

Sami Labs

Provider of complementary natural products for human nutrition and well-being

Sami Labs, a Bangalore based responsible and reliable ingredient company as a sister concern of the USA based Sabinsa Corporation, has emerged as an Indian multinational with offices in nine - countries with revenue of \$100 million



The seeds of a journey of over two decades of Sami Labs were sown by Muhammed Majeed, a young scientist born in Kerala, who did his higher studies in the USA and gained experience working in Pfizer, Carter-Wallace and Paco Research, when he established Sabinsa Corporation in the state of New Jersey, USA, with an initial investment of \$2,50,000 in 1988 with an objective of importing and marketing generic drugs into the US for the drug molecules coming off patent. However, because of the 'generic scandal' in the US Food and Drug Administration, his focus shifted and a new line of products was introduced into the US based on Indian herbal plants.

Sharing about his journey at his office

at Peenya Industrial Area in Bangalore, Dr Muhammed Majeed said, "Persistent efforts backed by our validated clinical findings helped us introduce to the Americans that ayurveda from India can act as a complete curative to their various ailments. They started recognising the potential of Ayurveda during mid 1990s and termed it the alternative medicine. To facilitate the increased demand for innovative application-based products, set up Sami Labs (formerly known as Sami Chemicals & Extracts till 1998) in 1991 at Singasandra in Bangalore as a research and development (R&D) facility with a team of six people."

Commenting on the then market trends for nutraceuticals in the country, Dr Majeed said, "Then the market

in India was not that great. We focused our efforts to cater to the USA customers, which offered us a great opportunity. However, things started changing over the years. Looking at the opportunities we decided to expand our businesses in India during the beginning of 2000. Today our main thrust and focus is on new product development and market oriented research."

Sami Labs came up with its first manufacturing unit at Kunigal, a 100% export oriented unit in 1996. With an efficient production team in charge, all the R&D products were scaled up successfully to meet customers' needs. In 2000, the company set up biotechnology facility involved in the production of high-value enzymes and probiotics. In 2002, Sami Labs

joined hands with India's premier technology institute Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Mumbai, to set up a Super Critical Fluid Extraction (SCFE) facility at Nelamangala near Bangalore with indigenous technology which uses carbon dioxide in its critical phase as extraction medium. Dr Majeed, proud of being an Indian and settled in America, said, "We have adopted this indigenous and affordable technology which is better and can be compared to the best in the world. The unit is fully computerised and it avoids industrial pollution and ensures safety of its products when compared to traditional extraction methods."

Sami Labs set up its fourth facility at Genome Valley, Hyderabad, in 2007 situated in a 4.5 acre plot and has all basic conventional facilities. The company has a continuous solvent extraction plant at Dobaspet, Bangalore, set up in 2008 with a state-of-the-art technology. This is about 20 times more than that of the conventional batch type extractors. "This plant is ideally suited for 'low active content raw material' which necessitates large volume extractions with



low solvent consumption," Dr Majeed said. "We will be expanding our manufacturing facility in India by setting up a state-of-the-art plant in Hassan in Karnataka. We will be investing about Rs 45 crore for these activities during this financial year."

Besides having facilities in India, Sami Labs has a sixth facility at Utah in the USA which provides a strong formulation support and is equipped to handle various dosage forms. The stick pack facility offers convenient package form for the growing industry needs.

With five manufacturing facilities in

India, Sami Labs has been manufacturing and marketing phytonutrients and standardized herbal extracts, specialty fine chemicals, and organic intermediates used in the nutritional, pharmaceutical and food industries over two decades and also providing custom manufacturing from lab scale to pilot/semi-commercial scale, and process development. The products offered by Sami Labs are certified Kosher, with many certified Halal.

The company selects ingredients with a long history of traditional success and conducts clinical research to confirm their efficacy. Research is the foundation of Sami's success. "We have so far invested over Rs 100 crore on R&D and human resources and continue to invest about 5-6% of our sales on R&D," adds Dr Majeed.

Recalling one of the major achievements of the company, Dr Majeed said, "Our R&D centre at Bangalore received the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), for its R&D efforts in 2002. Although our company has been nominated on two more occasions for this award, we couldn't get this prestigious award again as this honour is awarded to an organisation only once in a life time."

