CHANGE is the only CONSTANT

Amit Patel,
Group Managing Director,
Sintex Plastics Technology Ltd.
talks about expansions and diversifications of the company.
Today, Sintex is synonymous to a water tank. However, an interesting tale-to-tell is the business of the company started with textile. “The company was originally established in 1904 and dealt with contract manufacturing relating to jute and cotton. However, it was in 1931, that Dinesh Patel and Arun Patel decided to set up a textile unit. They are founders of Sintex in the true sense,” shares Amit Patel, Group Managing Director, Sintex Plastics Technology Ltd.

“While setting up this unit in Kalol, one of the challenges faced by the founders was to ship the machines to the interiors of the country. While machines were successfully shipped to Mumbai and then till Vadodara, in the absence of roads how would they carry to Kalol was a big question. The enterprising spirit of Patel brothers did not allow them to be discouraged. Finally, bulk-carts came to their rescue. The machines were disassembled and transported to Kalol by bullockcarts,” Patel narrates the story.

How did the company took a turn towards plastic? “The journey with plastics began in 1974. Foreseeing the opportunity that lay ahead for the plastics industry, the company decided to enter into this business. We are the pioneers of HDPE/LDPE water tanks,” he reveals. Today, Sintex is undoubtedly leader in the water storage segment and enjoys maximum market share. But that’s not where it has halted. With the philosophy of ‘change is the only constant’, the company diversified into other areas such as automotive, interiors, electrical & SMC products, industrial products, etc. And with this diversification, the family business has now grown to 10,000 employees across 38 manufacturing sites located across 9 countries on 4 continents. Speaking about presence in the foreign land, Patel says, “We have extensive presence is Europe through 13 manufacturing locations and two in North Africa. We have a logistics company in USA. Additionally, Sintex exports to USA, Columbia, Iran, Europe, Japan and Thailand from India.”

Elaborating on its manufacturing capabilities, the company uses over 30 different custom moulding processes and technologies including blow moulding, open moulding, rotational moulding, resin transfer moulding (RTM and LRTM), vacuum assisted transfer moulding (VARTM), vacuum bag infusion moulding, sheet moulding component (SMC), liquid compression moulding (LCM), RIM and soft touch urethane, ultrasonic welding, etc.

In spite of expansion across the continents, Patel is a firm believer of Make in India. Speaking about it, he says, “Make in India initiative has boosted the morale of the industry. It has
**Sintex has also expanded its presence into monolithic constructions. It is an ideal solution for mass and lowcost housing. It allows speedy construction on mass-scale. The advantages include its shape that gives the building extremely high structural strength against vertical and horizontal forces.**

definitely given a push to exports. We have been exporting high value add plastic components into USA, Columbia and Iran. Additionally, we have also started exports of automotive parts to Asian countries such as Japan and Thailand.”

**The journey of diversification**
Sintex is best known for water tanks but it’s not the only product that it manufactures. In fact, way back in 1990s the company decided to diversify. In 1995 the company commenced manufacturing of SMC moulded products, pultruded products, resin transfer moulded products and injection moulded products. “Post 2000, we started production of pre-fabricated structures for classrooms, booths kiosks and office rooms,” informs Patel.

The prefabricated structures’ applications include classrooms, bank houses, labour camps, anganwadis, sheds, housing, security shelters, portable ATMs, portable toilets, site offices, healthcare infrastructure, defence shelters, etc.

Sintex has also expanded its presence into monolithic constructions in 2005. It is an ideal solution for mass and low-cost

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**Journey**

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| 1931-74 | Incorporated as The Bharat Vijay Mills Limited in June 1931  
Established composite textile mill in Kalol, Gujarat |
| 1975-90 | Commenced manufacturing of plastic moulded polyethylene liquid storage tanks including water tanks  
Introduced new plastic products like doors, window frames and pallets  
Plastic Sections for Conversion into Partitions, False Ceilings, Wall panelling, Cabins, Cabinets, Furniture etc.  
Renamed to Sintex industries limited |
| 1995 | Commenced manufacturing of SMC moulded products, pultruded products, resin transfer moulded products and injection moulded products |
| 2000-15 | Commenced production of pre-fabricated structures for classrooms, booths kiosks and office rooms’  
Acquisition of 74 percent stake in Indian subsidiary of Zeppelin Mobile systems Ltd., Germany  
Entered the housing sector with monolithic construction  
First international acquisition by acquiring 81% stake in Wasaukee Composites Inc., USA  
Acquired 100 percent stake in Nief Plastic becomes Sintex NP, a European group with headquarters located in France  
Acquired automotive business division of Bright Brothers Limited  
Wasaukee acquired 100 percent stake of its competitor, Nero Plastics Inc., USA  
AIP => which is into machining solutions  
SIMOP, SICMO => a toolmaker and high precision moulding (gears) company  
Poschmann (Germany & Poland) => a thermoplastics producer  
SIMONIN => to gain access to a new portfolio of technologies in metal working (stamping, bending, spring), Electronics, and Harnesses |
took over Nief Plastic, a French company that became Sintex NP post acquisition.”

