

Rise of automobiles in india (before independence)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Belonged to Francis Spring, at that time Secretary of the Madras Railway Board and, IN 1904, to become the chairman of the Madras Port Trust and father' of the Madras Harbour. The first Indian-owned car in Chennai, MC-3, was building contractor T. Namberumal Chettys. Before long, several Madras firms became agents for British, Continental and American motor car manufacturers. The pioneer was Addison ; Co. Addison's, who have pioneered the cycle industry in Madras, is variously mentioned as having imported petrol driven cars from 1901 or 1904, but a date closer to the former is likely.

It also pioneered the import of motor cycles. On 1903, Samuel John Green of Simpson & Co. , Madras, built India's first car and caused a sensation on the roads of the city. The Madras Mail Hailed its appearance as the beginning of " a new industry for madras". Two years later, Simpson's built the first Steam bus. It ran between Bezwada (Vijayawada) and Masulipatnam (Machilipatnam) in what was possibly the first motor bus service in the country. A future in building steam-powered vehicles was, however, not envisaged by Simpson's who felt that its core business, carriage building, and ergo, body-building should be exploited.

In 1904, when it was experimented with steam cars, it built a ody on a Turner-Miesse chassis and supplied it to Gwalior, when it became the first motorized vehicle used in India for postal and passenger service. In 1907, it built the first Public Service Vehicle for a customer from Salem district; a 16-passenger body fitted to long wheel based 20/32 hp Darracq chassis. It was not till four years later, however, that a real beginning on Public Service Vehicles was made.

A 22-seater body on a 2-ton Halley chassis was supplied in 1911, again to Salem district. And this was followed the same year by a passenger-cum-goods body for Travancore Commercial Company. In 1912 it built a motor ambulance for a local institution. Simultaneously, Simpson's body-building activity for private owners of vehicles centred on building ornate, carriage-style bodies on car chassis. As English-made car bodies were expensive, only chassis were usually imported and locally-made bodies of varied designs were fitted on them.

In 1907, several landaulette bodies were built by Simpson's on Darracq chassis. In 1909, the first coach-type, full sized landau body with separate coachman's seat was built on a 27 hp Delauney Belleville chassis. The first of the "tourer" type bodies was built about this time on Rot-de-Belges and Hotchkiss chassis. In 1910, a Darracq chassis was used for the first double-purpose body built in India, the rear seat removable and conversation possible into a luggage platform. This must have been the forerunner of today's station wagons.

That same year, Simpson's set another record when it built an extra full-sized saloon body on a 90 hp Napier chassis; this was the longest wheel based chassis imported into India for a private car. A year later, Simpson's was building wood-panelled cabriolette bodies on Rolls Royce, Hotchkiss and Napier chassis. When TVS commenced operations in 1912, motor transport received a fillip in south India. The firm was founded by T. V. Sundaram Iyengar to operate a bus service. T. V. Sundaram Iyengar and Sons Ltd. (now Sundaram Motors) became a vehicle dealer in 1922 after the lifting of government restrictions on imported of all types had been put in place

during the Great First World War (1914-1918). By 1920, the number of imported vehicles of all types had grown to nearly 13, 500 and two international automobile manufacturers, Ford and General Motors, sensing the potential, set up local companies that year to sell and service their motor cars and trucks. When Madras tramway men struck work in 1921, three trucks and cars in its factory in Bombay, the first car assembled in India rolling off the assembly line on December 4th.

Two years later, Ford Motor Co. of India Ltd commenced assembly of automobiles in Madras, and the next year in Bombay and Calcutta. And in 1936, Addison & Co. commenced assembly of cars and trucks in Madras. A nascent components industry also began in 1936 when Dunlop's Sahaganj Factory, Calcutta, started producing tyres. A major development in this field was when Simpson's in 1948 began manufacturing the Perkins P-6 automatic type diesel engines, backed by a campaign urging users of petrol-driven heavy vehicles to make the change-over. It also began manufacturing pistons.

Hindustan Motors Ltd. , Calcutta, and Premier Automobiles Ltd. , Bombay, were established in 1942 and 1944 respectively to progressively manufacture complete automobiles. Hindustan Motors, a Birla group company, began manufacturing operations in 1948 by assembling Morris Oxford cars and Bedford trucks, gradually indigenizing the components. In 1957, the Morris Oxford, substantially indigenized, was re-introduced as the Hindustan Ambassador. Premier Automobiles Ltd. (PAL) was promoted by Walchand Harahan, in collaboration with Chrysler Corporation of the United States.

