

STRENGTH THROUGH DIVERSITY

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Strength

[\stren(k)th]: the quality or state of being strong : a strong attribute or inherent asset : a strong or positive quality : the inner courage or determination that allows a person to face and deal with difficulties.

Diversity

[di·ver·si·ty]: the condition of having or being composed of differing elements : variety; especially : the inclusion of different types of people (such as people of different races or cultures) in a group or organization.



Our Mission

Connect the World through the Power of Hospitality.

We Bring Together the People, Brands and Technology

That Enable the Success of Others –

Welcoming Every Guest, Every Partner,

Everywhere their Journey Takes Them.

These are the stories of the people who, through their vision, dedication and hard work, keep turning our mission into reality each and every day...



“The true growth of the business is the family, and the family will grow further than any business we can ever create.”



The Taneja Family

and the Palm Group of Companies

When Ashok Taneja was eight years old, growing up in Kenya, his father Amar Nath Taneja took him to collect rent cheques and taught him how to write the invoices. It was his father’s way of exposing his son to the family business. Decades later, Ashok followed his father’s example by taking his own three sons, Anil, Rajan and Anish, into business meetings and giving them responsibilities in the family business from a young age. “My father taught me to be a business man and I taught our sons some of the principles of my father. I did not give them pressure, but I gave them tasks and jobs to do. They have stayed in the business and I have to thank them for that,” Ashok notes with great appreciation. As a closely-knit family, the Tanejas have been able to carry on the legacy established by Amar in the 1940s in

the second and third generations through the Palm Group of Companies, consisting of Palm Hospitality, Palm Holdings and Palm Construction.

Amar Nath Taneja worked hard for everything he achieved in life. Born in India, by the time he was seven, he had lost both his parents. At age 14, he ran away from the orphanage he had been placed in and made his way to Delhi, over 1,000 miles away from Jhelum, where he had grown up. To escape poverty as a street kid trying to survive on his own, he carried on to Mumbai, but did not like it there either. Knowing he had a brother in Kenya, he made up his mind and snuck onto a ship to Mombasa. Halfway through the passage, the young stowaway was caught and put to work on the ship.

After arriving in Kenya, Amar worked in railway construction for the British. He eventually found his brother and sold Indian deserts for his brother's shop for a few years, before working as a street vendor and selling homemade sweet bread. Slowly, he saved enough money to set up a small shop with a partner for selling his delicacies. He later bought the shop next door and made it into a restaurant.

In the 1940s, when he was in his thirties, Amar had saved up enough money to purchase a small eight-room hotel with a full service restaurant, called the Popular Hotel. A few years later, in 1950, he built a second hotel, called the Amar Hotel, acting as his own contractor. It was a dream come true for the former orphan and runaway. The Amar Hotel was designed to serve multiple purposes at the same time, with shops on the ground floor, a restaurant and reception on the second floor, 24 hotel rooms on the third floor and living quarters on the fourth.

Amar's son Ashok was born in the hotel on account of its cleanliness, in comparison to the local hospital. Following Kenyan independence in 1963, the new government adopted a policy aimed at forcing the Indian community out of the country and expropriated the hotels owned by the Taneja family without compensation. Amar fought the government for years, but it was in vain and the

family moved to London, England in 1969. Starting all over again, Amar purchased and flipped apartments one by one and in 1973, bought his first hotel in Britain, the Amar Flats and Rooms in Kensington, London.

Ashok meanwhile completed his university degree in business and following graduation in 1976, worked as a marketing assistant at a fireproofing company. He joined his family in the hotel business in 1978, when they bought the Moat and Court Hotel, a run-down 79-room hotel in Earls Court, London, which they renovated and expanded to 95 rooms. Before selling the hotel in late 1981, they branded it as a Choice property, the Tanejas' first connection with Choice Hotels International.

