

A creative bent



Known for its bespoke, unique and beautiful handcrafted surfaces, Orvi Surfaces owes its success to founder **Sanjeev Agrawal's** passion to blend artisanal techniques of bygone eras with new-age technology to create exquisite products for both building interiors and exteriors.

Text * **Heer Kothari**

IMAGINE THE WONDERFUL CONJUNCTION OF KEEN business acumen and a creative bent of mind to come up with marvels in the world of architecture. With a passion for artistic techniques and crafts of bygone eras, Sanjeev Agrawal, the founder and CEO of Orvi Surfaces, is forging ahead as one of the most outstanding players in the field of innovative surfaces for walls, floors and facades.

Early years

Born and brought up in Jaipur, a simmering cauldron of creativity, Sanjeev Agrawal grew up with interesting narratives of age-old Indian arts and crafts unfolding right in front of his eyes. After his graduation, he joined his elder brother's jewellery business, where he developed a strong penchant for Indian craftsmanship. The opportunity also served as a stepping stone for his entrepreneurial pursuits and helped him imbibe the attributes of humbleness and perseverance, which proved to be the biggest takeaways of working with his brother. They enabled him to forge ahead and later give Orvi Surfaces the recognition that it enjoys today. However, it wasn't a straight road to success.

Finding his calling

"In 1993, using my savings of ₹ 30,000, I started a business of exporting stones to different countries, procuring materials from quarries located in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and southern parts of India. I named the company Stone Age Pvt Ltd," says Agrawal talking about how it all began.

Though the business allowed him to go globetrotting, limiting himself to export of stones felt rather restricting and didn't satiate his entrepreneurial hunger. Considering that he had grown up in a country like India which boasts some of history's finest architecture spanning several centuries, Agrawal was enamoured of the precision, detailing and expert craftsmanship of yesteryears. What followed was the launch of Orvi Surfaces in 2013.



Facing page: Sanjeev Agrawal, CEO & Founder, Orvi Surfaces

Top: Palacio Collection by Orvi Surfaces

Bottom: Wood and marble serving tray by Orvi Home





Orvi Surfaces' UK office

About Orvi

Orvi was the result of Agrawal's passion to harness and preserve age-old traditional techniques that are dying a slow death due to the economic pressures of the modern world and create innovative surfaces and home décor pieces for contemporary living with a fine blend of artisanal techniques and new-age technology.

Orvi works with more than 60 in-house artisans, who use traditional crafts and various techniques from across the world such as stone carving, hand sculpting, intricate metal inlay, stone-in-stone inlay, raku firing and others, to create bespoke and timeless surfaces, using an array of materials like natural stone, wood, metal, liquid metal, ceramics and glass. These unique techniques have become a part of Orvi's ever-expansive range that comprises its Arrazi, Palacio, Brise, Molecules and Glyph collections, to name a few. Designed for contemporary living spaces, they carry a distinct quality that instantly elevates the overall ambience of a place and are ideal for lobbies, living rooms, master bedrooms, highlighter walls and offices.

For all this, the Orvi team has state-of-the-art and highly advanced equipment at its disposal. These include water jets, CNC machines, calibration machinery, laser cutting machinery and a variety of other modern equipment that ensure impeccable craftsmanship.

Orvi has fully-fledged facilities,

warehouses and showrooms in Jaipur and the UK. Overall, the group has a workforce of over 300 employees.

The challenges

Achieving excellence entails overcoming challenges and it's no different for Orvi which invests time and energy to overcome every challenge it is posed with so as to produce innovative and uniquely beautiful surfaces—for both interiors and exteriors of buildings. "At Orvi, we believe that with each challenge comes a new opportunity to unleash our creativity and make high-impact surfaces by leveraging our cutting-edge technology and artisanal prowess," says Agrawal. Team Orvi, in fact, believes in steadfastly delivering nothing but the best to their clients. Every client after all is unique, every designer has his own set of ideas and every project comes with its own set of challenges and opportunities. At Orvi, working with such clients and exploring possibilities is perceived as an exciting and fruitful process, and this is precisely why bespoke services are not viewed as something extra, but as an integral part of Orvi's approach and culture. "The ability to work closely and creatively with external designers and architects, to adapt existing product lines or create completely new models is fundamental to the way we operate," says Agrawal. "The many models in our collections can be adapted to match the requirements of a particular interior theme or colour scheme, or, alternatively, starting from your own aesthetic vision, our in-house design team can develop customised concepts," he adds.

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Orvi today

As a protector of ancestral *connaissance*, Orvi remains committed to bringing the celebrated handcraft techniques of bygone eras such as tarkashi, stone carving, hand sculpting, intricate metal inlay and glass-making traditions from central India to the forefront of modern home décor. Through its portfolio of surfaces collections, it also celebrates ancient techniques such as Pietra Dura, an Italian technique which was often seen in palaces and churches across Europe; Raku, a 16th-century Japanese technique; and the bas-relief technique.

Further, through extensive hands-on training, assisted with technology, Orvi has provided sustainable livelihood to the few surviving tarkashi artisans in India. Thus, what was often seen as manual and constrained labour with no future by the artisans, is now looked at as an opportunity for artistic expression that can be passed on to future generations, due to recognition and demand creation.

As a leading luxury décor brand, Orvi has expanded its product portfolio by launching Orvi Home, a line of designer homeware items and artefacts made by skilled *karigars*. Made from eco-sustainable materials, the intricately handcrafted pieces recreate an amazing story of crafts being passed down the generations.

Orvi caters to a discerning clientele from across the world—especially clients from France, Italy, Germany and Russia—and works actively with architects and interior designers in Southeast Asia. The Stone Age Group of companies comprises of Stone Age Pvt Ltd, Orvi Surfaces and Strata Stones and together the group has an impressive turnover of ₹ 150 crore.



Clockwise from top left: Raku Collection by Orvi Surfaces; Sanjeev Agrawal with an artisan at an Orvi Home workshop; Orvi Surfaces' artisans

The future

Talking about the future of Orvi, Agrawal says he foresees the brand scaling newer heights by drawing from Orvi's identity and ethos. He also envisions making inroads into the e-commerce landscape and offering global customers its décor items, kitchenware and homeware products. Further, he looks to adopt more craft techniques from across the globe that are dying a slow death so as to offer them an opportunity for survival. *