

# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT

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## IMPACT OF CHANGING SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT ON BUSINESS: CASE STUDY ON MARUTI SUZUKI INDIA, MANESAR

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### ABSTRACT

*The case highlights the social and political milieu in which Maruti Suzuki India operated for the past few decades. Political compulsions and management dictates eroded the very fabric of organizational society in which the workers were operating. The greed of the management resulted in implementation of HR policies which were diametrically opposite to conducive labour-management relations. Seven strikes in the last 16 years (1995-2011) – that is the picture we get of Maruti Suzuki India at their Manesar plant. This case study highlights the practices which were adopted by the management at the Maruti plant at Manesar and the repeated rejection of the same by the educated workers of the plant. In spite of the repeated strikes by the workers, the management was firm on implementing some of the measures, which ultimately led to serious consequences. What were the issues which made the workers disgruntled and what were the compulsions of the Maruti management which resulted in this faux pas?*

### JEL CODE

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### KEYWORDS

automobile manufacturing, HR policies, labour-management relations, strikes.

### INTRODUCTION

Environmental scanning by strategic managers makes them aware of the many variables within a corporation's societal and task environments. In the process of necessitating changes in the production process these variables have to be taken care of. The purpose of highlighting the environmental factors namely the social and economic factors at the Maruti Suzuki factory at Manesar in Haryana with the help of this case study is to point out that these factors have made the auto giant's management falter while dealing with the militant workers. The practice that increasing the productivity of workers by fair means or foul will generate increased production is the very antithesis of the strategies a typical business firm follows namely corporate, business or functional strategy. This case study highlights how and why certain strategies to boost productivity of workers failed. It also sheds light on some of the region-specific socio-economic issues relevant to the company and why labour-management relations have to be handled with care taking into consideration the culture, region-specific features, the labour policies of the state, the education level of the workers etc.

### BACKGROUND

Maruti Suzuki India Limited commonly referred to as Maruti and formerly known as Maruti Udyog Limited, is an automobile manufacturer in India. It is a subsidiary of Japanese automobile and motorcycle manufacturer Suzuki. As of November 2012, it had a market share of 37% of the Indian passenger car market. Maruti Suzuki manufactures and sells a complete range of cars for every segment of the population. Originally, 18.28% of the company was owned by the Indian government, and 54.2% by Suzuki of Japan. The BJP-led government held an initial public offering of 25% of the company in June 2003. As of May 2007, the government of India sold its complete share to Indian financial institutions and no longer has any stake in Maruti Udyog Ltd.

Maruti Udyog Limited (MUL) was established in February 1981, though the actual production commenced in 1983 with the Maruti 800, based on the Suzuki Alto kei car which at the time was the only modern car available in India, its only competitors- the Hindustan Ambassador and Premier Padmini were both around 25 years out of date at that point. The company exports more than 50,000 cars annually and has domestic sales of 730,000 cars annually. Its manufacturing facilities are located at two facilities Gurgaon and Manesar in Haryana, south of Delhi. Maruti Suzuki's Gurgaon facility has an installed capacity of 900,000 units per annum. The Manesar facilities, launched in February 2007 comprise a vehicle assembly plant with a capacity of 550,000 units per year and a Diesel Engine plant with an annual capacity of 100,000 engines and transmissions. Manesar and Gurgaon facilities have a combined capability to produce over 1,450,000 units annually. The company is 54.2% owned by the Japanese multinational Suzuki Motor Corporation per cent of Maruti Suzuki. The rest is owned by public and financial institutions. It is listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange and National Stock Exchange of India.

The permanent workers in Maruti have passed out of the ITI's (Industrial Training Institute) and were hired through campus interviews. However Maruti determined that Haryanvis were better workers hence most of the workers are from various places in Haryana. These workers were recruited in 2007 as trainees and became permanent in 2010. As batch after batch of trainees became permanent the demand to form a union was raised towards end of 2010 (*The Telegraph*, 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2011 p 01).

