

Rural Transformation : A Case of Village Loni Near Pune City

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Abstract : *In the present study, an attempt has been made to unearth the processes which bring about rural transformation. This has been analysed for village Lonikand in the Pune Metropolitan region by comparing the data available from two previous surveys, carried out in 1820 and 1954, by Coats and Ghurye respectively; with the survey made by the author in 1990. All inferences are derived from primary data collected at the house-hold level, from the village core; the newly established M.S.E.B.colony and the four hamlets lying within the revenue limits of Lonikand.*

Introduction to Study Area

Lonikand with a population of 3,000 souls in 1991, lies on the Deccan Plateau, within the commuting field of Pune city. Loni's connectivity with the city has improved greatly in the last ten years, with buses plying every 10-15 minutes in both directions. The earliest mention to Lonikand appears in 1764-1765 AD, in the Peshwa's diary. The suffix *Kand* is after the prominent family of *Kand* in the village. The *Kands* held office of village sarpanch, besides having a thriving business as money lenders.

Loni was an important walled village, since early times is seen from the remains of beautifully carved stone arches at the entrance gate. The numerous temples and the imposing mansions (*wadas*) now in ruins, belonging to the royal family of Gwalior, all point towards its earlier importance as a key village in the area. Even during the British period, a guest house and a church were built, both are still

extant. Few traces of the traditional settlement morphology remain intact, albeit in somewhat altered social spaces. The arrangement of houses in the maze of lanes and alleys one sees today, survive as vestiges of past settlement patterns, mainly due to inertia of property lines.

Choice of Lonikand

The choice of village Lonikand was governed by one prime consideration. It was the only village in the vicinity of Pune for which published record of two earlier surveys was available. The first survey of Loni town was carried out by surgeon Coats in 1820.

This initial survey provided an exhaustive account of the institutions, resources and conditions of cultivators in the early nineteenth century. The second survey (1956) was a reconnaissance survey, carried out by Ghurye, shortly after independence. The present one by the author was conducted in 1991. The time span covered by the three surveys cover significant periods of Indian history. Coats' survey reflected the socio-economic conditions prevailing just after the decline of Maratha rule and rise of British power. The second survey records the socio-economic situation at the end of British rule, while the third survey outlines the developments initiated by the newly formed Indian government through the first Five-Year plan. The recent survey of 1991, coincides with the time when Pune was fast turning into a metropolis and the urban sprawl was rapidly swallowing up the fringe villages. The phenomenal urban growth due to industrial concentration has brought large scale changes to the fringe villages in and around Pune and one such village was Lonikand. The information gathered from the three surveys was obviously not comparable; nonetheless, it was sufficiently comprehensive for detecting the major areas of change in the socio-economic base of Lonikand.

Methodology

The survey conducted in 1991, involved collection of data at the household level from 530 families. Information on productive assets, family demography and work participation rates in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors of the village economy was collected. In addition, socio-cultural factors involved in the process of rural population dispersion were examined. A comparison with two previous surveys was made to identify the agents of change and rural transformation.

Objective

To analyze the data obtained from three surveys for Lonikand, so as to document the changes that have occurred in the village economy and social organization.

Hypothesis

There is no particular hypothesis formulated, except a simple assumption that since Lonikand enjoys a highway location and more importantly because the village has the added advantage of proximity to Pune, Lonikand would experience phenomenal growth and exhibit dramatic changes in its economic base and social morphology. It was also expected that since Loni is only 19 km. from Pune city, the impulses generated from Pune's growth in recent years would be transferred by "spread effect" to a fringe village like Lonikand.

Growth of Population

Population growth at Loni over the last 175 years is moderate, varying between 13.63% for 1941-51 to a maximum of 27.88% in 1971-81. This is well below the national average for the corresponding period. Two reasons account for this modest increase. The first is related to out-migration to nearby Pune city, while the second reflects a general slowing down of growth as family planning measures are being adopted by the people. Family size

shows the majority of households have between 3-6 persons. Once again the M.S.E.B. colony leads, having 87% of the families concentrated in this category. The hamlets in contrast, have the highest percentage of families with more than 10 persons. The tendency to live in joint families is most pronounced in the hamlets (Table 1).

