



Mr. Anantha Padmanabhan
(Managing Director)
Alfa Laval (India) Limited

Manufacturing Locally, Acting Globally:

Alfa Laval (India) Limited

Words by: The Executives India

Alfa Laval is a Swedish company that has been a supplier of high-quality products since 1883.

The company's vision is to create better living conditions for people every day and its key areas of technology include heat transfer, separation and fluid handling. Alfa Laval products are recognized throughout the world today with sales in more than 100 countries. Alfa Laval came to India in 1937 and has been a key player in several Indian segments including pharmaceutical, oil and gas, energy, steel and metal, sugar, food processing, pulp and paper, distillery, edible oil processing, brewing, starch, effluent handling, inorganic and the marine industry.

Mr. Anantha Padmanabhan has been working with Alfa Laval for almost 35 years. After leaving India to manage the Middle East and African regions of the company in 1991, he returned to be appointed as the Managing Director of Alfa Laval (India) Limited and Cluster President for India, Middle East and Africa.

"It was a dramatic change," he says when he came back to India from abroad.

"It was a great opportunity for me and even Alfa Laval India changed a lot in these years in terms of its competent manufacturing capability, its reach

and its presence. That is what the best experience was for me when coming back to India. I could do something different from what I had learned outside the country."

Alfa Laval's range of products can be found in anything related to the manufacturing industry. With a huge investment in R&D, there are at least 25 to 30 product launches every year.

"We have a presence in everything ranging from capital equipment till nuclear power plants. We have core products and engineering systems and plans which cover the entire structure. But being a capital equipment company, the growth and development of the company, up to an extent, is our connected economic growth in the country. I am a sworn believer that any progressive company should grow faster than the economy. That is the way the company and its people will grow and that is how the development will happen in the organization. So there are plenty of opportunities in this country even during these difficult times."

2019 was a difficult year for the economy, he states. The first two years after being appointed were very good, but in 2019

the economy started going southwards. Despite that, they were able to deliver positive growth for the company.

"2020 is a tougher year but we hope that we do better than the economy. But if you look at the future, the future is tremendous. There are a lot of fantastic opportunities out there."

Delving into their key business divisions

The company is a major player in the food processing industry in the country for both core products and engineered systems. Other industries include biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries where they supply critical electric plants including equipment used for vaccine processing. Besides these, the general manufacturing industry, chemical industry, infrastructure-related industries and the alternate power industry are areas where the company is expecting growth.

"Another area where I expect to see an acceleration of growth is the defense industry. We supply critical equipment to the aerospace and defense industry." The company is truly flag-waving in the sense that they have been manufacturing everything in India for

the last 80 years. Due to past regulations, the company had an option to leave the country and opted to stay and continue manufacturing in India.

"During those days we were not a private limited company, we were only a 40% owned company of a group, but we still managed to play a major role. For example, if you look at the White Revolution which took place back then, related to milk processing, we played a key role in bringing international technology into that area. From manufacturing the equipment over here till its execution in India itself. As of today, we are manufacturing in India for our country, but depending on the year, anything between 30-40% of what we



The company's petrochemical complexes in the Middle East are larger than the Reliance Industries facility, which is said to be the largest one in Asia. He concludes by saying that the scale of operation is much wider on an international level with a team of managers respectively in Africa and the Middle East but there's also a close connection.

Key areas of focus in the next 12-18 months

Customer service has always been the focal point for most companies.

make each year is exported worldwide.

They also have an engineering centre in India for global food processing projects. India is considered to be a huge market and he seems to be very optimistic about the Indian market.

Differences between India, the Middle East and Africa

Mr. Anantha Padmanabhan took the helm as MD, Alfa Laval India in 2017. Speaking about his experience in these distinct zones, he says there are a lot of common things as well as differences. There is a very large population of Indians mostly in the technical field, he observes, in both the Middle East and Africa. Over the last few years, the

Mr. Padmanabhan asks, what does a customer need in the current scenario? Service and support are a gradual process however, customer service has always been an area that Alfa Laval focuses on, he insists. In that prospect, they increased their service presence by getting a lot of qualified engineers on board and upgrade their technical expertise.

"We moved our service team of engineers closer to our customer bases instead of keeping them in our regional offices.

quality of the Indian manufacturing industry, i.e., their products have been exceptional in the market.

"We also undertake engineering projects from India for the Middle East and Africa in the food and vegetable oil processing industries amongst other industries. The projects are engineering and manufactured over here and then exported to these countries. From a business point of view, it is different.

