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CHAPTER - 3
PROFILES OF THE STUDY AREA AND THE STUDY ORGANIZATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This third Chapter of the Dissertation presents profiles of Kolhapur City, the study area, and Rocket Engineering Corporation Private Limited, Kolhapur, the study organization.

3.2 KOLHAPUR CITY

3.2.1 Historic Perspective

The historicity of Kolhapur has been reliably traced back to Paleolithic times. In fact, the town is so old that in mythology, its origin is attributed to the Creator Brahma Himself, after 'Brahmapuri', the old nucleus of the settlement that had prospered on the high bank of the river Panchaganga.[1] In Puranas, it is also known as 'Karaveer', after the legend that the Goddess Mahalaxmi used her mace (Kar) to lift and save her favourite retreat from the waters of the Great Deluge.[2]

The folklore has it that the names 'Kolhapur' and 'Karveer' have been derived after two demons, Kolhasura and Karaveera that were slain by the Goddess Mahalaxmi.[3] Yet another analogy is that the name 'Kolhapur' has been taken from the city's one-time King, the Srigala (Sanskrit for fox, converted to 'Kolha' in Prakrit).[4] According to Rajawade, 'Kolla' was the Goddess of the 'Kols' or 'Kolas', the aboriginal residents of the settlement and her shrine was known as 'Kollapur',[5] the name eventually degenerated into its Marathi variant 'Kolhapur'. Other explanations based on the topography of the region too are offered.

In any case, the rulership history of Kolhapur through its recorded past is much checkered. From first century B.C. onwards, it had been successively ruled by the Satawahanas (upto 218 A.D.), Rashtrakutas (218-500 A.D.), Western Chalukyas (500-750 A.D.), again Rashtrakutas (750-975 A.D.) as also Kalyani Chalukyas and Shilaharas (upto 1210 A.D.). Finally, the Devagiri Yadavas ruled over Kolhapur from 1210 to 1306 A.D., when they were vanquished by Malik Gafur. Subsequently it changed hands between different Jagirdars of Adilshahi and Bahamanshahi.[6] All these dynasties have left the evidences of their conquest of Kolhapur in the stone-inscriptions strewn all over the city.

In 1659, Shivaji, the Great, wrestled the control of Panhala Fort (20 km away), and of Kolhapur along with it, from Bijapur Mughals and successfully defended its recapture by the Mughals and the English.[7] The period of 100 or so years after Shivaji's demise is replete with Maratha's fratricidal wars to retain the control of the Maratha Kingdom. After much palace intrigue and repeated

realignments of mighty Sardars, Sambhaji, the grandson of Shivaji, who was utterly discomfited by his cousin, Shahu, in 1731, "accepted the principality of Kolhapur as a district and an independent sovereignty, comprehending with certain restrictions, *the tract of country between the Warana and the Krishna rivers on the north and the east and the Tungabhadra on the south,* containing about 40,000 square miles and yielding a revenue of Rupees 28,00,000".[8] But the internecine Maratha strife and bloodshed around Kolhapur could get over only in 1843, when the British appointed their Minister to Kolhapur Darbar.[9] It was in 1782 that Queen Tarabai shifted the principality's capital from Panhala Fort to Kolhapur.[10] The garrison transit town thus changed into the seat of Royalty and started to prosper as a religious, trading and military power centre.

In the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, rebels of 27th Native Infantry Battalion killed atleast 15 English officers on 31st July and liberated the city for two weeks from the foreign yoke.[11] The English returned with reinforcements and ruthlessly suppressed the uprising. The rebels and their sympathizers were executed publicly as a deterrent to others. The effects of the trauma lasted for about half a century and held the populace in submission to the might of the Whiteman's military machine. No significant historical development took place during the later period and the town continued to flourish under successive benevolent rulers. The Princely State of Kolhapur merged into the Union of India on 31st March, 1949, and became a district in the Bombay Province.[12]

