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# Forbes

## LEADING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS



Sairee Chahal

Suchita Oswal Jain

Upasana Arora

Dr Mariazeena Johnson

Dr Sangita Reddy

Suchitra Ella

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Network 18

# Preface

To take up the mantle of starting or leading a new business venture is no job for the faint hearted. To decide to embark on this journey of entrepreneurship as a woman in a traditional and patriarchal society like India is even more daunting. And then to make waves and come out on top is definitely an impressive feat of achievement. This supplement of Forbes wishes to shine a light on the trailblazing women entrepreneurs in India who have stood against all odds.

Either self-made or multiple generation entrepreneurs, the women in this issue decided to forge their own path to success. They chose industries they were passionate about and took about the task of transforming it, whether through enhanced and transformative products or innovative technology. In the field of healthcare, Upasana Arora decided to improve patient rights and safety when she took on the helm as Director of Yashoda Super Speciality Hospitals.

In the reverse of the brain-drain scenario, Suchitra Ella, whose family had settled in the United States, urged her husband to return to India to pursue entrepreneurship. As Co-Founder and Joint Managing Director of Bharat Biotech, her efforts have been instrumental in bringing India its first homegrown vaccine, COVAXIN, to take on the COVID-19 virus.

In the case of Suchita Oswal Jain, a third-generation entrepreneur, an overhaul of the design and manufacturing process was undertaken to turn Vardhman Textiles Ltd into a billion-dollar organization. To help India make progress on the global front, Dr. Mariazeena Johnson, as Chancellor of Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology, is inspiring young minds to devote their time to technological advancements, a cause worth championing. For Dr. Sangita Reddy, technology is the need of the hour in healthcare, and taking on the leadership role as Joint Managing Director of Apollo Hospitals Group, she is setting benchmarks in futuristic health care projects that will encompass IOT, AI, data analytics, drone tech and block chain.

These women entrepreneurs are committed to improving their respective industries in India and putting India on the map as an inclusive and innovative place to do businesses.

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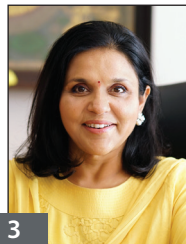
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## Contents



3

**Dr. Sangita Reddy**  
Joint Managing  
Director,  
Apollo Hospitals  
Group



4

**Suchita Oswal Jain**  
Vice-Chairman &  
Joint MD,  
Vardhman Textiles  
Limited



6

**Mrs. Suchitra Ella**  
Co-Founder,  
Joint MD,  
Bharat Biotech



8

**Dr. Mariazeena  
Johnson**  
B.E., MBA., M.Phil.,  
Ph.D., Chancellor



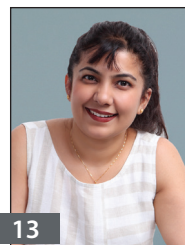
10

**Ms. Upasana Arora**  
Director,  
Yashoda Super  
Speciality Hospitals



12

**Dr. Grace Pinto**  
Managing Director,  
Ryan International  
Group of Institutions



13

**Neeru Sharma**  
Co-founder,  
Infibeam Avenues  
Limited



14

**Sairee Chahal**  
Founder & CEO,  
SHEROES  
(women-only social  
network)



16

**Chitra Gurnani**  
CEO and Co-founder,  
Thrillophilia



# DR. SANGITA REDDY ACCLAIMED SPEAKER ON GLOBAL HEALTHCARE FORUMS AROUND THE WORLD

**D**r. Sangita Reddy is a Global Healthcare Leader, Indian Entrepreneur and Humanitarian. She is the Joint Managing Director of Apollo Hospitals Enterprise Limited - Asia's largest and most trusted healthcare group. Dr. Sangita Reddy is also the immediate past president of The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

As one of the founding team members of Apollo Hospital she has promoted multiple significant initiatives and is passionately committed to transforming healthcare system through technological advancements and is accelerating positive transformation in enabling universal access to healthcare.

A firm believer in the potential of leveraging technology in a holistic manner, Dr. Sangita Reddy is focused on setting benchmarks in futuristic health care projects enabling IOT, AI, Data Analytics, drone tech and Block Chain. A driving force behind the adoption of innovation and foundational technological building blocks like PHR the Telemedicine platforms have successfully evolved into Apollo 24/7 a patient centric digital healthcare platform. It is under her leadership that Apollo Hospitals has received three consecutive HIMSS-Elsevier ICT achievement awards and four hospitals have achieved the HIMSS Level-6 certification. Apollo Hospitals Hyderabad has emerged as Asia's first Health City.

As a policy influencer and reformist, Dr. Sangita Reddy is actively engaged with governments and industry bodies on aspects of public health and policy development. As an appointed member of CSIR overarching committee she works closely with the Indian scientist and research ecosystem to help accelerate the use of science for the development of the country in all spheres both economy, social well being and healthcare. She has advocated and influenced policy reforms and is an acclaimed speaker on global healthcare forums around the world including the World Health Congress. As a member of the Rockefeller Working Group she contributes to the development of private sector's role in the global healthcare industry.

Committed to building a more inclusive in public and private sector healthcare ecosystem in the nation, one of her initiatives has been Apollo Clinics which aims to build a string of tech enabled primary care clinics across urban and rural India. Dr. Sangita Reddy is also Chairman at Apollo Knowledge, an education initiative focused on shaping healthcare human capital for tomorrow. She also heads Apollo Philanthropy, an umbrella entity encompassing 'Save a Child's Heart Initiative', SAHI, CURE and the Billion Hearts Beating Foundation, Total



**Dr. Sangita Reddy**  
Joint Managing Director, Apollo Hospitals Group

**Committed to building a more inclusive in public and private sector healthcare ecosystem in the nation, one of her initiatives has been Apollo Clinics which aims to build a string of tech enabled primary care clinics across urban and rural India. Dr. Sangita Reddy is also Chairman at Apollo Knowledge, an education initiative focused on shaping healthcare human capital for tomorrow.**

Health – a unique integrated rural health model with a focus in public and private sectors.

Dr. Sangita Reddy has been conferred with an Honorary Doctorate by Macquarie University Australia, in recognition of her untiring efforts and resolute commitment to bringing transformative changes in healthcare, development of Health IT and championing manifold initiatives both in India and abroad. She is the Honorary Consul of Brazil in Hyderabad, appointed by the Govt. of India and also an erstwhile member of the World Economic Forum.

