

Natural Vegetation in Maharashtra State

Dr. Shivaji Shankar Maske
Associate professor
Dept of Geography
Sangameshwar College Solapur

ABSTRACT:

Water, air, minerals, power resources and natural vegetation etc. are the important natural resources. Out of this natural vegetation is the most important natural resource. All the plants which grow together in any area form the vegetation cover. The vegetation of any region is composed of a collection of number of plants belongs to many different species. The natural vegetation is commonly used to describe the natural plants growth. The natural vegetation is consisting three types namely forest, grassland and desert. The aim of present paper is to assess study the natural vegetation of Maharashtra state. The entire investigation is based on secondary sources of data. The secondary data obtained from census handbook of India, Government of Maharashtra, Economic Survey of Maharashtra, handbook of basic statistics of Maharashtra state and Various Books to related water resource. Collected data is processed and presented in the forms of tabular and graphical. It is observed that the forest cover is very poor in the state. The forest of Maharashtra state occupies 61,939 Sq. km area in which includes 57,816 Sq. km of state forest, 3,563 Sq. km. corporation and 560 Sq. km area of Private Forest Brought under Possession of F. D.

Keywords: *Natural Resource, Natural vegetation, Forest, Deforestation, conservation.*

INTRODUCTION:

Life on earth is totally dependent upon plants. Forest and its products have immense importance in human life. Since the origin, humans are dependent for food, cloth, shelter, occupations, various products etc. on natural vegetation. Natural vegetation is plants that have not been grown by humans. It doesn't need help from humans and gets whatever it needs from its natural environment. Some types of natural vegetation are Forests, tundra, grass lands and rainforests. All the plants which grow together in any area form the vegetation cover. The vegetation of any region is composed of a collection of number of plants belongs to many different species. The natural vegetation is commonly used to describe the natural plants growth. The natural vegetation is consisting three types namely forest, grassland and desert. Natural vegetation is gifts of nature. They grow naturally. They follow the climatic variables. Due to a variety of climates, a wide range of natural vegetation grows in India.

Types of natural vegetation vary according to climate, soil and altitude. Maharashtra is an important state in India. Out of total geographical area Maharashtra state occupied 20.14 per cent are under forest during 2010-11.

OBJECTIVES:

The main objective of the present research work is to have detailed study natural vegetation in Maharashtra state of India.

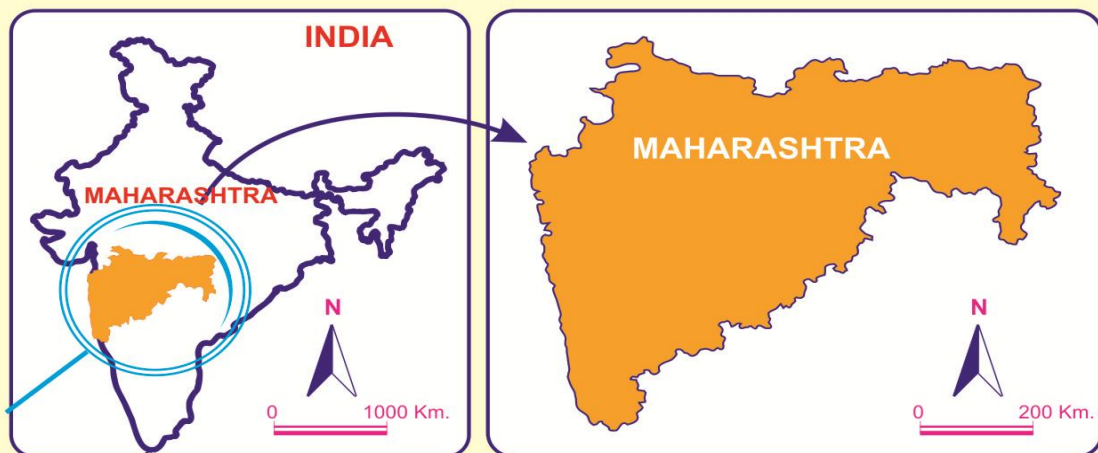
DATA BASE AND METHODOLOGY:

Present study is based on secondary sources of the data. The secondary data is obtained from census of India, Government of Maharashtra, Economic Survey of Maharashtra, State census handbook, State Gazetteers, State statistical department and socio-economic review, Agriculture department government of Maharashtra state and Various Books to related forest resource. Collected data is processed and presented in the forms of tabular and graphical.

