

Femina THE SOAP QUEEN

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THE SOAP QUEEN

As the director of Emami group, Priti Sureka makes it her business to understand the mind of the Indian consumer.
By **Brinda Dasgupta**

Priti Sureka's got a no-nonsense look, but within five minutes of making her acquaintance, we realise she's friendly, yet tough as nails. You've got to be, when you're the Director of Emami Group of Companies and being hailed as the next prominent business scion! Priti says she was born into a family that swore by entrepreneurship.

The daughter of businessman RS Agarwal, (who'd originally built the Emami empire with his business partner RS Goenka), Priti grew up with conversations about product development, packaging, labour meetings and factory takeovers. The young Priti accompanied her father to his Bentinck Street office, thus sowing the seeds of keen business acumen.

The head girl of her school, and a bright student, she graduated in English. Her marriage to Raj Sureka came next, and within a couple of years, Priti and her husband welcomed two new additions to their family—Rohinraj and Avishi.

PLAYING THE MIND READER!

However, business has always been Priti's calling. "How could I turn away from something I'd learned to love as a child?" Priti says, as she absorbed all the knowledge she could, and gradually gained acceptance into the Emami business.

"I'm fascinated by the mind of the Indian consumer," she says, "The international scenario is shaping ►



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PRITI'S SUCCESS MANTRA

- Perseverance and dedication towards a goal
- Ability to work as part of a team
- Multi-tasking and prioritisation to meet deadlines efficiently
- Effective communication skills in every sphere
- Creative problem solving and moving on to the next task

the Indian consumer's mind. What we need is a larger vision, that reverberates beyond borders." Priti heads the innovations and research and development team at Emami, and uses her understanding of the consumer's needs to devise new products.

Currently, she looks after Emami's hair-care and personal-care products division. She's handled major brands like Emami Malai Kesar Cold Cream, Himani Good Morning and Mr Black and Mrs Black. Priti says, "We've also made a foray in the categories of glycerine soap and petroleum jelly with the brands Emami Pure Skin Glycerin Soap and Emma Vasocare." Now, she and her team are working on the launch of hair-care segment products like colourants and shampoos. Priti's also involved with the paper mill range of products; the next time you pick up a Papermate or Classmate notebook, remember that it's the product created by Priti and her team!

And if all this isn't enough, Priti with her brother Harsh, heads the marketing division in Emami as well, spearheading mergers and acquisitions, as well as forging new business opportunities. She's the only woman in the Emami Board of Directors. According to sources, her international vision and belief in proper channelisation of resources are what set her apart.

Of course, she's dealt with disappointments too, one of which



A launch of one of the projects managed by Priti

"I am fascinated by the mind of the Indian consumer. The international scenario is shaping it to a great extent. What we need is a larger vision that reverberates beyond borders."

was the Beauty Secrets by Madhuri range of products. "We'd conceived a whole collection of cosmetics in association with Madhuri Dixit and our team put in lots of time and effort. However, the project failed because the launch coincided with Madhuri's retirement from the public eye—something that didn't go down well with consumers." However, Priti says that every stumbling block is a lesson in disguise.

DOING HER BIT

As far as corporate social responsibility goes, Priti's not to be left behind. "We started the Emami Small Village Shops and Emami Mobile Traders, which provide means of livelihood to underprivileged sections of society, including 15,000 women. We also hold regular medical camps and mobile hospitals to ensure speedy health-care for all."

But if you think Priti's motto is all work and no play, think again. She's a family-oriented person, who makes time for her husband and children no matter what. Her face lights up when you mention 'travelling', and she includes Paris and New Zealand in her list of favourite destinations. Religious pilgrimages at least twice a year are a must, she says. In fact, she tells us she's just recently returned from a trip to Salasirji and Mandawa Fort in Rajasthan.

For the girl who invariably answered 'businesswoman!' when she was asked what she wanted to do with her life, Priti's come a long way, and it's no wonder that FICCI Ladies Organisation has presented her with the Business Aparajita—The Art of Excellence Award 2010. For Priti, however, the road ahead is long, and she intends to do as much as she can to take her father's vision forward. ●