Dr. Sangita Reddy has been a recipient of numerous prestigious awards for business and leadership. She ranks 32 on INDIA TODAY group Top 50 Annual Power List for 2020

# SUCHITA OSWAL JAIN – A TRAILBLAZER LEADING THE VIBRANT WORLD OF TEXTILES



**Suchita Oswal Jain**

Vice-Chairman & Joint Managing Director, Vardhman Textiles Limited

**T**extiles not only create lifestyle trends but also provide a livelihood to many. One of the most dynamic industries, it is a world of creativity governed by change - appealing as also challenging. Entrepreneurs need grit, determination and above all passion to choose and lead such an industry. Suchita Oswal Jain is one such trendsetter driven by zeal and ably leading the country's largest textile manufacturing company as the Vice-Chairman & Joint Managing Director, giving every reason to business families to prepare their daughters for the role from the beginning.

## Preparing the Ground

A third-generation entrepreneur, Suchita grew up observing and learning from her father Shri S P Oswal – a Padam Bhushan awardee who has nurtured Vardhman Textiles with unflinching values, commitment to deliver excellence and a progressive approach.

Suchita used to visit Vardhman's manufacturing facilities with her father as a kid and started envisioning the dream of taking the organization to new heights from her childhood. Entrepreneurial traits like the clarity of goals and long-term vision reflected in her actions from the very beginning. To prepare herself for achieving the ambitious goals, she not only took education from some of the most premier institutions across the globe including London Business School (UK) and INSEAD (Paris) but also trained in a real business environment by working in different departments at Vardhman.

## The Turning point

When Suchita joined Vardhman, the Group was already a leader in yarn manufacturing. Suchita, however had her eyes set on bigger goals. Her plan was to diversify in a channelized manner continuing the tradition of balanced capacity expansions and planned growth.

In the early 90s, soon after joining the business, she initiated the forward integration of Vardhman Textiles by establishing Group's first fabric manufacturing facility in Baddi, Himachal Pradesh and gradually adding dyeing, processing and printing units. What started with the manufacturing of greige fabric has today grown to become an arm of Vardhman contributing to about 30% of the Group's turnover.

## Challenges & Opportunities

When Suchita decided to explore the possibilities in the uncharted territory of fabrics, she knew the challenges ahead were going to be huge. There were established players to compete with and fabric manufacturing required a different kind of technical expertise and supply chain. The thing in her favour, however, was her father's guidance who taught her to not stop trying until the desired goal is achieved.

She worked tirelessly to establish the manufacturing plant, achieve operational excellence, connect with the customers and deliver up to their expectations. Leading the marketing initiatives, she made several game-changing decisions including the establishment of product development & design cell. She also played an instrumental role in making Vardhman the largest vertically integrated textile manufacturer in the country by setting up a composite unit at Budhni, Madhya Pradesh.

Not to settle for anything less than excellence, she targeted the most quality-conscious markets. Delivering to exacting standards, she has made Vardhman a preferred partner for a slew of international brands including GAP, Target, Banana Republic, Marks & Spencer, Uniqlo, H&M, C&A, Muji, Calvin Klein and Kohl's.

At present, Suchita is involved in crucial business decisions

including long-term strategy, corporate service, governance policies, CSR initiatives, new projects, expansion planning etc. As the Vice-Chairman, she is playing a decisive role in all business segments – yarns, fabrics, acrylic fibre, garments and sewing threads. She is also leading initiatives towards digitalization and sustainability. While Sustainable development and standardization are not new concepts for the organization, she is the one to propel the development of a Sustainability framework through which tangible goals can be identified and achieved.

### Characteristically Unparalleled

Suchita asserts perseverance and an unyielding attitude. She is detail-oriented, agile in her actions, dynamic in approach, blazing with future-ready ideas and grounded in the vision and wisdom of her father. She also is a strong advocate of women empowerment and believes that it is the responsibility of women in power to support their sisters and daughters. “As a businesswoman, I believe in creating opportunities. Growth has to be holistic. Over 35% of our workforce comprises women employees. Connecting women to the mainstream economy and helping them acquire skills are crucial to empowerment. We are working in both directions firstly by ensuring a regular paycheck and secondly by training them” explains Suchita.

### Accomplishments

Ms Suchita Oswal Jain stands as a testimonial to how ambitious goals are achieved. She is the winner of the Outstanding Women Leadership Award 2021 and AsiaOne’s Women Empowerment Entrepreneur Award 2019-20. Under her leadership, Vardhman has garnered several awards including Niryat Shree and Textile Export Promotion Council’s Awards (TEXPROCIL). Her philanthropic initiatives have been honoured by India CSR Network. She also is a Board Member of International Textile Manufacturers Federation (ITMF) and a Member of the National Executive Committee of Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI).

Suchita thinks of accomplishments as a measure of growth, not as a sign of victory. She is not the one to rest on laurels. When she joined Vardhman, she knew how much she could contribute to the organization and was also aware that a scale had already been set up and there was only one way to go – forward.

### Leadership Quotient

With decades of leadership experience under her belt, Suchita firmly believes that an organization, to deliver excellence, should be agile, flexible, responsive and fleet-footed. Inclusive growth and participative management are at the heart of her leadership style. She follows an open-door policy, involves employees in the decision-making process and strives to create mutual opportunities for all stakeholders. As a person who believes in evolving, she emphasises the need to foresee the change and prepare to adapt accordingly. She encourages an environment conducive to growth and keeps taking initiatives to positively engage employees. Even in the pandemic she dextrously managed her people and the business.

Terming Vardhman as a family, she stated - “When the pandemic hit the country, there was little awareness about it. We have over 27,500 employees and some of them live inside the factory premises. The first thing I needed to figure out was ways to ensure their safety and health, not just physical health but emotional and mental.”



Ms Suchita Oswal Jain with her father Shri S P Oswal, Chairman & Managing Director, Vardhman Textiles Ltd.

She got her teams to quickly stabilize the situation through a threefold strategy of Prevention, Action & Innovation i.e. preventing the spread through compliance to safety norms, acting on the challenge with healthcare support, and continuing business utilizing digitalization. She further took a proactive step of conducting a mass vaccination drive as soon as the vaccine was available. Over 90% of Vardhman’s employees are inoculated and the company is operating on full-scale.

