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# MARWAR INDIA

PORTRAIT OF A COMMUNITY

NOVEMBER–DECEMBER 2008

Cross country  
The Sardas, Malanis  
& Mantris

Thar tales  
The story of Kota-  
Bundi & Pushkar

## STEEL MAGNOLIAS

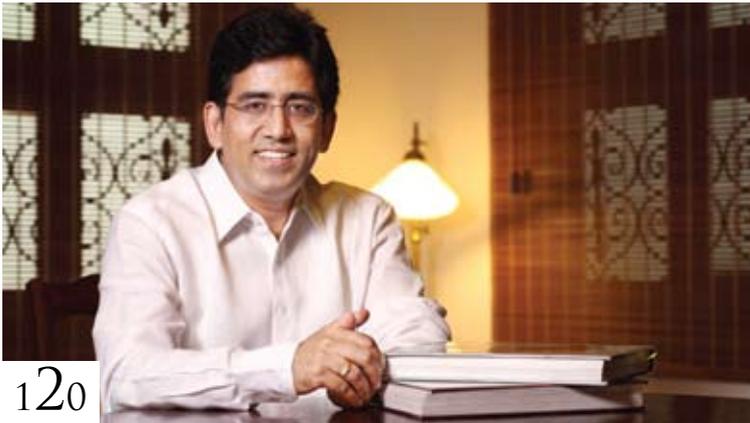
Sangita & Sajjan Jindal

Dream wedding destinations  
Caribbean, Geneva, Chiang Mai, Marrakech

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# MARWAR

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## ENVISIONING SUCCESS

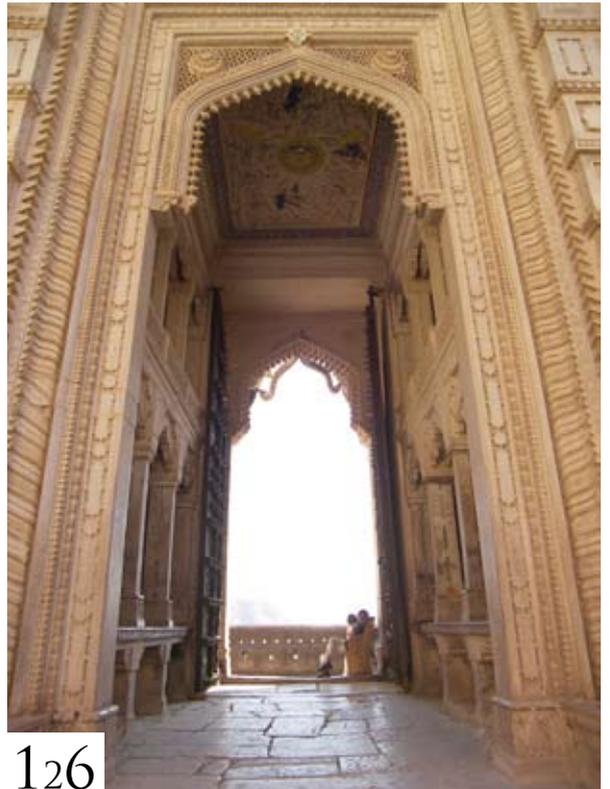
Prabodh Jain, one of names behind Rasvihar, the jewellery store based in Chennai, talks about how he started out, nurtured his business and his keen interest in arts, theatre and design.

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So near and yet so dissimilar that they make a classic example of contrasts. That's Kota and Bundi—once rival cities sitting across the Chambal that still don't see eye to eye when changing with the times is the defining parameter.

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# Envisioning *SUCCESS*

Entrepreneur Prabhodh Jain speaks to *Marwar* on why it is important to pay attention to details, and how he embarked on his recent foray, moving from engineering to brand creation.

Text: Melanie Fernandes

Taking a slice out of consumer India's pie has always come naturally to a Marwari. He has done this effortlessly irrespective of where he planted his feet. Living up to this entrepreneurial reputation, Duli Chand, an educationist, and a *Sahitya Ratna* and *Karuna Ratna* winner quit his job and moved from Ludhiana to Chennai, to partner with his brother in the family business. These entrepreneurial genes passed onto his son, Prabhodh Jain, who started out on his own after handling the family business of trading iron and steel for a few years.



### Starting afresh

For a man who was steeped in art and theatre, he studied chemical engineering—a degree he pursued to its end despite his disinterest. The degree most certainly didn't help the business he ran, but his career graph rose rapidly. His soft-spoken, and mild Tamil accented voice belies the ambition a simple and unassuming man might have. Sitting in the lobby of a cafe in Mumbai, Mr Jain tells *Marwar* about the turns his life took.