STUDY AREA:

Maharashtra State is one of the important Western and Central state in India. However, Maharashtra is located in the Deccan region of India. The state Maharashtra lies between 15°44' North to North 22°06' latitude and 72°36' East to 80° 54' East longitude (fig.1). The study area is situated Deccan plateau. The area is demarcated by Satpura Range on the North and Arabian sea on the West. The State is surrounded by Goa and Karnataka States in South, Andhra Pradesh in Southeast, Gujarat, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Madhya Pradesh in North, Chhattisgarh in east and Arabian Sea in west. The state is one of the most important states of India, both in terms of area and population. Maharashtra state is the third largest state (in area) in India after Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Maharashtra state covers an area of 307713 Sq. km. In the state Ahmednagar (17413 Sq. Km) is the largest district in area and the smallest is Mumbai City (67.7 Sq. Km) tahsil. The state extends about 800 km from East to West and about 720 km from North to South. As well as Maharashtra has coastline of 720 km. Maharashtra state is the second largest state (in population) in India after Uttar Pradesh. The total population of the state is 112372972 as per 2011 census. Thane is the largest district in terms of population (11054131) and constitutes about 9.84 per cent of total population of the state. However Sindhudurg is the smallest district with population 848868 which is barely 0.8 per cent of state. Mumbai is the capital of Maharashtra state. Nagpur is second capital as well as winter capital of Maharashtra state. There are 36 districts having specified divided by six administrative divisions in Maharashtra state. Entirely in the Godavari, Krishna, Tapi, Narmada and Bhima river basins which is a part of the state.

LOCATION MAP OF STUDY AREA



MAHARASHTRA DISTRICT MAP

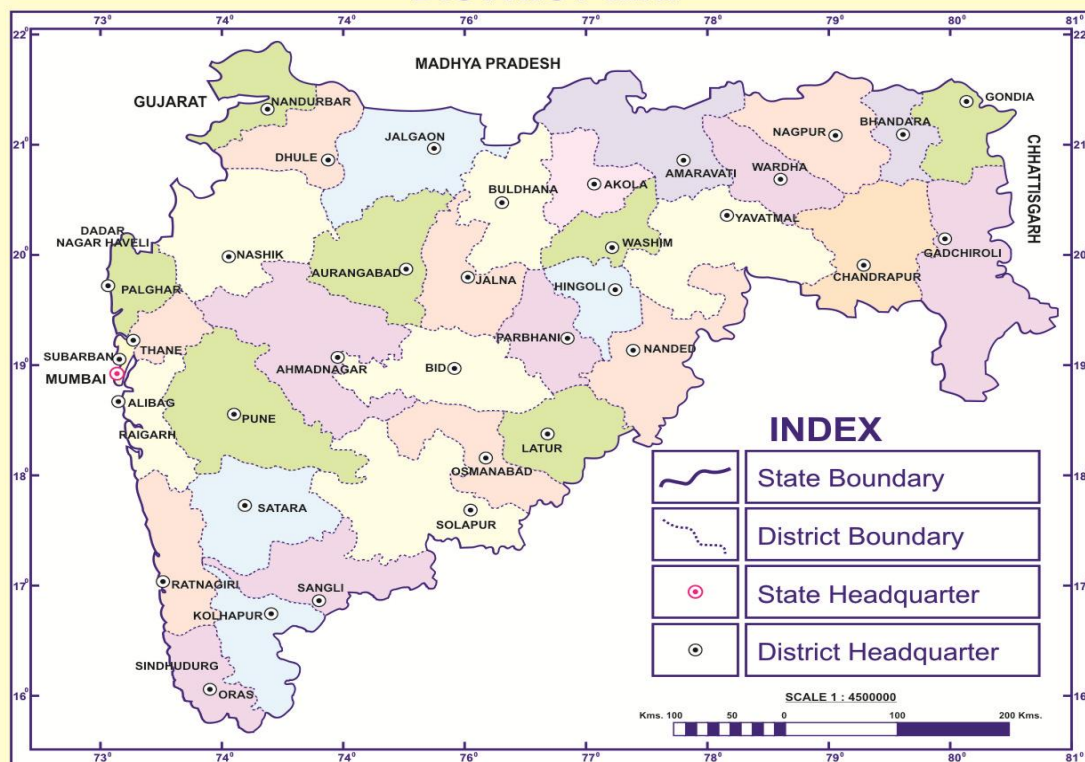


Fig. 1

Analysis:

