

Introduction:-

The Konkan, also called the Konkan Coast or Karavali, is a rugged section of the western coastline of India from Raigad to Mangalore. The sapta-Konkan is a slightly larger region described in the Skanda-purana.

Konkan Division is one of six administrative sub-divisions of the state of Maharashtra, comprising of its coastal districts. The precise definition of Konkan varies, but most include in it Maharashtra's districts of Raigad, Mumbai, Thane, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg, the state of Goa, the Uttar Kannada, Udupi and Dakshina Kannada districts of Karnataka. The Sahyadri Mountain range ("Western Ghats") forms the eastern boundary of Konkan, and the Arabian Sea marks the western boundary. The southern boundary is the Gangavali River. The Mayura River forms the northern boundary.

The North Konkan is well wooded in most parts, in the coastal districts the palmyra and the date palm spring up spontaneously in every direction. Parts of Southern Konkan are also well covered with trees, though, owing to the nature of the soil, many parts are bare. On this part of the coast neither palmyra nor date tree is seen, but their place is better supplemented by great groves of coconut trees planted along the sandy parts of the coasts and the banks of the creeks. The villages throughout Konkan are almost invariably shaded with trees, and wherever there is room enough, the houses stand in their own compounds, while in many of the inland districts they are found in scattered hamlets, several of which go to make up a village.

The whole tract is agricultural. Of this district it may generally be said that the parts near the coast are fertile, highly cultivated, populous, and the inland parts rocky and rugged, neither much favoured by nature nor improved by man. Compared with other parts of India the climate is moist, the rainfall being very heavy and hot winds which are little felt. Although enervating it is much more equable than that of the Dakhan: and the district, especially the southern part, may be called decidedly healthy. North of Bombay the coast is low and sandy, containing in many places great expanses of salt swamp, the rivers few and shallow, and the harbors insignificant. South of Bombay the coast is bold with a line of hills often bordering the sea, never receding more than two or three miles from it; there are many navigable rivers and commodious harbors, and in most parts water is deep near the shore.

Geographic condition:-

The Konkan Region of Maharashtra state in India has some distinguishable features.

1. Very close to the Financial Capital of India i.e. Mumbai.
2. It has a long coastal area admeasuring nearly 720 kms (Sea-transport is in existence).
3. Well Connected by Four National Highways:

- A) NH-17: Mumbai – Goa Highway
- B) Mumbai-Pune Express Highway.
- C) NH-8: Mumbai- Ahemdabad Highway.
- D) NH-4: Mumbai- Karjat/ Khopali Pune Highway.

4. Konkan Railway Project has value Added Advantages

Entire Konkan Region is having undulating topographical features, sandwiched between Arabian Sea from western side while sky-touching Sahyadri ranges from eastern side.

Due to 3000 to 4000 mm maximum rainfall throughout the year, natural vegetation is abundant and full of various useful trees and Medicinal Plants.

Konkan region of Maharashtra state is a narrow terrain between coast and the Ernst of Sahyadris with width of about 60 km. and length of about 500 km., sea coast 720 km. in length. Total geographic area 29,790 sq. km. Konkan region of Maharashtra includes Greater Bombay (380 sq. km), Thane (9337 sq. km.) Raigad (6869 sq km), Ratnagiri (8164 sq km) and Sindhudurg (5040 sq. km) districts bound by Gujarat in north and Goa in south. It is a stretch of 720 km long belt of coastal and Sahyadri hills with a width varying from 50 to 60 km. The territory is flanked by Arabian sea on western side. It is spread over in between 15 0 60' N and 20 0 22' N latitude and 72 0 39' and 73 0 48' longitude. Out of the total geographical area (30.79 lakh ha) the gross and net cropped areas are around 8.63 and 7.97 lakh ha respectively. Thus, the net sown area is 25.88 percent of the total geographical area. The total irrigated area is only 0.37 lakh ha which is barely 4.23 percent of the gross cropped area.

Topography & Geology:-

Topographically, the Konkan coastal lands are platform of marine denudation raised to form a narrow plain, interrupted by a parallel and transverse hills which reach the sea, thus denying the plain of a uniform level. The streams bring about a vast eroded material from their upper reaches and deposit it in lowest zone near the shore line. In the plains of Raigad, trap rock is found in tabulated masses and irregular shapeless boulders of considerably varying dimensions. The basalt has given rise to a fairly thick laterite particularly in southern part of Raigad and most of the Ratnagiri and Sidhudurg districts. The general level of laterization is 150 to 175 meters above mean sea level, but towards east, some higher plateau also show laterite. The granite and gneisses are exposed in southern part of Sindhudurg district around Kudal.

