar from the Bahamani rule and for a long period thereafter it was under the domain of Vijaynagar. The Miraj settlement has developed during the time of Vijaynagar empire, to a great prosperity. There is also a mention that the fort was built by one of the Bahamani Sultans, however, this view is untenable as the fort was in existence even before the establishment of the Bahamani dynasty. The Bahamani empire disintegrated to a succession of weak rulers who could not put down the turbulence of the powerful provincial governor.

In 1490 the governor of Ahemednagar, Govalconda and Bijapur declared their independence and on the fall of the Bahamani dynasty Miraj passed into the hands of Sultans of Bijapur. The evolutionary account of the Miraj during the 14th century indicates that the Miraj fort was conquered by the Adil Sah of Vijapur from the rulers of Vijaynagar. In the same period construction of famous Mirasaheb Darga and other buildings such as Jumma Masjid, Kali Masjid etc. were came into existence. The famous Miraj fort was under the possession of Vijapuri Sardars upto 1686, then it has been ruled by Mogals and from the Mogals it was captured by Maratha rulers. From 1739 onwards the Miraj fort was permanently under the Maratha rule for a long time. The fort was handed over by Madhavrao Peshva to Gopalrao

Patwardhan. Since that the fort alongwith surrounding area was under the control of Patwardhan family upto 1808. After this fudal state was divided into areas known as Miraj Mala, Soni and Supari Bag. Soni and Supari Bag states lost their existance and were merged with British India. Miraj Mala, Miraj and Sangli states were in existance upto 1947 and merged into the Indian Union.

During the state regime Miraj saw many improvements such as construction of bandhara on Miraj Nala to provide piped water supply, construction of old market, establishment of municipal council, construction of Kalyan market, mutton market, town hall and girl's highschool, opening of railway station, construction of Laxmi market and Mission hospital, completion of Balasaheb Water Supply Scheme, establishment of post and telegraph office and construction of Ghat on Krishna river etc.

Thus, the historical account of Miraj shows that this historical and strategic centre was ruled by various dynasty. Particularly, it was ruled by Yadvas of Vijapur for 250 years, by Adil Sah of Vijapur for 200 years, by Mogals of Delhi for 60 years, by Maratha Chhatrapti for 15 years, by Peshwas for 7 years and by Patwardhans for 180 years.

After independence Miraj florished as a railway junction, regional market centre and a tahsil headquarter. The administrative, commercial, educational functions and medical facilities

increased the regional importance and focal significance of Miraj city.