In March 1947, the company began assembling Chrysler products (cars and trucks (except Plymouth only car)): Dodge, De Soto, Plymouth. Indigenization started in 1949 with manufacture of radiators, mufflers, springs, propeller shafts, shock absorbers, etc. In 1950 PAL entered into the collaboration with Fiat, S. P. A of Italy and started assembly of Fiat 1100 cars. In 1953, following the tariff Commission report, the Government of India granted protection to the automobile industry, thus enabling Premier Automobiles to step up its manufacturing programme with full vigor and, in 1954, the first Indian-made 'Fiat 1100' cars rolled out.

The Industry Policy Resolution of 1948 announced that automobiles and tractors would be classified amongst industries which would be subject to regulation and control by the Central Government. Nevertheless, their manufacture - if progressively indigenized was encouraged. With Government intent on having a motor industry set up near each of three major port cities, Ashok Motors, incorporated in September 1948, was established in Madras to assemble Austin cars and trucks in India. In 1950, the company acquired rights to manufacture Leyland vehicles in India.

The name of the company changed to Ashok Leyland Ltd. in 1955. Also incorporated in Madras in 1948 was the Standard Motor Products of India Ltd. , the Standard Motor Company of Coventry teaming up with Union Company (Motors) Ltd. , Madras, to manufacture Standard cars. Production began in 1950 and the first Vanguard rolled out of the Standard Motors Factory in Vandalur, a suburb of Madras, in 1951. Addison's was the authorized agent in India for Nuffield products - Morris, Wolseley and Riley

cars and vans - and for Chrysler's Plymouth, Dodge and De Soto cars and trucks.

In fact, Addison's was at the time assembling Dodge trucks and Simpson's was doing the same thing with the Chevrolet trucks- using imported chassis and CKD - completely Knocked down - packs. In 1949, Addison's got permission to assemble Morris Minors and in November 1950, the first Morris car assembled by the company was driven off the assembly line. The assembly operations had continued for about two years when Addison's applied to government for permission to go in for progressive manufacture.

The government had meanwhile set up Tariff Commission which visited all the important assemblies in India - Premier's, Hindustan Motors, Addison's, and Ashok Motors, which was assembling Austin A-40s - and recommended that Hindustan Motors should be permitted to manufacture the Morris-10 (it was called Hindustan-10), Premier's the Dodge and Fiat, Addison's the Morris Minor, and Ashok Motors the A-40. But legal tangle with Hindustan Motors led to stoppage of products led to stoppage of production of the Morris Minor at Addison's in 1952 - and India lost out a small car long before the Maruti came along.

Addison's then took up the assembly of Ford trucks, but that too came to a halt in a couple of years. As advocated by Sir M. Visvesvararaya as early as the 1930s, development of a fully fledged automotive industry is the key to our economic development. Post- independence, full-fledged manufacture from assembly was a logical sequence. But the real impetus to the Indian

automotive industry came first Tariff Commission Enquiry initiated by the Government of India in the early 1950s.

A comprehensive policy for the development of the indigenous automotive industry was evolved with a seven-fold thrust as follows: * Progressive increase in indigenous content up to 100 percent in raw materials, components and vehicles; * Protection against imports (tariff as well as restrictions on imports); * Healthy domestic competition; Consumer choice of multiple models; * Collaboration with leading manufacturers in the world; * Quality to the best international standards; * Foreign equity participation restricted to 49 percent, excepting in special cases. With this policy, India could manufacture almost every competent that goes into car, commercial vehicle, two-wheeler, tractor or industrial engine. To build a self-sufficient industrial base in a short span of 10 years is not as easy task in my country. This self-sufficiency model is unique. This was implementing with a great vision. " This drive for indigenization paid rich dividends. It is indeed a creditable achievement and laid a strong foundation for the future progress of the industry' In the early years of the automotive industry, more attention was paid to manufacturing cars than buses and trucks.

The progressive manufacture of Tata- Mercedes-Benz diesel trucks and buses in India began in Poona in October 1954, after Tata Motors and Daimler-Benz had tied up. And the next year Ashok Leyland began manufacture of its Comet trucks. Fords and General Motors, not confident of indigenizing production, may have pulled out, but the Indian manufacturers confidently forged ahead. And the Automobile Industry by the late 1950s put down firm roots.