### The road ahead

Vardhman is a billion-dollar organization headquartered at Ludhiana, having over 20 manufacturing units strategically located across Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh & Gujarat. The company exports to 75+ countries. Suchita’s primary goal is to make Vardhman a one-stop solution for all textile-related requirements of its customers. Besides, she is determined to continue her endeavours to penetrate deeper into the industry, along with keeping all the other aspects under close eye. She wishes to establish the finesse of Indian workers and entrepreneurs globally while consciously fulfilling the social and environmental responsibilities. “The focus is on improving, innovating, and adding to the margins. Everything is becoming global and therefore competitive. We will be focusing on value-additions” she states.

# PASSION TO TAKE ON CHALLENGES, VISION TO LEAD, MISSION TO ACHIEVE

*As the Joint Managing Director of Bharat Biotech, her discipline, commitment, dedication, hard work, leadership and organisational abilities, including corporate governance have helped in fostering a sustainable growth path for the company. Her divergent thinking with a new outlook has helped in shaping the challenging yet path breaking efforts of Bharat Biotech, stand out in a short span of 25 years. As she proudly calls herself the "Heart of Bharat Biotech".*

**Mrs. Suchitra Ella**  
Co-Founder, Joint MD, Bharat Biotech



As a young student, Suchitra graduated with distinction from the University of Madras in economics & philosophy. Moving to the US in 1986 along with her husband Dr. Krishna Ella, she steadfastly pursued a career interest in financial operations, marketing & business - working full time & studying part time at Wisconsin & S Carolina for more than a decade. She further completed a post graduate diploma in Patent Law from NALSAR Hyderabad.

In the year 1995, when many Indians were anxiously looking for a chance to get to the United States of America with ways and means, she proposed the idea of returning to India to pursue the dream of entrepreneurship to her husband Dr. Krishna Ella, who had been through graduate school at the University of Wisconsin, Madison and a NIH researcher at the medical university of S Carolina, Charleston. Both of them were permanent residents at that time in the USA, both quit their promising and growing careers to relocate to India along with their two young children, merely 12 & 6 years old.

Returning to India, she started everything from scratch to build Bharat Biotech as a co-founder, the company that completed over 25 years. Mrs. Suchitra, spearheaded Bharat Biotech from constructions to execution, financial planning, HR & Admin, purchase, commercial & establishing pan India marketing operations with a team of 150.

Later on, she took the responsibility to establish marketing & corporate communication, corporate social responsibility, corporate affairs & corporate governance at the board level of Bharat biotech.

During the early years as a 1st generation start up entrepreneur, she was a jack of all trades, including answering the phones at the front desk, to wear a marketing executive hat meeting medical institutions and doctors with her new product or to travel to Delhi to

meet government officials for necessary regulatory permissions, she did not take a back step working beside her spouse Dr. Krishna Ella.

Right from the beginning, implementing & inculcating good business practices was very important to her. Employing women at work & practising equal opportunities at work was a trait she nurtured from her growing years and working in the US. she would never weigh the hat she was wearing, each and every role was important, no matter how big or small, quality, efficiency, productivity and timely results mattered at the very core of each task undertaken. Racing against time has been the underlying common denominator to this day from day one, even with COVAXIN.

Under her holistic thought leadership, team Bharat Biotech has established an excellent track record of innovation with more than 145 global patents, a wide product portfolio of more than 16 vaccines, 4 bio-therapeutics, a robust pipeline of 10 plus products, supplies of over 5 billion doses of vaccines to more than 123 countries, well equipped with WHO Pre-qualifications & other international approvals to become a major supplier of vaccines to India & the world.

The company continues to lead innovation and has developed vaccines for Polio, hepatitis-B, Typhoid, tetanus toxoid conjugate typhoid, influenza, H1N1, Rotavirus, Japanese Encephalitis, Rabies, Pentavalent & COVID vaccines. Development of Chikungunya, Zika, HPV, Cholera, Malaria and many others are in the pipeline.

Bharat Bio is proficient in conducting extensive multi-centric clinical trials, and has completed more than 75 trials enrolling more than 700,000 participants, in over 20 countries globally. Product research & clinical development of first-time products for several infectious diseases have been successfully accomplished in the last 25 years.

As the Joint Managing Director of Bharat Biotech, her discipline, commitment, dedication, hard work, leadership and organisational

abilities, including corporate governance have helped in fostering a sustainable growth path for the company. Her divergent thinking with a new outlook has helped in shaping the challenging yet path breaking efforts of Bharat Biotech, stand out in a short span of 25 years. As she proudly calls herself the "Heart of Bharat Biotech".

### Birth of Covaxin

When SARS-CoV-2 virus struck the globe, many countries were caught in the backfoot, confused & scared of the global pandemic unfolding itself. But Suchitra and Dr. Krishna Ella were restless to pursue a path of unprecedented risk and challenges to face the pandemic by beyond the box thinking, to find potential solutions to overcome the grim scenarios in India.

Bharat Biotech wrote to The ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research) requesting the sars SARS-CoV-2 virus strains to develop a potential vaccine candidate on this deadly virus, from NIV Pune who had isolated and were the national repository of the strains, when the ICMR agreed to share the strains by end April, senior most scientists from Bharat Biotech went to Pune by road during the lockdown 1.0 to transport the strains intact, frozen at -70 degrees Celsius, by themselves as there were no logistic operators available to handle live strains of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

As the virus reached the facility there was no looking back -they were grown, multiplied, inactivated, stabilised and formulated into a potential vaccine candidate in just 30 days, the vaccine candidate was first deployed in animals as part of regulatory procedures to be tested for safety. Then followed by 3 phases of India's largest human trials to prove COVAXIN's safety, Immunogenicity & efficacy in 28,000 volunteers!!

The rest is history as we all know. Suchitra Ella has been working on campus physically through the pandemic lockdowns since April 2020 along with her 2000 employees & staff at Bharat Biotech, in genome valley, 75 kms away from the comfort of her home. Her goal was to be strong and extend moral support by motivating all her fellow employees & their families, across the various departments who were deployed in 24x7 operations over the last 16 months. Barely catching up with enough sleep or time to rest even on Sundays, with a sole objective to develop a safe, effective indigenous COVID vaccine from India.

At 1AM, early hours of January 12th 2021, when the trucks rolled out of Bharat Biotech's facility with Covaxin to 11 different cities in India, to kickstart the national vaccination program for the first responders of the country, which was to start from 16th January. It was by far one of the most remarkable days of her career & entrepreneurial journey. She was watching it live with uncontrollable tears rolling down her eyes!