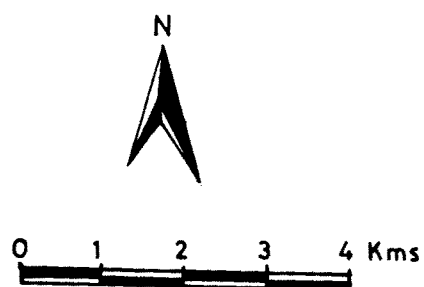
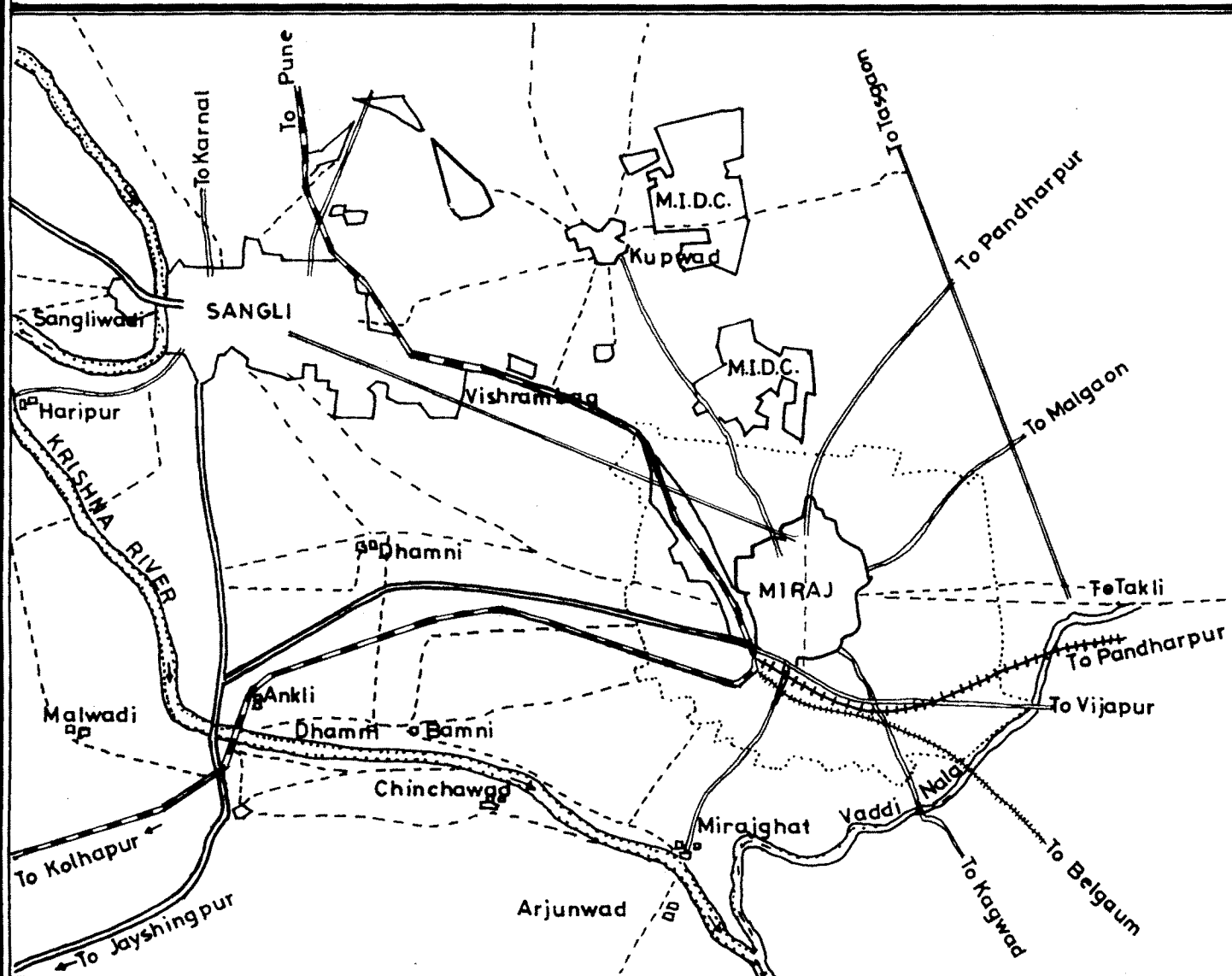
Topography :

From the topographic point of view the city has generally a flat terrain with gentle slope towards the river Krishna. The general level of the city is at an altitude of 604 metres above the mean sea level. Miraj is situated to the north of Krishna river at a distance of about 5 kms and 11 km south-east of Sangli (Fig.1.3). Miraj Mission Hospital is the highest spot in the city. There is a remarkable break in the slope at Laxmi market and Nadiwes. The city has a flat terrain sloping from north to south. A nala locally known as 'Miraj Nala' flowing in north to south direction divides the municipal area into two parts : a) Gaothan area - including town planning scheme area, railway yards and all other developments alongwith the agricultural lands on the west, b) the rich agricultural tract on the east.

4. CLIMATE :

Miraj being situated on high plateau on east of the Western Ghats, is noted for its dry and salubrious climate, only because of extremely favourable climatic conditions in the city hospitals such as Wanless T.B. Hospital, Richardson Leprosy Asylum have been established and the city is known to be an important health care centre in the whole of Maharashtra.

MIRAJ AND ITS ENVIRONS



REFERENCE

- Broad gauge Rly.
- Metre gauge "
- Narrow gauge "
- State Highway
- Major District Road
- Village Roads

FIG 1-3

The climate is generally temperate. The range of temperature between maximum and minimum temperature is comparatively small. The maximum temperature in hot season rises upto 40°C and the minimum temperature in winter season not below 10°C.

The city is situated to the east of the Sahyadri mountains in the rainshadow area and hence receives relatively smaller amount of rainfall. It is frequently referred as a place of dry and warm climatic conditions. The average annual rainfall is about 600 mm. This place and the surrounding region known for the drought prone area as there is uncertainty of the rainfall. The maximum rainfall recorded was 1035 mm in 1932, while minimum 350 mm in 1923. The rainfall statistics of 1985 shows that the place had received the amount of rainfall is 635 mm. The prevailing wind direction is generally west-easterly.