With acquisition of Bright Brothers in 2007, the company entered into the automotive sector. Today, this division is known as Sintex-BAPL. “We at Sintex-BAPL cater to the automotive sector in India (two wheelers, passenger vehicle, commercial vehicles, etc.). This gives us a good balance in the market. We have the strategy to grow into CV space with the evolution of new generation vehicles with technical productssuch as fuel tank and urea tank. We have expertise in different product lines of automotive plastics (aesthetic, functional, precision, design, etc.), which is a differentiator from many others in the field and makes us a total solution provider to customers,” expresses Patel.

When asked about one of the innovations that he is personally proud of, Patel says, “Our European sub-

In India, during the Financial year 2018-19 we are planning for three new plants to cater to new OEM customers and new product lines. In the next three year horizon three more plants have been planned in specific locations for the proximity to the customers.”
Plastic provides many advantages which other options normally do not, for example ease of production, consistency, Light weight etc. Compared to average European or American cars where-in approximately about 120 Kg of plastics is used, in India an average of about 60 to 70 Kg of plastics is used which offers huge growth potential for Indian plastics industry in the near future.

Sidiary, Nief Plastics has integrated electronics with plastics for automotive and other industries. Sintex is focusing on functional plastic components value addition through engineering capability enhancement is significant. Another example is metal to plastic conversion using innovative design and process. It provides lot of opportunity for reducing overall weight of the vehicle in turn resulting in fuel consumption reduction.

Speaking further on the use of plastics in the automotive industry, he says “It provides many advantages, which other options normally do not, for example ease of production, consistency, light weight, etc. Compared to average European or American cars where-in approximately about 120 Kg of plastics is used, in India an average of about 60 to 70 Kg of plastics is used which offers huge growth potential for Indian plastics industry in the near future.”

Research & development
When handling a mammoth size business which is spread across industries, what makes its roots strong is research & development. “R&D is the back bone of our business. Through R&D, we bring new manufacturing solutions to our customers. Our development projects largely are designed keeping in mind the products of tomorrow. The introduction of Bharat Stage-6 and many other opportunities coming up requires an elaborate R&D team and facility which Sintex is building up at a fast pace. In Pune we have a strong design and development team which has technical tie ups with Korean design houses. Our European subsidiary Nief Plastics’ design team works closely with our Indian team for futuristic product development,” he elaborates.

Apart from automotive, the company’s R&D team is also working on the environmentally-friendly products. Commenting on the same, he says “Sintex R&D team is working closely with both Indian and overseas customers for product development which will confer with environmental policies of today and tomorrow. As mentioned earlier our focus has been in this area to offer our customers the best value to meet their GREEN GOALs (Products like plastic fuel tanks, urea tanks, metal to plastic conversion of oil pans, etc.) We are sensitizing our customers to propose recyclable grades of polymers and also help them in following ELV (End of Life Vehicle) norms. In addition, besides ISO14001, our European plants are certified ISO50001 (energy saving management),” Patel says.

Additionally, to make its manufacturing processes eco-friendly, the company is in the process of setting up a 5.6 MW rooftop solar project at its Pipavav plant. This would be one of the largest rooftop solar projects setup in the country.

Looking ahead
The company recently revealed results for third quarter of FY2018. Highlighting the key areas for Q3FY2018, Patel says, “It’s been a smooth quarter driven by strong performance on retail and CM business which represents SBAPL, revenues. For the quarter under review, both the businesses have grown at a seamless pace. Our European operations have seen topline growth and margins are at record highs for their financial year. Domestically automotive continues to be a strong growth area. The process of transferring superior overseas technology, domestically, on the back of higher emission norms, structural changes like electric vehicles ensures strong pipeline for future growth.”

The expansion, diversification & growth does not stop here. Patel already has future plans ready. “As far as Nief Plastics is concerned, we have now a new plant in France (NP NORD). We are targeting acquisition in Europe (Germany) and North America. In India, during the Financial year 2018-19 we are planning for three new plants to cater to new OEM customers as well as to new product lines.

In the next three year horizon three more plants have been planned in specific locations for the proximity to the customers. (Hosur, Gujarat and Kalol LRTM. In three years – the plan is to have plant in Ananthapur for Kia motors, Second Precitec plant in the North zone, and one HVAC assembly plant),” he concluded. Well that’s what you call a mammoth in true sense!