

The small wonder

When India opened its market to international competition, it was welcomed with an admixture of skepticism, reluctance and fear by the Indian industrialists. It was widely believed that the native Indian companies wouldn't be in a position to withstand the money power and marketing acumen of foreign corporates.

Prior to the liberalisation era there were only a handful of Indian companies which had any sort of association with foreign companies--one of them being Government controlled Maruti Udyog Ltd. Incorporating the time-tested Japanese automobile technology and an Indian touch, Maruti had a dream run for the past 13 years as the undisputed car market leader, until tragedy struck recently. Politics of one upmanship ensured that Suzuki and GOI came to loggerheads with each other on the issue of leading the prestigious company. How far this will affect the Maruti applet is not clearly known.

There couldn't have been a more opportune time for many international car manufacturers to capitalize than this fiasco. The recently concluded Auto Expo'98 has exposed that the other leading auto manufacturers have been quick to pounce on the prey at the right time.

Maruti 800 which is the flagship of Maruti Udyog Ltd.' seems to have met its match - not by one but at least four of them (Daewoo and Hyundai also displayed their mini cars in Auto Expo'98). While this is bad news for Maruti, it is definitely delightful news for the customers, for two reasons. With more and more competitors entering the fray, the customers would get a better price/performance advantage. And secondly, one of the companies who have entered the battle for supremacy in the car market, is none other than India's own Tata group.

Tata group has a history of being a forerunner in establishing indigenous ventures of global standards. Be it commercial airlines in pre-independence era or setting up of the first steel plant, Tatas have always set the pace for others to follow. It is now up again with yet another immaculate feat of introducing a minicar, which very much suits the Indian needs. The yet to be named car which was showcased in 'Auto Expo 98' gave glimpses of the wonder.

An indigenous effort from the Tatas, this satisfies all the three basic needs of Indian car buyer--a contemporary exterior, spacious interior and fuel and price efficiency. The car received accolades from the visitors and industry experts alike. A bigger car than Maruti Zen, with spacious seating arrangements, modern exteriors and just about the price of Maruti 800, this has made this an excellent choice for buyers in the Indian car market. More importantly, the Tatas have dispelled the myth that everything Indian is inferior and anything foreign is superior.

Alongside this, it has also smashed the perception that Indian industry would be destroyed by the entry of foreign companies. On the contrary it has shown that Indians can produce the best under competition, which very much symbolizes the Indian spirit. It is a reassurance for all Indians that we are nothing less than the best.

Long Live Indicar!

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