Since its founding in 1983, Maruti Udyog Limited experienced few problems with its labour force. The Indian labour it hired readily accepted Japanese work culture and the modern manufacturing process. In 1997, there was a change in ownership, and Maruti became predominantly government controlled. Shortly thereafter, conflict between the United Front Government and Suzuki started. Labour unrest started under management of Central government. In 2000, a major industrial relations issue began and employees of Maruti went on an indefinite strike, demanding among other things, major revisions to their wages, incentives and pensions.

Employees used slowdown in October 2000, to press for a revision to their incentive-linked pay. In parallel, after elections and a new central government led by NDA alliance, India pursued a disinvestments policy. Along with many other government owned companies, the new administration proposed to sell part of its stake in Maruti Suzuki in a public offering. The worker's union opposed this sell-off plan on the grounds that the company will lose a major business advantage of being subsidized by the Government, and the union has better protection while the company remains in control of the government.

The standoff between the union and the management continued through 2001. The management refused union demands citing increased competition and lower margins. The central government prevailed and privatized Maruti in 2002. Suzuki became the majority owner of Maruti Udyog Limited (Wikipedia- Maruti Suzuki- retrieved on 16<sup>th</sup> July, 2013).

### HISTORY OF UNREST AT MANESAR

There have been 7 strikes at Maruti factories in the last 16 years. The first occurred in April, 1995 for 3 days at Gurgaon when the demand was more wages. The second was in March, 1998 at Gurgaon factory for 2 days when some local issues was the reason. The third strike impacted Maruti for 89 days, the longest ever strike at any factory of Maruti where the demand was of more wages at the Gurgaon plant. The fourth was for 13 days at Manesar plant when the management did not allow the workers to form a new, independent union. The fifth strike was again of a long duration, for 33 days at Manesar when the workers were directed by the management to sign a "good conduct bond" and they refused. This bond was to seek an assurance from the workers that they will not resort to go-slow, sabotage production or indulge in activities which would hamper the normal production in the plant. The sixth strike was for 2 days in the sister

concerns of Maruti who were supporting the Manesar workers. The seventh strike went on for 10 days at Manesar and the two sister concerns where the workers demanded restoration of the services of 1100 contract workers. The last two strikes resulted in the full closure of Suzuki Motor's Indian operations. The strikes at Manesar in 2011 portray a disturbed industrial relations scenario with demands of the workers ranging from formation of a new independent union to permanency of contract workers ( *The Economic Times*, 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2011, p 04.).

### FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE INDUSTRIAL UNREST

The 750 acre Manesar facility of Maruti Udyog Ltd., a highly automated factory that produced 600,000 units for India's largest automaker each year was in the news for labour unrest that resulted in a number of strikes from 1995 to 2011. Maruti's record of following labour guidelines and practices has been far from remarkable. In the automotive industry, while Japanese peers like Honda and Toyota have managed to keep their workers happy, Maruti's labour trouble has been growing. Strikes and unrest have been growing with a rapid decline in workers' trust, keeping the labour situation at a low ebb. The company also failed to maintain agreements signed with workers on the creation of Works Committee and the Grievance Committee, which was part of the October, 2011 agreement and which has not yet been formed. While the formation of these committees would have increased the trust of the workers, it would have been a subtle weapon in the hands of the management while dealing with workers' grievances. The fragile industrial relations at the factory premises took a turn for the worse as an unrelenting management, a union lacking mature leadership and a dithering state government all contributed in lighting the fuse.

Since any business today is operating in a highly socio-political environment where social demands and political laws are constantly changing, management has to meet the demands of business and people by not just focusing on wealth creation but also by adding values to the system in which they are operating. Indian managers practice how good values pay better dividends, how honesty helps to grow industry and business, how cooperation and not competition are better growth strategies.

