

# YOUNG & RARING TO REDEFINE HOSPITALITY

AMRUDA NAIR HAS HOSPITALITY IN HER DNA. HER GRANDFATHER WAS THE LEGENDARY CAPTAIN C P KRISHNAN NAIR, FOUNDER OF THE LEELA GROUP. HOWEVER, FROM THE START, SHE HAS BEEN KEEN TO PROVER HER OWN METTLE AND HAS COME UP THE LADDER DEVELOPING SKILLS AT EVERY STEP...

BY: **AMRUDA NAIR**

THE WORD 'Araiya' simply means "something beautiful and divine" which illustrates succinctly what I wish to achieve in the hospitality industry. Setting the standard for modern Indian hospitality is the ultimate vision for Araiya, with an emphasis on seamless technology, engaged team members and adaptive designs. We are driven by the need to stay updated on how guests are evolving and how their needs are changing, allowing us to adapt and exceed expectations. We are young and raring to showcase our unique offering that will redefine the hospitality scene in India.

While I have always been proud to be a third-generation hotelier and conscious of my legacy, it has always been important to me to create an identity of my own. Starting my own hospitality brand was on a bucket-list



exercise I did in my early twenties and the last decade and a half has gone into systematically working towards it, starting with exposure to hotel operations with a brand like Mandarin Oriental, to pursuing a career in real estate, finance and asset management in various Asian markets and running a brand with over 600 rooms in the Middle East as CEO.



### **Araiya Palampur**

Araiya Hotels is a culmination of that journey, all the learnings and global experiences. My vision with Araiya is to create a hotel brand that is technology-led, accessible and representative of world-class service, with the warmth of Indian hospitality. I believe that if one is clear about one's vision and communicates the rationale behind it, the team is more likely to adopt the organisation's vision as their own. On the other hand, plans can change and one must also be open to feedback and willing to adapt to a volatile environment.

My approach to all projects is to break it into smaller, achievable goals – a trick I learnt from long-distance running. If there's a personality trait that has helped me stay the course in my career, it is perseverance.

Even though I came from a family that was in the hotel business, it was a personal choice to be a hotelier. I studied Economics and also went to the London School of Journalism before I made a conscious decision to pursue a career in hospitality. I enjoy the process of identifying a site and evaluating the best options for its development. I believe that the hospitality industry attracts a unique personality that has an innate sense of service. If not hospitality, I would have pursued a career in another service oriented business that invests in unlocking human potential.

I have been fortunate to have several role models in my career. My grandfather, Captain Nair, was a force with a

distinct ability to take risks and make bold decisions. I also got a chance to work with Jennie Chua, the Grande Dame of Singapore, a trailblazer who wore her success with strength, dignity and humility.

At Araiya Hotels, we believe in the opportunity that tier two and tier three cities offer and have actively pursued projects in undiscovered locations with potential. Araiya Palampur is a gateway to discovering the beauty of the Himachal mountains, while Araiya Calicut, that is scheduled to open in Q4, 2020, is a spa resort located near river Kadalundi. Essence by Araiya, Ahmedabad is a luxury resort under construction on the 270-acre Glade One Golf Course in Gujarat. Hotel projects are a great way to create a destination and tap into the local talent to create employment opportunities outside the metros.

I have always believed that being a woman is my strength. Women leaders have to believe that they deserve a seat at the table and act like it. Displaying self-belief and confidence is an important and effective way of gaining respect. My message to women hoteliers is to look beyond the glamour and find a niche within the various specialised fields that the industry offers, be it customer service, finance, sales, interiors, architecture, engineering, projects, development and asset management as the opportunities in the field are endless.

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