5. EVOLUTION OF THE CITY :

Little information is available pertaining to the first settlement that came into existence probably before the 13th century.

1) Ancient sites :

The following sites may be considered as the ancient sites where the first settlement was evolved.

i) The Miraj Fort :

The fort of Miraj was considered to be one of the most important ground fort. In those days, it was looked upon as a

most strategic. The origin of this most ancient site can be traced to the 13th century. There is a mention that the first view is untenable as the fort was in existence even before the establishment of the Bahamani dynasty. The fort and the surrounding area developed during the time of Vijaynagar empire.

ii) Mirasaheb Darga :

This is another important site in Miraj city. Miraj city was under the Muslim rulers of Vijapur for a long historic period, Muslim relics are still visible in the city. There are number of Dargas, Mosques and Tombs scattered in the city. Among these the Mirasaheb Darga is famous one. It contains the tombs of Khaja Shamshoddin Mirasaheb and that of his son lying side by side and are constructed by Khaja Samshoddin Sahale in 1368 A.D. This Darga is being visited annually by thousands of pilgrims from distinct parts of the country at the time of Urus. An annual Urus is held on 24th Rajab of Muslim calender. The noteworthy feature of this Darga is the imposing tall dome of 65' height glistening while in broad day light which is visible from long distance.

iii) Krishna Ghat :

A small settlement situated at about 5 kilometer to the south of Miraj city on the bank of the river Krishna known as 'Krishna Ghat'. This village type settlement is probably ancient than the Miraj city. It comprises 100 houses with a population of about 1,000. This old settlement consists an old beautiful

temple of Markendyswar. This Krishna Ghat settlement is connected to Miraj city by metalled road. During the 1801 a huge 'Ghat' was constructed on the bank of river Krishna, where from Miraj gets the present adequate water supply.

iv) Jame Masjid :

The Jame Masjid in Brahmanpuri area of the Miraj city has been built in 1620 by Akus Khan, Subhedar of Bankapur. It has well compound wall, specious courtyard and prayer hall. The top corners are crowned by minars, one in each corner.

v) Shree Ganesh Temple :

This is a another ancient site florished during the Peshwa regime. This temple was built by late Srimant Yelder Balasaheb in 1799. At the same time a big tank was also built infront of this temple. Presently most of the wells within the cities receives the water from this tank.

vi) Other Constructions :

There are some temples and mosques scattered in the city, out of which Mallikarjun temple, Madhavaji temple, Kali Masjid, Vitthal Rakhumai temple and Krishneswar Mandir were constructed in old days. Among these the Madhavaji temple is situated in the fort area and it is privately owned by Rajasaheb of Miraj. This is a beautiful temple worth to visit. Fig.1.4 shows the location of the major ancient sites in Miraj city.