Recently Bharat Biotech Concluded its final analysis for COVAXIN® efficacy from Phase 3 Clinical Trials. The company has announced its efficacy analysis that demonstrated COVAXIN® to be 77.8% effective against symptomatic COVID19, through evaluation of 130 confirmed cases, with 24 observed in the vaccine group versus 106 in the placebo group. Efficacy analysis demonstrated COVAXIN® to be 93.4% effective against severe symptomatic COVID-19. Safety analysis demonstrates adverse events reported were similar to placebo, with 12% of subjects experiencing commonly known side effects and less than 0.5% of subjects feeling serious adverse events. Efficacy data demonstrates 63.6% protection against asymptomatic COVID-19. Efficacy data demonstrates 65.2% protection against the SARS-CoV-2, B.1.617.2 Delta variant.

COVAXIN® is well underway with additional clinical trials to establish safety and efficacy in children between 2-18 years of age. A clinical trial to determine the safety and immunogenicity of a booster dose is also in process. Several research activities are being carried out parallels to study variants of concern and to assess their suitability for follow up booster doses.

The company is driven by science and validated by empirical clinical research evidence & study data. Its commitment to data transparency has been proven again with 10 publications on COVAXIN®, covering all aspects of product development, all within 12 months, in the world's best peer reviewed medical journals.



Covaxin was a challenging project because of the tight timelines and it was like taking the "bull by its horns". She always says she has a great team with remarkable strength as an organization to pull through any difficult situation, with a little bit of good luck & tons of well wishes from all over.

Besides COVAXIN, Mrs. Ella works closely with the medical & regulatory teams for Covid-19 Intranasal Vaccine. The intranasal vaccine candidate developed in collaboration with Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis for a novel chimp- adenovirus, single dose intranasal vaccine for COVID-19 has demonstrated unprecedented levels of protection in mice studies.

Besides her work at Bharat Biotech, Suchitra Ella manoeuvres multiple roles in various professional & non-profit organizations and won many reputed awards. She likes to promote women empowerment, is soft hearted towards the underprivileged, and leads CSR activities from the board level. She is very active on her twitter account, updating the world about the development, supply and progress that's going on around her.

She is the deputy chairperson of CII SR, a founding board member & past chairperson of United way of Hyderabad, founding & past national chairwoman of Indian women network, CII, a life member of the Red Cross society, a former member of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), among many other organisations, she has enjoyed serving and giving back to society. She allocates time, energy & resources to women empowerment, education, health & enabling livelihoods for many deserving sections of the society.

Suchitra Ella, a working mother & a serial entrepreneur, has two grown up children - Dr. Jalachari Ella & Dr. Raches Ella, mother-in-law to Dr. Aditya Chowdury & Sahari Cherukuri and a loving grandmother to Keshav Rana.

# UNDERTAKING RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN EMERGING THRUST AREAS

## How they have started

Entrepreneurship is an Art. Technology driven entrepreneurship is really a smart act. Innovation has become the fulcrum of industry today. Technological advancements are driving the market. Yesteryears strategies of entrepreneurship needed attention to fine tune as per the modern day requirements. But the key is "Thoughts are Roots of Life". I was fortunate enough to have strong roots of life as well as entrepreneurship imparted diligently by my father in the early days of my career.

## The unique characteristics

The uniqueness of my success is interesting; in the way it is defined in this travel. Every success taught me to select the next challenging idea that leads to a different dimension of subsequent success. Exploring hidden opportunities is one thing, I consistently do to understand and deal with the gaps in the market.

Every challenge that I had faced in entrepreneurial ventures was converted into an opportunity. I always believe "Good is good enough". For a successful entrepreneur, "Completeness" is a prime factor in handling any issue at work. Entrepreneurship road as known to everyone is not smooth always. Lateral thinking also helps in analyzing a problem. Problem skills cannot be taught always, sometimes we learn through the process of sailing through the challenge. We develop a repository of experiences in facing challenges. Sometimes, we learn by looking our inspiration in handling such challenges. In my perception, an Inconvenience in negative perspective is the "Problem", an Inconvenience in positive perspective is a "Challenge". Ignoring inconvenience is not the solution, encountering with enough strength and resolve is should be the mission in overcoming challenges. Opportunities always welcome such positive minded people and become ladders of their success.

## Challenges and Opportunities

Entrepreneurship journey has not only economical but also emotional dimension. Family support is crucial in facing and overcoming challenges. Opportunities emerge out with lateral thinking. Any linear method of understanding a problem makes it more complex at times; exploring other means to resolve helps to find solution. A path finder does this act more smartly. Not all roads leads to destinations, it's a crazy maze puzzle. One has to explore with determination to arrive at the destination.

Another aspect of opportunity is the pace at which we grab it. Opportunities are not perennial, sometimes they



**Dr. Mariazeena Johnson**  
B.E., MBA., M.Phil., Ph.D., Chancellor

*"I always believe "Good is good enough". For a successful entrepreneur, "Completeness" is a prime factor in handling any issue at work. Entrepreneurship road as known to everyone is not smooth always. Lateral thinking also helps in analyzing a problem. Problem skills cannot be taught always, sometimes we learn through the process of sailing through the challenge. We develop a repository of experiences in facing challenges.*

resemble deserts. Perseverance is the quality that helps us when opportunities challenge us with their distant presence. The question is simple. How long we should be patient enough to sail through the right boat? The response to such question is also interesting. Patient makes us better with time but should never be measured against time. In other words, Passion, Patience, Perseverance are features of a problem solver. This approach not only equips us to handle challenges but also enable us in proactive mode to create ample opportunities.




## Turning point

“Turning Point” is another aspect in success. Sometimes, Life turns around and around at the same junction. Time seems to be too slow in our journey, a quick moment, a spark of intelligence, a step towards future changes the pace with which we think, act and achieve. This moment in everyone’s life is a Turning Point.

For an Entrepreneur, the turning point is the “Idea to Prototype” stage. Once the business model at small scale is ready, next step is attracting the financial resources to implement in bigger canvas. Business Model Canvas also hints at such short journeys in the early stage of entrepreneurship. Gender becomes rarely significant in this saga of this entrepreneurial success.