Yet these concepts were forgotten when Mr. M.M. Singh the then company's Head of Manufacturing commented, while addressing a meeting of the company's functional heads- "How did we lose the connect with our workers?", part of the answer might lie in measures he spearheaded in early 2010 when Maruti saw a spurt in demand which led to outstripping its capacity ( *The Economic Times*, 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2011, p 04.). Since longer waiting periods for Maruti cars meant that rivals will step in and start eating into its market share, Singh and his team put in place a series of measures to produce more. This included more frequent maintenance of machines, reprogramming robots that control the assembly line to squeeze out efficiency and implementation of a "flexi-line" that could produce multiple models. These measures resulted in creating a capacity of 350,000 cars per year as compared to 250,000 earlier ( *The Economic Times*, 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2011, p04.). Incentives of workers were aligned to production; in short life was like a machine on the shop floor with production accelerating by 40 % at Manesar. Hence life on the shop floor took a turn for the worse. The strategy which was adopted here by the Production department was meant to achieve corporate and business unit objectives through maximizing resource productivity. This consists of nurturing a distinctive business competence to provide the company with a competitive advantage. The strategic decision taken here had no precedent among other Maruti Suzuki plants in India, leading to commitment of substantial resources and demanding a great deal of commitment from the employees at all levels. In other words, this is the adaptive mode of strategic decision making as stated by Henry Mintzberg (1973), which is characterized by reactive solutions to existing problems. Strategy is adopted to move the corporation forward incrementally. The Maruti leadership took decisions in fits and starts based on the volume of cars selling instead of taking decisions based on a planning mode after gathering appropriate information, generating feasible alternative strategies and a rational selection of the most appropriate strategy. This strategy should include both the proactive search for new opportunities and the reactive solution of existing problems.

The unionization problem is predominant in the Manesar area where the Gurgaon-Manesar-Dharuhera-Rewari belt in Haryana employs about 400,000 workers in about 1000 companies. Here trade unions which are popular are the All India Trade Union Congress and the Hind Mazdoor Sabha. Since AITUC is a left leaning trade union it is thought to be prone to violence, so HMS is the lesser evil of the two. Apart from the above two unions, CITU and NTUI also enjoyed support among the workers. When workers wanted their matters to be taken up exclusively by a trade union, they first approached the Maruti Udyog Kamgar Union (MUKU), the Gurgaon based union recognized by the company as the union for all Maruti workers. However the workers demanded a separate union which the company bypassed by persuading the workers to join the Gurgaon based union. The company management also promised elections to the existing union while warning the workers not to form a second union in Manesar. Election eventually did take place in July, 2011 but the Manesar workers boycotted it. Management went so far as to force workers to sign a declaration that they were happy with the Gurgaon union and did not want a new one. The management on the other hand reiterated that they were stopping workers who were collecting signatures of all workers for the purpose of formation of a union during factory hours. This sort of faux pas by the management was further aggravated when management summarily dismissed workers for indiscipline including 4 office bearers of the new union whose application the workers had filed the day before. It seems childish on the part of the management to resort to such tactics to be one above the workers. The workers went on strike for 10 days from 10<sup>th</sup> of June, 2011 to 16<sup>th</sup> of June, 2011, at the end of which the dismissed workers were reinstated by the management. The loss of face suffered by the management was the result of indelicate handling of a volatile situation. As per the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 the 5<sup>th</sup> Schedule deals with Unfair Labour Practices wherein it is stated that employers and employers' trade union, if they interfere, restrain, coerce workmen and do not allow them to engage in concerted activities, it will be treated as unfair labour practice. Violation of the Act will lead to penalty as specified under Section 25U, Chapter V-C of the said Act. Union leaders among them Amitabh Bhattacharya, General Secretary of Mazdoor Kranti Parishad who was a key figure in the Hindustan Motors strike in 2007 as well as in Mamata Banerjee's agitation against land acquisition at Singur for the Tata Nano factory was waiting in the sidelines ready to strike once the iron was hot. It was to the credit of the workers that they were receiving advice from all unions but they confided in none.