MIRAJ CITY

ANCIENT — SITES

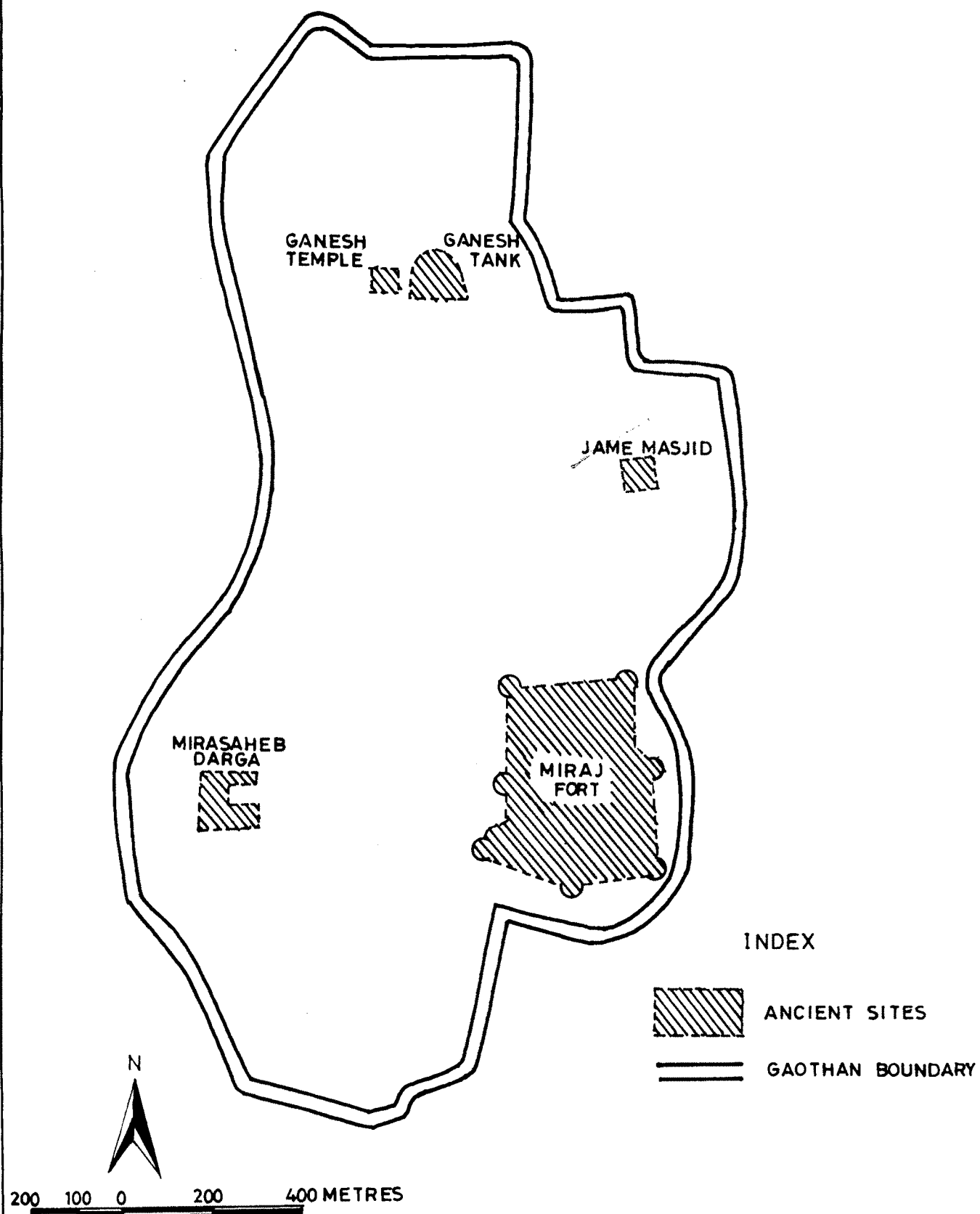


FIG. 1-4

6. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF CITY :

The growth in area of Miraj city is a developmental process of more than two and half centuries, which can be divided into four different phases of growth of city size.

- i) The first phase of growth includes the period from the origin of a town till the 18th century i.e. origin to the 18th century.
- ii) The second phase of growth consists the period of 1800-1900.
- iii) The third phase includes the growth from 1900-1950.
- iv) The fourth phase of the city development includes the post independence period from 1950 onwards.

The growth phases of Miraj city have been represented in Fig.1.5.

Phase I :

This is an old phase in the development of Miraj. During this phase the ancient sites and their environs have developed. This development traced back to the 13th century. Till the 18th century Mirasaheb Darga area, Jame Masjid area and Railway Yard area were developed. At the end of 18th century the boundaries of city were expanded very little and it was covering an area of 2.5 sq.kms. The city built-up was found in a scattered form (Fig.1.5-A).