The policies of government, the change in the customs, and the revolution in the thinking of modern society surpassed the clutches of gender based development. Humanity should thank for its own evolution of intelligence in coming out vicious circle of gender centric ideation. Today, women are working as security personnel. Small scale industries, Self Help Groups (SHGs) and many NGOs are accommodating and encouraging women entrepreneurship. Government is offering financial assistance through various popular schemes. Skill based opportunities are many in today’s market. Banking Sector, Government Agencies, NRIs, Angel investors are supporting home based micro business, Start-ups and small scale industries. Particularly the support to women entrepreneurship is increasing year by year.

Women entrepreneurs are most successful in past few decades. Passion driven Perseverance is the cause behind every success story. Please never allow setbacks to stop you in moving forward. In my view, Women shall become Wonderful Mentors to Men, this mentoring starts when we are mothers, this mentoring creates impact on many lives, when we transform ourselves into able administrators. The inspiration we draw from most successful women entrepreneurs is phenomenal. In the past one and half decade, we all have witnessed the global presence of women entrepreneurship.



*Today human-centric empathy is missing in technology driven mechanized modern society and the minds steering the society. In my view, a leader should have a wonderful coordination between mind and heart. I wonder sometimes, when I know about certain incidents from Dr.M.G.R and my father.*

## Their leadership quotient

Leadership is another important part of entrepreneurship. We have a well-established and deep-rooted opinion that every successful entrepreneur is a great leader. This need not be true in every case. “Leaders are not just successful people; they see indeed the people in their success”. I have experienced presence of two of such tallest leaders in my life. One is Dr. M.G. Ramachandran, and the other is my father Col. Dr. Jeppiaar, incidentally the staunch-follower of Dr. M.G.R. Both of them dreamt and dedicated their lives to the people. There are list of leadership qualities one can make out from the way they celebrated their lives with people centric thinking.

Today human-centric empathy is missing in technology driven mechanized modern society and the minds steering the society. In my view, a leader should have a wonderful coordination between mind and heart. I wonder sometimes, when I know about certain incidents from Dr. M.G.R and my father. Mind and Heart function in synergy that energizes the surroundings. We are awestruck often, the way they thought about others and the pace with which they worked for the welfare of people.

Ironically, technology made by man is challenging human potential. Modern day leaders often are tech-savvy. Time management, Self-discipline, Sustained growth and Successful thoughts are the four essential attributes of a good leadership. A point to mention is the transformation of a good leadership to great leadership. This is not a simple task. Early success guarantees good leadership but great leadership demands a heart that beats beyond horizons of followers expectations. To quote in simple terms, Climbing Everest is a simple challenge compared to standing on the peak of it for a long time. Great leadership demands such courage when it is most needed. Organizational Challenges, Unforeseen outcomes, Pressure from different corners, Over expectation of people around, Our own success created benchmarks will always try to test a good leader, when they surpass this test with grace, this is the sign of transformation into a Great Leader. Great leadership requires such capacity, will power and integrity. I believe in such leadership quotient that is bigger than our own imagination and humble to reach out majority expectation.

## The road ahead

The road ahead is wonderful. The road covered so far is eventful. The turnings are amazing; the thoughts supported in such narrow turnings are precious, and all the above my people stuck to my ideology in realizing organizational dreams are my real assets. Every morning should inspire us to do something good to others, every night before we sleep; our work should inspire us to plan for a better tomorrow is my philosophy towards LIFE.



**Ms. Upasana Arora, Director,**  
Yashoda Super Speciality Hospitals

## COMMITTED TO SERVE THE COMMUNITIES BY THE HIGHEST QUALITY IN AFFORDABLE PRICES

### How they have started

As Director, Ms. Upasana Arora has been solely responsible for the successful management of the Kaushambi unit of Yashoda Hospitals with all its attending specialties, administration and finances since its inception in 2006. At the hospital, the emphasis has been on patient, and providing services to the patient before they ask for it thus ensuring to put patient's first by actively seeking patient feedback and motivating the organization for the same at all times. At this level of management, she strongly functions as a mentor to ensure personal growth of each of her employee. She has always focused on gender equality and women's empowerment not only as human rights, but also professionally with the female staff outnumbering male staff at Yashoda hospital.

### Unique characteristics

Ms Upasana's central 'focus' - as a professional and leader - is to keep her patients' safe. The emphasis has been on patient rights and safety with transparency in all processes of the hospital. This comes from the belief that we should reach the patient before the patient reaches us. The patient is considered as a family member, as the staff connects with them emotionally while looking after

their daily needs in a personal way. The impact of this strategy has been immediate and significant leading to patient families becoming a part of Yashoda family and also being the brand ambassadors who are genuinely happy with their experience.

### Challenges and opportunities

As with most self-made successes, Upasana Arora's life has been far from a bed of roses. She has had to fight her way through various odds and adversaries. Upasana lost her father at the tender age of ten, and her mother just before her marriage and hence the family had to go through tough times. A very active student in school, Upasana always had an inner voice urging her to aspire for more. Despite the ups and downs of her journey, that voice has never changed - even today, it reminds her to never take the focus away from the larger goals she was born for causing her to join Yashoda Super Speciality Hospital at Nehru Nagar in 2000. As a women she had to face many challenges to manifest her ideas and decisions, however when Yashoda Hospitals opened in 2006 at Kaushambi, Ghaziabad she took the front role in the hospital and looked after it like a 'baby' which soon blossomed into one of NCR's finest institutions of healthcare - under her relentless efforts and undivided attention.

## Turning Point

Though she started Yashoda Super Speciality Hospital in 2006 and was running it smoothly to a position of prominence her experience with NABH in 2010 changed her outlook towards attaining perfection by being able to identify opportunities of improvement in processes in an apparently well managed system. NABH's influenced her into an on-going path of growing knowledge and insights on best practises and tested strategies which made her take multiple degrees from Harvard and IIM besides many other institutions. This engineered a ground-breaking transition in her mindset and approach to leadership, and took Yashoda's growth curve to the next level besides spreading Ms Upasana's wings for improvisation in global healthcare. She has been acknowledged nationally & internationally as Chairperson-SEPC Healthcare Sector & Health Division Indo-US Chamber of Commerce, Co-Chairperson-ASSOCHAM Healthcare Council & Empowerment Council, VP-Vishwa Hindu Parishad (Delhi Chapter), Member NABH Accreditation Committee, Member- NABH Board & NABL Board, Vice President – AHPI (Delhi NCR Region), Panel Member Medical Tourism, Emirates International Accreditation Centre (EIAC), Member FICCI – Health Service Committee & Medical Tourism Committee besides many others.