Table 1: Population Growth at Lonikand (1820-1991)

Year	Population	Percent	Cumulative %
1820	557	---	---
1941	1181	112.30	112.03
1951	1342	13.63	125.66
1956	1404	4.62	130.28
1961	1642	16.95	147.23
1971	1926	17.30	164.53
1981	2463	27.88	192.41
1991	2983	21.11	213.52

Source : 1. 1820 Survey by Coats
2. (1941-1981) Census of Pune District
3. 1956 Survey by - Ghurye
4. 1991 Field-work by author.

Demographic Changes

Change in the demographic attributes is not that spectacular at Loni, except for literacy rates where an overall improvement is clearly discernible. The disparity between male and female literacy has narrowed down considerably, though significant differences still remain. The M.S.E.B. colony has the highest overall literacy and the lowest literacy is found in the agricultural hamlets, followed by the *gaathan*. This was expected as hamlets evolve for efficiency of agricultural operations, whereas the population in the M.S.E.B. colony being employed in the power station, obviously must have higher literacy levels. Even the age-composition and dependency ratio in the case of M.S.E.B. colony has distinct traits of an urban

Table - 2 : Distribution of Families (by size) in the Village and in the Component Parts of the Village

Family Size	0-2 (%)	3-6 (%)	7-9 (%)	Above 10 (%)	Total Families	Literacy		Total
						Male (%)	Female (%)	
Total village	7.09	70.19	11.70	10.19	530	62.14	37.85	57.82
Gaothan	6.55	67.58	13.45	12.41	290	61.9	38.05	56.34
Wadi	10.6	62.12	13.64	13.64	132	70.4	29.06	50.20
MSEB Colony	8.33	87.03	4.63	0.00	108	53.0	46.91	76.80

Source : Data collected from field work

population, while the hamlets and *gaothan* show eminently rural demographic features (Table 2).

Sex ratio at Lonikand has been consistently declining since the first survey by Coats in 1820. With each successive census a significant drop in sex-ratio is noticed, reaching an all time low of 874/1000 in 1981 (Table 3). This is not unusual and is in keeping with overall trends at the national level. The sharp decline in sex-ratio at 1981 could be attributed to male selective migration into Loni, following the new industrial growth in the area. Another variable, which shows significant change since 1820 is the proportion of working population. This was sixty-four per cent in Coats' survey, by 1956 this fell to forty-five per cent and by 1981 census it hit an all time low of 36.8%. The considerable fluctuations in the size of dependant population seen at Loni is on account of different methods used for computing the total workers with respect to non workers.

Social Areas

The social morphology of Lonikand shows a dominance of Marathas, the premier agricultural community. Brahmins, are essentially an urban-based community, they form slightly over 2% of the total population. The backward classes constitute 10% of the

village population, and most of them reside in the village core. Looking at the family names, three major clans (Shinde, Kand and Magar) dominate the village population, accounting for 42% of the total families in the village (Table 4).

The settlement morphology shows that some renewal and reconstruction is taking place in the old core as the number of houses is once again on the upswing. This trend has been initiated after the establishment of the M.S.E.B. colony — a well laid out modern building complex of flats close to the core. Most houses in ruins, in the village belong to the farmers who have left the *gaothan* to live in the hamlets. These vacant

Table 3 : Sex Ratio

Year	Male	Female	Total	Sex Ratio
1820	269	296	565	1100
1941	586	595	1181	1015
1951	653	689	1342	1055
1961	798	844	1642	1057
1971	950	976	1926	1027
1981	1314	1149	2463	874
1991	1561	1422	2983	911

Source : 1. 1820 Survey by Coats
2. 1956 Survey by - Ghurye
3. Census of Pune District
4. Field work data - 1991

Table 4 : Total Number of Families with Population (Caste-wise) in 1820, 1956 and 1991