Particularly, if you look at the Middle East- the operations are done on a larger scale. There are fewer plants but with larger capacities when compared to India which has a large number of medium and smaller sized plants and enterprises."

The intent was to be able to respond to our customers sooner. Each engineer is assigned an area of around 200 km radius from their location so that they can effortlessly reach the customers and solve the issue quickly. Depending upon the need of the hour, the engineer would be travelling either daily or weekly. We need to take care of our people, that's what we believe in."

Today, during the covid-19 scenario, the company is on a journey towards digitalization, but Mr. Padmanabhan

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INDIA, THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA

says that this has accelerated it. The focus for the next one and a half years is to increase the digitalization in the service offered by the company. He calls it 'connected services'.

"In connected services, there would be two divisions. The first one would be a virtual reality experience for the customer where they can see the product and be advised to go through troubleshooting and maintenance of our equipment by contacting our office. The issue can easily be resolved in 1-2 hours without travelling to the location. It saves a huge cost and overcomes the current travelling restrictions. This is the first half.

The second part of the connected services has already started. We deliver equipment with necessary features in corporate equipment so that we can connect the equipment and monitor it remotely. This is called predictive maintenance wherein we are not only maintaining the equipment but also ensuring its constant performance."

The ongoing pandemic has put digitalization on a pedestal and changed the way companies are interacting with customers. The same goes for Alfa Laval, according to Mr. Padmanabhan who considers this to be a high priority.

"Digitalization doesn't mean just bringing in technology, it is a change in the way we work. It's a transformation. The advantage we have as an engineering company is that we also have a sales team who sell our products. A big step would be the transformation of sales and service into digitalization."

Keeping ahead in the market

The company spends a huge sum of money on research and development, according to Dr Padmanabhan. R&D is done at a group level. He says that almost half of their revenue goes into this field. The company had recently launched new products both in India and internationally.

"We are introducing new technology and markets here. But in reality, our competition, people whom I would consider as our competition which is necessary they are also not keeping quiet. So what differentiates us from other competitors? We are continuously working on the competence of our people. Our people of service or sales are actually like partners to our customers. They are trained to understand the requirements of the customers and they work with them very closely. If I look at the purpose of Alfa Laval, we are submitted to creating better everyday conditions for our people and helping our customers become more productive, more energy-efficient and more competent in their

business."

Self-sustainability is another core value of this corporation. Mr Padmanabhan explains that as a core value, they have certain ways in which they utilise energy to manufacture or shipment of a product. Most of their products are offered as a technology and solution where they produce the requirement and deliver it.

This decreases the overall energy and water consumption in the industry. "That is what we are valued for," he says.

Industries in which these technologies are used include the sugarcane industry wherein the company supplies the equipment for the sugar processing plants. As sugarcane is one of the largest consumers of water, it is not recommended to be grown in parts of the country. However, the company's high performing system allows the water to be recycled, thereby directly contributing to sustainability. Similarly, the company supplies equipment for dewatering sludge and wastewater management. The equipment used to dewater sludge known as decanters are processed in these plants. Alfa Laval is the largest manufacturer of this particular equipment in the country. Approximately 50% of what they manufacture is exported across the world.

The company's brand value

Brand value is extremely important at Alfa Laval. Particularly when dealing with certain countries, says Dr Padmanabhan. Considering Asia, the Middle East and its surrounding nations, business ethics is of utmost value in keeping the brand value high.

"Your company can have amazing products and good solutions but business ethics is a necessity. It does not just mean how transparent you are, but also how loyal you are.

As a company, we don't walk away from products in terms of equipment performance and the solutions that we deliver.

When you work in industries which are related to processing, particularly when it is natural products, sometimes what you expect may or may not be the result as planned. There could be differences in what you expected and what you may deliver. But with us, there is a commitment from the company's side always wherein we deliver the product or project we have up taken. We always ensure that it is delivered. And that is the history that Alfa Laval has and we have been carrying it since then. Of course, it is a very old company and very strong foundation but I would say it is



our commitment to our customers- even staying with them if something goes wrong and making sure that we fix the problem and arrive at a solution, that is what has built the trust and confidence of our customer base.”

Supplier relationships

With a base that has been in operation for the last 80 years, the organization has a strong foundation of suppliers.