All the plants which grow together in any area form the vegetation cover. The vegetation of any region is composed of a collection of number of plants belongs to many

different species. The natural vegetation is commonly used to describe the natural plants growth. The natural vegetation is consisting three types namely forest, grassland and desert. The natural vegetation depends upon the distribution of climatic elements such as temperature, rainfall, soil conditions, topography, natural drainage system, various biotic factors and the extent of human interference. Following vegetation types are found in Maharashtra.

i) Tropical evergreen

On the lower slopes of the Sahyadri hills where rainfall is 200–300 cms. The evergreen forests give way to semi-evergreen forests. These forests have been depleted considerably due to indiscriminate felling of tree species, forest encroachment for agriculture and development projects. These forests yield poor quality of timber and are not of much economic significance.

ii) Semi evergreen forest

These forests are found in the high rainfall areas of the Sahyadris. These forests are conspicuous at in Bhimashankar, Harischandragad, Khandala, Koyana, Lonavala, Mahabaleshwar etc. They abound on the lateritic plateaus. The trees are evergreen because of the heavy rainfall, of about 300–600 cms. They are not typical evergreen forests. Hence these forests are sometimes called subtropical evergreen forests. These forests have been mostly destroyed and occur only in patches (Arunachalam B. 1967).

iii) Tropical moist

These forests occur on the lower slopes of Western Ghats i.e. below 700 meters. Above mean sea level and on plains with high rainfall, 150 – 250 cms. These are found in Ahmednagar, Nashik, Sangli and Satara districts and also found in eastern Maharashtra in Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Bhandara and Melghat area. The most important species in these forests is teak. Most of the natural teak area is replaced by teak plantations by the forest department, especially in Thane, Nashik, Chandrapur and other eastern districts. Other species are Ain, Haldu, Bondara and Kolam.

iv) Tropical dry deciduous

Tropical dry deciduous forest lies on the comparatively drier margins of the tropical moist deciduous forest in Maharashtra. These are found in moderate rainfall zone of 100 to 125 cms. They are found on the eastern slopes of Sahyadris, parts of Vidarbha and Khandesh areas. These forests are relatively thin and occupy two third of the area under forest and are spread all over in these areas.