Caste	1820		1956		1991	
	No. of Families	Population	No. of Families	Population	No. of Families	Population
Scheduled Castes						
1 Harijan	13	48	18	-	24	149
2 Mang-Garudi	02		15		77	
3 Mang			01		09	64
4 Ramoshi	03	11	02		03	9
5 Cobbler	02	06	04		11	62
Artisan Castes						
6 Wadari			01		10	
7 Pardeshi (Rajput)			01	02	09	
8 Lohar			03		05	17
9 Barber Shepherd	01	04	03		08	42
10 Potter	01	06	01		06	
11 Goldsmith	01	04	01		04	23
12 Carpenter	01	05	02		03	19
Service Castes						
13 Water Carrier	01	04	01		02	
14 Goorav (Idol Dressor)	01	04				
15 Washermen	01	04				
16 Teli					01	05
17 Gosavi					01	04
18 Shimpi					01	06
19 Wanjari					01	03
20 Tamil					02	09
21 Angriya Slaves	08	18				
Agricultural Castes						
22 Maratha	84	379	123		321	1811
23 Mali			43		83	490
Trading Castes						
24 Marwaree	02	02				
25 Jain	03	21			01	02
26 Lingayat Wani					02	12
Religious Groups						
27 Gound Brahmin	03	21	04		14	53
28 Muslim	05	20			07	31
29 Christian					01	04
Total	130	557	207	1404	530	2983

Source : 1820 - Coats Survey. 1956- After Century and a Quarter by Mr. Ghurye. 1991 - Field Work data

Note : caste - wise population data for the year 1956 is not available.

properties are now attracting new buyers especially the people employed in the newly established industrial zone at

Ranjangaon (across the river) are recognizing the potential of Loni as a residential suburb due to its excellent connectivity with Pune.

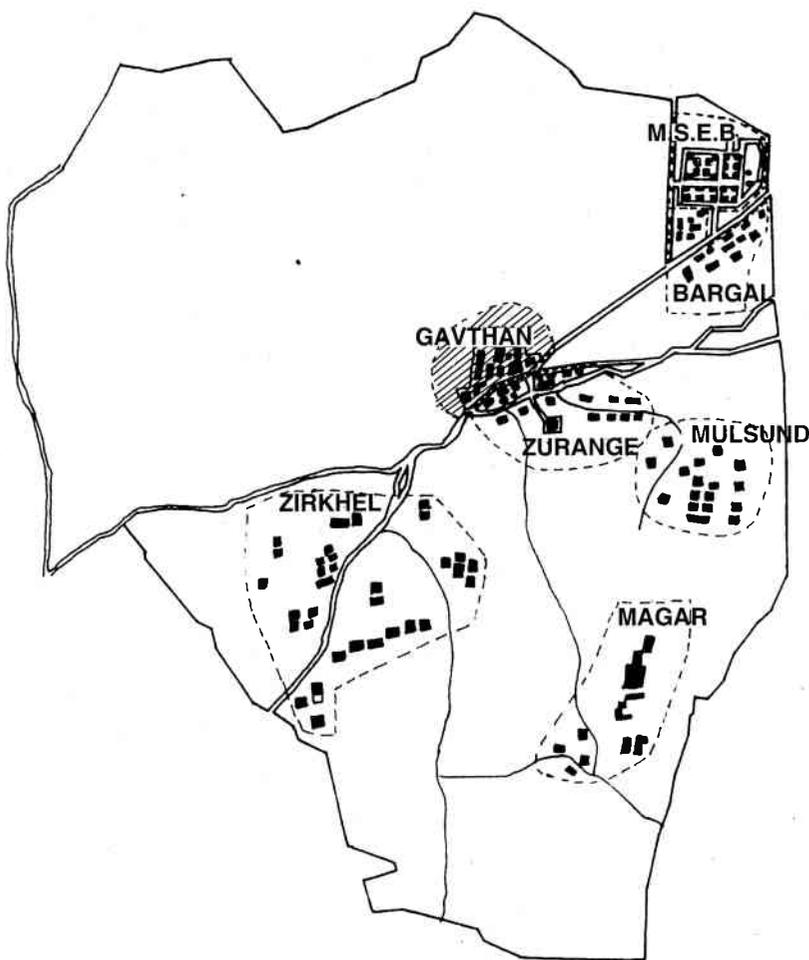


Fig. 1 : Wadies of Lonikand

Population Dispersion — A Phenomenon of Hamletization

Population redistribution or relocation within the village is another area where change is significant. Earlier the majority of the people lived in the *gaothan* or the compact village core. Today, a selective tendency for population dispersion is observed in the village as most farmers prefer to live on their farms. Intra-village population movements show distinct residential preferences, between the land-owning and non-agricultural population. The