3.2.2 Geographical Setting

The origin of the word 'Kolhapur' is indeed controversial. Another explanation

suits the topography of the place, according to which, the words 'Kolla' and 'Kholla' have been derived from the original Kannada word meaning 'low ground'. Kholla also means a river valley and, therefore, 'Khollapur' means a town situated in the valley of a river;[13] while the word 'Koll' means a "low lying trough between mountain ranges, a town situated in such a place being named as 'Kollapur', later transformed into Marathi form 'Kolhapur'.[14] Therefore, atleast topographically, the name Kolhapur has been justified as the town does really lie in a sort of bowl formed by the end portions of the five valleys of the rivers, the Kasari, the Jambhali, the Tulshi and the Bhogawati, all flowing into the Panchaganga river before it reaches the outskirts of Kolhapur city.[15] Kolhapur is situate at 16°42' North Latitude and 74°16' East Longitude, at a mean sea level of 1872 feet.

The City of Kolhapur has really grown out of a clump of original seven small villages - Brahmapuri, Uttareshwar (Lagmapur), Khol-Khandoba (Kesapur), Rankala, Padmala, Ravaneshwar and Laxmiwadi, that were settled nearly 2000 years ago. The first three of these were situate on the southern bank of the river Panchaganga, while the rest four were near the ten numerous lakes in the area. Brahmapuri was the oldest among these and had trade and cultural ties with the Roman Civilization when Roman Empire was at its zenith.[16] Sometime later, during the reign of King Yadnya Shatkarni of Satvahana Dynasty (circa 106-113 A.D.), Brahmapuri village was gutted in a blaze and despite attempts to resettle it, it could never regain its lost glory.[17] Other villages had been razed to the ground in an earthquake that had rocked the area early on in the 9th

century. The survivors had regrouped in a single settlement in the vicinity of today's Mahalaxmi Temple,[18] that 1200 years later, has changed into a vibrant, bustling, growing city spread over 66.82 sq.km., a home for 4 lakh-plus people.

Kolhapur is the headquarters of Kolhapur District, comprising 1086 villages divided into 12 revenue tahsils. The district sprawls across the Deccan Plateau in the rainshadow region of the Sahyadrian mountain ranges on the southern-most tip of the State of Maharashtra. It is bounded on the north by the district of Sangli and on the west by the districts of Sindhudurg and Ratnagiri of Maharashtra State and on the east and south by the district of Belgaum of Karnataka State.

Topographically, the district consists of plains, plateaus and hill ranges as well as crisscrossed by the valleys of the Krishna, the Warana, the Panchaganga, the Dudhganga, the Vedganga and the Hiranyakeshi rivers, all flowing due southeast. The flood-plains and the flood-terrains of these rivers have endowed the district with prized soil fertility. Climatically, the city enjoys salubrious weather throughout the year, maximum being 40°C in the summer month of May and the minimum being 15°C in the winter month of December; thus, there are neither hot summers nor harsh winters. The rainfall in the district varies from 6200mm in the West to 525mm in the East; Kolhapur City, on an average, getting about 1000mm annually.

Kolhapur's reputation as a transit town dates back to medieval times, as it occupies such a unique location, that on the west, it is a gateway to the Konkan and the Arabian Sea; on the east, it opens on the rolling flatlands of the

Sahyadrian plateau that is Maharashtra's Jowar Bowl and a Goatherd Country; and on the north-south artery, it has long since been the wayfarer's revictualizing and resting place between Poona on the north and Bangalore on the south. Today, the city is connected by a well-serviced network of roads (National Highway No.4 - Poona-Bangalore; State Highway No.17 - Ratnagiri-Solapur and feeder roads from interior Konkan); rail (Kolhapur-Miraj and thence to Pune and Bangalore) and air (Kolhapur-Bombay feeder) with other commercial and industrial centres in the country. It also figures prominently on the telecommunication network and powergrid maps of the region.