MIRAJ CITY

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GROWTH PHASES

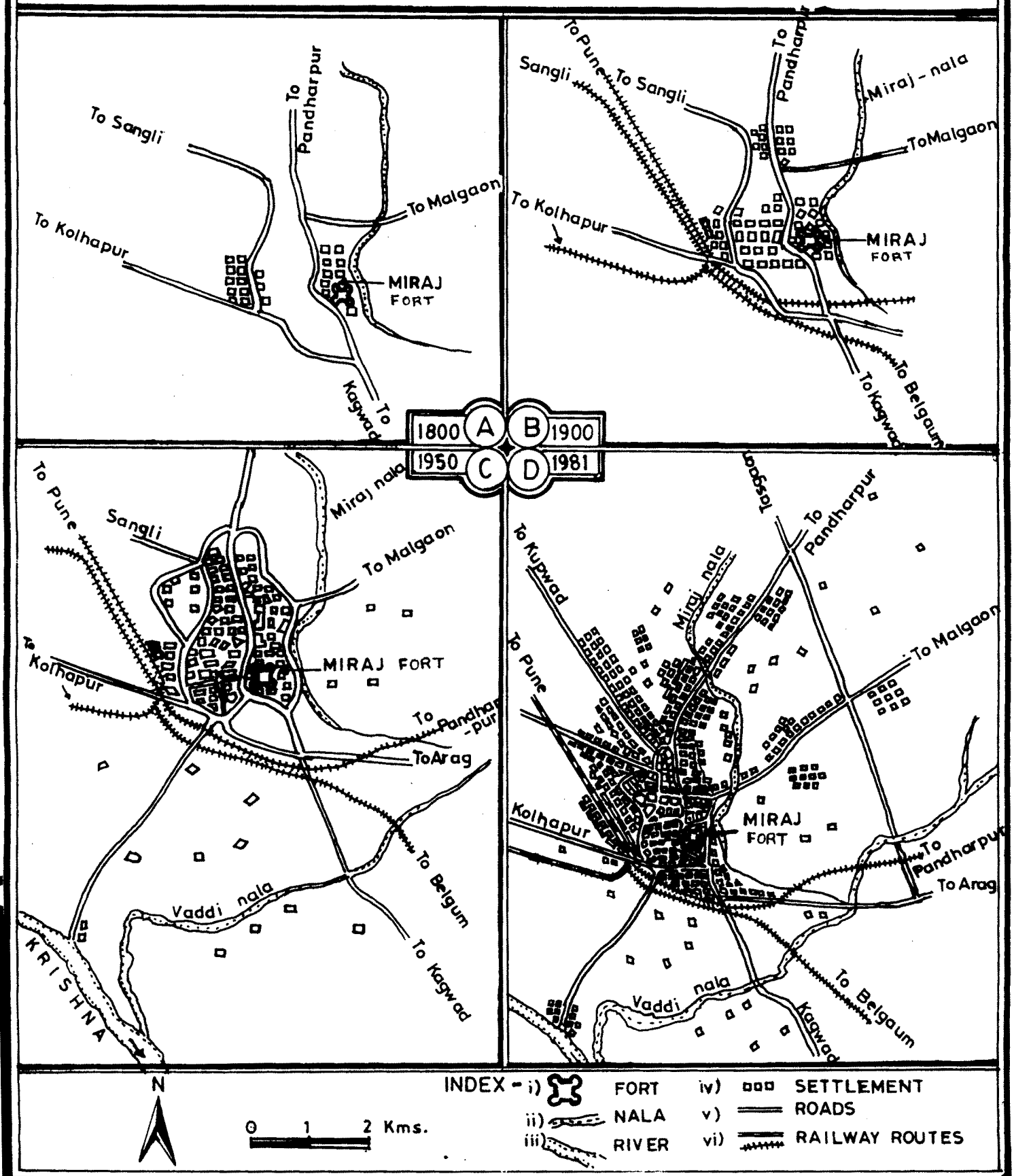


FIG. 1.5

Phase II :

This phase of the development includes the additional increase in the city build. In this phase the imprints of Maratha rulers, Peshwa and Patwardhana family reflects. The construction of Miraj Highschool building, Wanless Hospital, Ganesh temple and other several public buildings were included in this phase of development of city. Several services such as health, sanitation and education were developed and such developments expanded the city limit. Such development has expanded the city size from 2.5 to 5.9 sq.kms. (Fig.1.5-B).

Phase III :

Miraj is well connected by rail and roads to the other regional centres. The major development seems along these transportation lines. The city has developed as an important administrative and commercial centre. Many commercial establishments, residential colonies and public buildings were emerged in this period. The new expansion of the city took place towards the north and south. The area of the city has grown to 10.4 sq. kms.

Phase IV :

This is the development phase in which the Miraj has experienced a more rapid development and expansion. After the independence there is a noteworthy development towards north along Pandharpur state highway and towards northwest along Miraj-Kupwad road. In the north the growth trend is due to

establishment of educational and medical institutions. Within the Miraj municipal limits and moreover the lands are suitable for the construction purpose. In the south of gaathan further expansion and growth has been hampered due to the good agricultural lands which are under the command areas of lift irrigation schemes. The railway line in the south act as a barrier for the further development of settlement. Thus the city is expanding in north, northeast and little bit in northwest direction. The city limits were expanded from 42.40 sq.kms in 1961 to 42.68 sq.kms in 1981. The newly expanded area includes the development of Laxmi Nagar, Subhash Nagar, Indira Nagar, Vijaynagar, Ganesh housing society etc.