The societal environment in which Maruti Suzuki operated consisted of economic forces, technological forces, political-legal forces and socio-cultural forces. These forces do not generally influence the short-run activities but often influence the long-run decisions of an organization. Among these influences the impact of Generation Y boom is of importance because of the socio-cultural environment in which they have grown up. The Maruti workers are all in the age group of 18 to 30 and take decisions based on environmental factors. The changing pace and location of life results in instant contact and communication and this help take fast decisions. Efficiency is at its best today and this was taken advantage of by the Maruti management. Also, in terms of socio-cultural variables Asian cultures are less concerned with the value of human rights which was amply demonstrated by the dictates of the Maruti Suzuki management and elaborated later on in the case study.

### REASONS FOR INDUSTRIAL UNREST

The Manesar plant draws its employees mostly from Haryana. The workers consist of 60% regular employees and the rest contract workers ( *The Economic Times*, 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2011, p04.). Average age of the workers at Manesar is under 25. They became regular after three years of training entitling them to privileges which trainees and contract workers do not enjoy. The strategic decision to squeeze out more cars from existing plants involved adopting regressive policies which were harmful for the workers. For example, workstations have 40 seconds in which the worker has to do the job assigned to him. This duration may be compressed or expanded depending on the production target. All Maruti workers are young and able bodied. Hence in an eight hour work shift workers get a 30 minute lunch break and two 7.5 minutes tea breaks. This is easier said than done because one has to remove the safety equipment, run 500 meters to grab tea and snacks, then run to the washroom 400 meters away and come back in 7 minutes, which becomes very tight at times ( *The Telegraph*, 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2011, p01). There is no scope for leaving the work station and no extra breaks are given; besides any absence from work results in a heavy pay cut. For example if an attendance reward of Rs 2000/- has accumulated in respect of a worker, he may forfeit the same if he is absent 3 days in the next month. The time for breaks may be reduced which does not give workers enough time to go to the washroom, change his clothes, run to the canteen 450 metres away and get back on the job before the belt starts running ( *The Telegraph*, 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2011, p01).. These measures speak of the stringent policies being implemented as part of the performance linked pay. However these measures were not properly explained to the shop floor workers but dictated by the demands of the assembly line. If a single worker does not do his part in the specified time the production halts. As the General Secretary of the proposed Maruti Suzuki Employees' Union, Shiv Kumar says that Maruti is like a family and all workers are willing to do their bit provided the management treats them with understanding and respect.



It was issues like the aforesaid ones which prompted the Maruti workers to demand a union to negotiate with the management. The workers first approached the Maruti Udyog Kamgar Union (MUKU) the Gurgaon-based union recognized by the company as the union for all Maruti workers. This happened sometime in end 2010 or early 2011. Maruti officials were reluctant to allow formation of another union so they persuaded the workers to join the existing one and promised elections to the existing union. However when elections did occur the Manesar workers boycotted it. In June, 2011 workers called a strike which went on for 13 days. The reason stated by the workers was that they were forced to sign an affidavit stating that they were happy with the Gurgaon trade union and did not want a new one although the management denies this stating some workers were forcing other workers to sign showing their consent to form a new union. The workers had filed an application with the Haryana labour department regarding formation of a new union, Maruti Suzuki Employees Union. As a result the management dismissed some workers for indiscipline which included the office bearers of the proposed union. However the management retreated from its aggressive stand and agreed to reinstate the dismissed workers.