evolution of hamlets is not singularly the result of intensification and commercialization of agriculture, though initially it was given a boost by expansion of irrigation. In a sense, this movement also reflects the tendency to establish a new order of life, away from the traditional superiority (status) enjoyed by the first families in the village --a sense of freedom from the restrictive atmosphere of village society. A clear-cut segregation in space is fast developing between the traders, artisans and backward classes who have remained in the village proper, and the cultivating classes who have left the social security of the traditional compact village to mind their fields, with greater

efficiency. The phenomenon of population dispersion, leading to hamletization is steadily progressing in almost all rural areas. By 1991, one-third of Lonikand's population was living in its hamlets, and the centre of gravity of the population is fast tilting in favor of the hamlets, at the expense of the main village. This dispersive tendency is likely to pose severe problems in future for provision of social amenities and services and other infrastructure.

Changes in Different Sectors of Village Economy

Agriculture

Agriculture is still the mainstay of majority of the people at Lonikand. Agricultural practices and cropping patterns have changed in recent times with the availability of new techniques and inputs. The area under cultivation has been steadily increasing, from

53 per cent at the time of Coats' survey, when Loni had a population of 500 souls. This increased to 70 per cent by the time Ghurye under took his survey after a century and a quarter, in 1956. This figure increased marginally to 71 per cent in 1991. The area under irrigation in 1956 was just below seven percent, which compares favourably with the state's average. By 1991, the percentage of irrigated land had dwindled to less than two per cent. The change in general landuse in the last three decades is most pronounced in one single category—uncultivable land. This was drastically reduced from 47 per cent in 1817, to 30 per cent by 1956 and finally to only 28 per cent in 1991. The area under grazing and wastelands has shrunk to allow for more area under cultivation.

Agricultural practices and cropping patterns have undergone some modifications with HYV seeds and use of fertilizers. In the earlier two surveys, market forces were

Table 5: Land Under Different Uses at Lonikand

	1820	1956	1971	1981	1991
1 Total Area (Acres)	3669	4253.07	4253.07	4253.07	4253.07
2 Total Cultivable Area(%)	53.3	70.02	87.7	60.8	71.1
3 Jiryat Area (%)	-	61.5	96.0	96.0	98.3
4 Bagayat Area (%)	-	6.7	4.0	4.0	1.7
5 Area under Paddy(%)	-	0.3	-	-	-
6 Grazing Land (%)	-	7.7	-	-	2.4
7 Uncultivable Land (%)	46.7	30.0	2.0	31.0	28.4
8 Gaothan (%)	-	0.4	-	-	-
9 Road (%)	-	0.2	-	-	0.2
10 Forest (%)	-	4.0	5.0	3.7	0.2
11 Fallow Land (%)	-	56.09	-	-	5.0
12 Brook (%)	-	0.4	-	-	-
13 Cultivable Waste (%)	-	-	5.3	4.2	-

Source : 1820 data from Coats Survey, 1956 'After a Century and a Quarter' by Mr. Ghurye. 1971 and 1981 data from Census Handbook. 1991 Talathi Record.

