

## INTRODUCTION :

Rural settlements are the mainstay of human society. They serve as the home of a sedentary culture. They are the basic units of civilization from where culture spreads into the whole sphere of human life. They also help in the growth and development of a region and its cultural advancement. Planning of rural settlements, particularly rural service centres, is an integral part of regional economic development. A study of rural settlements, therefore, becomes indispensable for the rural planner. In the field of Geography, the sphere of influence drawn for the study of rural settlements and rural service centres covers the relationship <sup>with</sup> ~~to~~ number of settlements, their size, linkage and service facilities. In recent decades due to the alarming rise in population, the problem of rural service centres has become increasingly acute and the need for their planning corresponding more importance.

In India where 76.27% (1981) of the population lives in villages and the economy has an agrarian base, the rural service centres play a significant role in the development of rural landscape. The rural service centres are the centres of collection and distribution of agricultural surpluses, consumer's goods and allied services. Moreover they are the nodes in the general fabric of settlements

through which the over all development of the region takes place and the regional development is reflected in the mirrors of rural service centres.

The present study deals with the rural service centres in Kolhapur district of Maharashtra State. The present work attempts to highlight the study of geographical personality of the study region, evolutionary account of rural service centres, their spatial distribution in relation to physical, social and economic conditions of the study area, functional organisation and occupational structure, centrality and hierarchy and the service areas of rural service centres.

The data used in the present work are based on the Govt. Publications particularly district census handbooks, socio-economic review, and statistical abstracts of Kolhapur district for the year 1971. The collected data have been processed on electronic calculator and tabulated and presented at the appropriate places in the text. Various statistical methods and quantitative techniques have been applied. The techniques like, indices of distribution and concentration, location quotient, are used. The correlation and regression analysis is also used. For the identification of functional association, Doi's technique of combinational analysis has been used.

Chapter First deals with an introduction to the study area, data base and methodology. Geographic personality of the region is considered and the correlation of rural service centres with the promoting factors like physiography,

population distribution, settlement distribution and economic organisation in the study area has been studied. The criteria for the identification of rural service centres has also outlined.

Chapter II emphasises on the evolution of rural service centres in the district. The evolutionary account of rural service centres has been studied in different historical periods because, it gives an idea of social, economic and political set up of the past through which rural service centres have evolved.

Spatial distribution of rural service centres in the region under study has been widely studied in chapter III. In this chapter an attempt has been made to trace briefly the factors influencing the distribution of rural service centres, their size and relationship. The levels of development and spatial distribution of rural service centres are co-related. To understand the spatial pattern of rural service centres the nearest neighbour analysis has been applied.

The fourth chapter includes the study of occupational structure and functional organisation of rural service centres. To know the functional association <sup>of</sup> in the rural service centres, Doi's method of combinational analysis has been used - in part I of the chapter. The second part deals with functional organisation of rural service centres.

Chapter V includes the study of centrality and hierarchy of rural service centres. The centrality has been calculated by Davis method of location quotient and Godlund's Method and comparative centrality indices have been worked out in part I of the chapter. The second part throws light on the hierarchic structure of rural service centres and the regional analysis of hierarchic orders, and related characteristics of rural service centres in the study region.

Chapter six analyses the service areas of rural service centres. Hierarchic orders of rural service centres and their respective service areas have been delimited by empirical method.

In the last chapter, the functional gaps have been identified and to cover the gaps new rural service centres have been proposed from the regional planning point of view. The proposed hierarchy of rural service centres is a conspicuous feature of this chapter.

In the style of presentation, the references are given at the end of each chapter. It was highly impossible to include in the dissertation, all the data collected and processed, but the important and relevant information is included in the form of ' appendix ' at the end of relevant chapters. Small tables which need consultation in the text have been included at proper places. The maps and graphs

have been drawn by <sup>the</sup> author and were prepared in the departmental cartographic laboratory. The author has tried to avoid errors and repetition, yet through oversight some errors might have occurred in the text for which author may be excused.

KOLHAPUR.

S. B. KANASE.