1. Introduction

Agriculture is the main foundation of rural life. Most of the villagers ranging from 15 to 60 years of the age are occupied in agriculture. In rural life land is called mother earth. The level of development of the civilization and culture of a particular place is measured according to the land productivity. Land provides him opportunity for life by supporting the basic needs of food, fodder, fuel, clothes etc. In rural life, land is worshipped on occasions of marriage, festivals and celebration. In this way, rural life beings with land and ends with land. Agriculture is the most important, occupation of the people in India. The agricultural sector contributes nearly one-third of the national income provides livelihood to about two-third of the population supplies the bulk of wage goods required by the non-agricultural sector and raw materials for a large section of industries (Dauthy, 1979). In the recent past contribution of agriculture has been reduced. However, it is significant as it provides employment to about 60 % of working population especially in the rural sector. Agriculture is the oldest and most important industry of the world. Leaving out China, there is no country in the world in which so many people depend on agriculture for their livelihood as in India.

Agriculture the most important primary economic activity, is closely related to physical environment particularly relief, climate and soils. In any scientific and viable inquiry into agricultural phenomena, therefore it is perquisite to pay attention to the basic relation between these physical determinants and agriculture (Singh and Dillon, 1994). However, the physical environment plays significant role in determining the development of agricultural productivity i.e. heterogeneous environmental conditions lead to diversified nature of agriculture which further manifests into variations in agricultural productivity. Thus, physical set up of the region governs the agrarian structure of the region. An elaborate account of the physical setting is presented in the present chapter from the viewpoint of a geographer, particularly as the base for the superimposition of agricultural productivity on the physical environmental aspects. McHarg (1966) on the basis of principles of ecological determinism has shown how
nature can impose limits, provide guidelines and assist man in solving environmental planning problems in a manner which is most compatible with natural problems. Hence efforts need to be made to qualify the environmental attributes to meet various for future ecological planning, modification and adjustment. Although natural factors are far from explaining everything slope, soil, climate and hydrological conditions have very important effects on the cultivation of crops and preference of a particular agricultural system. In Sindhudurg district the meteorological factors mainly, temperature and rainfall, are more important as like terrain. The two outstanding features of agricultural production Firstly developing countries are the wide variety of crops and the preponderance of food over non-food crops (Negi, 2000). In terms of population and geographical area, Maharashtra is the third largest state in India. The share of agriculture and allied activities in net State Domestic Product (SDP) for Maharashtra has declined from around 38% in 1961-62 to 22.9% in 1992-93. The corresponding numbers for all India have been 50.9% and 32.3% respectively (Mungekar, 2003). Thus, the contribution of agriculture to the net SDP has been less in Maharashtra as compared to the national average. It may, however, be noted that Maharashtra’s economy is predominantly agrarian since around 61 percent of the total workers are dependent on agriculture and allied activities for their livelihood in the early 1990s. The soil, topography and climate in Maharashtra are not very much favorable for some high valued crops and have led to relatively low yields of the important crops in the state as compared to that in India. The state has, however, several advantages for development of horticulture and vegetable crops. Banana, oranges, cashew nut and grapes are the important horticulture crops grown in the state. The 8th five year plan of Maharashtra gives lot of emphasis on agro-processing. The establishment of processing units will help to support prices of agricultural commodities. It also creates further employment opportunities in grading, transporting and processing.

The area selected for the study i.e., Sindhudurg district in Maharashtra state in respect of agricultural productivity shows imbalance in agricultural productivity. Agriculture being the dominant primary activity of the study region it is essential to study important features of agriculture in the study region. Agriculture in any area is closely related to climatic conditions and topography. Productivity as defined in economic or agricultural geography means output per unit of input or per unit of area respectively and the importance of agricultural productivity is generally the result of a more efficient use of factors of production viz. environment, arable land, labour and
capital (Jasbir Singh & Dhillon S. S. 1997). Bhatia (1967) defined “Agricultural efficiency as the aggregate performance of various crops in regard to their output per acre but the contribution of each crop to the agricultural efficiency would be relative to its share of the crop land”. The study of levels of agricultural productivity provides a base for rational planning. Its changing pattern is a reliable index to assess agricultural development in the past. It will help in identifying weaker areas for agricultural planning in Sindhudurg district.