altogether absent and all cultivation was merely for subsistence. Today, not only a larger acreage is under plough but commercial farming and animal husbandry are far more important in response to the growing demand for perishables and milk from the expanding urban market of Pune. Comparing Coats' rather vivid description of crops grown at Loni with Ghurye's observations in 1956, there is sea change in the area under various crops. In 1820, to cope with the tyranny of climatic conditions, particularly the meager and uncertain rainfall, the custom of sowing a variety of seeds was common as an insurance against total crop failure. In Ghurye's time (1956), bajra had overtaken jowar as the first ranking crop. A new fodder crop *nilwa* was introduced for the first time, which provided fodder which was valuable in times of a lean monsoon. By 1991, with drought resistant and hybrid seeds, the number of food crops at Lonikand was restricted to one or two major cereals, best suited to the environment. The general lowering of water table in the area has brought about significant changes in the cropping pattern. The area under irrigation declined from seven per cent to less than two per cent, as mentioned earlier. Due to this, rice and sugarcane, the earlier irrigated crops have been replaced by onion and oilseeds. Both the crops occupy a significant place in the cropping pattern, since their water requirement is much less, and they can be grown under a variety of geographical conditions. In the overview, agriculture at Lonikand has not developed into a very attractive economic proposition. It is neither very remunerative nor is there much scope for further increase in productivity. For the majority of small and marginal farmers and landless laborers, it is becoming less viable, as fragmentation of land holdings at Lonikand goes on, unabated. Land scarcity is a major problem, which is becoming more acute with rising pressure of population. With changes in the tenancy act, after the 1950s, land was transferred to the tiller who became the owner-cultivator. Following this land reform a significant rise in productivity was expected,

but all hopes were belied as the size of holding per person remained unproductive, having shrunk in size, with excessive fragmentation. Only 40% of the landholders had holdings between 1.5 to 4 hectares, which is economically viable at the subsistence level.

Occupational Shifts

Steadily a switch over to non-agricultural occupations is observed at Loni. A selective tendency is apparent here with occupational mobility being greater for landless labourers, the artisan castes and backward castes whose vocations are no longer relevant in the present economic context. Most of these people have taken to wage earning in non-agricultural jobs (Table -5). Cultivators are down from 65 per cent in 1820 to 42 per cent in 1991. The proportion of non-agricultural workers has gone up from 27 per cent in 1820 to 47 per cent in 1991. More people were returned as workers (63%) in 1820 as compared to only 40 per cent in 1991, showing greater dependency in the demographic profile. Agriculturists show the least propensity to change their professions being virtually tied to the land. Income from agriculture has been invested in ventures like truck business for transporting sand from the nearby Bhima river, to construction sites in and around Pune. A number of agricultural labourers find it more profitable to excavate sand from the river bed. Also, the backward communities have given up their age-old traditional occupations and found service in the lower rungs, in the public sector and government offices, as a result of the reservation policy.

Rural-Urban Interaction

The field of rural-urban interaction shows that Lonikand has strong ties with Pune and there is significant commuting between the two places for employment, supply of milk and perishables and transport of sand and for shopping, education, medical and other services, which are obtained from Pune. Regular

commuters to Pune form 5% of the total population. These are mainly in the transport sector and suppliers of milk.

Growth of amenities and facilities in the village include piped-water, a secondary school, telephone and electricity, a mobile medical unit and a visiting doctor. There are several government schemes for providing housing and shelter for the economically and socially backward classes. With the establishment of financial and credit co-operative societies, significant growth in agricultural and commercial sectors has also taken place at Loni.

Conclusion

Though the rural economy has been drawn into the orbit of the larger urban hinterland, the economic base has not widened sufficiently to generate adequate employment for those rendered surplus from agriculture. Rural transformation is limited to providing basic amenities, social facilities and services to the rural population, due to government intervention and planning. It is observed that establishment of industries alone can stimulate the economic base to generate employment for the (under) unemployed rural poor and prevent them flocking to the slums in the metros. Depending on local resources, rural agro-based industries which are manpower-intensive, rather

than capital-intensive, using appropriate indigenous technology can bring about rural transformation and lessen the gap between urban and rural in terms of development. The study of Lonikand has brought out clearly that to bring about structural changes in the economy, mere provision and improvement in infrastructural facilities alone does not automatically generate development but a core industry is required to create employment opportunities to stem the tide of exodus to the large cities. Due to its proximity to Pune, Lonikand has good prospects of turning into a dormitory suburb, in the near future.

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