“Suppliers are the backbone of what we promise, convert and deliver to our customers. We outsource a lot of our fabrication work and also components supply. The good thing is, we have nurtured and supplied a strong base in India. We work with them very closely and listen to them and we work with a very strong but not a very large supplier base. These guys can deliver quality and also follow the safety, health and business procedures. So it is not that we move suppliers. We believe in a long term relationship with our suppliers. Our suppliers have been working with us for many years. That doesn't mean that we don't evaluate them or challenge them or even change them. But we work with them very closely. We support them in improving their technology, health and safety standards. And I would say one of our biggest strengths is that we make payments on time. Possibly, we have

one of the best markets out there where suppliers are concerned,” he concludes.

Making customer relationships work

Similar to their relationship with suppliers, many of their customers have lasted throughout the years. Dr. Padmanabhan says that Mr. Azim Premji, well-known Indian industrialist visited them recently.

“We have worked with his father's family before they started their journey into the IT industry. That was in India during my first stint. Even today we work very closely with them. There are quite a few customers like JSW, Biocon, etc.”

Reaping the benefits of strategic partnerships Predictability and quality of the product is a direct benefit of strong relationships between the suppliers and the company, according to Dr. Padmanabhan.

“We don't waste time in just inspecting once we have developed a product. We are very sure that quality is maintained. This reduces the risk of last-minute rejection which will have a big impact on the delivery time for our customers. That is one strong area and number two is the predictability of the costs. You won't have surprises. You know the cost.

As there is a strong relationship between the suppliers and us, they understand when the market is in difficulty, in fact very evidently during the covid days. We as a company were given special permissions to run the factories because we were supplying equipment to critical industries such as pharmaceutical and defense.

But then it is very clear that we cannot run without our suppliers running. Fortunately, they were ready to support us and it is that strong bond that helps us over all. They are almost like partners to us.”

The company has at least 40 to 50 suppliers who are crucial for its ever-growing progress.

Key Message to everyone

A visionary in the manufacturing industry, he has been with Alfa Laval during its climb up the ladder. His message to all during the pandemic is to stay together, talk to each other and contain it as he expects the pandemic to last at least till 2021.

“To our suppliers, I would say we need to be together, to understand each of our challenges, work and support each other to ensure that we don't stop production. That is what our country needs to do”.

WHEN HITMAN HITS

Rohit Sharma



His journey has been a topsy turvy one. He has seen failure, a lot of it, in his early days. He has been a disappointment in the yesteryears. And then he has followed it up with success at an alarming rate. The stuff he has achieved within a short time is unimaginable.

If Rohit Sharma's era can be divided into 2 parts, it would be pre 2013 and post 2013 era. The pre era would consist of a talented batsmen being delivered a spoonful of opportunities and still failing to rise to the occasion. It wasn't easy for him to break into the team which boasted of yesteryear greats. But then he got the chances and spilled it at a consistent basis. Every time he went out of the team, he would deliver some strong performances in the domestic tourney and be brought back to the national side.

Many would've thought his exploits in the CB series 2008 might have sealed the deal for him. However, that wasn't the case. It's not easy being an in and out person in the team. Playing a game with the fear of being dropped in the next. This in and out process continued until

another masterstroke decision by M S Dhoni changed his career for the better. The Captain Cool promoted him as an opener, an opportunity which Rohit Sharma grabbed with both his hands.

When Sachin Tendulkar scored 200, it took the world apart. While people imagined the possibility of someone scoring 200 in a game, they would've never imagined someone going bonkers and scoring 264 runs in a game. At most grounds, it would be a winning total and Rohit Sharma did it all alone. To top that, the Sri Lankan innings failed to match Rohit's total in that game. And he didn't do it once, he did it thrice. Though, I've my own reasons to believe that his 209 knock against Australia stands right at the top.

If someone told me in 2011 that Rohit Sharma will score 10 hundreds or a single double century or a test debut century, I would've had a better chance of believing that 'the earth is flat'. But this is how Rohit Sharma is. Unbelievable. His transformation is certainly on par with Bruce Wayne's transformation to

BATSMAN.

Often Rohit Sharma is criticized for not stepping up but if you check on the stats, after Virat Kohli, he has been India's most reliable batsman. Talent is surely one word he hates, so we'll use the word blessed. The 30 year old batsman is blessed with style in his rampage strokes. His crickering shots are so beautiful that I can totally imagine bowlers going awestruck inspite of being hit out of the park. For someone who has proved to be an assassin to the bowlers, he's rightly called the HITMAN.

I've been following Rohit Sharma since the start of his career. While I may have not been an admirer in his initial days, I've been a part of this expedition. It was a breathtaking moment as he walked out for the toss against Sri Lanka. From being a player pushed into the team on the basis of his capabilities, to captaining the Indian team a decade later, this journey has surely been incredible to say the least.