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VERSATILE INDUSTRIALIST: DR.A.V.VARATHARAJAN

A Success story of Dr.A.V.Varatharajan, Sandfits Foundries Private Limited

SUCCESS STORY AND CASE RESEARCH

Dr.A.V.Varatharajan is one of the successful first generation entrepreneurs, whose life bears a standing testimony to the transformation power of education and enterprise. Born in an ordinary farming family in a remote, backward village namely, Appanaickanpalayam in Palladam taluk of Coimbatore district, an arid region with scanty rainfall, agriculture was not a livelihood option for him. Educational opportunities were also not widespread. But Mr.Varatharajan's father Mr.Venkatasamy Naidu, was an informed man, who could gauge that education will bring opportunities and will secure the future of his son. In those days high-school education was beyond the reach of the children in remote villages. Fortunately a high – school was started by the philanthropic industrialist Mr.L.R.G.Naidu in his native village Lakminaickanpalayam in the year 1943.The school was not easily accessible and Mr.Varatharajan had to walk 6 kms from his native village to attend the school, which he did with great enthusiasm. In school days he showed keen interest in studies, exhibited leadership qualities and nurtured service mindedness. He proceeded to college studies and completed Intermediate education in 1954 with good grades.

His family circumstances did not permit him to continue his education further and he had to discontinue his studies and was in search of a job.

Under the Mentorship of Legendary Leader Prof.GRD

In his pursuit of a job Mr.Varatharajan with the help of a political leader had the opportunity to meet Prof.G.R.Damotharan, one of the members of the PSG Trust and Principal of PSG College of Technology, and a renowned educationist and a philanthropist. This made a turning point in his life. Prof.G.R.Damotharan enquired about the educational background of Mr.Varatharajan. On knowing that he completed, Intermediate course with good grade, and could not pursue further studies due to financial problem, he offered him a part-time job in the college cooperative stores on a monthly salary of Rs30/-, which happened in September 1954.

In the next year(1955) Mr.Varatharajan was admitted into BE course in PSG College of Technology, with the benevolence of Prof.GRD. He was allowed to continue the part-time job and he completed his BE in the year 1959. The engineering education he had at PSG College of Technology, brought about a great transformation in the personality of Mr.Varatharajan. He was subsequently appointed in the PSG foundry division and became a trusted and favourite lieutenant of Prof. GRD.

Historical Decision

Had Mr.Varatharajan continued as an employee of PSG Foundry Division life would have been normal and career growth would have been progressive and he would have gained a respectable position in the PSG Foundry. But Mr.Varatharajan saw the growth potential in the foundry Industry and decided to choose the same as his career with the financial support of his father he started a small foundry unit called Sanfits with a small investment of Rs 10,000 employing 7 workers, in the year 1962. The first product he produced was flush tanks for the toilets. Mr.Varatharajan deliberately made the strategic decision in the product choice. While most of the foundry units were engaged in the production of machinery components and spares, Mr.Varatharajan chose a product, not so popular, thereby took the risk of entering into an entirely new venture. Subsequently the unit was expanded to cater to the captive needs of local industries.

Another turning point in the entrepreneurial career of Mr.Varatharajan is the engagement with BHEL, Tiruchirapalli, a public sector undertaking, as a sub-contractor and supplier. The business association with BHEL provided lot of opportunities to expand and upgrade his factory. He started producing engineering and automobile components and spares, which accelerated the growth of his industrial establishment.

SANDFITS:Company Profile:

Sandfits Foundries Private Limited is one of the leading foundries in South India. It is a family owned enterprise managed directly by the skilled and energetic members of Mr.Varatharajan's family members with the state of the art infrastructure. Sandfits has emerged as a casting solution provider to a diverse industrial clients. The company is a leading manufacturer of all grades of Grey and Ductile iron castings, conforming to quality standards and grades. Sandfits has become a well established brand in the global market.

Sandfits has two major units, unit I for green sand process and unit II for Resin sand process. These units have the capability to supply various engineering and production needs of Automotive, Earthmoving, Gear Transmission, Hydraulics, Tractors, Textiles and Wind energy. This is largely due to the engineering and manufacturing skills, adequate plant and facilities, skilled workforce and technological excellence. Today A.V.V Group has proliferated into nine companies, all managed by the members of the extended family of Mr.Varatharajan. Totally 2025 employees are working in these companies.

