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**IMPACT
FEATURE**

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role in sustainable
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SHREYASKAR CHAUDHARY
Managing Director and CEO, Pratibha Syntex



PRATIBHA SYNTEX

Playing a leadership role in sustainable textiles and products

By K. Gopalakrishnan

Pratibha Syntex, a sustainability-oriented manufacturer of knitted textile products, is a global brand known for its professionalism, its enduring motto of 'fashion should not cost the earth' and for its strong community welfare spirit. Shreyaskar Chaudhary, Managing Director and CEO, elaborates about the company's philosophies, strategies and vision.

Shreyaskar Chaudhary, Managing Director and CEO, Pratibha Syntex



FULFILLING DREAMS

Pratibha Syntex family patriarch's 100th birth anniversary was marked by offering dream houses to employees. Rajesh Prasad Dwivedi is a happy man. An employee at Pratibha Syntex, he is one among 28 workers, including six women, who were gifted houses by the management as part of the birth anniversary. The houses are situated in Pithampur. Dwivedi shares: "This is my dream fulfilled. I have always wanted to own a home. I am thankful to the management for this invaluable gift." Taking care of people, the community and ultimately the country makes for the foundation of the company, a sentiment established by Chhogmal Chaudhary. S K Chaudhary, Chairman, Pratibha Syntex, says: "We engage with our employees who are our pride, both professionally and emotionally. It is my moral duty to help them realise their dreams."

The employees were part of a survey carried out in 2018 when the management inquired from them their wish list. The most commonly quoted wish as owning a house. As such, both S K Chaudhary and Shreyaskar Chaudhary were determined to deliver the promise to their employees in 2021. The lucky employees are those whose CTC is equal to or below Rs 25,000. The total cost of the homes will be borne by the company. Further, 65 children of the employees who excelled in board and college examinations were gifted with scholarships too. And 12 employees were presented with an award that recognised and appreciated them for serving the company for the last 20 years.



It is a 24-year-old fascinating journey of endurance, commitment and delivering promises. Pratibha Syntex, today, is known as a true professional company that is driven by sustainable operations and processes. From fibre to yarn to apparel, it is a vertically integrated manufacturing house providing knitted textile products to global brands.

Driven by Social Commitments

Founded in 1997, Pratibha Syntex aims at creating organic relationships across the value chain. The company connects 35,000 farmers, 10,000 employees and engages apparel brands from over 20 countries. It produces over 60 million pieces of garments annually that comprise inner wear, thermals and sleepwear. The manufacturing house began with 25,000 spindles in 1997 and within two years grew to 40,000 spindles. The mission was to generate employment in the region. Then, in 2000, the company initiated its knitting division. Forward integration in 2001 saw the company establishing its dyeing and garmenting units.

As the demand for specialised yarn grew, Pratibha Syntex came up with a vortex spinning unit in 2008. The same year, a state-of-the-art garmenting unit was built supported by a world-class studio and design house. The guiding light behind the company is Chhogmal Chaudhary, the father of the current chairman, S K Chaudhary. It is from the patriarch that the company has learnt how imparting educating is a worthy means to empower people in society. His belief in social welfare for the larger symbiotic good of the community and, ultimately, the country is actively followed even today. On the occasion of his birth centenary, the Chaudhary family and Pratibha Syntex recently gave away keys to brand new houses to 28 employees, including six women.

As part of its community welfare



program, Pratibha Syntex spearheads various initiatives in the field of education and generating employment for rural folk, including women. Elaborating on the company's philosophies, Shreyaskar Chaudhary, Managing Director and CEO, Pratibha Syntex, says, "The founder, Chhognal Chaudhary, was a visionary and an education enthusiast. Inspired by his vision, even today Pratibha Syntex sponsors scholarships to about 200 bright and deserving students. We have established laboratories and institutes to teach the youngsters computer science, dress designing and tailoring in various regions across Madhya Pradesh."

Accentuating Business USP

As a young enthusiast who believes in change for the better, the scion of the family, Shreyaskar Chaudhary, believes in a hands-on approach, a principal he has adhered to since the time he joined the family business in 1999. Chaudhary brings to the company academic and work experience in plenty. He is a graduate in Textile Technology from UMIST, Manchester. His passion for building processes that minimise environmental impact and maximise social impact is visible in his decisions and actions. Chaudhary has driven many a project aimed at the wellbeing of the community that easily entwines with business. A case in point is 'Vasudha Organics', an agriculture-based venture which is India's first and the largest organic cotton textile vertical and engages farmers to obtain the raw material.

Under his leadership, Pratibha Syntex has invested in the latest textile technologies, including salt-free fabric dyeing – a process that consumes merely a third of water and half the energy otherwise used traditionally, organic and Fair Trade compact mélange spinning, recycled cotton yarn spinning and an eco-garment facility equipped with LED lighting and rainwater harvesting. He shares: "Pratibha Syntex is committed to converting completely sustainable textile manufacturing and to reduce carbon and water footprint by 65% (base year 2011) by 2025. We are now focused on a 'Developed India'. Under the vertical of Vasudha Organics we spearhead our 'Swaraj' initiative and work with 35,000 farmers to create holistic and self-reliant rural communities in Madhya Pradesh."

Fashion Shouldn't Cost the Earth

The ultimate promise that Pratibha Syntex has pledged to deliver always is that 'fashion should not cost the earth' and hence has created an organic value chain across all its stakeholders. Chaudhary informs: "Our apparel customers span categories from outdoor, active wear to essentials and everyday athleisure apparel. Our annual production capacity is 22,000 metres of lint cotton, 28,000 metres of yarn, 10,000 metres of fabric and 60 million garment pieces. We understand the social and ecological impact of conducting business and hence work towards being a responsible global organisation by implementing the four Ps – people,

planet, product and profit – as part of our overall performance management practices.”

