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Understanding Kolhapur as one of the major foundry hub in India

M. M. Ganganallimath[1], K. Vizayakumar[2], Umesh M. Bhushi[3]

[1]*Associate Professor, Mechanical Engineering Department, Basaveshwar Engineering College, Bagalkot, India*
[2]*Retired Professor, Industrial Engineering Department, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kharagpur, India*
[3]*Professror Emeritus, Department of Management Studies, VTU, Belagavi, India*

Abstract: *One of the major hubs for foundries in India is Kolhapur, a district in Maharashtra. Kolhapur, which has long been renowned for its agricultural economy and rich cultural legacy, has recently established a solid industrial base, with the foundry sector serving as a key component. With parallels to other significant foundry regions in India, this article examines the historical development, present industrial environment, competitive advantages, difficulties, and prospects of Kolhapur's foundry industry. The foundry cluster in Kolhapur stands out for its close ties to downstream engineering sectors, entrepreneurial heritage, and solid foundation of trained workforce. From modest workshop-based businesses serving regional agricultural demands, the cluster has developed over the years into a diverse industrial ecosystem that supplies cast components to both domestic and foreign markets. Kolhapur foundries have been resilient and adaptable in the face of shifting market demands, technical advancements, and regulatory frameworks, while operating mostly in the MSME sector. The socioeconomic significance of Kolhapur's foundry industry is emphasized in this report, along with important issues like environmental compliance and technology obsolescence and potential avenues for sustainable growth in the future. Gaining knowledge of the foundry ecosystem in Kolhapur will help one better understand how regional industrial clusters contribute to the growth of manufacturing in India.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Metal castings are produced by foundries, which are specialized industrial facilities that use molds to melt and shape molten metal into precise shapes. With a diverse foundry industry dispersed over places like Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Howrah, Jamshedpur, and Kolhapur, India is one of the world's biggest producers of casting. Pump sets, agricultural machinery, heavy engineering, automotive, and valve industries all heavily rely on the Kolhapur foundry cluster. By turning raw metals into useful cast components that are used as inputs for a variety of industries, foundries provide the foundation for industrial manufacture. Because it contributes to industrial output, job creation, and export revenue, the foundry sector in India is strategically significant. With a widely distributed foundry industry structured around distinct regional clusters, India is one of the biggest producers of castings in the world. Kolhapur, Coimbatore, Howrah, Rajkot, and other industrial clusters have developed as a result of a confluence of socio-cultural, historical, and economic elements.

Metalworking arts have a long history in Kolhapur; welding, casting, machining, and fitting are common crafts. Local inhabitants have been able to rapidly develop their skills as a result. Knowledge spillovers, localized supplier networks, skilled labor pools, and common infrastructure are all advantages of these clusters. Small and medium-sized businesses dominate Kolhapur's foundry cluster, creating a dense and interconnected industrial network. Historically known for its agricultural economy and cultural legacy, Kolhapur has progressively evolved into a manufacturing hub with a focus on engineering and foundry operations. Numerous downstream industries, such as automobile parts, agricultural machinery, pumps and valves, sugar machines, and general engineering items, are supported by Kolhapur's foundry sector. Strong connections with industrial centers like Pune, Mumbai, Satara, and Belagavi are made possible by its advantageous location inside Maharashtra. Examining Kolhapur's rise to prominence as a key hub for foundries, comprehending the elements that supported its expansion, and assessing its current position in India's larger manufacturing scene are the goals of this study. The study aims to add to the conversation on cluster-based industrial development in India by concentrating on historical development, industrial structure, and regional impact.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Kolhapur's industrial traits, structural strengths, and historical development provide a thorough understanding of this important Indian foundry hub.

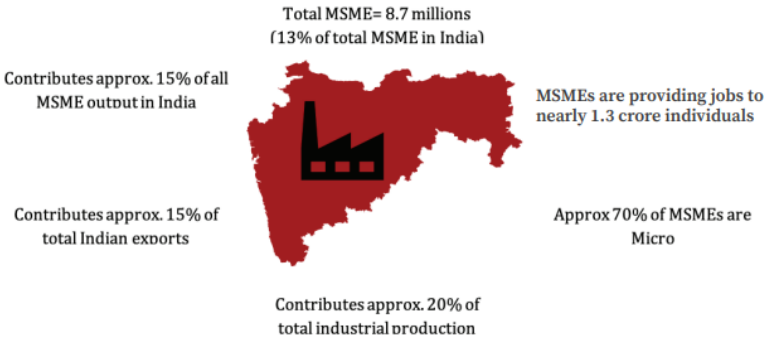


Figure 1. MSME scenario in Maharashtra (Source: https://asar.co.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/KolhapurReportWEB_18Sept25.pdf)

Kolhapur foundries provide metal castings to industries including heavy engineering, power, infrastructure, automotive, and agricultural. The foundry sector is vital to India's manufacturing ecosystem. Kolhapur in Maharashtra has become one of India's most important regional foundry clusters, especially for small and medium-sized foundries.