Association Architect

Mr.Varatharajan is a self made man. He sculpted himself skillfully using every opportunity that came on his way and converting challenges he met into opportunities. By the fifty years of dedicated enterprise he has established himself as one of the leading Industrialists of Coimbatore. But he did not confine his entrepreneurial ability only to build his family enterprises. It is the altruism and broad mindedness that brought him to the centre-stage in all community projects through different Industry Associations. He has held key positions in more than 20 Industry organizations and Associations, at District, State and National levels, including President TamilNadu State Small scale Industries Association, President TamilNadu Electricity Consumers Association, President, CII-Coimbatore Zone, President ICCI-Coimbatore, president CODISSIA Intec Technology Centre, Vice –President as well as Honry-Secretary CODISSIA, National Advisory Committee SIDBI, member National Council of CII (Currently held), member of the committee constituted by RBI to study the flow of credit to small scale industries. Currently he is holding a vital position, namely Managing Director CODISSIA Industrial Park Ltd. The organizing ability and leadership skills of Mr.Varatharajan is exemplified by The extraordinary effort he took for organizing Industrial Fairs in Coimbatore since 1982. He is a great organizer and motivator. The leadership qualities in him made him a natural leader accepted by all. He

is also a key player in the influential Alumni net –work of PSG college of Technology as President of PSG Tech Alumni Association. With this leadership quality and organizational ability, he has made two signal contribution to the entrepreneurial class of Coimbatore.

Industrial Trade Fairs:

Mr.Varatharajan is an admirer of the entrepreneurial spirit of Coimbatore. He wanted to exhibit the industrial potentials of Coimbatore in a big way. Coimbatore never had an industrial trade fair till 1980.As Chariman of Industrial Trade fair Coimbatore (INTEC) 1988,he organized a massive Trade Fair, in PSG College of Technology Grounds, with the cooperation of a dedicated team of 100 entrepreneurs and with the logistic support of Mr.G.Varatharaj, the then Managing Trustee of PSG Trust. About 200 stalls in a running mode were set up in the fair by Industries from allover the country. Encouraged by the resounding success Mr. Varatharajan continued to be the Chairman of three more INTEC Fairs at three years intervals upto 1997.

Construction of CODISSIA Complex :

By organizing successive Trade Fairs, Mr. Varatharajan and his team mobilized substantial funds. under the stewardship of Mr. Varatharajan preparation was made to create a permanent trade fair complex under CODISSIA. With the support of the philanthropic industrial houses of Coimbatore and with the active involvement of CODISSIA members and with the financial support of IDBI a monumental structure namely CODISSIA Trade Fair Complex was created in a 40 acre land area near Avinashi Main Road, Coimbatore. It was completed in a record time of 160 days with 1,35,000 sq ft. of built up area in December 1999. The INTEC 2000 was conducted in the New CODISSIA TRADE FAIR Complex. The CODISSIA Trade Fair Complex has the unique destination of being the biggest one in the country, next only to Pragathi Maidian, New Delhi. This is the greatest achievement of Mr. Varatharajan and it was made possible by this perseverance, galvanizing team work and maneuvering ability to achieve even the impossible tasks. He is acknowledged by all as the man behind the marvel.

Master Entrepreneur

Mr.Varatharajan is never contented with his achievements. As a social entrepreneur, he wants to share his rich and intense entrepreneurial experience as an entrepreneur for the benefit of new entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial Development of Coimbatore is his goal. He believes that Coimbatore has a conducive entrepreneurial eco-system. He paid special attention to small scale industries, so that the first

generation entrepreneurs can set foot in a variety of new enterprises. While the Industrial Fairs focus on the large scale industries, for the first time an Entrepreneurial Development Exhibition (ENDEX) was organized in Coimbatore in the year 1982, under the staunch and effective leadership of Mr. Varatharajan. As the purpose of this Endex was to create new entrepreneurs, 2000 project proposals were made available to the public who visited the fair, 834 products of small scale units of Coimbatore were exhibited in the Endex. It was a milestone in the history of entrepreneurship in Coimbatore. According to Mr. Varatharajan as a result of the impact of the event, about 600 new industrial units were started in and around Coimbatore. Mr. Varatharajan is a motivator and master entrepreneur who was instrumental in creating new entrepreneurs.

Dr. A. V. Varatharajan has been recognized in more than one ways through many prestigious awards including, Good Industrial Relationship Award by Govt of Tamilnadu, Lifetime Achievement Award by the Institute of Indian Foundry men Coimbatore Chapter, Guardian of Small industries by TANS TIA, Eminent Engineer Award by the institute of Engineers (India) and on the top of it Honorary Doctorate by Karpagam university.

Inference to young Entrepreneurs

The life of Mr. Varatharajan is full of intense experiences, which have created a deep impression in him and the reflections bear valuable lessons to the youth who aspire to become entrepreneurs.

- 1) Mr. Varatharajan believes that the youth of today have ample opportunities. They should have the courage and commitment to seize the opportunities
- 2) He is a standing testimony that smart work wins. Small assignments provide opportunities and sincere and committed work lead to success and accelerate the upward spiral.
- 3) Mr. Varatharajan is a people man and he has a fine bonding with the workforce. There has never been any strike in his factories and the relation with the workforce is cordial and cooperative.
- 4) Mr. Varatharajan is a team player and his leadership is always been the result of assignment of responsibility by others. He never sought any leadership position and never tried to dominate others. He is quite unassuming and modest in his attitude and expression.

5) Quality consciousness, work ethics and human values are the obvious attributes of Mr.Varatharajan, which any new entrepreneur has to imbibe.

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