3.2.3 Social and Cultural Progression

In about 634 A.D., King Karnadeo of Chalukya Dynasty had begun the construction of a temple for the Goddess Mahalaxmi, but he could not complete it during his lifetime. Later on, Chalukyas too lost Kolhapur to invaders. Nearly four centuries later, Shilaharas and Chalukyas came together through a matrimonial alliance and King Gandharadivya of Shilahara Dynasty finally dedicated the temple to the Goddess Mahalaxmi in about 9th century A.D.[19]

Jains had arrived in Kolhapur in the 5th century A.D. and later on, Shilaharas also adopted Jainism. Mahant Vidyashankar Bharati established on Panchaganga's banks at Kolhapur a Matha of Shringeri Peetha in the 13th century.[20] These religious institutions, a temple and a Matha, gave Kolhapur the distinction of being the 'Dakshin Kashi' (Banaras of South).

In more recent history, under the collective influences of a relatively stable political clime for over 100 years (1840 onwards), a general feeling of not being

directly under the foreigners' rule but being the subjects of the lineal descendants of Chh.Shivaji and the Royalty that freely mixed with its subjects, people of Kolhapur developed a political complacency that continued well into the 20th century. Instead, they focused on their cultural and economic progress under the paternalistic State administration. The first major initiative in this direction came with the setting up of a city municipality in 1854, only the second municipality (after Satara) in the Southern States.[21] In 1873, the municipality introduced property taxes for the first time. Between 1873 and 1889, the city witnessed the growth of social institutions - New Palace, Rajaram High School, City Library, Town Hall and Albert Edward General Hospital, all came up during this period.[22]

By the close of the 19th century, the British had established their firm control over the State's administration, but it was the native upper castes that actually populated the corridors of power. While the British were preoccupied with law and order and diplomatic overtures, Darbaris and petty bureaucrats were anxious to maintain their caste distinction and to retain their stranglehold on the rustic populace. Ignorance and purposefully cultivated superstition of the people effectively prevented their social awakening, which was further hindered by the limited spread of education only to the upper echelons of the social strata.[23]

Chh.Shahu (1874-1922), prior to his ascension in 1894, during his ruler-designate period, had toured the length and breadth of his future domain on horseback and had firsthand witnessed his people's economic and social

wretchedness, the squalour and misery they lived in and their slavery to the ritualism imposed by the clergy. On his ascension, he took on the monumental task of total social reconstruction, and surprisingly for his detractors, succeeded in it. As a panacea for several social malaises, he first concentrated his attention on spreading the basic education among masses and to accelerate its tempo, he implemented the innovative idea of setting up caste-wise students' boardings, so as to develop community leadership. The experiment then was quite novel in the country. Soon he made primary education compulsory, though it was a drain on the State's treasury. He was so earnest in his desire that in 1917, he declared, "If only my people would fortify themselves with even primary education, I shall entrust Kolhapur's State's rule to them". Next, he set up occupation-related training institutes in agriculture, animal-husbandry and technical training.[24]

He could visualize that the higher educational levels emerging among the lower castes due to his educational reform initiatives have to be gainfully exploited. Accordingly, Chh.Shahu issued a notification on 26th July, 1902, reserving 50 per cent of the State jobs for the educated persons from the lower castes, so as to give them an equal opportunity.

Chh.Shahu espoused cooperative movement and encouraged the investment of collected funds into profitable ventures. For developing agriculture, he set up commodity markets, made available newer farm implements, fertilizers and seeds, and for promoting scientific animal-husbandry, the administration arranged livestock exhibitions, produced crossbred animals and set up a large

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SHIVAJI UNIVERSITY LIBRARY KOLHAPUR

veterinary hospital.