1950 and Before (Pre-Industrial): Kolhapur's lengthy history of metallurgy and workmanship is the foundation of the city's foundry sector. In the past, the area fostered craftspeople who were proficient in toolmaking, blacksmithing, and farming implement repair. These conventional abilities served as the foundation for the human capital that later underpinned contemporary foundry operations. Kolhapur's economy was mostly rural and had little industrial activity prior to independence. To support farming operations, bullock carts, sugarcane processing, and irrigation equipment, however, tiny mechanical workshops arose. Over time, these workshops developed into simple fabrication and casting facilities.

1950–1970 (Post Independence): Small-scale industry development was fostered by national industrial strategies following India's independence in order to support employment and regional economic growth. This policy climate was advantageous to Kolhapur, especially when it came to the growth of cooperative sugar plants in western Maharashtra. Castings, maintenance services, and mechanical parts were in constant demand due to sugar mills. A number of small foundries were founded at this time to produce castings for agricultural machinery, mill components, and replacement parts. Low entry hurdles and the availability of basic raw materials, coke, and scrap metal allowed foundry facilities to expand. This foundation was further reinforced by government assistance in the form of power supplies and industrial estates.

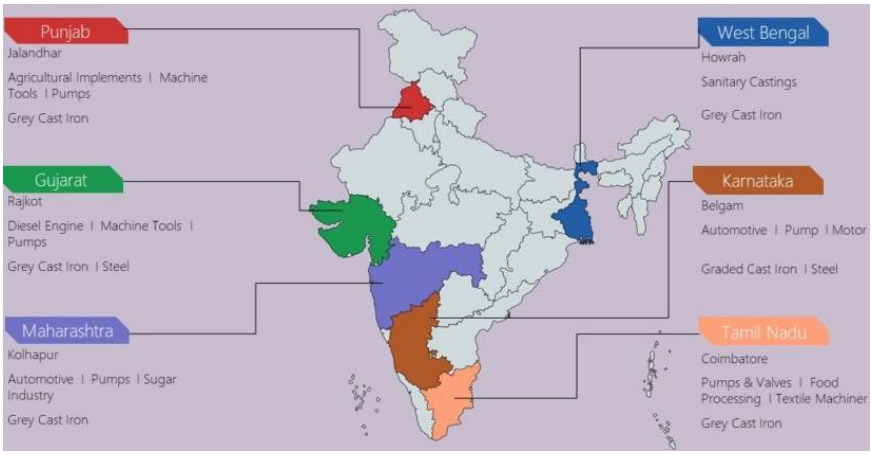
1980–1990 (Expansion): The Kolhapur foundry industry had substantial expansion and consolidation in the 1980s. Foundries now offer grey iron and ductile iron castings for pumps, valves, and engineering applications in addition to agricultural components. A functional industrial cluster was created as a result of the growth of related industries like fabrication, heat treatment, machining, and pattern making. Kolhapur foundries faced more competition as a result of the economic liberalization of the 1990s, but there were also new market prospects. Production and specialization were pushed by demand from the quickly expanding automotive industry, especially from Pune and other Maharashtra industrial areas. In order to satisfy OEM regulations, many foundries implemented enhanced quality practices.

2000 Onwards (Modern): The foundry sector in Kolhapur has been gradually modernized since the early 2000s. A portion of the cluster has made investments in induction furnaces, improved molding technologies, and quality certification systems like ISO standards, even though many units still use conventional operating procedures. In some product categories, export-oriented production has also accelerated. The cluster is durable because of its flexibility, inter-firm collaboration, and robust local entrepreneurship, even in the face of obstacles like environmental rules, growing input costs, and a lack of skilled workers. Today, Kolhapur is recognized as one of India’s important foundry hubs, particularly within the MSME manufacturing ecosystem.