## The leadership quotient

Ms Upasana Arora has the right mix of qualities that a born leader is made of which comprises of honesty and integrity. Her team members have seen her stand by their side in all kinds of situations with words of promise which is manifested by her work ethics and this means doing the right thing whenever possible. It's clear that if people are willingly to follow you—whether into battle or into the boardroom, the front office or the front lines—they first want to assure themselves that you are worthy of their trust which is one of her inborn qualities. Besides this she has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. She believes in equality of her actions and the integrity of her intent which makes her have innumerable followers both in her hospital as well as in the industry.

## The road ahead

Ms Upasana Arora under her leadership is opening up two new hospitals to serve the community



*The emphasis has been on patient rights and safety with transparency in all processes of the hospital. This comes from the belief that we should reach the patient before the patient reaches us. The patient is considered as a family member, as the staff connects with them emotionally while looking after their daily needs in a personal way.*

by providing range of healthcare services from preventive aspects to rehabilitative mode, with value for money. Her vision is to focus more on preventive aspects of healthcare as she believes in Prevention is better than cure. She also wants to increase her focus on Women & Child empowerment though she has been already acknowledged as “Woman of Substance” in 2014, and was awarded “Women Leadership and Innovation Award 2013 & 2014” in multiple forums. Her focus on Women & Child empowerment is manifested by her association with NGO's where she is working for families who have lost their bread winners during COVID-19, by helping the women by providing them support in terms of job opportunities and children's by providing them safe homes with provision of education and food so that they can stand on their feet and sustain themselves and hence be a productive asset to the society as a whole.



**Dr. Grace Pinto**  
Managing Director,  
Ryan International Group of Institutions

# NURTURING GLOBAL CITIZEN LEADERS

with sport and media professionals to bring in the best resources for her students.

## Turning Point:

Ryan Group believes that education goes beyond classroom walls and textbooks and involves lifelong learning. Over the years, they have made every effort to pioneer activities that create opportunities for holistic development that has helped them remain relevant from time to time. Technology integration, teacher's training, collaboration with stakeholders and holistic pedagogy has helped them remain ahead of the curve in the field of education and reach out to parents and students serving the need of the nation.

## Challenges and Opportunities

Over the years, there have been several challenges all along the way which have only caused her to stay grounded and rooted in values and her faith in God. She humbly says, "Being in leadership has been a "learning from and for life" experience. I believe that there is no checklist of things to achieve success as a leader, but the hunger and willingness to learn, determination to change every challenge into an opportunity, discipline, courage to take risks, being grounded in values and family with faith and trust in God have enabled me to realize the dream of making a worthwhile contribution in the lives of children, our future leaders."

## Leadership Quotient

What makes Mrs. Grace Pinto unique and different is her management style with multiple roles as a managing director, educationist, leader, visionary, counselor coupled with entrepreneur qualities. With her leadership style of empowering others, she has made a definite difference in the educational system by modernizing it and making it more relevant to today's times. As a leader, she also champions the cause of the underprivileged as well as the welfare of senior citizens through several initiatives. In recognition of her outstanding efforts to upgrade teaching-learning standards in Indian K-12 education and for her commitment to several social causes, she has been awarded several prestigious awards the recent among them are, the Most Promising Women Leader 2021 by the Economics Times, Visionary Leadership in Education Sector Award 2019 by Mid-day News Paper, 'Global Leaders Award 2018 by Business Leaders Forum at Dubai.

## The Road Ahead

Even as the year 2020 witnessed the major challenge of the pandemic, Madam Grace Pinto was quick to adopt the e-learning mode across all her schools to continue the teaching-learning process without a stop. As a nationwide group, her focus now is on innovation in leveraging technology and its tools and various strategies to integrate the apps to ensure that children are engaged in an immersive learning experience. Hybrid blended learning with 'face-to-face classrooms and virtual lessons' will be the future of education and her aim is to enhance it further. Also, the Ryan Group has a lot of good practices that are in-line with the NEP and that is something they will continue to build on further in the coming years.

## How they have started

It was nearly four decades ago that Dr. Grace Pinto humbly began as a teacher with a single school in the city of Mumbai and today she is a force to reckon with in the highly competitive and challenging segment of education in the country for her noteworthy contribution. As Managing Director, her perseverance coupled with a deep and abiding faith in Lord Jesus Christ has enabled her to partner her husband, Dr. A. F. Pinto, Chairman, Ryan Group, in building one of India's largest privately owned and managed chains of over 137 K-12 institutions spread across the country. A dedicated faculty, trained and led by her team, supported with state-of-the-art infrastructure and ICT, the Ryan Group is responsible for educating over a quarter of a million students globally through diverse national and international curricula.

## The unique characteristics

Under her leadership, the Ryan Group has pioneered several national and international events in order to nurture holistic citizen leaders. The Ryan Group was the first in the country to host the International Children's Festival of Performing Arts (ICFPA) and the Indian Model United Nations (INMUN) at a national level. The Group hosted the prestigious World Scholar's Cup with record breaking participation. International Cultural Exchange programmes are also a regular feature arranged with institutions based out in Europe and beyond. The Group has even partnered with NASA for educational programmes and has collaborated with PennHub and the College Board to provide higher education opportunities for students. She has also collaborated

# CULTURE PLAYS A VITAL ROLE IN ALIGNING THE TEAM TO WORK TOGETHER

## How they have started

She started her professional journey as a Computer Science Engineer with Tata Consultancy Services in 2001. Over the next 6 years, she was elevated gradually to senior roles like Module Lead, Technical Product Lead and finally Product Manager in the technology domain. Thereafter, she pursued MBA from Carnegie Mellon University, specializing in Finance and Strategy. Later, she got the opportunity to work with Amazon, both as an intern and a full-time employee in Seattle, USA. She worked with the M&A Finance department and got tremendous insights into ecommerce, with in-depth focus on quality, pricing and convenience. She then got connected with like-minded people who had an aspiration to launch an entrepreneurial venture in the Indian ecommerce ecosystem. In 2007, they incorporated Infibeam Avenues Limited to venture into eCommerce enablement business and within a decade, they established ourselves as one of the leading multinational FinTech company offering digital payment solutions and enterprise e-commerce technology platforms.

## The unique characteristics

She believed in an idea to not delve into a safe career option and plunge into creating value for your shareholders. Each customer insight drives her to better the product. She had actively listened to the market and evolved her business to match the changing industry landscape. Learning on the job and learning all the time is key in creating sustainable impact.