Here the role of corporate culture comes into focus. Corporate culture is the collection of beliefs, expectations and values learned and shared by a corporation's members and transmitted from one generation of employees to another. It often includes a number of informal work rules that employees follow without question and these become part of a company's unquestioned tradition. The rules regarding increased productivity at the Maruti factory in Manesar fall in this category. The cultural intensity is the degree to which members of a unit accept the norms, values or other culture content associated with the unit. Corporate culture has a strong and powerful influence on the behavior of people at all levels and can strongly affect a corporation's ability to shift its strategic decisions. A strong culture should not only promote survival but it should also create the basis for a superior competitive position. If such a distinctive competence is embedded in an organization's culture it will be a form of tacit knowledge. This knowledge was present to a certain extent at Maruti Suzuki, Manesar; however due to environmental factors it could not be sustained and worked upon to the benefit of the company.

## ROLE OF TRADE UNIONS

About 400,000 workers are employed by about 1,000 companies in the Gurgaon-Manesar-Dharuhera-Rewari auto hub. Trade unions have had a mixed track record here. AITUC and HMS are the two most prominent trade unions operating here. AITUC is regarded as Left aligned and has a propensity for violence while HMS is more conciliatory. However in the run up to the formation of the new union the Maruti workers had grown close to the AITUC who helped them file the application for the new union. But there the role of the established union ended. A lot of unions started advising the Maruti workers. However the union leaders namely Gujjar and Kumar both remained indifferent to all the unions.

Here the issue of union leadership comes into focus. Initially the Gurgaon based union Maruti Udyog Kamgar Union (MUKU) looked after the affairs of the workers at Manesar. However the highly automated factory suffered a series of strikes in 2011 (*The Economic Times*, 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2011, p 05). When the workers were inclined to form a new union Mr. Gurudas Dasgupta of the AITUC helped them. He assumed the role of a mentor since he too had a stake in the Manesar pie. Union leaders of other unions such as CITU, NTUI etc. also started helping the young workers. The worker leaders listened to all of them but trusted no one. These young workers had managed to force the Maruti management to reinstate the sacked workers. Next they demanded a separate union, colouring their demand with aggression. The general secretary of Maruti Udyog Kamgar Union (MUKU), Kuldeep Jhangu originally organized the Manesar workers. But the workers were waylaid by other forces and demanded a separate union. However the methodologies adopted by the workers of Manesar were too violent even for MUKU. Instead of starting with a tool-down protest and slowly progressing up to a full-fledged strike, they started off with a full strike; they also wanted the Gurgaon plant to shut down and join the strike, but when the MUKU general secretary refused, he became their enemy (*The Economic Times*, 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2012, p 04). These workers were young, impressionable and eager to fight for what they felt was their right; the leaders of these workers namely Gujjar and Kumar too were raring to go. They were young and inexperienced. They were not elected leaders since they had boycotted the election process of MUKU, but nominated. The workers were angry young men and expected a lot from the union leaders. These young workers were aware that the production in India contributed to half of Suzuki's worldwide profits. They were disgruntled with the fact that there were massive salary hikes of the top management whereas workers' pay rose by barely 5%. However, these union leaders were new to their position and had little track record in leading workers as well as little acceptance among them. Hence they were being guided by unknown external leaders of various trade unions such as Hind Mazdoor Sabha, New Trade Union Initiative etc. The new union had the support of the management since it was set up with the cooperation of the management. It was also the union recognised by the management. The workers were a little wary about this. However the union leaders promised a lot but could not deliver that much; as a result workers became disgruntled (*The Economic Times*, 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2012, p 04). The new leaders were impatient on the negotiating table, a fact that was noticed by the Haryana labour department officials. They were not as tactful and patient as was required under the circumstances. Veteran AITUC secretary D.L. Sachdev rued the fact that the leadership lacked maturity and this may lead to ultra-left elements misleading the workers (*The Economic Times*, 6<sup>th</sup> Nov, 2012, p 03). Unionisation raised expectations of the workers sky high. They expected the new union to deliver the goods, forgetting that union leaders tend to promise more than they can get out of the management. This resulted in the union leaders coming under constant pressure to be a more effective political force. These union leaders are first-time leaders with little or no track record of sitting at a negotiating table. One cannot be impatient there as the HR managers are not authorized to take decisions on behalf of management. Hence one has to be tactful and patient. However the leaders were neither tactful nor patient and they failed to temper the expectations of the workers. These workers felt that they now had a recognized union that would represent them in the upcoming wage negotiations and they could negotiate with the management on equal terms. However the workers' unionization had exacerbated tensions on the shop floor. The worker-supervisor friction received a new twist with the union being a new variable in the checkerboard. Earlier, the relationship between the supervisors, who were more or less of the same social standing as the workers and the workers were cordial, it turned frosty with the new union being established and equations changing between the workers and the supervisors as a result.

