



# Being Burman

Energetic and dynamic Amit Burman, Vice Chairman, Dabur, has an entrepreneurial acumen which has bought him success at a young age.

Text by: Arati Thapa and Soumya Jain

The driving force behind Dabur's 3,000-crore business empire, Amit Burman, 40, is an unconventionally modest man. We met him at his Rouse Avenue office, dressed simply in a check shirt and a black trouser. His high chair is framed by a splatter of multi-hued drawings by his children. Talking in a gentle, animated voice, he tells us about his life, career and fitness mantra.

#### Amit and Dabur

Amit did his bachelors in Industrial Engineering from Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA, USA, masters in Industrial Engineering from Columbia University, USA, and then MBA from University of Cambridge. Armed with these qualifications and with a work experience of 10 years, Burman started working with Dabur seven years back as an engineer. It wasn't easy in the beginning, as he says, "being in the family helped. My father (GC Burman) told me to start from the beginning, and go up learning all aspects and functions of the company. I always had the entrepreneurial bug in me."

Dabur was started in 1884 as an Ayurvedic company, which sold its products only through doctors. The

brand is still associated with purity, health and nutrition. "When we started in 1884, the products were sold mainly through doctors like our forefather Dr SK Burman. Today, we have the largest distribution network in the FMCG sector," Burman says. The company has forayed into attractive packaging. Celebrating its 125th anniversary this year, the company now wants to be seen as a brand that manufactures products for the young and trendy. They have evolved from an ayurvedic company to a FMCG company.

Burman contemporised Dabur with the introduction of Real and Activ juices. "One of the starting points of updating Dabur was when I introduced the fruit juice section. Though the market had tinned or canned fruit juices at that time, people were not happy consuming it with preservatives, added sugar, and so on. Real Juice with the attractive packaging made us the market leader in this category." The company has recently launched a refreshing fruit beverage, Real Burrst.

With a profit of 31 per cent in the last quarter, Burman is absolutely confident that Dabur's profits will keep surging, recession notwithstanding.



AMIT BURMAN WITH WIFE DIVYA





FAMILY ALBUM: AMIT AND DIVYA WITH THEIR TWO CHILDREN DIYA AND ADHIRAAJ

“Our products are value-for-money. People wouldn't restrict buying toothpaste or hair oil since it's a daily use product. In my opinion, we are almost recession-proof.”

**Family Pride**

Born and brought up in Delhi, Amit met his wife Divya while she was in college. After a few years of strong friendship, the couple fell in love. Their whirlwind romance hasn't ended yet. They have two children Diya (10) and Adhiraaj (7). Simple and elegant, the couple shows off their classy taste with their choice of wardrobe and furnishing.

A spa and sea lover, travelling spells joy for the Burmans. “My friends tease me that my wife should be the counsel general of Thailand since she is always there! There are fabulous beaches there and the kids love the water,” he says. Disney World at Orlando is another favourite destination. “Divya and I love going to Italy. Florence and Rome are two places which we really enjoy visiting. An exotic place we have been to is Croatia. It's a very beautiful place with lovely beaches and unexplored

**A spa and sea lover, travelling spells joy for the Burmans. “My friends tease me that my wife should be the counsel general of Thailand since she is always there! There are fabulous beaches there and the kids love the water,” he says. Disney World at Orlando is another favourite destination.**

countryside.” The next in line are Jordan and Guatemala.

**Talking Shop**

Apart from leading the family business of Dabur, Burman now directs his own ventures too. Lite Bite Foods is a joint venture by Burman, Rohit Aggarwal and Tejpavan Gandhok. Aggarwal is the Director of Shree Bharat International Ltd and Lana India, and a board member of Mount Everest Mineral Water Ltd, while Gandhok has held partnership roles in private equity and strategy consulting



**DABUR INDIA LTD**

Dabur India Limited is a leading Indian consumer goods company with interests in health care, personal care and foods. The company is dedicated to providing nature-based solutions for a healthy and holistic lifestyle. The company has three major strategic business units - Consumer Care Division (CCD), Consumer Health Division (CHD) and International Business Division (IBD); two Subsidiary Group companies - Dabur International and the Fern Care Pharma; and eight step-down subsidiaries - Dabur Nepal Pvt Ltd (Nepal), Dabur Egypt Ltd (Egypt), Asian Consumer Care (Bangladesh), Asian Consumer Care (Pakistan), African Consumer Care (Nigeria), Naturelle LLC (Ras Al Khaimah-UAE), Weikfield International (UAE) and Jaquiline Inc, USA. Eighteen ultra-modern manufacturing units are spread around the globe. Dabur's products are marketed in over 50 countries. It has a wide and deep market penetration with 47 C&F agents, more than 5,000 distributors and over 2.8 million retail outlets in India. The company has a turnover of about Rs 3,000 crores approximately.



## PROFILE

**Burman now directs his own ventures too. Nature's Bounty is a wine and alcoholic beverages company. Lite Bite has strategic alliances with many leading players like PVR Cinemas, PepsiCo, etc.**

with leading firms such as Halcyon, AT Kearney, Stern Stewart & co, the Boston Consulting Group and advised many Indian and international corporates on their organised retail entry/growth strategies. He is also a director of Nature's Bounty, a wine and alcoholic beverages company established by Burman. Lite Bite has strategic alliances with many leading players like PVR Cinemas, PepsiCo etc. Burman calls them a "like-minded group of people".

"We saw the retail space growing with supermarkets coming up. So we thought of launching a fast food chain like McDonald's and Pizza Hut. He has a chain called 'Street Foods of India', which whips up Indian food made and served in a healthy way. They have opened eight of them in Delhi already. He is planning to open pizzerias and has recently opened a restaurant called Punjabi Grill in partnership with Jiggs Kalra.

Meanwhile, Divya invests her time and creativity in crafting candles. The little company, which she started with her friend Vernaz Mittal, is called Wax Works.

### Demystifying Burman

Burman is fun-loving, easy-going and thoroughly disciplined. He starts early and drives in his SL 500 Sports Mercedes to office by 9 am, finishes his work by 5.30 pm and works out at his personalised gym from 6-7 pm. Burman and Divya, in fact, have these little competitions on who can outdo whom when they are working out. After that, it's either family time at home or an occasional social evening. On weekends, he prefers to relax with his family. Sometimes, on Saturdays, he treats his family at any of his outlets.



do spas regularly." Grooming, however, doesn't feature very high in his list of priority. He loves his Blackberry and replies to every email within 24 hours. However, he doesn't force the same regimented habits on his team.

### My Alter Ego

Burman is passionate about bartending and flying as well (he has a private pilot's license). "I started bartending when I was working in Colgate-Palmolive in New York. Being an engineer, I worked in the night shifts and returned home at 6am, caught up with some sleep and practiced flying for three-four hours. Flying over he headed straight for a bartending course. Another one of his passions was learning and playing saxophone, but that never happened. ■

Burman is a self-proclaimed fitness freak. "I have a strict health regime. I workout at my gym five days a week. A fitness instructor comes home, and I do weights with him. I am conscious about my health and how I look. That's why I

### LITE BITE FOODS

Lite Bite Foods Pvt. Ltd. is a F&B retail chain of restaurants and food courts comprising both leading international and in-house concepts. The various formats are Quick Service Restaurants (QSRs); Casual Dining Restaurants (CDRs); Fine Dining Restaurants and Food Courts (big and mini food courts), Caterings and Cafés that caters to discerning guests with its cuisines covering the world's best food concepts. Lite Bite Foods is also among the first few food retailing ventures selected to set up F&B operations at the modernised domestic airport in Delhi.

Photographs by: Rohit Suri