1) Growth of the city 1900-1950 :

During this period the Miraj city was well connected to other areas by rail and road transport. The city has developed as an important administrative and commercial centre. In the same period a large number of the public buildings, highschool buildings, commercial complexes, hospital buildings and many private buildings were emerged. The area of the city which was only 6.00 sq.kms at the end of 19th century has grown to 10.00 sq.kms in 1950.

2) Post-independence growth of city :

After independence several industrial establishment, residential colonies, extended city routes and the developments along those routes have a greater impact on the city build.

In 1950 the adequate water supply from Krishna river, the establishment of Miraj Industrial Estate and the extension of railway routes during 1961-71 have considerably extended the total area of the city upto 42.40 sq.kms. In the decade of 1971-81 the establishment of Miraj Industrial Development Corporation, the development of residential colonies like Subhash Nagar, Indira Nagar, Vijaynagar, Laxmi Nagar etc. are noteworthy growth, which extended the city limit upto 42.68 sq. kms in 1981.

7. POPULATION GROWTH :

The municipal records shows that the population of Miraj was 50,000 souls in 1762 A.D. which further decreased to 18,425 in 1901. The town should have developed in the due course of a time, however, it has experienced the decline in the population on account of the frequent epidemics of plague especially of 1898 A.D. which took a toll of nearly 3,000 people. The other major cause of the decline in population was the water scarcity.

Here an attempt is made to consider a population growth review for last hundred years i.e. 1881 to 1981. Table 1.1 shows the population of Miraj city, it also indicates the decadal variation and growth rates for last hundred years.

A cursory glance at the growth of population of the Miraj city indicates that the city has experienced a upward

trend of the population growth for the last hundred years except little decline of population in the year 1901 (Fig.1.6).

TABLE 1.1 : Population growth of Miraj city 1881-1981.

| Year | Population | Decadal variation | % Decadal growth |
|------|------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1881 | 26,610 | - | - |
| 1891 | 26,060 | 5,450 | 26.44 |
| 1901 | 18,425 | - 7,635 | - 29.29 |
| 1911 | 21,168 | 2,743 | 14.89 |
| 1921 | 21,424 | 256 | 01.21 |
| 1931 | 26,465 | 5,041 | 23.53 |
| 1941 | 32,455 | 5,990 | 22.63 |
| 1951 | 40,224 | 7,769 | 23.94 |
| 1961 | 53,345 | 13,121 | 32.62 |
| 1971 | 77,606 | 24,261 | 45.47 |
| 1981 | 105,455 | 27,849 | 35.89 |

SOURCE : District Census Handbook of Sangli District, 1981, p.105.

A careful examination of decadal growth rate in the 20th century indicates that in the decade 1901-1911 the centre had nearly 15% growth rate. However, there was no increase in the population during the period of 1911-1921. During the decades 1921-1931, 1931-1941 and 1941-1951, the growth rate of the population was

MIRAJ CITY

POPULATION GROWTH

(1881 — 1981)

