Spreading Love & Light

Arushi Agrawal, Founder & CEO, **Sevā India**, makes a strong case for women with the spirit of selfless service. The accomplished entrepreneur walks us through the joy of *seva* through her luxury home fragrance collection.

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andles are looked at as a symbol of luxury in the home décor space. But Arushi Agrawal had a different plan. She wished to spread love and light through candles and also bring joy to those suffering in the dark. Her spirit of *seva* (service) and belief in 'luxury for a cause' led her to embark on an entrepreneurial journey. Combining her passion for craftsmanship, dedication to sustainability, and belief in the power of service, she established Sevā India and realised her vision of serving humanity. "The idea was to launch a brand that focused on creating high-quality candles and also made a positive impact on the society," affirms the Founder-CEO of Sevā India. The home fragrance brand sets itself apart with its philosophy that resonates with its customers.

Clockwise: A clean an eco-friendly burn with Seva candles; Arushi Agrawal, Founder, Seva India

Born into an elite Marwari family of Surya and Ritu Jhunjhunwala, a young Arushi Agrawal always had the urge of giving back to the community. "I was born in Hong Kong where we lived as a joint family before we moved to Singapore. My father's company Hind Corporation was into watches and I remember going with my cousins to the factory all the time to watch our fathers manage their business. My mother started a restaurant called Rang Mahal in Singapore and I have distinct memories of how she juggled her business and kids." While studying her Bachelor's in Science at Babson College, Boston, she took up internships during summer breaks to learn the nuances of entrepreneurship. After postgraduation, she joined her mother's business of hospitality before getting married to Aayush Agrawal, founder of Lenexis Foodworks and Inspira Realty, a real estate company in 2014 in Mumbai.

Bridging the gap

It was while refurbishing her home during the pandemic that Agrawal noticed a gap in the market for luxury candles made with premium ingredients. "While there were luxury candles available, I sensed that there was a need for a brand that emphasised on premium ingredients

and international design aesthetics. Consumers were seeking luxury candles that not only offered a visually appealing design and pleasant fragrance but also a clean and eco-friendly burn. I saw an opportunity to bridge this gap by focusing on the use of soy wax, which is known for its clean and long-lasting burn, as opposed to the traditional paraffin wax found candles," Agrawal elaborates. This led to the establishment of her luxury home fragrance brand, Sevā India in 2021.

Recognising the need to use premium ingredients and acquire technical know-how, Agrawal invested in training women with the skill of making handcrafted and hand-poured candles. She shared her own expertise in techniques like wick selection, optimal wax-to-fragrance ratios and precise pouring temperatures for making candles. "We focused on using 100 per cent soy wax and selected high quality fragrance oils to ensure that our candles met the highest standards of luxury," says the entrepreneur. These factors contributed to achieving consistent burn time, ensuring a captivating candle experience that was sustainable and environmentally friendly.

The power of *seva*

Sevā India believes in the power of *seva* which translates to selfless service in Sanskrit. Shedding light on its unique name, Agrawal says that the brand's philosophy revolves around craftsmanship, sustainability and social responsibility and is rooted in the concept of making a difference to humanity. "I always wanted something

with a deeper connection and a strong backbone of service. My desire was to incorporate philanthropy into the niche luxury industry, wherein business was created with focus on high quality and luxurious products while also making a difference in people's lives. A deep understanding of ingredients, meticulous craftsmanship, and a commitment to quality were essential in elevating the ambience of any space."

Sevā India offers a curated selection of 13 soothing scents in candles and other categories in the decor space—reed diffusers, closet fresheners—to cater to varied preferences and moods. Available in different sizes and vessel options such as glass jars, metal or decorative containers, the fragrances are thoughtfully crafted to evoke specific emotions and create a unique atmosphere. "By introducing a delightful selection of scents, we aim to provide a diverse range of choices that resonate with different individuals and occasions," she asserts.

By combining luxury and social impact, Agrawal provides her consumers with products that satisfy their desires for quality and elegance, and contribute to being meaningful. Whether it is through supporting local artisans, empowering women, or addressing other social issues, her products are designed to help society. "The name Sevā India represents the brand's spirit of selfless service. Through our candles, we aim to spread light, warmth and positivity not only in the lives of our customers but also within the communities we serve," says the social contributor who believes in helping the underprivileged.

Deriving joy from *Seva*

What makes her venture commendable is that it contributes to cataract surgeries through the proceeds of candle sales. With the sale of every 10 candles, Sevā India conducts a cataract surgery in the villages of Maharashtra. "We are not solely driven by profit but also a deep-rooted desire to uplift the lives of those in need. I want my customers to experience the profound simplicity of service towards the self and others in their everyday lives. Hence, I have partnered with my family's Samta Foundation that has completed 3,83,317 cataract surgeries till date. From the initial diagnosis to transporting the patients to the healthcare centre for surgery, and

Clockwise: The wide range of candles by Seva India

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aftercare, the Foundation holds the patient's hand throughout the entire process and Sevā India supports the cause," says the entrepreneur with a sense of compassion.

The family influence

Agrawal has imbibed some important lessons in entrepreneurship and business and she thanks her family and Marwari background for that. "From a young age, I have seen my family working very hard with dedication and passion. Growing up, my siblings and I were always taught to lead, instead of following. My parents have instilled in us the values of hard work and discipline. My father always teaches me to 'be the engine, not the train compartment'. My husband says that, as leaders, we need to steer the company in the right direction. He encourages me to think big and set attainable targets for the company. My father-in-law, Madhusudan Agrawal, also says, 'fortune favours the brave'. Thanks to the unwavering support of my parents and in-laws, I have been able to make clear decisions in life and business and forge ahead!" concludes the devoted mother of two children.

That's Arushi Agrawal for you, the entrepreneur who dreams of seeing her luxury fragrance in every home, with every customer contributing to her vision of giving back to society. ✳