



Plastics are categorized on the basis of their use as commodity and engineering plastics. **Commodity plastics** have lower mechanical strength and can function under less severe environmental conditions. They have a wide range of uses such as packaging, household products, magnetic tapes etc, and **Engineering plastics** have better mechanical, thermal and physical properties such as heat, impact and abrasion resistance. They are flame retardants and chemically inert. They are expensive and are used in applications as a replacement for traditional engineering materials such as metals and alloys.

#### 2.4.1 Properties & Uses of Engineering Plastics:

The use of plastics as an engineering material has grown tremendously because of their several advantages over other conventional materials. These include properties such as light weight, high strength to weight ratio, chemical and corrosion resistance, low thermal and electrical conductivities. The following are some of the important properties which make plastics more useful in practice than any conventional material.

- 1) Plastics possess low specific gravity which is much less than that of metals & alloys
- 2) Their strength per unit weight is much greater than those of metals
- 3) They can be fabricated into any desired shape
- 4) Their maintenance cost is very low and they do not require any protective coating such as paints
- 5) They are chemically inert to the action of light, oils, acids and moisture
- 6) They possess low coefficient of thermal expansion and are very good thermal and electrical insulators
- 7) They can be easily moulded to accurate dimensions even to complicated forms and shapes
- 8) They possess good shock absorption capacity
- 9) They have the ability to take variety of colours, shades and excellent finish.
- 10) Some polymers can also conduct electricity as good as metals called conducting polymers

**Uses:** Automobile and aircraft parts, gears, pulleys, electric iron, frying pans, shock absorbers, pipes for underground installations, telephone parts, switches, plugs, holders, spare parts in industries etc.,