Pratibha Syntex works with this vision to be a torchbearer in sustainable textile products and practices. Integrating sustainability is part of the company’s business strategies and hence it engages with other organisations and industry associations to actively advocate for positive change in various operative sectors. It is this enduring philosophy that helps Pratibha Syntex to build sustainable manufacturing processes and export to customers in USA, UK, Europe, and South Africa.

Walking the ‘Sustainability’ Talk

Pratibha Syntex adopts sustainable and clean technologies and performs continuous innovations to come up with eco-friendly designs that have minimum negative impact on the environment and society. The company is aligned with social initiatives as per the UN-stipulated Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Chaudhary says: “Currently we use 67% sustainable materials and the goal is to use 100% by 2025. We are offering a wide range of responsible sourcing products like organic cotton, BCI and blends, Tencel™, viscose, modal and a recycle portfolio, among others. Today, about 22,000 tonnes per year of organic, BCI and Fair Trade cotton is produced. We are one of the largest manufacturers of cradle-to-cradle (C2C) products in the country and supply them globally.”

Pratibha Syntex has taken up organic cotton cultivation to the level of regenerative organic cultivation and is working



with some of the most reputed brands in the US and Europe. Chaudhary continues: “Recently we have developed a sustainable extra-long staple fibre called Vasudha Primo, named after the sustainable farming initiative. It is both organic and Fair Trade-certified.” The company has replaced old machines that were water guzzlers with the new METSA machines. Their commitment to sustainability is further strengthened by their membership of Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC), Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals (ZDHC) and Textile Exchange.

A great example in this initiative is that Pratibha Syntex treats 100% of its wastewater of which 93% is reused in the processes at the facility. The integrated operations are well-supported by an ETP that helps the company achieve zero discharge. Circularity in energy sourcing is enabled when 30% of the total energy consumption is derived by harnessing renewable solar and wind energies. “We are planning to install 5 MW solar panels on the rooftops to become a 100% renewable energy user and a solar-powered factory by 2030. We are also conducting research to incorporate the use of solar concentrator boilers for eliminating the use of coal for steam generators and other heating applications,” Chaudhary informs.

Pratibha Syntex’s product supply chain is entirely traceable from the farm to the finished garment. The company has developed a blockchain tool with the help of a technological partner wherein the user



is given an opportunity to fund a social cause – which vibes close to the heart of the management at Pratibha Syntex. For its efforts in sustainable practices, Pratibha Syntex has been feted by an Australian chain of supermarket and grocery stores with the ‘Supplier of the Year – Sustainability 2019 Award’ for being the top supplier of sustainable products.

Handling the Pandemic Impact

The pandemic has had a strangulating hold on the economy and industries of the world. And the textile and fashion industries too have faced its raw impact. With most of the textile business houses showing negative growth, many have quickly adapted to making anti-microbial treatments for clothing. And Pratibha Syntex too modified its operations to manufacture PPE kits from the scratch. Chaudhary explains: “We set our priorities in place once we understood the situation a little better. We decided to help the health professionals, social workers and security personnel by manufacturing PPE kits and masks. And to tackle the ‘new normal’ way of conducting business, we have adopted unique solutions in 3D technology.”

Today, Pratibha Syntex and its team are well-versed with working on digital platforms – be it adopting buying processes using 3D sampling, conducting audits virtually, enabling digital collections, opening virtual showrooms, participate in virtual exhibitions or meeting vendors. Chaudhary believes that the pandemic has taught the world the importance of climate change and how to keep our footprints green. And a positive aspect of the otherwise deadly virus, Chaudhary feels, is that the world has now put more emphasis on sustainability and sustainable manufacturing practices.

He points out: “Humans do not have a Planet B. Mother Earth is what we have and that is what we must protect. A disturbing thought is that the textile industry contributes 10% of global carbon emissions and generates 20% of industrial wastewater. More importantly, 21 billion tonnes of textile waste is deposited in the landfills every year. Every one of us must work towards reducing GHG emission and water use as also minimise the landfill burden.” He believes that every company must adopt the many new technologies that are available today to make their processes eco-friendly.



VISION 2025: Leading Sustainability Revolution

Pratibha Syntex is looking to become a global leader in sustainable textile products and practices. In alignment with this vision, the company is working proactively towards:

- **Consuming 50% less water in manufacturing** that can potentially save water for 2,000 families. This is in line with SDG Goal 6 which is ‘clean water and sanitation’ and Goal 13 that advocates ‘climate action’.
- **Using 50% renewable energy in its production process.** This will save electricity for the use of 7,500 families annually.
- **Ensuring zero waste in the landfill,** translating into 1000 million tonnes of less trash. This will fulfil SDG Goal 12 which is ‘responsible consumption and production’ and Goal 13 which is ‘climate action’.
- **Zero GHG emission.** All boiler fuel is replaced with biomass briquettes or solar concentrator. This equals to planting 6 million trees. It covers SDG Goal 13 of ‘climate action’ and Goal 12 which is ‘responsible consumption and production’.
- **Green factory premises and surrounding areas.** This aligns with SDG Goal 8 of ‘decent work and economic growth’ and Goal 9 which is ‘industry innovation and infrastructure’.
- **Manufacturing 100% sustainable products.** It fulfils SDG Goal 12 which is to ‘ensure sustainable production and consumption’.

Most importantly, the company’s heart is in the right place. And it beats to the rhythm and tune of sustainability and community welfare, fortified with a dream to become a global leader in sustainable textiles and products. And that is why success for Pratibha Syntex is ensured! ♦