A foundry produces metal castings. To cast metals into various sizes and forms, they are melted into a liquid. After that, it is put into a mold, and as it begins to cool and harden, it is taken out of it. Cast iron and aluminum are the most frequently treated metals. Casting has been done for ages. About 90% of manufactured items rely on this for their parts and components.

The biggest markets for iron castings are cars and trucks. Additionally, some non-ferrous metals are added to steel as alloys or utilized for casting. Since 3000 B.C., Indians have been skilled in the craft of metal casting. Sand casting continues to support the size of the Indian foundry market for pump housings, railway couplers, and automobile cylinder blocks. Every year, around 600,000 t of sand-cast iron parts are shipped from Kolhapur and Pune alone. Die casting is shifting to EV motor housings and battery frames with 45-second cycle durations. Crankshafts, ductile iron pipes, and pistons are served by a minor percentage of permanent mold, evaporative pattern, and centrifugal casting. Due to the continued iron-intensive nature of large diesel engines and rail bogies, sand casting is expected to maintain over half of India's foundry market share through 2031, despite the rapid expansion of investment casting.

III. FOUNDRY HUBS IN INDIA



India has over 5000 foundry factories, the vast majority of which are in the MSME sector. Approximately 30% of the foundries are certified internationally. Although it is simple to locate facilities that create Steel Alloys, Pure Steel Grades, and High Performance Grades of Steel, 70% of the castings produced are in Ductile Iron grades. In India, foundries work in groups.

Figure 1. Foundry Hubs in India (Source: https://apogeesourcing.com/india-foundry-cluster/)

After China and the United States, India has the third-largest foundry sector in the world. India's foundry market is expected to expand at a compound annual growth rate of 19.67% between 2014 and 2018, according to an estimate by TechNavio, a top market research firm with global reach. In foundries, castings are created by pouring molten or liquid metal into a mold composed of ceramic, metal, or sand that has a hollow hole of the required shape. This method creates geometrically complex pieces. Castings can be created from any major metal, although the most popular ones are alloys based on iron, aluminum, magnesium, zinc, steel, and copper. For use in automobiles, tractors and other agricultural machinery, railroads, machine tools, sanitary, pipe fittings, defense, aerospace, mining and earthmoving equipment, textile, cement, electrical, power machinery, pumps/valves, wind turbine generators, etc., the Indian foundry industry produces metal cast components.

The Institute of Indian Foundrymen (IIF), the leading national trade association for the Indian foundry sector, estimates that the sector generates over USD 2.5 billion in exports and USD 19 billion in revenue annually. With a few prominent operators spread throughout several foundry clusters, India has over 5000 foundries, most of which are MSME-owned. The productivity per unit is 2173 TPA on average. Each cluster is recognized for a certain area of expertise in the variety of goods produced. The Coimbatore cluster, for instance, is well-known for pump-set castings, the Kolhapur and Belgaum clusters for automotive castings, the Rajkot cluster for diesel engine castings, the Howrah cluster for sanitary castings, etc. Batala, Jalandhar, and Ludhiana in Punjab; Rajkot and Ahmedabad in Gujarat; Faridabad and Gurgaon in Haryana; Howrah in West Bengal; Agra in Uttar Pradesh; Pune, Kolhapur, and Solapur in Maharashtra; Belgaum in Karnataka; Chennai, and other significant Indian foundry clusters are situated in these cities.

According to numerous international standards, Indian foundries presently manufacture over 10 million TPA of cast components in both ferrous and non-ferrous categories. By weight, it makes up around 10% of the world's output. For a variety of uses, the goods come in sizes ranging from a few grams to more than 100 tonnes each. After expanding by more than 43% since 2008, the Indian foundry sector has steadily ascended from No. 5 to the third-largest in the world. The nation exports castings valued at USD 2.2 billion a year, and there is a

great chance to increase its export market share, which might triple. Approximately one-fourth of the USD 900 million worth of castings that India imports each year come from China.

The utilization of automated manufacturing processes in place of human labor, simulation, digitalization of the process chain through software and ERP systems, or 3D printing are examples of technological advancements that are becoming more and more significant. In recent years, the Indian foundry business has grown steadily thanks to rising demand across a number of industries, including infrastructure, engineering, automotive, and energy. In an effort to become even more eco-friendly and economical, many foundries have begun modernizing their production methods. About 15% to 17% of the projected $19 billion in revenue generated by the Indian foundry industry goes to foreign markets. Because foundries serve a wide range of industries, including automobiles, railroads, tractors, ships, engines, and many more, the internal market for foundries is enormous.