Chh.Shahu gave tremendous boost to the town's industrialization by first setting up a cotton spinning mill (in joint sector) and later on, patronizing several industrial and commercial enterprises. He had advised, "It is well-known that the prosperity of a nation depends on the progress of its industries ... We are Indians and it is our duty to develop our country. In the days gone-by, artisans prospered through Royal patronage; but now, public patronage would be more beneficial. Likewise, the days of a single artisan doing the whole task are over. Now, many people would need to pool their expertise, talent, money and labour; in other words, cooperate with each other. I advise you to start not only cooperative credit societies, but also cooperative factories and cooperative stores".[25]

The intensity of his feelings gradually percolated down to the lower stratas of the population and the people enthusiastically responded to him. After Chh.Shahu's untimely death in 1922, his son, Chh.Rajaram, followed in his father's footsteps and gave added momentum to his father's reform initiative. Eventually, the efforts fructified in the blooming up of a whole new genre of socially-conscious leaders.

3.2.4 Socio-Economic Progression

The population of the city, per 1991-Census, was 4,05,118, with a sex-ratio of 919 females to 1000 males. The total workers comprised 30.43% of this population. The average literacy stood at 73.42% (male: 80.03%, female 66.23%).[26]

Over the years, Kolhapur has evolved into an educational centre of repute in South Maharashtra. The extensive development of educational network springs from Chh.Shahu's initiative for educating the masses irrespective of their religion or caste.

Kolhapur had been a transit town of repute for centuries; as a result, trading and commercial occupations proliferated and prospered. The real fillip to the city's commerce, however, was received during Chh.Shahu's reign with the setting up of a jaggery (Gur) market at Kolhapur in 1905, when out-of-state traders were invited to come and settle in the city on the promise of freehold land, tax exemptions and preferential treatment. Gradually, the commerce and, because of the availability of soft finance through the growing cooperative movement, commerce's attendant activity, the banking, prospered. Cooperative credit institutions have effectively liberated common people from the clutches of the moneylenders.

The spirit of cooperation and mutual assistance among the people eventually gave impetus to the growth of the sugar industry and the rural landscape of the district became dotted with 22 cooperative sugar factories. Perennial availability of river water and efficiently harnessed irrigation potential have made agriculture the dominant activity in the district; and in its wake, several agro-industrial activities have grown, e.g. processing of agriculture produce and milk and food processing. The city being the district headquarters has turned into a large trading and financial centre; it has the second largest regulated market for agriculture produce in the State. The city is also famous

for producing 'Kolhapuri Chappals', a popular beach wear in Europe and America.

During Chh.Shahu's reign, Kolhapur had the best developed wresting arena (Khasbaug Ground) this side of Vindhya, together with numerous wrestlers' gymkhanas (Talim Mandals) that produced many renowned wrestlers. The tradition continues till date. The city has a long tradition of creativity in literature, fine arts, stage and cine production.

3.2.5 Industrial Landscape

As far back as 1854, the tentative industrial activity being carried out in the State had prompted Major Graham, a British Officer attached to Kolhapur Darbar, to carry out a survey, that records the number of people engaged in lime-, charcoal-, paper-, glassbangle, bamboowork, ink-making, oilmen, saddlers, perfumers, cloth-weaves, coppersmiths, liquor-distillers, etc., divided into 20 different trades in which were engaged about 1200 people. He mentions the population of the town as 43,387.[27] In 1926, Dr.Balkrishna, then Principal of Rajaram College, carried out *'The Commercial Survey of the Kolhapur City'*, covering the industrial establishments in the town which revealed the presence of such activities as leather-tanning, edible oil extraction, printing and publishing, automobile repairs, fireworks, electric supply, cine-film production and licensed country liquor brewing. Evidently, within about 75 years since Maj.Graham's survey, manufacture in Kolhapur had left behind the traditional and taken on the contemporary, the number of people engaged in these activities having rose to 3,778.[28]

The foundation of the modern industry in Kolhapur was laid with the setting up of 'Shahu Chhatrapati Spinning and Weaving Mills' on 27.9.1906 as a joint-stock concern. The mill was set up partly to utilize the cotton being grown in about 30,000 acres in the State at that time.[29] The mill was originally only a spinning mill and the weaving department was added in 1928. After several changes in its holding over the years, the mill finally closed down in the year 2004.