The societal environment has some important variables which affect the industries operating in the region. For the Manesar area some of the important variables affecting the functioning of Maruti Suzuki factory operations are:

1. Economic – wage/price controls, inflation, disposable and discretionary income: they affect the availability and cost of capital, influence the cost of production, prices and consumer demand. After liberalization, the Indian economy was opened up which also paved the way for foreign investments and entry of multinationals in a big way.
2. Technological – productivity improvements through automation: strategies developed on the basis of technological developments create a competitive advantage.
3. Political-legal – special incentives, laws on hiring and promotion, attitude towards foreign companies: a few of the issues under political-legal factors are legislations regulating wages, price control, import-export policies etc. Certain policy changes such as industrial policy liberalization in India has opened up enormous opportunities to Indian companies to expand but at the same time posed a serious threat of increased competition.
4. Socio cultural – lifestyle changes, career expectations, age distribution of population, regional shifts in population, consumer activism:
5. Demographic factors – size, growth rate, age and sex composition of the population, family size, education levels: companies have to adapt to automation, rationalization, downsizing etc. to remain competitive in the market economy which are opposed by labour, socialist and political groups.
6. Global factors – India is emerging as a super economic power and is having a major influence on world markets simply because of its very large consumer base and significant purchasing power. The demand for quality goods at competitive prices has shot up.

## DEPENDENCE ON CONTRACT AND CASUAL LABOUR

The central government had identified the increasing reliance on contract and casual labour to get routine operational jobs done at cheaper costs, as the primary reason for the recent increase in labour strife and violence. This was done so that gratuity and provident fund benefits can be denied to these temporary workers. In the process the workers are losing out on many social security benefits which the company is committed to provide as per the labour laws of the country. Social security benefits are not reaching out to the casual workers and as a result this is leading to labour disputes and labour violence. They are victims of the system where the company is getting work out of them for half the wages. As per the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1971 if

an organization has 100 or more permanent workers it has to seek the permission of the appropriate government in case it wishes to dismiss any permanent worker. Hence all the more it was easier to make do with contract labour where no questions would be asked if any of them were retrenched. These contract workers also have no job security and are denied benefits like gratuity, provident fund and health insurance. Necessary amendments to the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act of 1971 where provisions for securing the rights of contract labourers have been identified have not yet seen the light of day. International Labour Office has recommended a nationally-determined social security floor for all workers, which is a comprehensive package consisting of medical aid, educational funds, old-age income security, gratuity, provident fund, etc. This has received support from India; it remains to be seen whether this can be put to practice in the form of a labour law by the Indian Parliament. The top demand of the Maruti union during this period of unrest related to contract workers. They union wanted higher wages for the contract labour and regularization of casual labour since they have strong ties of clan, caste and region with the permanent workers. A large number of them are related or have been employed through references from permanent workers to the labour contractors. But once on the shop floor they work together with very different terms and conditions and remuneration. After the violence the Chairman Maruti Suzuki said that contract labour form contractors would be phased out and Maruti's own HR department would take in contract workers and give priority to them when permanent worker vacancies arise.