## Challenges and Opportunities

She believes entrepreneurship needs a very committed team with the right passion, belief and spirit of working together towards a common goal. Getting the right people on board is critical and a hiring mismatch can make the journey more challenging. You might be right in some, you might be wrong in some but the idea is to move on and take each win/failure in your stride.

With regards to the opportunities, she thinks, entrepreneurship brings new ideas every day. With growth comes the changing market needs, with the breadth of your offerings comes the depth of each product - there is opportunity in everything.



*Investment in digital capabilities will enable them to scale their business not only in India but in multiple other geographies.*

**Neeru Sharma**  
Co-founder, Infibeam Avenues Ltd.

## Turning point

The turning point for her was pursuing an MBA degree as I got exposed to a lot of business frameworks. This was the time when I realized that running a business has a whole new dimension than just ideating and creating a product. There was a big shift in her perspective and knowledge - from being a technical product person to getting an overall exposure of multiple industries. She was massively intrigued by the role business leaders play in moving the industry forward. Luckily, as part of our course itself, she had first hand interactions with exemplary leaders like Tim Cook and Jeff Immelt. Later she had the opportunity to work with Amazon, attending a few meetings with Jeff Bezos himself

## Their leadership quotient.

Leadership for her is about - Unlocking and Unblocking

- Unlocking the potential of each member in your team to make sure they grow, improve, learn and excel at what they do
- Unblocking is important to make sure that when each team member performs his/her best, their hard work, passion and skills are not blocked by any process or other hassles

For her, perseverance and discipline are extremely important virtues to succeed in whatever you take up. As a leader, it is very important to be a part of the team, yet distant enough to set an example and mentor the team to achieve business goals. Culture plays a vital role in aligning the team to work together. Once a culture of ownership, accountability and excellence sets right, teams can work in a self-driven model to reach any heights.

## The road ahead

Talking about the road ahead, digital adaption and consumption is surging all over the globe. They are strongly positioned to cater to this growing digital need with a unique combination of their business offerings - digital payment solutions and enterprise ecommerce technology platforms. Their investment in digital capabilities will enable them to scale their business not only in India but in multiple other geographies.

# THE SHEROES ECOSYSTEM SUPPORTS WOMEN AS THEY TAKE THEIR FIRST STEPS TOWARDS BECOMING ENTREPRENEURS AND LEADERS

## How they began

At age 17, Sairee left home for the capital, Delhi, in pursuit of her destiny. Till then, home was Muzaffarnagar, the small town where she grew up in the midst of latent dreams, many of these harboured by women. At home, the atmosphere was rife for learning, as her father brought home guests; the main topic of discussion was business and entrepreneurship. Little Sairee eavesdropped on these conversations, and the early seeds of entrepreneurship were sowed in her curious mind.

In Delhi, she secured admission to the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru University. In her second year, she began working parttime. She continued working alongside her studies, for the next four years. She gained work experience, and saved enough to afford her own set of wheels. By end of college, she was 21 years old and came to be known on campus as the “girl with the car”.

A chance meeting with a digital entrepreneur led her to partner up, and together, launch an innovative online media platform for seafarers in 1999. This experience was an eye-opener for the entrepreneur who came to understand the vast powers of the internet to serve, influence and change lives, in real-time.

With this experience, an internet entrepreneur was born. Sairee’s experience with the start-up coupled with her exposure to the aspirations of women in her hometown, led her on a new journey. She was able to connect the dots between the Internet, women’s aspirations and building access.

In 2012, she launched Fleximoms, a jobs platform offering credible remote work opportunities. In 2014, she launched SHEROES, a women-only social network that has come to be known as the “New Women’s Internet”.

## The unique characteristics

Extremely driven by her mission and vision, Sairee has leveraged her voice to draw attention to the true potential of building a safer, constructive Internet for women.

A social influencer with a massive digital footprint, she has evangelised important narratives such as the redesign of workplaces to be accessible for women and the legitimisation of remote work.

A thought leader in the Internet space, she has



**Sairee Chahal**, Founder & CEO,  
SHEROES (women-only social network)

been a pioneer in triggering conversations around building an internet for women that serves needs and fuels aspirations.

She predicted, early on, the shrinkage of jobs and growth of gig culture. She has emphasised on the need to trigger entrepreneurship in women, which can lead India to meet its GDP growth goals of 9 to 10 %.

What also sets her apart, is that she has made a strong technology play to solve the problems of gender disparity in India. She has successfully built a “women-only” social network, with deep-tech investment in AI and ML. By doing so, she has reimagined the very idea of a social network, and the purpose

it serves. The platform, today, has 22 million members. It is an online ecosystem for women, offering support, entrepreneurial and employment opportunities, content and community at [www.shero.es.com](http://www.shero.es.com) and the SHEROES App.

SHEROES has come to be regarded by women as a safe, high-trust space, and around 70% of its member base hails from outside tier 1 cities, and 5%, globally.

### Challenges and Opportunities

Early challenges included the lack of a playbook for building community-first products. Additionally, building a unique product for women. So, SHEROES, under Sairee's leadership created its own playbook.

Everything from metrics and member incentives to the vibe of the platform had to re-imagined. Building for first-time internet users and listening to members was prioritised.

Building for first-time internet users brought with it a unique opportunity. In a post-Jio world, rural women are the fastest growing demographic on the Internet. Affordable data and smart devices are contributing to this growth. The concept of work is also shifting with more women looking to grow their businesses from home, turn a passion or skill into an enterprise, or offer a service.

The SHEROES ecosystem supports women as they take their first steps towards becoming entrepreneurs and leaders. Thus members growing their financial and social identity are core outcomes of the platform.

In 2021, India slipped 28 places in World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021. We now rank at 140 among 156 nations, making us the third-worst performer in South Asia. Lack of access to a wide range of services and opportunities is a major contributor to the larger problem at hand. The women's internet brings with it an opportunity to flip the narrative by building an internet that prioritises women users with access to data and a smart device.

### Turning point

The pandemic proved to be a major turning point especially as women internet users quickly evolved their behaviours based on real-time needs. It triggered massive interest in digital skilling, fiscal literacy, building new domain skills, and seeking community support in tough times. The SHEROES platform helpline saw a spurt in conversations, and dormant members became invested in self-growth, mentorship building connections, entrepreneurship and securing their financial independence.