Since mid-19th century, Kolhapur has had the reputation of producing quality jaggery and exporting it to Kutchha, Kathiawar and Gujarat. Even during the famine year of 1889, Kolhapur State had 9,990 aces of land under sugarcane cultivation.[30] Chh.Shahu realized that jaggery could be harnessed beneficially for developing the economy of the State and established a separate jaggery market adjacent to the railway station. In latter years, the market prospered and now functions on an area admeasuring 145 acres.

Side-by-side with jaggery, canesugar industry also wields significant influence on the economy of the region. 'Kolhapur Sugar Mills' was established under State's patronage in 1932 to process the sugarcane left over after the production of jaggery. The mill was equipped to crush about 500 tonnes of cane per day. In 1951-52, jaggery prices crashed to an all time low, forcing the canefarmers to torch their standing canecrops to clear the land. Gradually, Phoenix-like, from the ashes of the burnt-down canestalks rose the canesugar industry in the cooperative sector. Growth of the sugar industry proved a boon to the then infantile engineering industry as it gave impetus to indigenous

manufacture of diesel engine pumpsets used for irrigating the canefields. Several workshops came up for carrying out repairs to pumpsets and farm equipment and implements.

The first-ever cast-iron foundry in Kolhapur was set up in 1920 by an enterprising individual, Yamanaji Anandrao Ambale, under Chh.Shahu's patronage for producing bullock-driven canecrushers. The foundry, however, could not survive.[31] In 1941, one S.Y.Kulkarni started yet another cast-iron foundry on the capital of Rupees Two. He was another enterprising genius and in the early days of his venture, he used to give working demonstrations of his diesel engine and pumpset to the farmers right in their villages. His zeal and selling talent boosted the sale of his products and also made the farmers realize the potential of irrigation for harvesting bountiful double or even triple crops, but mostly the sugarcane.[32] Gradually, the increasing use of oil-engines, pumps and crushers in sugar and jaggery industry helped to start many new engineering workshops, in which oil-engines, gas-plants, centrifugal pumps, storage batteries, hullers and crushers were manufactured.

Latter-ay industrial entrepreneurs in Kolhapur modelled themselves on the lines of the enterprise and tenacity displayed by the pioneers like S.Y.Kulkarni, Hemaraj Samani and Mahadeo Shelke in setting up small and medium sized ventures, initially to meet the increasing demand for farm equipment from the agricultural sector and subsequently diversifying, for better capacity utilization, into engineering and automotive ancillary sectors.

At present, Kolhapur has three specially designed and developed industrial zones, Shivaji Udyamnagar (set up in 1947 and extended into Y.P.Powarnagar and now planning further expansion to Mudshingi village nearby), Shiroli MIDC Industrial Estate (1971) and Gokul-Shirgaon MIDC Industrial Estate (1982 and now planning to expand on additional 2200 hectares between Kolhapur and Kagal on the south). In addition, Kolhapur Municipal Corporation set up its Panjarpol mainly for servicing industries. Besides these major industrial areas, clusters of foundries, machineshops, assembly shops have long since come up in the areas of Vikramnagar, Uchagaon, while Jawaharnagar area has been earmarked for leather industry.[33]

The industrial landscape of Kolhapur today presents a picture of pulsating, thriving industrial development. Latest press release of the District Industrial Centre, Kolhapur, states that in very near future, a capital investment of Rs.150-200 crores is envisaged in the district, from 37 upcoming industrial units, to whom Industrial Entrepreneurs Memoranda (IEM) have been granted by the Union Government. Just like old days, the new ventures too are spread over a wide spectrum of manufacturing activities, from carded/combed yarn, bleached textiles and polyester viscose fabrics to processed pasteurized yoghurt and malted foods, to undenatured ethyl alcohol and gibberellic acid, to hard disk drives for computers, all presaging an industrially bright future for Kolhapur and its people.