### FAIR IMPLEMENTATION OF LABOUR LAWS

The Gurgaon-Manesar-Dharuhera-Rewari belt in Haryana employs about 400,000 workers in about 1000 companies. Here a large number of companies have taken licences for contract labour but they are making the contract workers do work which should be done by the permanent workers. This violates provisions of the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1971. Minimum wages as per the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 are not being given, Employees State Insurance deductions and Provident Fund deductions are not being deposited – these are the grievances of the union leaders operating in the above belt. Maruti engages contractual workers and tries to ensure that they are paid at least the minimum wages by asking the contractor proof, which in turn allows the contractor to fudge. Workers' grievance is that the contractors bill the company more than what they pay the labourers and pocket the difference.

However Maruti's record of following labour guidelines and practices has been far from being remarkable. Strikes and unrest have been on the rise; the company has failed to maintain agreements signed with workers on the creation of the Works Committee and the Grievance Committee (*The Economic Times*, 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2012, p 03,). Following the strikes and unrest the management decided to introduce a 'good conduct bond' in August, 2011 wherein the workers would be promising to show good conduct during working hours.

After peace was made with reinstatement of the dismissed workers, these workers started flouting all rules of the company, appointing their own representatives in each machine area and encouraging workers to listen to only these representatives and not those of the management. Here the workers' views are different; they said that company officials started harassing and victimizing the workers through show cause notices, pay cuts, etc. (*The Economic Times*, 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2011, p05). The workers in turn resorted to go-slow policy.

There were various instances when management made a blunder in handling sensitive issues. The management of the auto giant made a major miscalculation in handling a labour incident, as a result of which violence broke out in the factory. Two office bearers of the workers' trade union were suspended following accusations of manhandling of a supervisor. They were let off after an oral apology; but in a similar incident in which an ordinary worker was involved in manhandling, the company launched disciplinary proceedings against him. This different treatment affected the morale of the workers (*The Economic Times*, 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2012, p 03,). Again there was an incident of scuffle of an ordinary worker with a supervisor and suspension and disciplinary proceedings followed, unlike what happened with the union office bearers. The case of the union office bearers were dealt with by bending some of the clauses of the Maruti's Standing Orders. Violence resulted leaving a senior company executive dead and many more injured (*The Economic Times*, 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2012, p 04,).

Punitive measures introduced by Maruti meant that the workers suffered pay cuts. For example, for each day of strike in the year 2011 two days wages were deducted from the striking workers. Again, if the workers have come to work braving the strike they are locked out of the factory if they have not yet signed the "Good Conduct Bond". According to the workers while the annual remuneration of the CEO had increased from Rs.47.3 lakhs in 2007-08 to Rs. 2.45 crores in 2010-11 an increase of 419% from 2008 to 2011 (*The Telegraph*, 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2011, p 01), while that of the workers had not, what with the punitive pay cuts.

There were questionable practices regarding corporate governance issues too (*The Economic Times*, 7<sup>th</sup> Nov, 2011) at Maruti Suzuki, Manesar. It became apparent that 30 suspended workers were given a handsome package by the management in return for their exodus from Maruti Suzuki, Manesar. The package amount was from Rs 16-40 lakhs per worker and included the two union leaders Sonu Gujjar and Shiv Kumar. However the management said that the 30 workers had resigned from the company. Institutional investors were seriously condemning the Maruti management for handling the issue in this suspicious manner

### RESULTANT EFFECTS OF THE STRIKE

Rising inventory, underused plants, idle workforce etc gave the vendors of spare parts and components sleepless nights. These vendors had invested more than Rs. 10000/- crores in capacity expansion in 2010-11 when car sales were growing by about 30%. 14 of these are joint venture companies setup exclusively for Maruti. They were allowed to supply to other car manufacturers' during the ongoing disturbances at Maruti. However these vendors lost about 15-20% of their revenue or about Rs. 1400 crores during the ongoing dispute at Maruti Suzuki. These vendors were in a dilemma about whether to retain their temporary workforce, whether to give holidays to their permanent workers or whether to ask them to resign. Foreign car makers who source components from the Manesar auto belt were scared that the agitation could affect supplies. In order to de risk their business they were thinking of relocating to places like Gujarat, Rajasthan or even Thailand.