Women-led social commerce also grew in its volume and texture. Under Sairee's guidance, the SHEROES platform recently launched SHOPOnSHEROES, a social commerce marketplace where small business owners can set up their online stores in less than 60 seconds. Shop owners comprise a mix of first-time entrepreneurs - creators, resellers, service providers, and women building small brands. The marketplace was triggered by organic social commerce on the platform, and to give women an opportunity to sell and become financially independent. Shop owners can also access loans and other financial products via Mahila Money, a community neo bank for aspirational women.

In a first, 500 plus rural women-micropreneurs graduated on July 30, 2021, from a 6-month accelerator hosted completed online in multiple languages, for the first time. The Internet Saathi Accelerator was launched by SHEROES in partnership with Google's iconic Internet Saathi programme in December 2020. The Saathis have grown their digital skills, income and confidence. They are also now savvy internet users, who understand how to leverage it for work and life.

### Their leadership quotient

The transition from offline work to remote work has been challenging for businesses across the world. However, under Sairee's leadership Team SHEROES was able to make the transition seamlessly, almost overnight. One of the reasons is that Sairee has been an advocate for remote work from the start. Her



***The SHEROES ecosystem supports women as they take their first steps towards becoming entrepreneurs and leaders. Thus members growing their financial and social identity are core outcomes of the platform.***

core belief is that that remote work democratises the workplace, and brings in talent that is otherwise inaccessible.

Remote work culture has always been a part of the start-ups' DNA, with 35% of the team working remotely at any given time. SHEROES also runs MARS, its enterprise business, which manages the largest all-women remote workforce in the world. MARS offers a spectrum of services to businesses from every sector.

### The road ahead

The women's internet knows no limits, and Sairee aims to make SHEROES a 100 million women network. But her role expands beyond her platform. Over the past five years, she reserves every Saturday to mentor budding women entrepreneurs, and is now also an angel investor to women-led businesses. She sits on the board of Paytm, its first woman board member, and she is an advisory board member of the US-based organisation Women In Cloud, which supports women entrepreneurs building cloud tech businesses. She also aims to support more women coming into the product and tech space, walking the talk has her start-up hires more women in tech, to shape and build the tech of the future.

# WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH, THE TOUGH GETS GOING

## How they have started

Thrillophilia today is Asia's leading platform to book travel experiences. Over 100 Million+ travellers use the Thrillophilia platform every year to discover and book travel experiences across 40 countries.

Chitra Gurnani, the CEO and Co-founder of Thrillophilia talks about her journey to start and scale Thrillophilia which has been one of the most inspirational journeys.

Post-MBA from ISB, Hyderabad Chitra CEO opted out of placements and started Thrillophilia, with Abhishek in 2011.

## Challenges and Opportunities

Chitra says that the big idea was to streamline travel experiences, which is a globally \$200 billion market, and make experiences bookable in real-time as flights and hotels for the domestic market.

The initial few years were about building technology and the content marketing layer over it. We started getting good traction over the website but sales were far below expectations. Those were the early days of e-commerce and people had started buying apparel and books online; buying experiences online was still far. Travellers were consuming content, appreciating it, commenting, sharing but not booking. The first 5 years were a struggle to keep the company afloat, we believed in the market and the idea and knew the right time would come sooner or later. To sustain and make money, we did whatever was required from doing B to B sales to corporate sales, travel events and what not. We went to 45+ VC's and got rejected. The meetings went very well, the investors applauded our traction and our presentation skills but were not able to understand the market size or believe in the scalability of the model. These are the situations where you start questioning your ideas, your strategy, your decisions and your abilities. When you are going through times like this, most others around you also question the same. Only the resilient ones can survive these times and sail through.

As it's rightly said - "When the going gets tough, the tough gets going".

Undeterred by the problems coming our way, we put our heads down, kept working, kept building technology, curating experiences, finding customers and discovering markets.

## Turning point

In the later part of 2016, came the turning point, when we were just left with a month's runway, our house already on mortgage, all credit cards fully utilized, vendor payables close to a crore and multiple VC rejections. Tears trickling down my eyes with the morning cup of tea, I was wondering how I would pay the salaries as the payout date was approaching. As it's rightly said -

"When you want to achieve something truly, the universe conspires to help you achieve it". Something like that happened that day. Magically, from nowhere, a long overdue TDS cheque came our way and there came my energy back like a shot of caffeine.

I now knew that I have one more month to keep the race on and that is exactly what I needed. I was in the middle of turning the table; with no intentions to give up, I played harder with the expense and revenue gears, focused on restructuring payouts in a way that they became our loan granters and introduced multiple schemes on the customer side that I could get more and more advances thereby making our customers our biggest investors. And 6 months down the line, the company became profitable.

Since then we have not looked back. Today Thrillophilia has travel experiences across 150+ destinations from things to do, multi day tours to boutique staycations.

## Their leadership quotient.

Thrillophilia is not an office but the second home for all its people. We love our team, we don't count leaves, we count on our people. It is an ownership driven culture and we love it that way. We walk miles for each other, we don't do politics, we do little things for each other to show that we care, we work very hard and we celebrate



Chitra Gurnani, CEO and Co-founder, Thrillophilia

harder and in the journey, we have a lot of fun.

Covid was the real test of the character of Thrillophilia. When we went into Covid with a team of 200+ people, like every other company we had no idea when this would end. Travel was the first sector to get hit and we knew we would be the last ones to recover. We were very transparent with our team regarding our cash buffers, strategy as a company we would adopt and had a clear message to all that we will retain most of the team during these tough times. We were one of those companies which never had worked remotely and we had to be nimble enough to adapt to new ways of working. I would say this has been a turning point for us as a team, we were all in this together as a family in difficult times. I had members from the team come to me and say they are willing to take deeper pay cuts and today when we are out of this, I have a rock solid team which has a hustler mindset to achieve anything in any of the situations. I am so proud of them.

## The road ahead

The road ahead is towards customer experience and each team member needs to get obsessed with it. There have been learnings when things have broken for our customers, and we have been on our toes to fix them and make the process better and better.

Holidays and experiences are something which people cherish for a lifetime. Moments pass by but the memories stay with them forever. It's our job to bring more and more value in those moments and make them more memorable. As we scale further, enhancing customer experience will remain the key.

From starting as a technology company, we have now become a full fledged travel company where we have people on the ground working with 1000's of local suppliers to make better experiential products and deliver more meaningful experiences to our customers.