On the other hand, it is also expressed that in order to develop Kolhapur as a mega industrial city, there is a need to develop infrastructural facilities like housing complexes, development of wider inter-city road network, business

complexes with large warehouses, upgrading of present airport for inter-connecting flights from metropolitan cities and state capital for business travel, telecommunication expansion, drinking water supply scheme to meet growth, direct rail transportation network to leading cities, establishment of HRD management centre, business schools, Indian Institute of Advanced Technology, manufacuring technology institute, advance training institute for tool management, besides bringing tractor and automotive manufacturers to the proximity of component/assembly manufacturers go a long way in providing just-in-time management for offering cost, quality and delivery advantages.

3.3 Rocket Engineering Corporation Private Limited - The Study Organization

Rocket Engineering Corporation Private Limited, Kolhapur (hereinafter 'Rocket') was started as a small-scale unit in rented premises by Vasa-family way back in 1960 for producing crude oil engines, then used in agricultural irrigation. Later on, it joined hands with another enterprising family - Doshis - and entered into the production of diesel oil engine and pumpsets. The alliance, however, could not last longer as the Doshi family permanently shifted its operations to Ahmedabad. With growing business, Rocket shifted its production facilities to Udyamnagar Industrial Estate in Kolhapur on own industrial plot. In later years, as the demand for diesel pumpsets started waning because of intensive rural electrification, Rocket diversified into the manufacture of radial, vertical and horizontal drill machines and soon specialized in it. In 1975, Rocket's products received ISI certification and it begaun exporting them. Today, it produces

special purpose electric motors also. It has started a second assembly unit in MIDC-Shiroli Industrial Estate, near Kolhapur, in 19__.

Constitution-wise, Rocket has now changed into a Private Limited Company incorported under the Companies' Act, 1956, and its turnover in fiscal 2002-03 stood at Rs.24 crore.[34] On the whole, Rocket is wellknown for its success story in the industrial realm of Kolhapur City.

The organization chart (Chart 3.1) of the study organization is being presented on the next page.

As in March, 2005, Rocket's workforce stood at 163, comprising 8 executive directors, 7 managers, 30 supervisors, 38 administrative employees and 80 technical employees.

The Personnel Department of the Organization is headed by a qualified (MBA - HRM) manager. Through an exploratory structured interview schedule (Appendix-I) administered to him, it emerged that, in his opinion, the following were functioning generally on 'good' to 'very good' footing in the study organization:

1. Existence of a separate Personnel Department
2. Existence of a written Personnel Policy
3. Periodic Personnel/HR Audit Procedure
4. Periodic Personnel/HR Accounting Procedure
5. Existence of a Personnel/HR Information System
6. Periodic Personnel/HR Planning
7. Existence of a written Promotion Policy
8. Existence of a written Employee Training Policy
9. Existence of a Employee Development Policy
10. Existence of a written Grievance Redressal Procedure

