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IN CONVERSATION

“EMAMI IS TESTAMENT TO FOUNDERS’ COMMITMENT OF MAKING IT BIG”

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Boasting a legacy of 50 glorious years, the Kolkata-based Rs 34,000 crore Emami Group epitomises innovation and resilience in diverse sectors including FMCG, healthcare, real estate, and more. **ADITYA VARDHAN AGARWAL**, Promoter-Director, Emami Group talks to **ASHISH SINHA** about the legacy of excellence, visionary leadership and more. Excerpts:

As Emami celebrates its 50th year, could you share insights into the journey?

Over these 50 years, there have been many highs and lows, each contributing to our learning process, making us stronger and bolder with every passing day. We owe our industry standing to the vision of our legendary founders who have fuelled this journey with values, courage, friendship, and progressive mindset for relentless pursuits of their dreams. As part of its 50th year celebrations, the Emami Group formally unveiled a special logo highlighting the legendary founders and the group’s vision, ‘Making Lives Happier’. The group is setting up a legacy-cum-experience centre on the lines of a museum spread over 5,000 sq. ft in Kolkata to highlight its journey as an inspirational experience for the future. A book on the group’s journey is also being planned for publication.

Take us through the last five decades briefly highlighting the key takeaways?

Our journey began five decades ago in a modest 200 sq. ft room on Mukhtaram Babu Street in north Kolkata, where two childhood friends, my father, Radhe Shyam Agarwal and my uncle, Radhe Shyam Goenka, both having relinquished their corporate roles, set foot into the world of entrepreneurship. Emami’s evolution from a ‘startup’ venture with an investment of a very small capital and a handful of cosmetic products to a thriving over Rs 30,000 crore business conglomerate present in multiple diverse industries and boasting over 500 consumer product offerings stands testimony to the courage, deep bond of friendship and relentless pursuit of dreams.

What role does innovation play at Emami and how has it shaped your brands?

At Emami, the most important investment made over that the last few decades has been knowledge acquisition. We strongly believe in the philosophy of “innovision,” where capabilities are driven through world-class innovation based on deep consumer insights, which has propelled Emami to its present stature. Emami believes in leveraging and introducing new business models and service innovations and deploying breakthrough technologies to “disrupt” the “core” and create novel and emerging consumer spaces, both nationally and globally. We are known for marketing innovation and have been a pioneer in promoting the Emami brand through

in-film branding. It started in early 80s with the super-hit movie *Agar Tum Na Hote* starring Rajesh Khanna, Rekha and Raj Babbar. Both the personal care and healthcare arm and the edible oil and foods arm of the group have extensively used celebrities from all walks of life to connect to its consumers.

Emami is known for its disruptive and differentiated brands. Could you highlight some of the legacy products and newer innovations?

Our journey has been marked by pivotal landmarks. For example, the launch of flagship products like BoroPlus (1982), Navratna (1989), and pioneering products like Fair and Handsome (2005). Noteworthy turning points encompass acquisition of Zandu in 2008 and that of Kesh King in 2015. In its branded food business, Emami has introduced popular brands like Emami Healthy & Tasty, Himani Best Choice etc. The group offered distinguishably designed range of pure and blended powder spices and tastemakers Mantra Masala made using the cryogenic grinding technology, where the spices are ground at temperatures ranging from zero to minus 50 degrees C. In its personal care and healthcare businesses along with newsprint and paperboard manufacturing, Emami boasts of hi-tech modern R&D facilities and manufacturing units establishing the legacy of excellence.

What is Emami’s commitment to India going forward? How are you

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gearing up for the future?

Emami Group, built on the ethos of Make in India, believes in being committed to the nation by 'Making Lives Happier' for the past 50 years across various spheres of life. Today, we have 25,000 employees working with us across the world; there are hundreds and thousands of distributors, suppliers and associates with whom we enjoy strong relations. We believe that we have grown not for ourselves but for the nation and for all of these stakeholders who have played major roles in this journey.

For the next phase of growth, the group is actively exploring new ventures and conducting comprehensive studies across seven to eight sectors. The intention is to carefully select one or two sectors to initiate business operations, aligning with the group's commitment to expanding its footprint in consumer-centric domains.

Emami is big on celebrity marketing. How does it work in shaping the brand narrative?

At Emami, we have always been actively involved in celebrity marketing. India is a market of over a billion people and most of this market is rural, and at the bottom of the pyramid. It is price sensitive and emotional. This segment responds to the pull of a visible celebrity. We are amongst the first ones who pioneered the concept of endorsements and in-film advertising with the objective to create aspirational aura and recall. The promotions were directed at arresting the attention. The brand ambassadors were signed based on our brand strategy and narrative and the fit between the brand and the star. Till date, Emami has been endorsed by more than 60 celebrities including Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Salman Khan, Rekha, Katrina Kaif, Juhi Chawla, Preity Zinta, MS Dhoni, Sourav Ganguly, Sunny Deol, among others. 

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