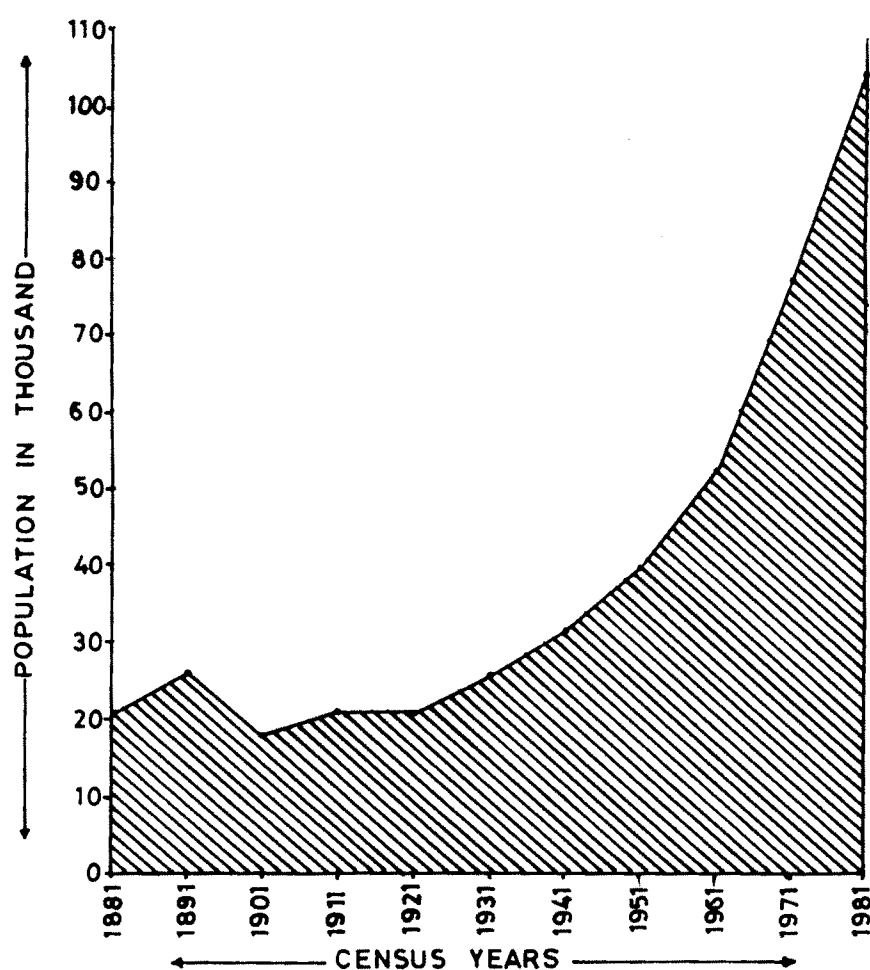


FIG. 1-6

MIRAJ CITY

POPULATION GROWTH RATES

1891 — 1981

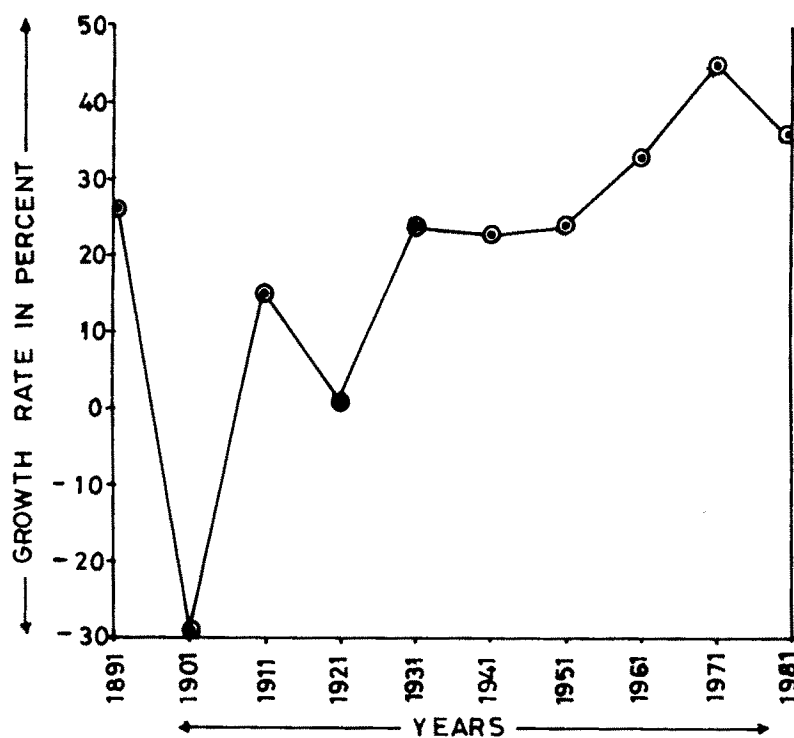


FIG.1.7

below 25% (Fig.1.7). The real growth of the population seems after post-independence period. The decade 1951-1961 registered 32.62% of growth. However, the highest growth rate was recorded in 1961-1971 decade (Table 1.1). It is interesting to note that there is a net addition of 27,849 persons in the city population during the 1971-1981 decade. The decadal growth rate of the city population has represented in Fig.1.7 . *why?*

It is obvious that during the last three decades the population of Miraj city has accelerated growth rate due to the growth of industries, commercial establishments, adequate water supply, social amenities and public facilities. The availability of medical facilities is one of the root cause in the population growth of Miraj city. The population growth trend is indicated in Fig.1.6

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