Agricultural scenario:-

There are two major cropping seasons the Kharif and Konkan season. Most of the cropping is directed towards rice on terraces and some additional pulse crops & low quality cereals. Entire Konkan area is full of Red Lateritic Soil strewn with some weathered rocks, where water logging is available, Paddy cultivation is practiced on such loamy soil. Considering the soil, climate, input and human resource availability and market conditions, farmers are growing various crops in their fields with lot of limitations. Some of the crops listed below are conventionally grown in the area.

Cereals:-Rice, Jowar, Maize, Ragi, Kodra , Vari etc

Pulses: -Gram, Mung, Tur, Udid, Kulthi, Wal, Chawali etc

Condiments & Spices:- Betel Nuts ,Coriander, Chilies, etc

Agro-climatic zones:-

Out of the nine agroclimatic zones of the State, the Konkan region covers three zones namely, very high rainfall with lateritic soil, very high rainfall with non-lateritic soil and the ghat zone. The lateritic soils are moderately acidic, low in fertility having low moisture retention capacity, whereas, the medium black soils have comparatively better fertility as well as moisture retention capacity. The region shows variation in agro-climatic features, Soil types and crops and cropping pattern. Based on these variations, the region is broadly divided into two agro-climatic zones.

1. South Konkan Coastal Zone
2. North Konkan Coastal Zone.

The South Zone includes Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts, whereas the North Zone includes Raigad and Thane districts.

Employment condition:-

Rural employment is low. Especially outside of the Kharif season. Little small and craft industrial opportunities exist in the area, which acts as a labour source for the more industrial metropolitan area of Mumbai.

Climate condition:-

The warm and humid climatic conditions are quite favorable for Horticulture. For example: Mangoes, Kokam, Cashew Nuts, Coconuts, Strawberry etc. Even Rubber Plantation is also successfully practiced in some areas.

In short, water is abundant in this region. The agro-climatic conditions are totally dependent on the south west monsoon. Even after receiving more than 3000 mm rainfall the region faces water scarcity in pre monsoon period. Runoff of this rainwater has created serious problem. This water is not only being wasted, but also accelerates process of soil erosion, thus probing the twin problems of soil erosion and water conservation. Considering hilly track of this region, important problem in this respect is preservation of rain water. Construction of chains of uncounted wells, canals surrounding the hill rocks helps in preserving rain water for a long time in the soil instead of getting evaporated or flown to the sea.

Soil condition:-

The soils of the South Konkan Coastal Zone are mostly lateritic and acidic in nature. The soils have low fertility with low moisture retention capacity. This zone is hillier than the North Zone. The soils in the North Konkan Coastal Zone are medium black and have better moisture retention capacity. Coastal alluvial soils are developed on the banks of rivers and creeks in low lying areas.

The typical topography associated with high rainfall and other climatic condition has given rise to following six major soil types, in the Konkan region.

1. Laterite and lateritic soils
2. Medium black soils
3. Coastal alluvial soils
4. Reddish brown soils
5. Coarse shallow soils
6. Coastal saline soils

Out of above said six types, except last one, remaining all types of soils are observed in the project area. The soil type has an influence on the water loss from wet bare soil in the evaporation process. The heavier the soil, the greater the water loss will be from straight evaporation and it will continue longer because of the high capillary conductivity.

Wild life In Konkan:-

Most of the district area is covered by dense rain forest, Amboli hill station area provides a suitable habitat for wild animals like leopard, wild cats, rabbits, wild hen and sometimes wild buffaloes also appear in winter season. Wild buffaloes come down from Radhanagri forest (Kolhapur District) for search of food and water. Recently Elephants have made their way into the Sindhudurg District (Dodamarg taluka) from Karnataka state through Khanapur jungle. This is the first time, elephants have found habitat in the state of Maharashtra. Tillari major irrigation project area (Dodamarg taluka) is covered with lush dense rain forest and is most suitable for elephant habitat but local people are facing problems, as elephants have been destroying crops and trees.

Miscellaneous:-

Farmer community in Konkan region is adoptive and receptive for new changes in agricultural production. This increased production will bring change for better life. Any small farmer can improve his livelihood if the technical input of agricultural production, irrigation and management is provided with proper support of marketing. Various departments and agricultural Universities have a technology and distribution system for these two resources. With this one can expect to increase food production and rural income of small farmers in Konkan region.