Scores of industries, including original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), component suppliers and other ancillary units spread out in the Gurgaon-Manesar belt are the life line of large manufacturers like Maruti Suzuki, Hero MotoCorp and Honda Motorcycles & Scooters India(HMSI).Some of these firms had called for an impartial enquiry into the recent violence at Maruti Suzuki's Manesar plant. They had the audacity to warn the law-enforcing authorities against harassing the Maruti workers. Their union leaders demanded fair implementation of labour laws by the companies operating in the region, housing facilities for workers and a rise in minimum wages of entry level workers from Rs 4850/- to Rs 15000/-. According to the General Secretary of Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India Employee Union, various companies were blatantly violating contract labour laws, not depositing provident fund and ESI of employees etc. Work done by the contract workers were actually the work assigned to the permanent workers.

The wage settlement at Maruti Suzuki, Manesar which expired in March 2012 was effective till a new settlement was put in place. The charter of demands of the Manesar union included the following (*The Economic Times*, 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2012, p 04,):

- Basic salary of at least Rs 25000/-
- All contract workers to be made permanent
- At least 20% annual hike till 2014 when the next agreement will be due
- D A of at least Rs 10000 a month
- HRA to be hiked to 60% of basic and DA
- Laundry allowance of Rs 3000 /-per month
- Child education allowance of Rs 8000/- a month
- Transport allowance of Rs 10000/-a month
- City compensatory allowance @ 40 % of basic pay etc.

However the top demand of the union related to contract workers. The workers wanted higher wages and regularization of casual workers because even though the contract workers are not part of the union they have strong ties of clan, caste and region with the permanent workers. A large number of them are related or have been employed through references from permanent workers to labour contractors. But once on the shop floor they work alongside for very different terms and remuneration.

This categorization of workers as human production machines lead us to Rene Descartes who stated that nature worked according to mechanical laws and everything in the material world could be explained in terms of the arrangement and movement of its parts. This view of the universe as a mechanical system provided scientific sanction for manipulation and exploitation of nature in a typical business scenario. The relentless search for raw materials and markets on the part of business has led to the following implications:

1. Continued notion of differentiating between brain and other motor organs like hands and feet have led to downgrading 'blue collar workers' as compared to management
2. The mechanistic model of the universe has generated a technology aimed at control, mass-production, standardization and centralized management that pursues the mirage of infinite growth

Descartes' (1637) statement "I think, therefore, I exist" led to the development of a method of analysis and derivation of conclusion totally opposed to a holistic approach which had a profound influence on business and management thinking and attitude. He tried to explain nature as a perfect machine, governed by exact mathematical laws. This mission was fulfilled by Newton who said all physical phenomena are reduced to the motion of material particles, caused by their mutual attraction, i.e. by their force of gravity. These mathematical laws guiding the activities of the material universe had a great influence on the growth and character of the world of business.

## CONCLUSION

Most enterprises of today face conflicts, tensions, low efficiency and productivity, absence of motivation and lack of work culture etc. For them the underlying purpose in developing a strategy is to outperform the competitors over a sustained time period. Organizations today have realized that that they need to present a more positive image to the public and manage their human resources efficiently and carry out business so as not to harm others. Successful management means managing men, money and material in the best possible way according to circumstances and environment. In order to get an edge over their competitors Maruti Suzuki tried to enhance the productivity of its workers with Taylorian (Taylor, 1911) concepts of scientific management principles, leading to disastrous results. Such a sustainable competitive advantage cannot be achieved through operational effectiveness alone; a winning strategy considering the social and economic aspects need to be determined. Such a strategic plan requires tough managerial choices from among numerous good alternatives. The case study highlights that such decisions were taken but somewhere along the way the leadership faltered and were taken for a ride in their quest for higher productivity.

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