

Marrying scientific rigour

WITH RESPECT FOR TRADITION

Shaheen Majeed, marketing manager for Sabinsa Corp, has grown with the company since its founding by his father, Dr Muhammed Majeed, in 1988 in New Jersey. From its humble beginnings Sabinsa has blossomed into a global supplier of standardized herbal extracts, nutritional fine chemicals, phytochemicals and speciality chemicals with manufacturing, research and growing operations in New Jersey, Utah and southern India.

Fi: How did you get your start with Sabinsa? Did you hang out at work with your father? Do you have any early, fond memories from then?

SM: I was pretty young, but I know this business started in the basement of the apartment we were living in. My father used to take me to the local medical university library, where he would look up various medicinal journals and I would help make copies of pages for him to read later on.

Throughout my childhood, I would see the growth of this company.

My father was in the US about 15 years before starting Sabinsa. He came over from India pursuing higher education; along the way he worked his way up



in various companies, from contract-manufacturing companies that made prescription drugs to head of new product development at some of the country's prestigious top-notch pharma companies. This aspect is important to note, because as I view Sabinsa today, everything we handle in terms of products and documentation has been designed as a pharma company would do. A man of that culture and breed knows no different than his early schooling and principles he learned at his workplace – and what a good thing that was – because the scientific nature of Sabinsa is what set us apart then and continues to differentiate us among our competitors today.

Fi: Were Sabinsa's early products related to Ayurvedic medicine?

SM: Certainly, even today our major products are from the Ayurvedic tradition. This is not specific to any religion (neither Hindu nor Muslim); in fact, I'll admit I feel Ayurveda sometimes is its own religion. The real Ayurveda of India is very intense and followed with precise practice

and care. Ayurvedic doctors are revered for their knowledge of both the products of Ayurveda and of their patients.

Fi: What's the history of Sabinsa's operations in and around Bangalore, India?

SM: Before Bangalore was the 'silicon valley' of India – there was us. No joke, we were in this town manufacturing herbal items before the IT boom hit. But nevertheless, Bangalore has some major advantages. India is a geopolitically diverse business culture – that's my way of saying it can be a nightmare doing business in India if you don't know what you're doing. Forget the corruption, forget knowing the right person(s), it takes guts and determination. Bangalore was business minded; that helped us right away. The pleasant weather was another plus.

Fi: What do you see as the future of the regulatory climate of the natural supplements market from a supplier's point of view?

SM: I never argue with doing things right. We were doing that since day one. It hurts both personally and businesswise when someone else makes mistakes and hurts the entire industry, or when a governing body is one-sided. However, I believe certain items are needed, like the GMPs. It should be the right of our customers and ultimately the consumers to have finished products of superior quality and integrity. In the end, aren't we all consumers as well?

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