Organization Chart of
Rocket Engineering Corporation Private Limited, Kolhapur

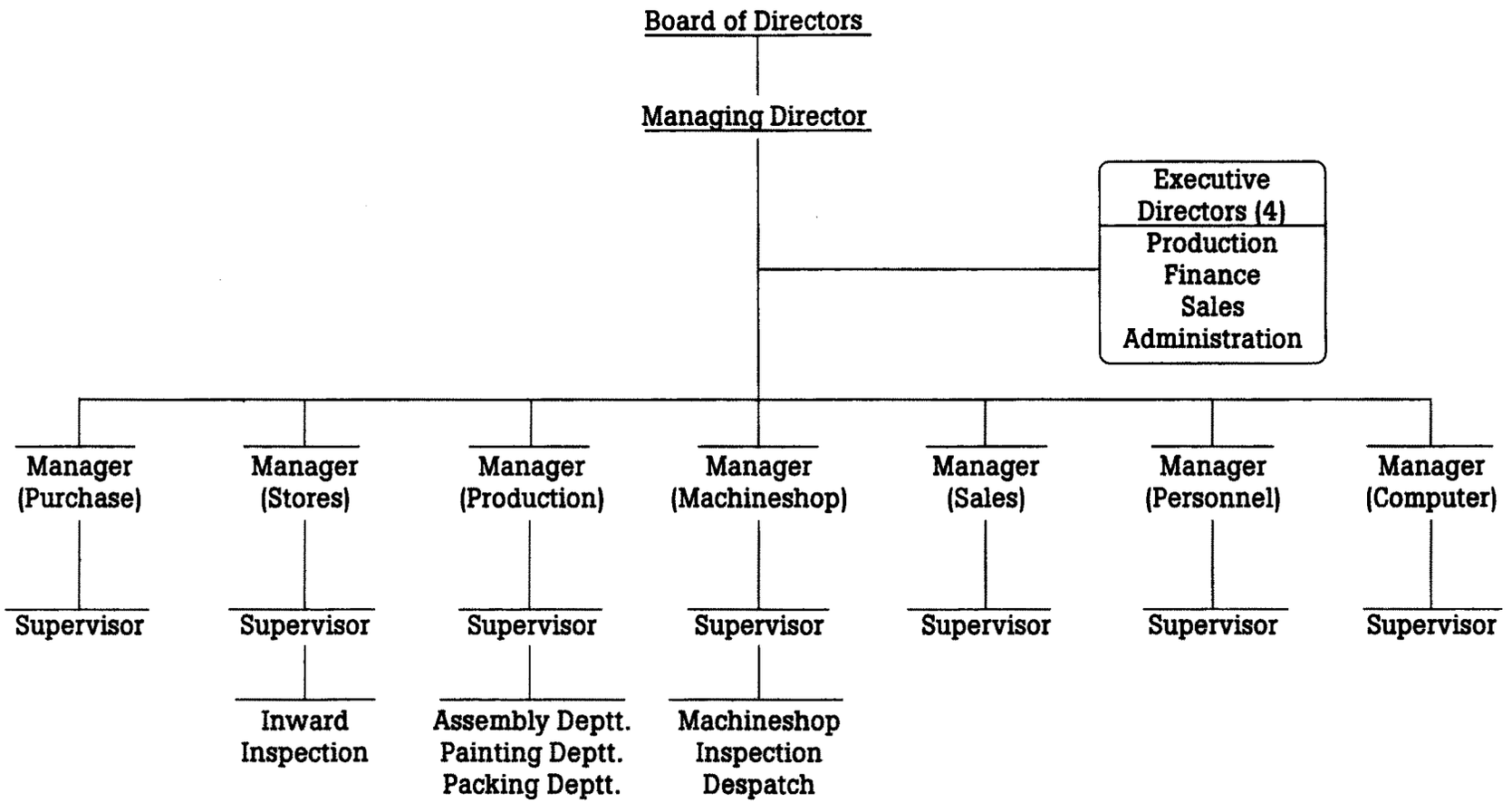

Chart 3.1

11. Existence of a Succession Planning Policy (tacit/express)
12. Functional Departmental Committees
13. Functional Quality Circles
14. Functional ISO Committees
15. Periodic conducting of Organizational Climate (OC) Surveys
16. Periodic conducting of Human Resource Development (HRD) Climate Surveys

When querried specifically about absences and absenteeism, he responded that there were around 5% normal daily absences among shopfloor workers due to pre-sanctioned leaves and the absenteeism (unauthorized leaves) did not exceed 1%. According to him, sudden sickness of self and in the family, funeral in the family/neighbourhood, conveyance problems like vehicle breakdowns, family and social issues were generally reported as being the causes of absenteeism, but he did not routinely verify them. The absenteeism was somewhat high during local fairs and festivals seasons. He had found that warning memos, show cause notice, limited period unpaid suspension and occasionally, a departmental enquiry as well as a frank discussion with the offender were the effective means for curtailing the tendency towards absenteeism. As a sequel, he regularly calculated the man-hours lost and the monetary value of the production lost.[35]

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