Over 200 billion dollars is the market value of almost 45,000 foundries worldwide. About 10% of global foundry clusters are located in India, with Maharashtra accounting for 15% of all foundries in the nation. Approximately 13 million tons of metal castings are produced annually by the Indian foundry sector, of which 75% are made of cast iron. Due to its heavy reliance on manufacturing high-quality metal components for use in vehicles, the automotive industry is the biggest consumer of these castings. Although the majority is used in the automotive industry, over half of metal castings are used in sanitary, industrial machinery, pipelines and fittings, and agriculture.

IV. CONTRIBUTION OF KOLHAPUR IN REGIONAL TRADE ROUTES

Due to its advantageous location in southern Maharashtra, Kolhapur is an essential component of regional transportation and commercial networks. It is positioned as a crucial node in the movement of goods and services throughout western India due to its historical significance as a major trading hub and its present infrastructure. This section examines Kolhapur's historical development of its transportation network and incorporation into important commercial routes.

Strategic Location and Geographical Advantage

Kolhapur has a clear edge in terms of connectivity and trade because of its location on the border between Maharashtra and Karnataka as well as its close vicinity to Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Pune, three major industrial and commercial centers. It is situated where a number of significant trade routes converge.

- Access to Major Cities: Kolhapur is a vital link for interstate trade since it serves as a gateway between Maharashtra and Karnataka.
- Closeness to Mumbai and Goa: Kolhapur's distance from Goa and other coastal regions makes it easier to transport commodities to the western ports, strengthening its trade ties.
- Hub for Western Maharashtra: Kolhapur connects rural and urban markets throughout Maharashtra and neighboring states, making it a significant trading hub in the area.

Connectivity and Road Transportation

Kolhapur's well-developed road system is a major factor in both trade and transportation.

- National Highways: National Highway 4 (NH4), which links Bangalore and Mumbai, provides excellent access to Kolhapur. From the southern to the western regions of India, this route is crucial to the movement of consumer goods, machinery, textiles, and agricultural items.
- State and Regional Roads: Well-maintained state highways connect Kolhapur to other significant towns in Maharashtra and nearby states, allowing the flow of both raw materials and completed goods.
- Local Transportation Systems: To facilitate regional trade between Kolhapur and nearby towns like Satara, Sangli, and Ratnagiri, local transportation, like as buses and freight services, is well-organized.

Connectivity by Railway

Historically, Kolhapur's railway system has been crucial for long-distance transportation, linking the area to important cities in Karnataka, Maharashtra, and other states.

- Kolhapur Junction: A well-known train station in the city, Kolhapur Junction is a part of the Konkan Railway system. This links Kolhapur to major cities like Mumbai, Pune, and Goa as well as the western coast.
- Freight Services: From Kolhapur to other regions of the nation, the railway is essential for moving bulk goods like coal, cement, textiles, and agricultural items.
- Near Major Rail Hubs: Kolhapur's access to both domestic and foreign markets is improved by its proximity to major rail hubs like Pune and Mumbai.

Air Communication

Despite lacking a sizable international airport, Kolhapur has excellent air connectivity because to neighboring airports.

- Kolhapur Airport: Domestic flights are the main use of the Kolhapur Airport. Despite having little commercial traffic, it offers easy access for commerce and business, particularly for people coming to Kolhapur for business or industrial reasons.
- The city benefits from being close to important international airports in Bengaluru and Mumbai, which facilitates the import and export of products by air cargo.

Function in Zones of Regional Economy

The Maharashtra Industrial growth Corporation (MIDC), which seeks to encourage commerce and industrial growth, includes Kolhapur. Kolhapur's importance in regional trade has increased as a result of the development of industrial zones and clusters in and around the city.

- Industrial Clusters: There is a considerable demand for both domestic and international transportation due to the existence of industrial hubs, especially in the fields of engineering, textiles, and dairy. Kolhapur is a major hub for both inward and outbound goods since it is a major source of Kolhapuri chappals, brassware, textiles, and agricultural items.
- Logistics Hubs: Kolhapur's expanding industrial sectors have helped to build the city's logistics infrastructure, which has increased its significance in regional trade. Trade connectivity is improved by the growing number of warehouses and distribution hubs in and around the city.

