History of Sulekha

Sulekha Works Limited is one of the enterprises initiated in pre-independence period in undivided Bengal. From a humble beginning in 1934 at Rajshahi (now in Bangladesh), the company grew up to become the pioneer in manufacturing of writing inks and allied writing instruments and homecare products in India.

At a time, when the movement for independence was at its peak, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi called for educated and enterprising Indians to start ventures that will provide employment to local people and will be pillars of independent India. Development of writing instruments was given a priority as a symbolic defiance to the rule of the Raj.

Instructed by Gandhi, Shri Satish Chandra Dasgupta, erstwhile Chief Chemist of Bengal Chemicals, directed Shri Sankaracharyya Maitra and Shri Nani Gopal Maitra to set up a unit for manufacturing fountain pen ink that will be at par with any other imported inks.

Both the brothers were always encouraged and motivated by their mother Satyabati Devi who was a freedom fighter and the President of Rajshahi Mahila Samity. Ambika Charan Maitra handed over to his two sons his lifetime savings. The decision to set up a small manufacturing unit was supported by all the family members. Satish Chandra Dasgupta gave Shri Nani Gopal Maitra the basic formulation of Krishnadhara, a fountain pen ink developed by him.

However, things were extremely difficult at the beginning. The objective was to develop a formulation that will be at par with the best in the world. Resources were few, even basic instruments cannot be purchased. The ink was christened “Sulekha” meaning beautiful writing. All the members of the family contributed to this endeavour. The women folk took charge of the production while the male members took up the marketing activity. In 1936, Sulekha opened a showroom at the Mahatma Gandhi Road. During that time Shri Nani Gopal Maitra was offered a teaching job in the Calcutta University. The entire earning was invested in the expansion of the business. In 1938, a new factory was opened at the Bowbazar area of Kolkata to cater to the increasing demand.

Sulekha was like a movement in pre-independence India. Many enterprising individuals were inspired by the success story of Sulekha. Many others came forward to assist in this unique venture. In 1939, the works shifted to Kasba area of Kolkata and thereafter moved to Jadavpur in 1946. In the same year the company became Public Limited, ultimately having more than 1000 shareholders. In the 1960s, two other units of Sulekha were set up at Sodepur (North 24 Parganas) and Ghaziabad (Uttar Pradesh). In 1971, during the war with Pakistan, about 150 people, who came here as refugees, were given employment. In early eighties, Sulekha expanded further in India and abroad with several governments from different countries of South Asia and Africa inviting Sulekha to set up their own writing ink and writing instrument-manufacturing units. During that period, there were more than 550 employees of Sulekha.

Unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond its control, Sulekha Works was forced to close down in the late eighties. After a long period of closure, finally, the company again restarted its operations from November 2006. Most of the items had to be reinvented using new and improved raw materials, and Sulekha has again become the most preferred brand of the intelligentsia for its high quality products.