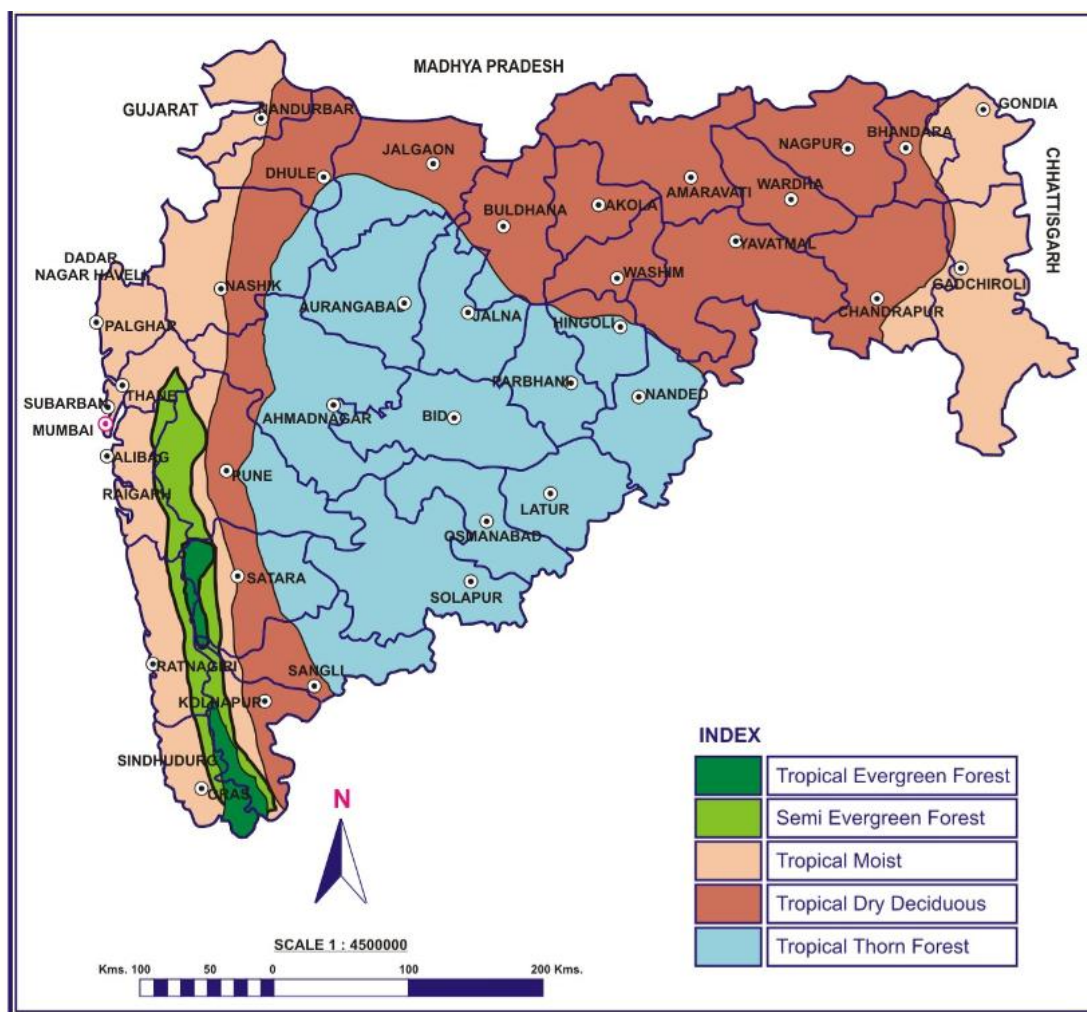


Fig 2 Types of Forest

v) Tropical thorn forest

These forests occur in areas having a low rainfall of less than 50 cm. They are formed of thin jungles and xerophytic trees. They are found in the dry tracts of western Maharashtra. The forests are scattered and surrounded by cultivation on all sides.

Maharashtra state is an important state of India but the total geographical area of the state is very limited. Out of the total geographical area forest occupied only 20.14 per cent area of the Maharashtra state during the year 2010-11 (Table 1).

Table 1 Area under Forest Classified by Ownership in Maharashtra state
(Area in Sq. Km.)

Year	State Forest	Corporation	Private Forest Brought under Possession	Total Forest	Percentage of State forest to Total forest	Percentage of State forest to Total Geographical

			of F. D.			Area of the state
1970-71	62,331	205	-	62,516	99.67	20.25
1980-81	61,373	1,255	1,696	64,224	95.40	19.91
1990-91	60,747	2,096	1,015	63,798	95.22	19.74
2000-01	57,687	3,734	612	62,033	98.20	20.16
2010-11	57816	3,563	560	61,939	98.05	20.14

Source: Statistical Abstract of Maharashtra State 2010-11.

From the table 1, according to 1970-71 the total 62,516 Sq. km. of forest in Maharashtra state, but the percentage of state forest to total geographical area of the state is only 20.25 percent. It is observed that the total forest area of the state is decreased in 19.91 percent during the year 1980-81. Then the total forest area is slowly increased after two decades such as 1990-91 and 2000-01 in the state. It is also found that from last decade 2001 to 2011 there is steady decrease of forest area in the state.

The state has a very limited area under forest. Mostly arid and scrub forest patches are in state. In the past forests were fairly dense on the hills and low lands of the plains with good growth of Babul and Neem. At present, however, most of these forests have disappeared. What remains today are poor, stunted and mal formed trees and Shrubs in scattered Patches. Common grasses as found in drought prone area of Maharashtra state are found here also. Rosha grass is much grown and is used commercially.

CONCLUSION:

The state has a very limited area of forest. Tropical semi-evergreen forest, tropical moist deciduous forest, swamp forest, tropical dry deciduous forest, tropical thorny forests are found in Maharashtra state. Tropical dry deciduous forest is the highest (57.41 Per cent) occupy area of the state. The vegetation mainly consists of the forest region of the Western Ghats, the Satpura Ranges and the Chandrapur region. The coastal region of the Konkan Coast has peddy fields as the vegetation. The coastal belt consists of eminent trees like the mango and coconut and shrubs. The important minerals occurring in the state are coal, iron ore, Manganese, Limestone, Bauxite, Dolomite, Silica Sand, Kyanite and Silimanite etc.

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