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A SPECIFIC CASE STUDY OF THE MARUTI-SUZUKI
COLLABORATION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the dynamics of cross-cultural technology transfer. It focuses on a particular case: the process by which the Japanese automobile company Suzuki Motor Company (SMC) transferred its know-how to Maruti Udyog Ltd. (MUL) in India, within the context of 'learning process' and development of technological capability by the recipient firm.

The MUL-SMC collaboration began in 1982 and is considered epoch-making because of the modernization it brought about in the Indian automobile scene as well as for building up a strong base of component manufacturers. Until then the Indian automobile industry had been in a stagnant state for over three decades.

The comprehensive technology transfer from the Japanese firm SMC to MUL led to a new stage of development in the stagnant Indian automobile industry. I mainly focus on the learning process after the technology was transferred, especially on the difficulties faced and how these were overcome. For this particular case study, the research concentrates on the individual and enterprise related factors that make up the firm level capability. The problem at hand centers around the learning process by which such an advanced technology was transferred along with the work practices of the donor firm, the problems that were faced during the process, and how these were overcome, the importance of small and incremental changes in the acquisition of technical knowledge, as opposed to institutionalized forms of knowledge like R & D.

Although this study concentrates on one firm's capability, the automobile industry has a large linkage effect through its numerous suppliers of components and materials. An important focus of study is the rapid indigenization that took place and this study throws light on this process. Automobile manufacturing is a very integrated industry that

necessitates the cooperation of numerous suppliers and thus is dependent upon the capability of these firms too.

The emphasis is on presenting as closely as possible the actual experience of the firm in the above efforts, rather than on "testing" a hypothesis using highly technical methods. The study has been deeply influenced by my own work experience at MUL from May 1990 to September 1992. Although the job was only in the capacity of an interpreter, it helped nurture in me an interest in the process of technology transfer and the buildup of technological capability as a consequence of the transfer.

Collected facts and materials largely came from my first field research in Suzuki at Hamamatsu Japan, carried out from October 10 -15 in 1993, and two subsequent field works at Maruti, in the state of Haryana, in India. The latter were during March to April 1995 and May to June, 1996. In order to understand the meaning of these facts and data, as far as possible and as far as circumstances allowed I tried to intensively interview a few people instead of extensively interviewing many people. This gave me the chance to get back to the interviewees for clarification or supplementary questioning. It allowed me to ask the same questions of counterparts in both the SMC and MUL companies. This, of course, made possible a closer comparison of opinions during analysis. Most of the interviews were recorded and later transcribed and analyzed. Where informants were unwilling to be recorded, detailed notes of the interview were taken. The primary sources' documents used are of the following types: (1) Maruti Project Report; (2) Annual Reports of Maruti Udyog Limited; (3) Certain reports of the Suzuki Advisors and lecture compilations on the Japanese management styles by MUL; and (4) In-house data and faxed answers to questionnaires from Maruti.