Sami Labs along with Sabinsa Corporation have received a number of new patents, bringing the company's patent portfolio to 95 in over 20 countries (including the USA 39, Europe 10, New Zealand 9, Japan 6, Aus-

Associated companies

- Sabinsa Corporation - Founded in 1988 in the USA, it is the international marketing arm of Sami Labs
- Sabinsa Australia, Sabinsa China, Sabinsa Europe, Sabinsa Japan, Sabinsa South Africa, Sabinsa South Korea and Sabinsa Vietnam – (All these sister companies represent Sabinsa's marketing and sales platform as well as service and cater to the expanding market of standardised herbal extracts, nutritional fine chemicals, phytochemicals and specialty chemicals)
- Hanbury Fze - established in 1997, is a leading trade house in Dubai, involved in trading standardised phyto extracts, phyto powders, probiotics, enzymes, fine chemicals, cosmeceuticals, and minerals for the Health Food and Cosmetic Industries.
- Sami Direct - started in 2010 is committed to offer a range of nutraceutical followed by cosmeceutical products
- Finest Inc - has developed an innovative line of herbal dietary supplements under the Allovedic Remedies brand.
- ClinWorld - a CRO that provides the nutraceutical, cosmeceutical and pharmaceutical companies with outstanding strategy as well as a full complement of quality clinical development and regulatory services to accelerate the drug development process.
- Organica Aromatics - set up in 1999 it is in the development of high quality Aromatic Chemicals and Perfumery Compounds for the flavour and the fragrance industries.

tralia, Canada and India (3 each) etc.) and over 70 applications are pending. It has launched 53 products and many products are in pipeline. With so much Intellectual Property to protect, the company has also increased enforcement action worldwide.

"With over 120 scientists continuing to research naturally derived herbal remedies to address common health concerns in our patent portfolio is growing exponentially, so we have strengthened our legal teams accordingly to protect our IP," said Dr Majeed. "As we work to find safe and effective ways to keep the world's population healthier, ensuring that our patents are protected allows us to continue to invest in innovation. Our responding strongly to patent infringement protects the investment of our customers at the same time."

To strengthen its success on a research based foundation, Sami Labs entered into a tripartite agreement with the Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (IIIM), based in Jammu, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), whereby it acquired two Indian patents pertaining to *Pterocarpus marsupium*, an existing ingredient in its global product portfolio.

Sami Labs also entered into a memorandum of understanding with India's premier ayurvedic practice and research organisation, Arya Vaidya Sala, Kottakkal (AVS), to further the use of modern scientific methods and technology in exploring more deeply the knowledge base of Ayurveda, with the ultimate goal of improving the health of mankind.

Pleased with this development Dr Majeed said, "We are honoured by this recognition for the validity of the pioneering work that we have been relentlessly pursuing for the past 26 years in manufacturing and marketing standardised medicinal plant preparations in a manner acceptable to the developed world."

Achievements

- Nutra Excellence Award – Best company in the field of research & development” at the 8th Nutra Summit - India held in Mumbai - 2013
- Amulya 2012 Award from Karnataka State Innovation Council and Department of Industries and Commerce for having filed an application entitled Oleanoyl Peptide Composition, Process and Methods - 2012
- National Award for R&D (Food 360 Awards), from Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) – 2012
- Certificate of Excellence Award for exports from Federation of Indian Export Organisations – 2008
- Export Excellence Award 2006-2007 from Federation of Karnataka Chamber of Commerce & Industry – 2007
- Award for R&D efforts in industry in the category of “chemical & allied industries”, by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India – 2002
- Award for Excellence in Export Achievement for sub 100% EoU scheme in “Agro and Food” sector in Karnataka from Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India – 2002
- Visvesvaraya State Award (Gold Medal) for Excellence in Exports for the period 1997-2000 - 2002
- Award for Outstanding performance from the Spices Board, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India -2001
- Award from the Spice Board for developing Export Markets for *Garcinia cambogia*, a standardized *Garcinia* extract for weight management – 1997
- Recognition of in-house R&D by the Ministry of Science and Technology, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Government of India - 1997
- National Award for Quality and Innovation (Basic Drugs) from the Directorate of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India -1994

Sharing his future plans for Sami Labs, which has 14 associate companies having a presence and strategic alliances in USA, Europe, Japan, Australia, Middle East, South Africa, China, Vietnam, and the Philippines with 1,000 employees (850 in India), Dr Majeed said, "We are Rs 400 crore company in India. Under the leadership of professionals, we are growing at a rate of 20-25%. We see more growth in the coming years as markets are opening up in India and South East Asia with a lot of awareness about nutrition and nutraceuticals."

Dr Majeed, who built the company with the help of many professionals but without any financial aid, said, "Looking at the growth of the market, my team is insisting that we should look for Initial Public Offering (IPO) or diluting the stake," while commenting on the company five years down the line.

"It is my firm belief that integration of modern scientific techniques into ayurvedic herbal armamentarium can produce new drug molecules for India and for the world. A revisit into ayurveda with the help of modern scientific approach from pharmaceutical era can produce very useful and safe products. Drug discovery from ayurveda using technologies developed in the pharmaceutical era, can result in substantial number of newer molecules for modern therapeutic use. We should adopt the modern testing and evaluation tools to identify useful herbal drug molecules. I call upon all established ayurvedic groups in India to work with research based groups such as Sami Labs to develop innovative therapeutic products for the molecular age," concludes Dr Muhammed Majeed, Founder & Managing Director, Sami Labs. NS

Narayan Kulkarni