

PRIYA PAUL

# Park Ranger

The latest addition to The Park Hotels portfolio is a modern palace inspired by Hyderabad's glittering past, explains **Priya Paul**, Chairperson of the hospitality division of the Apeejay Surrendra Group.

Words: Catherine Martin Photography: Courtesy of The Park Hotels

**P**riya Paul is feeling a little under the weather. "I'm losing my voice," she explains apologetically before it transpires that the group's centenary celebrations took place a few days earlier – clearly a great success.

Apeejay Surrendra Group, the owner of The Park Hotels, was commemorating one hundred years in business with a lavish bash at its newly opened 'baby', The Park Hyderabad. From its beginnings in manufacturing steel goods for the domestic agricultural market, the group has diversified with operations in tea, hospitality, shipping, real estate and retail. The family values that have nurtured the group continue to guide it through expansion and new business ventures, so for the woman at the helm of the hospitality division, there's no time to waste.

Despite the sore throat, Paul's ambition and drive is clear as she recalls her journey from marketing manager to Chair. "My family owns the company so I've been with

The Park Hotels since 1988," she explains. "I started as marketing manager at The Park Hotel Delhi and now I head the company, driving it since the early Nineties."

Having completed her studies in Economics at the Wellesley College, Massachusetts, Priya returned to India working under her father, Surrendra Paul. After his untimely death in 1990, she succeeded him as the Chairperson of the hospitality division of the Apeejay Surrendra Group, aged just 24.

She didn't assume her position just because of circumstance, however. Her hard work and determination have pioneered the concept of boutique hotels in India, seeing The Park Hotels portfolio triple in size. "When I joined we had three hotels and now we are up to nine with another five under development," she reveals adding that they are currently working on a record five projects right now, two of which are under construction. Located in Pune, Jaipur, Kolkata, Kochi, and Goa, the new



