

Not A Luxury, But A Necessity

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As Sri Lanka moves into a phase of high development and growth, businesses and individuals are conforming to a higher standard of hygiene and cleanliness. With manual cleaning becoming a thing of the past, efficiency and effectiveness of professional cleaning has become apparent. Professional cleaning equipment is no longer a luxury, but a necessity, says Wasantha Tudawe, Chairman and Managing Director of Tudawe Trading Company as he outlines the progression of the professional cleaning industry and how Tudawe Trading is ready to meet every cleaning requirement in the country.

By Ayesha Inoon

Photography Damith Wickramasinghe

Tudawe Trading is the market leader in the professional cleaning industry in Sri Lanka and has been the provider of a range of cleaning machinery and cleaning agents for over a quarter of a century in the country. Tell us about the inception and growth of Tudawe Trading over the years.

Tudawe Trading was established in 1980. At the time we were the subcontractors for Tudawe Brothers for specialised work such as electrical contracts, air conditioning contracts and fire contracts done by Tudawe Brothers as well as outside contractors. In mid 1985 we embarked on the professional cleaning industry along with KARCHER in Germany. We started very small with industrial machines, marketing them to various industries such as tea factories and other general factories in the Free Trade Zone. In the late eighties, we created self-employment by enabling people to have their own car cleaning centres by providing high pressure machines, car shampoo machines and vacuum cleaners.

By mid-nineties we had expanded to the domestic machines that KARCHER started selling, including domestic high pressure machines, vacuum cleaners and floor polishers. From then onwards there was steady growth in the domestic machine area and we appointed distributors such as Singer, Arpico and Dinapala as large scale distributors to sell our domestic high pressure washers, floor polishers and domestic wet and dry vacuum cleaners.

At the same time we expanded to automatic car washing in early 2000 by importing and supplying the necessary equipment for an individual's automatic drive-in car wash, which continues to function today. In recent years we moved into medium sized road sweepers, warehouse sweepers and ride on scrubbers.

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Today, cleanliness of the environment has been taken to higher levels than ever before, making professional cleaning an essential service. Could you tell us about how the industry has evolved in Sri Lanka?

People used to think about the cleaning aspect of a building or project only after it was completed. However, in recent years it has become necessary to think of it right at the planning stage and decide beforehand what equipment and cleaning agents you are going to use. We feel that cleaning will now be a very important aspect of all businesses in every sector – engineering, hotels, hospitals, every production factory, nursing homes, hostels – everywhere these machines will be needed.

With the variety of cleaning equipment increasing, people have begun to realise that these machines are necessary and important, especially where hygiene is concerned. Of course when we started in 1985, people said manual cleaning is cheaper. However, now it has been proven that mechanical cleaning or power cleaning is more efficient in every industry.

People have now begun to spend money on cleaning.

Do the products and services offered by Tudawe Trading meet both domestic and industrial needs?

Yes. Domestic machines came in about twelve years ago. In terms of volume, industrial machines sell in a much larger scale since they are essential to businesses but our domestic machines are also popular. We have a variety of cleaning equipment related to the home and garden. These include floor polishers, home steam mop machines, garden pumps and pressure pumps. The steam cleaning machines are far more efficient and effective than chemical detergents to clean the bathrooms in the house, and completely remove the germs as well.

Another domestic appliance we have is the electric broom. This rechargeable machine picks up even minute dust. We have domestic and commercial electric brooms. We also have robotic cleaners. At the press of a button this robotic vacuum cleaner cleans the entire floor of the house. It senses the placement of the furniture and if the doors of the rooms are open it goes into the rooms and cleans as well, coming back to park at the same place. With this machine you don't need domestic

workers to clean the house.

All these equipment are gradually catching on in Sri Lanka.

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Tell us about your after-sales services.

We give serious thought to after sales service. We have big quantities of machines coming in for service and replacements. We have invested a large amount of money for this and we import container loads of spare parts alone two to three times a year. We don't believe in only importing and selling the machines but also in stocking more than the manufacturer's expectations in spare parts - they have a rule of thumb that spares should be ten percent of the turnover of imports. As a matter of fact, the spares we import are about 25 percent of the total imports of the machines. Anything that we don't have we are able to get down from Germany within a period of a week.

