

Volume: 62 Issue: 5
March 2021 Rs. 50

THE TEXTILE MAGAZINE

ASIA'S LEADING TEXTILE INDUSTRY MAGAZINE

IMPACT FEATURE

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Kanishka Arumugam, Co-Chief Executive,
EKKI Pumps, Deccan Pumps(P) Ltd.
and EKKI HOMA (P) Ltd.

Coimbatore has always been a key hub for the textile industry. The city is also a primary centre for the pump industry, a fact that seems to fly under the radar a bit. Almost every top brand of pumps has its presence in the city. But one name that has silently stolen a march over others is EKKI, one of India's advanced pump and water technologies manufacturers that makes products under the 'EKKI' and 'Deccan' brands. Established in 1981 as Deccan Pumps, the company has recently been pivoting from a pump company into a deep tech water technology firm under the name EKKI.

With four state-of-the-art production centres, the group is considered a world leader in the niche field of open-well sump submersibles and is also a growing leader in the pump business in India. The group has





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 “Like his father Arumugam , Kanishka is humble and hardworking for the modern times. Their team also compliments them and this is a unique asset of EKKI. Don’t let the unassuming fun around Kanishka fool you, he is focussed and clear-eyed about the need for R&D, Customer focus and Global Alliances in business success. His strong academic background from prestigious universities , people skills and vision for the industry makes him one of the undisputed next-gen talents within the Water Industry.

- Hoffmann family of HOMA, Germany

forged a joint venture with HOMA, a globally established German wastewater pump technology provider that operates in more than 100 countries. Textile Magazine caught up with Kanishka Arumugam (30), Co-Chief Executive, EKKI, for an exclusive chat at his office. Kanishka has been responsible for bringing the global giant HOMA to partner with their company in Coimbatore,India.

Currently excited about his new projects and also about to start his MBA from the Oxford University (UK) with a focus on sustainability in September, this young and energy-charged, next-generation member of the group, already holds a post-graduate degree from the Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG) at the University of Warwick (UK). He is an engineering graduate from Sheffield (UK)

with a Certificate of Higher Education from the University of Leeds (UK). He is also an alumnus of the Stanford University’s SIGM program (USA). Before joining EKKI, he interned at Xylem Water Solutions (Italy), the world’s largest producer of water technologies, Forbes Marshall (India), a leader in process efficiency and energy conservation technologies, and Rentropsche Vermögensverwaltung (Germany), a private investment firm.

Elaborating about the history of the company, Kanishka says, “My father Shri Arumugam P and his uncle along with a friend established Deccan Pumps in 1981. EKKI was started in 2013 and acquired 100% of Deccan Pumps (P) Ltd. after an internal family business restructuring. I joined the business in 2015. Our family hails from a small village in Tamil Nadu. My parents are from a humble agricultural background. After completing his BSc



(Maths) in 1980 and desiring to start something on his own, my father set up a pump spares shop. This was the time India was witnessing the Green Revolution.”

“Submersible technology was just making its appearance in India. Pumps were expensive, hence unaffordable to a majority of Indian farmers. My father, along with his uncle, decided to start the venture in 1981. There has been no looking back since then,” he adds. The key market segments catered to by the company include agriculture, domestic building services, commercial building services, public utilities, industry and OEMs. The company’s wide range of products comprises borehole submersibles, submersible motors, open-well submersibles, dewatering pumps, sewage pumps, centrifugal monoblocs, jet pumps, regenerative monosets, horizontal multistage pumps, pressure booster systems and digital solutions.

Elaborating, Kanishka states, “Our range spans from pumping clean water to recycling wastewater; thus we complete the water cycle. Today we are the world leader in open-well sump submersible technology. We are the market leaders in this area. We are strengthening our other product segments too and gaining market share slowly.” Another key highlight is the fact that the group produces all the components in-house. “This means better control over aspects such as winding, machining, tooling, design, etc. This control over critical processes and technology has been one of the key reasons for our pumps being a preferred choice in the market,” he explains.

Megatrends like urbanisation, population growth and sustainability are fundamentally changing the water industry. Today 70% of the water resource is used for agriculture purposes, 20% for domestic applications and 10% for



industries. With its focus on sustainability, EKKI has been working on being a SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation for all people) and 13 (combat climate change) company. “Water is still one of the least technologically influenced industries on the planet. I see here an opportunity for EKKI. With our two brands we are stronger than ever before. The company is a zero-debt company,” Kanishka informs.