Connectivity along the coast and port access

- Although Kolhapur lacks a significant port, its proximity to Mumbai, a port city around 380 kilometers distant, gives it access to international commerce channels. Kolhapur is situated relatively close to India's western coast.
- Exports and Imports: Kolhapur's agricultural and industrial products can be exported to foreign markets because to its convenient proximity to the Mumbai port, and the region can import manufactured goods and raw materials.
- Logistical Integration: Kolhapur's involvement in import-export operations is strengthened by the integration of transportation networks that link it to ports like as Mumbai as part of the broader Western Maharashtra Industrial Corridor.

Prospective Advancements and Difficulties

In the future, Kolhapur will have a number of chances and difficulties to improve its transportation and trade infrastructure:

- Infrastructure Improvements: To increase Kolhapur's connectivity with important cities and ports, continuous investments are being made to upgrade the city's road and rail systems. It is anticipated that initiatives such as the Mumbai-Bangalore Industrial Corridor will enhance Kolhapur's accessibility to bigger markets.
- Initiatives for Smart Cities: Kolhapur is also investigating the possibility of turning into a smart city, which might further simplify logistics and transportation by utilizing technology and improved urban design.

- Challenges with Traffic and the Environment: The city's quick expansion has raised worries about traffic jams and the effects of more industrial activity on the environment. In the upcoming decades, striking a balance between sustainability and growth will be crucial.

V. ECONOMIC IMPACT OF KOLHAPUR'S FOUNDRY HUB

Kolhapur's foundry sector is vital to the local economy, making major contributions to industrial output, infrastructural development, and employment. Kolhapur is home to one of India's biggest foundry hubs, directly employing thousands of people in foundries and generating opportunities in allied industries like small-scale manufacturing, logistics, and raw material delivery. In order to boost economic activity, the sector encourages the growth of regional infrastructure, such as commercial buildings, transit systems, and industrial zones.

The foundries provide essential components that serve both local and national markets, making them essential to important industries like engineering, building, and the manufacture of automobiles. Kolhapur's foundries have made significant foreign exchange profits by forging a strong export presence, especially in the heavy machinery, construction, and automotive industries. However, issues including fluctuating raw material prices, international market competitiveness, and environmental concerns still have an effect on the industry's expansion.

Contribution to Employment in the Community

- Direct Employment: Examine how many skilled laborers, technicians, and engineers are directly employed by foundries.
- Indirect Employment: Examine the extra jobs generated by the foundry industry in sectors such as retail, logistics, raw material supply, and transportation.
- Skill Development: Look at the initiatives and training programs that assist employees become more knowledgeable, which raises productivity.
- Labor Market Dynamics: Talk about the socioeconomic circumstances that affect the workforce, including pay, working conditions, and the function of labor unions.

Contribution to Kolhapur's GDP

- Examine the foundry sector's % contribution to Kolhapur's or Maharashtra's overall GDP.
- Talk about the foundry industry's potential for economic growth and its portion of the region's manufacturing sector.

Effects on Local Infrastructure

- Industrial Growth: How has the foundry industry's expansion influenced the construction of commercial districts, industrial zones, and transportation infrastructure (roads, railroads, etc.)?
- Urbanization: Talk about how industrialization has affected Kolhapur's urbanization, taking into account the city's growing population, housing stock, and urban services (such as water and electricity).
- Industrial Ecosystem: The development of small-scale businesses, supplier networks, and services that surround the foundry sector and aid in the expansion of a positive economic environment.

Creating Revenue and Paying Taxes

- Examine the ways in which Kolhapur's foundry sector supports both state and federal tax collections.
- Talk about indirect taxes from sales and exports as well as direct taxes from corporations, labour, and businesses.
- Examine how government initiatives, including tax breaks or subsidies, have affected the financial results of the foundry sector.

Export Capabilities and Worldwide Presence

- Examine the function of Kolhapur's foundries in international trade, paying particular attention to important export markets like Europe, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia.
- Foreign Exchange Earnings: Examine how much foreign exchange is made from the export of machinery parts, castings, and other foundry products.

- Competitive Advantage: Determine the elements competitive pricing, high-quality products, and specialized services that make Kolhapur a desirable location for foreign purchasers.

