



Villoo Morawala Patell

Educational Qualifications

B.Sc. Osmania University, Hyderabad

M.Sc. Bombay University, Mumbai

Ph.D. University Louis Pasteur, Strasbourg, France

Post Doc. University of Gent, Belgium

Dr. Villoo Morawala-Patell is Founder, Chairperson and Managing Director of AVESTHAGEN LIMITED. AVESTHAGEN is globally recognized as a leading systems biology company with a unique model focused on the convergence of food, pharma and population genetics. A convergence that leads to continuous and path-breaking innovations in predictive, preventive, personalised healthcare.

Dr. Patell started her professional career at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) at Hyderabad in 1978. She worked on projects on the biochemistry of nitrogen fixation in legumes, standardizing a screening technique for drought tolerance, and on Heat Shock Proteins in Millet and Sorghum, amongst other projects.

Dr. Patell's Ph.D. studies in plant molecular biology at University Louis Pasteur, Strasbourg, France, on Fundamental aspects of the plant mitochondrial genome, coming face to face with the role of each nucleotide and its importance in cis-, trans-, splicing and RNA editing, ignited a passion to learn and manage this information and develop new products. The Ph.D. was followed by 9 months as a post-doc at the Ghent University, Belgium, working with scientists from all around the world that really sparked off her entrepreneurial spirit. She then returned to India with an idea rooted in her mind – to create a platform that would bridge Academia and Industry. Thus was the seed sown that would give birth, a few years later, to Avesthagen.

On return to India, she established herself as an independent scientist and principal investigator working from the National Center for Biological Sciences (NCBS) with funding from the Rockefeller Foundation and subsequently at the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS) in Bangalore with a grant from IFCPAR, the Indo-French Centre for the Promotion of Advanced Research.

Dr. Villoo Morawala-Patell experimented with different models on how best to create a sustainable innovation platform for the nation. In 1998, she registered Avesthagen as a public-private model as perhaps the best way to build an innovation model. The public-private model found few takers from Academia, Industry, and Financial Institutions. The need for speed in gearing up for the 2005 opening up of India to WTO was the trigger to go solo and to create a full private entity, Avestha Gengraine Technologies Pvt. Ltd in early 2000. A year later, ICICI Ventures, Global Trust Bank and Tata Industries invested 8 crores in the company, which was now settled in its new laboratories in the International Technology Park at Whitefield. This was only the beginning. Since then Villoo has worked ceaselessly to build the company and raised significant international funding, attracting foreign investors and partners who saw a potential in the young Indian biotech sector and particularly in this fast growing company with its promise of innovation in predictive,

preventive, personalized healthcare and Environment-Adjusted crops and Nutritionally enhanced seeds for agriculture. Avesthagen now has 650+ employees, foreign investment stands at 31% today. Investors recognized that Avesthagen was unique. Most Indian biotech companies survive by doing reverse engineering or contract work. Dr. Patell set out to give Avesthagen a strong focus in innovative R&D in diverse areas such as bioPharmaceuticals, bioNutrition and bioAgriculture. Today, the company has a portfolio of 350 patents filed, continues to build and intensify its intellectual property through product commercialization. Dr. Patell has built a “business of Science” and developed a new model of “Science of Business” to deliver ideas to products. Collaborating with several giants of global industry has also been one of Dr. Patell’s far-sighted endeavours. Avesthagen has fruitful partnerships for co-development and research, with Cipla for bioPharma development and manufacture, a tie-up with France’s Groupe Limagrain (the largest seed company in Europe) to create new varieties of seeds. with bioMerieux for diagnostics and alliances with Groupe Danone, and Nestle Nutrition and Godrej Industries. Dr. Patell is a much sought after speaker at national and international events and conferences, and has given presentations at The Harvard University, at Stanford University and the Kellogg Business School.

Dr. Viloo Morawala-Patell was born on 18 June, 1955 in Navsari, Gujarat and grew up with her parents Dara Dinshaw Morawala and Daulat Sorabji Kasad, brother Mahiyar, and sister, Bakhtawar in Nizamabad, Telangana District. She went to Boarding School at Age 6. In 1978, she married Zareer, a jazz pianist, son of Dr. Rashida Reporter and Mino Patell, and has two daughters Farah, aged 26, and Sanaya, aged 24. They are both Ph.D. students at the University of Cambridge, UK and have recently joined Avesthagen as Board Members.