Alliance with HOMA

According to Kanishka, ‘Made in Germany’ has the best reputation. That a leading German manufacturer has, after searching for partners, across India and China, partnered with EKKI is in itself a testimonial that it can produce world-class quality. HOMA is a well-known brand from the US to Japan. Germany is the heart and soul of HOMA’s business and remains at the centre of the company’s design, engineering and manufacturing capabilities. “Combining HOMA’s German technology with EKKI’s Indian engineering capability is what excites me in this joint project,” Kanishka says. The JV was arrived at in an interesting way. In the past, Kanishka had interned with Forbes Marshall, India’s leading manufacturer of steam and instrumentation products.

His experience with Forbes Marshall evolved into an inspiration during his student days at Warwick University and his thesis titled ‘Growth through Joint Ventures for EKKI’ was about joint ventures in family-run businesses. “In 2014, I met this 75-odd year old gentleman, the CEO of HOMA, Dr. Klaus Hoffmann. He is one of the most respected water technology leaders globally. After a year of persistent and persuasive emails and phone calls, I convinced him to visit EKKI, amidst his busy schedule, for at least a day and tour our unit,” Kanishka recalls.

“He was very skeptical and wondered if





anyone in Coimbatore, India would be able to achieve German quality levels for the Indian market. After the first day of his visit, he decided to stay on for one more day. He wanted to analyze deeper into the processes in our unit. At the end of the second day, he said, 'Young man, I am impressed and want to work with you and your father.' "Once in a while an opportunity like this arises in the global pump industry Kanishka says "We started working with a spirit of cooperation for the first 24 months," he adds. Kanishka personally spearheaded this initiative. He formed a young group within EKKI and code-named the project Rhine after North Rhine Westphalia in Germany. He travelled more than 37 times to Germany. The JV agreement was signed in 2018. Both companies have been working on product development for the last 36 months. "Because of globalisation, the modern day customer demands the EKKI product to be of German engineering, Japanese quality, and Italian finish with American innovation and Chinese pricing combined with India's frugal engineering capabilities. It is a tall order but EKKI is a crusader in this pursuit for excellence," Kanishka states.

According to the Hoffmann family of HOMA, Germany, "The entrepreneurial bug of creating a unique business model and expanding his family business has pushed Kanishka to convince HOMA to partner with him. We are extremely happy with the cost, quality and delivery standards of EKKI. Very few manufacturers have this ability to match our German quality requirements for the Indian market." "Like his father Arumugam, Kanishka is humble and hardworking for the modern times. Their team also complements them and this is a unique asset of EKKI. Don't let the unassuming fun around Kanishka fool you, he is focussed and

clear-eyed about the need for R&D, Customer focus and Global Alliances in business success. His strong academic background from prestigious universities, people skills and vision for the industry makes him one of the undisputed next-gen talents within the Water Industry"

Benefits for Textile Industry

Being based out of Coimbatore, it is but natural that the EKKI Group has identified textiles as one of the key focus sectors. Elaborates Kanishka: "WWTP's, WTP's, ZLDs, STPs and ETPs, which are part of the textile industry, require high-quality pumps. The imported pumps that are mostly used in the industry in India are largely expensive. Finding local service and support is not easy either. At EKKI we are trying to bridge this gap and bring in world-class products that are competitively priced, backed by an excellent local service support network. There are many ways in which the textile industry will benefit. They will have world-class pumping solutions from EKKI which will be designed after studying the complete plant. We will also support them with local service. "We will offer German quality made in India."





Openwell Production Facility



Surface Pump Production Facility



Corporate Headquarters

Coimbatore. Both Dr. M Manickam of the Sakthi Group and Mr.P Nataraj , Mr.K P Ramasamy , Mr. KPD Sigamani of the KPR Group have supported this initiative tremendously. “This kind of open innovation leadership approach is what we need between academia and the industry. What is produced in the academic world should be applied in the industry,” Kanishka states.

Optimistic Outlook

Proud of offering German quality in the Indian market, Kanishka says, “Just as France is known for its wine and Switzerland for its chocolates, EKKI in Coimbatore should be known for pumps and water technology.” I have been very fortunate early in my life with a good educa-

EKKI International Water Technology Centres (EIWTC)

Another initiative by the group has been the establishment of two ‘Centers of Excellence’ called ‘EIWTC’. “We believe that if you want to be able to build a world-class company, it is about having world-class people. Therefore we have invested approximately Rs 75 lakhs to set up two centres of excellence for Pumps and Water Technologies, one at Mahalingam College of Engineering and Technology (MCET) in Pollachi and the other at KPR Institutions in

tion and also meet interesting people and learn from them. Meanwhile, to ramp up for the future, the company has added two manufacturing facilities in the last five years. “The pandemic hit some of our plans. But things may return to normal soon. We look forward to an exciting period of growth. We are also looking to attract good people to work with us. Learn from the past to attack the future in the present,” Kanishka says.



Borehole Production Facility



Wastewater Production Facility