We have also established a spacious workshop, opened recently, which can accommodate even larger machines such as road sweepers. We have a daily shuttle service from the showroom to the workshop which promptly handles the repairs and returns the machines.

We also ensure that our staff is well trained, regardless of whether they are from the workshop or the sales department, since they have to know how the machines work and be able to demonstrate this to the customer. Several times a year they travel to Germany or Singapore to the regional workshop for training along with other KARCHER agents from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia. They meet their staff and exchange ideas on how to improve.

Tudawe Trading has gained many achievements over the years, tell us about some of these.

We consistently win awards at the KARCHER seminars held in Saudi Arabia. Although Sri Lanka is a small country the targets we have achieved are well in advance to what they expect of us. We have been awarded for the best cleaning machine sold during that year or for the highest number of domestic vacuum cleaners or domestic high pressure machines being sold, surpassing even Saudi Arabia during years when we were in the midst of the war.

At the recent Hotel Show 2012 we won the award for the best exhibition stall. We were well represented here and had many enquiries regarding our products from hoteliers.

In this booming post-war era, the need for cleaning equipment and machinery has risen. How has Tudawe Trading positioned itself to meet the growing requirements of the nation?

Tudawe Trading is there to fulfill all the requirements of cleaning in this growing nation. We represent every cleaning requirement for every customer in Sri Lanka. With the new motorways coming up there is a need for road sweeping machines which we provide, and miniature sized road sweepers as well for town centres where large trucks cannot be used. We represent an Italian company named Dulevo and are the sole agents for the road sweepers and road washers. The high-end road sweepers from Dulevo can also be used for airport runways.

Apart from KARCHER we also represent two other German companies – Kramer and Beach Tech. We are the sole agents of Beach Tech for their beach cleaning equipment. Their technology is far superior to other brands. Beaches are one of the main tourist attractions in the country and it is important to keep them clean and bring them up to par with international standards. We have small and medium beach cleaning machines and have done several presentations with MEPA – the Marine Environmental Protection Authority – regarding these machines. They are very interested and we are sure we will see these machines in the tourism areas very soon.

We also have leaf and litter vacuum machines from Kramer which could be utilised by hotels. Some are ride-on types and some are walk-behind. Hotels are able to clean the leaves in the garden without the use of ekel brooms, which when used on

tarmac or concrete surfaces make a noise which could disturb the guests. We also have the Trafalgar brand motorized vacuum cleaners from England, which can be used to clear away leaves as well.

We Intend To Go Island-Wide Very Soon And Now Have Service Centres In Jaffna, Anuradhapura, Kandy And Biyagama With More To Come. We Are Making Our Presence Felt In The North And East...

Another product that we have recently introduced to the local market is the ice blaster. This is used in places where water cannot be used for cleaning and instead uses carbon dioxide or dry ice. This is the replacement for the sand blaster which is very abrasive and harmful to the environment. The ice blaster is very useful in the printing and gold industry to clean the moulds. Even statue cleaning can be done with the ice blaster, to give them a fresh look without damaging the original appearance. This may be especially useful in cleaning our historic monuments.

We donate machines and do repairs free of charge where necessary. We also donate machines for various events and to religious institutions. Three years ago we donated seven high pressure washing machines to the Gangaramaya temple and they used it to clean the 800 washrooms in the pilgrim's rest in Kataragama. Therefore we engage in such activities for the betterment of the community.

What other new developments are in store for Tudawe Trading?

We intend to go island-wide very soon and now have service centres in Jaffna, Anuradhapura, Kandy and Biyagama with more to come. We are making our presence felt in the North and East where people are beginning to recognise these yellow machines after many years.

We are now online as well and receive inquiries via the internet. Gradually we are widening our scope of business regardless of whether it's commercial, industrial or domestic. Basically Tudawe Trading is a one stop shop where everything is found for cleaning needs.