They kept building their expertise in the hotel industry by acquiring Concordia Hotel Reservations, an unprofitable hotel booking agency, specializing in selling hotel rooms to travellers at main airport and railway hubs. An early proponent of computerization, in 1983, Ashok hired a company to redo their accounting and reservation systems, turning the business into a computerised company and changing the name to First Option Hotel Booking Agency. The family then grew the business into one of the largest booking agencies in the United Kingdom, with international offices in the U.S., Canada, Germany, France, and Scotland.

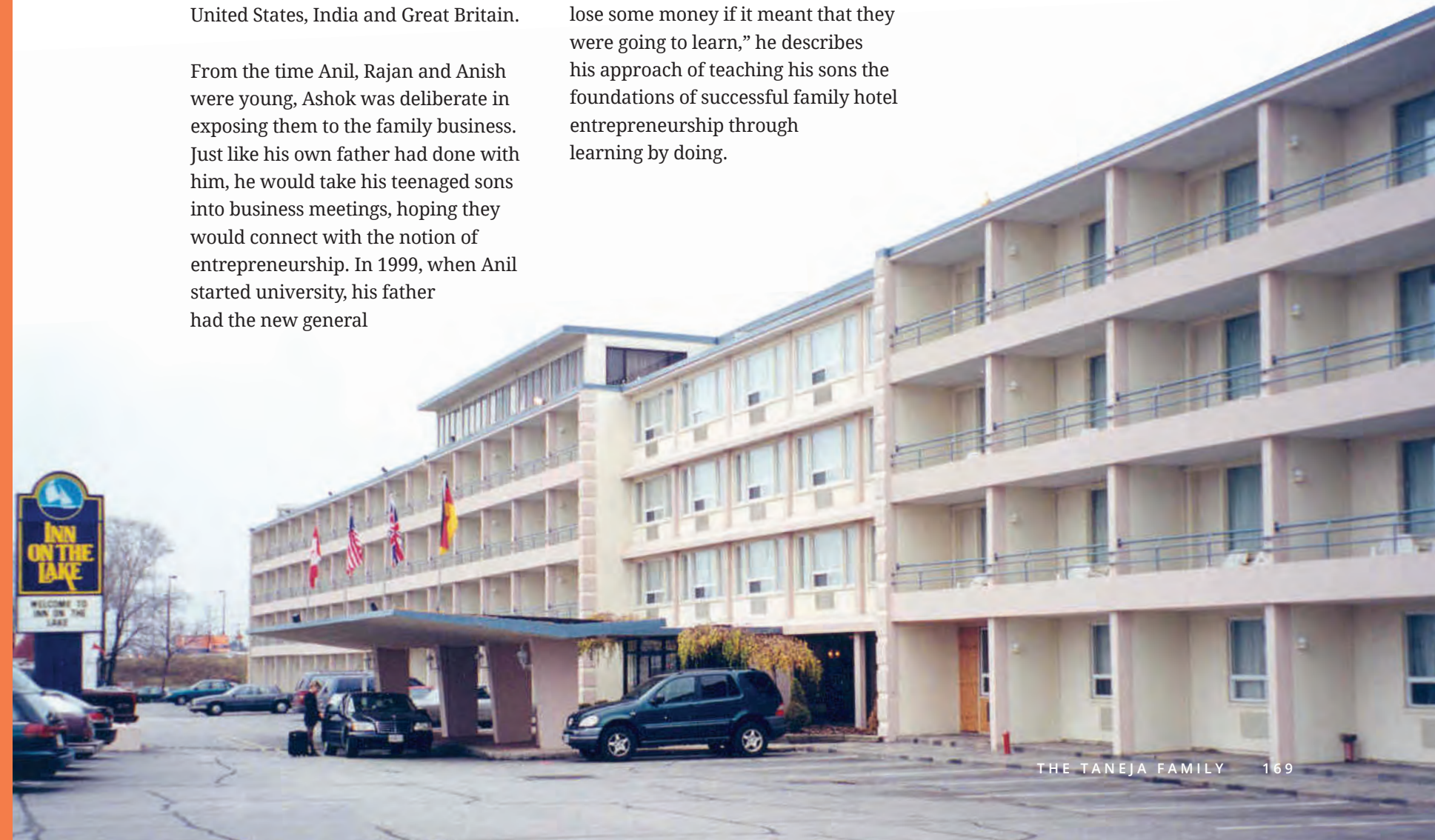


The Taneja family subsequently acquired several other hotels, including the award-winning Royal Terrace Hotel in Edinburgh. In 1985, Ashok got married to Kamni and shortly thereafter, their oldest son Anil was born. In 1997, the Taneja family decided to relocate to Canada, having visited the country several times for holidays. The purchase of their first Canadian hotel, the Inn on the Lake Hotel in Toronto, marked the beginning of the next chapter in the family's journey and today, their Toronto-based hospitality business extends to over seventy locations across Canada, the United States, India and Great Britain.

From the time Anil, Rajan and Anish were young, Ashok was deliberate in exposing them to the family business. Just like his own father had done with him, he would take his teenaged sons into business meetings, hoping they would connect with the notion of entrepreneurship. In 1999, when Anil started university, his father had the new general

manager report to the 19 year old, effectively putting him in charge of a 152-room Toronto hotel. A few years later, when Ashok was in the process of developing hotels in India, he took Rajan with him so that he could learn how to develop hotels and negotiate their purchase and sale. When the youngest, Anish, was ready to come into the business, his father made him responsible for renovating all of the bathrooms in one of their hotels, leaving him on his own to force his youngest to make decisions, stand by them and most importantly, not to be afraid of failure. "I was prepared to lose some money if it meant that they were going to learn," he describes his approach of teaching his sons the foundations of successful family hotel entrepreneurship through learning by doing.

