



Aarthi Ramamurthy at home in San Francisco

SPOTLIGHT

Code breaker

Writing an app on her honeymoon and developing an algorithm for bras, **AARTHI RAMAMURTHY** is a digital doyenne. By AARTI VIRANI

As a bright-eyed software engineering student in Coimbatore almost a decade ago, Aarthi Ramamurthy regularly put herself through rickety bus rides around South Indian villages. Her goal? To teach kids how to code. It's how she met her husband, Sriram Krishnan, explains the 29-year-old tech wizard. "We were student ambassadors," she says. "Super romantic, I know."

GOOD VISION

The two wed in 2010, and proceeded to spend the bulk of their Hawaiian honeymoon—

inspired as they were by the picturesque shores of Oahu—building BubbleGum, an application that takes and shares photos. It quickly drew comparisons to Instagram. "We thought it was this goofy little thing," she says, "but it's doing really well in the marketplace."

SUPPORT SYSTEM

Ramamurthy, who currently serves as an entrepreneur-in-residence at Silicon Valley-based venture capital firm Battery Ventures, had co-founded True&Co in 2012, a chic online lingerie boutique. The big difference with her site is that it uses algorithms—which she developed while juggling a full-time gig as a product manager at Netflix—and a 15-question quiz (which includes queries like, "Do your cups runneth over?" and "Are you right- or left-breasted?") to ensure bras fit like a dream. "In the US, I hate standing in line at Victoria's Secret, waiting half-naked in the dressing room," she confesses. "And in [small-town] India, the experience was humiliating: lingerie stores tucked away in alleys and basements with salesmen who stare at your chest." Though she moved on from True&Co last September, she still claims a financial stake in the company.

CHANNELLING PASSION

Changing how women buy underwear is just one of the creative ways Ramamurthy wants to shape cyberspace. While attending South By Southwest (SXSW) in March, the annual Texas-based festival of live music, independent films and emerging technologies, she served as a panellist, offering start-ups advice on tackling unanticipated demand—a problem that's all too familiar to her. "When True&Co launched last year, at the end of the first day we had five times the number of orders that we thought we'd have in an entire month," she says.

At SXSW, she also spent quality time with one of her favourite mentors: Padmasree Warrior, 52, the chief technology and strategy officer of Cisco Systems, Inc, who was recently named the 58th most powerful woman in the world by *Forbes*. "Padmasree's early struggles are very similar to mine," says Ramamurthy. "I look up to her because she can always calm me down... In Texas, we shopped for cowboy boots together," she adds, laughing.

Later this year, Ramamurthy will launch an e-commerce site dedicated to a growing passion: amateur photography. "I love the photography community," says the serial multitasker. "But there's a lot to be done in that space, and I wanted to do something about it." There's no doubt that it'll be a smashing success. ■