Scope of Assisting Large Industries

- Engineering and Automobiles: Examine how Kolhapur's foundries provide vital parts to the industries that manufacture machinery and automobiles, two of the main engines of the Indian economy.
- Examine how foundries contribute to the development of India's infrastructure by providing parts for heavy machinery, transit infrastructure, and other projects.
- Expanding into New Industries: Examine how Kolhapur's foundry sector is diversifying to benefit the local economy by entering new markets like renewable energy (such as solar and wind energy equipment).

Connections to the Rural Economy

- Raw materials from rural areas are used by a large number of Kolhapur's foundries. Examine the connections between rural and urban areas, taking into account the agricultural industry and small-scale manufacturers of raw materials such as metals, clay, and sand.
- Impact on the Supply Chain: Examine how Kolhapur's foundries and rural communities are economically dependent on one another for labor and raw supplies.

Obstacles and Limitations to Economic Development

- Dependency on Raw Materials: Talk about the difficulties foundries encounter because to the varying costs and accessibility of raw materials such as steel, iron, and non-ferrous metals.
- Infrastructure Gaps: Despite the fact that the foundry sector has stimulated the expansion of infrastructure, there may still be gaps, particularly with regard to power distribution, waste management, and water supply.
- Environmental Concerns: Analyze the financial toll that pollution has on the community and the effects that adopting sustainable practices will have.
- Global Competition: Talk about the difficulties Kolhapur's foundries have in the face of competition from other major global foundry hubs, such as China or other countries in Southeast Asia.

Policy and Assistance from the Government

- Subsidies and Incentives: Talk about how tax breaks, government subsidies, and other incentives help Kolhapur's foundry industry expand.
- Regulations for the Development of Infrastructure: Analyze the ways in which Kolhapur's foundry sector has benefited or been hampered by state and federal policies pertaining to infrastructure and industrial growth.
- Future Policy Projections: What kinds of policies, particularly those pertaining to worker welfare, environmental laws, or energy efficiency, would be advantageous to the foundry sector in the future?

Prospects for the Future

- Growth Projections: How much room does Kolhapur's foundry sector have to develop in terms of output, exports, and employment in the future, given present trends?
- Technological Innovation: Examine how implementing cutting-edge technology (such as automation, artificial intelligence, and 3D printing) might boost economic expansion and competitiveness.
- Strategies for Diversification: Examine other industries that Kolhapur's foundries could expand into in order to stay relevant and thrive in the years to come (e.g., renewable energy, defense manufacturing, high-tech sectors).

If appropriate measures are taken, Kolhapur's foundry sector has a great deal of room to grow sustainably in the future. Productivity and environmental performance can be greatly improved through cluster-level modernization projects, shared common facility centers, Industry 4.0-aligned talent development programs, and focused financial assistance. Kolhapur foundries may be more integrated into global supply chains by bolstering

export oriented and quality certification procedures. It is crucial that policies acknowledge the cluster's distinct MSME-driven character and encourage inclusive, incremental change as opposed to universal industrial models.

VI. DISCUSSIONS

Important insights into the dynamics of MSME-led industrial clusters in developing countries can be gained from an investigation of Kolhapur, one of India's principal foundry hubs. The results show that Kolhapur's foundry industry has developed as a result of a combination of historical legacy, regional expertise, entrepreneurial spirit, and cluster-based efficiencies, rather than just advantageous economic circumstances. These results are interpreted in this debate in light of regional competitiveness, industrial development theory, and policy significance. One of the study's main conclusions is that cluster agglomeration is essential to the survival of Kolhapur's foundry sector. Even while individual businesses are still modest, the cluster-level economies of scale have been made possible by the spatial concentration of foundries and related units. The collective efficiency is consistent with well-established theories of cluster development, which highlight knowledge spillovers, labor pooling, and shared infrastructure as factors that contribute to regional industrial competitiveness. The lack of capital investment and technological competence at the individual enterprise level is offset in Kolhapur by unofficial cooperation among businesses. The importance of human capital based on conventional skills is also emphasized in the conversation.