As for their relationship with Choice Hotels, the Tanejas currently own four Choice Hotels Canada properties in London, Ontario; Regina, Saskatchewan; and Laval and Anjou in Montreal, Quebec. They speak highly of Choice as "an amazing system with a great team," highlighting the flexibility Choice franchisees enjoy, enabling them to cater to local needs. "They allow you to work with them and they understand the markets that we are in. Choice is in every market, so they know the markets better than anybody else out there. And we really, really enjoy working with them," Anil points out.





Inspired by the legacy of their father and grandfather Amar, the Tanejas make sure to give back to people and communities in need. They recently launched their own foundation, the Palm Family Foundation. All of their hotels are deeply tied in to the respective community they operate in and the Tanejas have made it their personal mission to support orphanages and organizations dedicated to health care, medical research and the education of children. Paintings displayed in their hotels can be purchased, with all proceeds going to local hospitals. The Tanejas further work with a company called Clean The World, which consolidates and repackages partially used shampoo bottles, conditioners and soaps from hotels and sends the leftover product to developing nations.

This spirit of giving is shared by the over 1,000 employees in the various hotels belonging to the Palm Group.

Reflecting on his life in different parts of the world, Ashok considers Canada “the best place in the world to bring up children and operate a family business,” pointing to the way Canadians value family and a generally open business environment. Having his sons involved in the business is a dream come true for Ashok that is shared by the members of the third generation. “It’s exciting to work with your family, support your family and build a business as a family,” states Anil. The current model has the family business divided into three separate silos—Palm Hospitality, Palm Holdings and Palm Construction—with each division led by one of the brothers, allowing Anil, Rajan and Anish to forge their own paths and develop

strategies for each area, while working closely with their parents on the larger business and family goals through board and family governance meetings.

Led by the foundational understanding that “the true growth of the business is the family and the family will grow further than any business we can ever create,” combined with a clear sense of legacy building, Ashok is committed to continue building the family legacy. He is already thinking about how to create the best possible environment for the fourth generation—even though his first grandchild is only an infant. “I want to start something our sons have to finish,” he defines the larger goal of taking both the business and the family to the next level, while building on the experiences of the previous generations.