Kolhapur's foundry sector still relies on generation-old tacit knowledge, in contrast to technology-driven clusters that mostly rely on formal training and automation. The skill set improves flexibility and problem-solving on the shop floor, it also makes it more difficult to implement sophisticated manufacturing techniques. This dichotomy implies that rather than substituting one for the other, future interventions should combine traditional handicraft with contemporary technology education. The conflict between cost competitiveness and technical advancement is another significant subject. Low operating costs and adaptable manufacturing processes help Kolhapur foundries keep a competitive edge. However, the durability of simply cost-based advantages is being progressively undermined by global competition, tighter environmental restrictions, and OEMs' growing quality expectations. The best course of action for MSME foundries in Kolhapur may be gradual technological adoption as opposed to quick, expensive upgrading. Businesses could preserve financial sustainability while increasing productivity and compliance with such a shift.

Additionally, market diversification has improved cluster resilience, according to the study. Because Kolhapur Foundries provide to a variety of industries, such as general engineering, pumps, automotive components, and agricultural, the risks associated with cyclical downturns in any one of these areas have been reduced. During times of economic slowdown, this diverse demand structure proved especially beneficial, highlighting the significance of cross-sectoral connections for regional industrial viability. The discussion draws attention to a discrepancy between general industrial policies and the unique requirements of MSME foundry clusters from a policy standpoint. Small foundries with limited financial and technical resources are frequently disproportionately burdened by uniform regulatory frameworks and compliance standards.

According to the findings, cluster-level solutions like joint testing labs, technology centers, and pollution control facilities would work better than firm-level regulations. This strategy acknowledges the collective aspect of competitiveness in clusters like Kolhapur and is in line with inclusive industrial development goals. Lastly, the conversation highlights new issues pertaining to generational shifts and workforce transformation. Because of the working environment and other job options, younger workers are becoming less interested in traditional foundry vocations. The cluster runs the risk of long-term skill loss in the absence of focused interventions to enhance career advancement, pay, and workplace safety. Hence, maintaining human capital requires integrating digital tools, raising occupational health standards, and changing how foundry labor is viewed by the public.

In conclusion, the conversation shows how the foundry cluster in Kolhapur reflects the advantages and disadvantages of MSME-driven industrialization. Its success stems from collective efficiency, adaptive entrepreneurship, and localized competencies; its competitiveness in the future will rely on skill renewal, supportive policy frameworks, and strategic modernization. Therefore, policymakers and industrial planners looking to support balanced and sustainable manufacturing development in India can learn a lot from the Kolhapur scenario. To summarize, Kolhapur's competitive edge is its trained labor, cost benefits, entrepreneurial

culture, adaptability, and cluster-based efficiency rather than its extensive automation or capital intensity. All of these elements work together to make Kolhapur one of the most resilient MSME-driven foundry hubs in India.

VII. CONCLUSION

Within the larger context of India's manufacturing economy, Kolhapur's emergence into one of the country's principal foundry hubs is a striking illustration of cluster-based, locally anchored industrial development. Kolhapur's foundry sector, which began with modest mechanical workshops and traditional metalworking techniques, has developed into a vibrant and diverse industrial cluster that is dominated by micro, small, and medium-sized businesses. Historical events, entrepreneurial spirit, the availability of skilled labor, and the ongoing regional demand from the engineering, automotive, and agricultural industries have all influenced this change. The analysis shows that the competitiveness of Kolhapur's foundry industry is derived from the combined efficiency of its industrial ecosystem rather than just scale or capital intensity. Cost-effective production, operational flexibility, and quick reaction to shifting market demands have all been made possible by the close concentration of foundries and related businesses.

The cluster continues to benefit greatly from the presence of a knowledgeable and experienced workforce that was mostly created through informal training and generational knowledge transfer. Kolhapur foundries have also been able to successfully integrate into national supply chains thanks to their close proximity to important industrial customers in western India and strong inter-firm ties. The report also emphasizes the cluster's substantial operational and structural difficulties. Long-term competitiveness is hampered by technological obsolescence, pressure to comply with environmental regulations, restricted access to financing, and developing skill gaps in sophisticated industrial technologies. Although certain foundries have embraced quality methods and contemporary machinery, the cluster's general rate of technological advancement is still inconsistent. Coordination between business associations, governmental organizations, financial institutions, and educational institutions will be necessary to address these issues.

In conclusion, the foundry cluster in Kolhapur plays a significant role in India's manufacturing resilience, industrial output, and employment in the region. Its experience provides important insights into how cluster dynamics, entrepreneurship, and localized skills can support industrial growth without significant capital investment. Achieving balanced industrial growth and enhancing India's role as a global manufacturing powerhouse require an understanding of and commitment to these clusters.

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