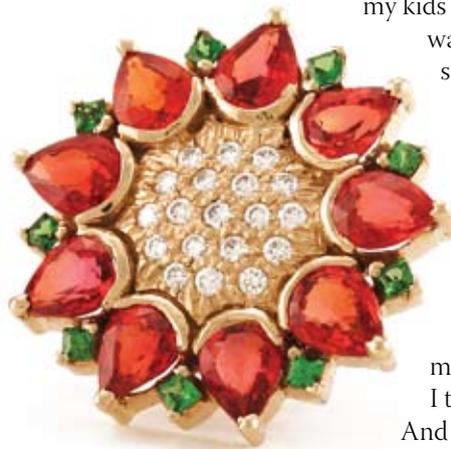
He started his own company called *Envision* in 1993 to help develop brands and communication for a few clients, (some of who remain loyal to this day) and along the way moved to graphic designing. Two years ago, he started *Rasvihar*—a jewellery store that sits in a quiet bungalow off Sterling Road, near Loyala College in Chennai, in partnership with Ahalya—the creative brain behind the jewellery. Dr Pratibha Jain, Mr Jain's sister, introduced the future business partners, when Ahalya was looking to grow her business. No stranger to the business of jewellery-making (since his loyal clients at *Envision* are some of some of the most reputed jewellery makers down south), he immediately recognised her flair for design and set shop.

Unable to digest a Marwari man's south-Indian accent, I can't refrain from asking him if he speaks Marwari and I



receive an equally surprising answer, "Yes, we speak Marwari at home." And who are the 'we'? "I live with my parents, wife and our children, Akshat and Aditi."

He juggles his twin responsibilities with the help of his wife, who is also the Executive Director of *Envision*. Clearly a man who knows how to prioritise, he managed the interview and business calls at the same time without letting either one be affected. Speaking of his father who has been a source of



inspiration to him, he says, “My father was running a business and in spite of that he would make time to educate himself further. Even my mother, Anoop Jain, who hails from a conservative Marwari background, finished her 10th standard, which for her generation is commendable. We were never “forced” to excel in our studies, watching them both in itself set an example for us (siblings).”

Does that mean that he’s unlike a lot of parents dwelling in the urban milieu, who can’t resist enrolling their kids into one class or the other, I ask. He responds with a smile, “No, we don’t believe in telling our children what to do or what not to do. My wife and I both believe that they (kids) should enjoy themselves, not in the negative sense of the word though. They go to a school that is pretty conservative in its outlook and isn’t full of kids whose parents load their pockets with ridiculous amounts of pocket money. And that’s the kind of environment we would want them to be raised in.” Clearly his upbringing and values have stayed with him over the years and he chooses to impart them to his children as well. He says, “I don’t deprive

my kids of anything. They can have whatever they want within certain limits. I don’t believe in spoiling them!”

### One life, many aspects

We then speak of his wife Tara, and partner, whom he credits with a lot of responsibility. “She handles our home and the administrative and people side of the business as well. On most mornings, I first go to *Envision* for a few hours and thereafter my day revolves around meetings and *Rasvihar*. I try to limit my client meetings to two a week. And despite that I end up working for 12-13 hours a day. Managing time for the kids and work is a challenge, but we go an annual family holiday, which is mandatory—a habit my father instituted in me. I also learnt to prioritise family from him and so I try to come home by 7 p.m. during the week and spend time with my wife and children.”

Does he find the time to pursue his hobby of reading? “Yes, I do. My favourite is Jeffrey Archer. I have read Linda Goodman’s *Sun Signs* many times over and do believe in it,” he laughs and offers further, “I have lots of books on graphic designing too. I also love art and like Thotataruni’s work. In fact at one point in time I used to attend every art exhibition in Chennai apart from being part of a theatre group called *Madras Players*.

How come he didn’t want to pursue mainstream theatre? He says he was sure of himself even during his college years, and knew that it was a passing phase. “I quite enjoyed it while it lasted.” What about his children, would he be fine with them doing something other than the taking the reins of his business? “My son is already showing a lot of interest in cricket and we would like him to get professional coaching. And later if he wants to pursue cricket, I’m fine with it.”

However, he didn’t get that kind of support from his family when he decided to quit his family business and started another business. The parting wasn’t easy and met



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government though I wasn't sure and so I wrote to them. They responded saying that their mint does contain a chemical synthesised from beef. I have also embarked on a project called Veg Mark that's registered and aimed at helping vegetarians maintain their diet restrictions. The ubiquitous *naan* (Indian bread) sometimes has egg as a constituent and unsuspecting clients consume it, while hotels don't inform you about the choice you're making. My mark will certify restaurants that don't employ such practices. I will take the program forward at a later date when I have more time on my hands," he smiles.

Since *Rasvihar* will remain on the anvil for a while to come, the subject of its future plans came to the fore. He reveals, "There are talks in the pipeline to export jewellery to stores in the US and we are giving ourselves five years to cross our milestones. We're very clear that we don't do the regular "bridal" repertoire. We're more focussed on creating jewellery for the woman who is elegant and graceful." Ahalya, his business partner who joined us in the middle of the interview, adds, "And also for a woman who is confident about what she wants to wear, values good design and finish, and most importantly wants to keep her jewellery for a life time."

With a designer and business partner who is focussed about what her designs need to convey and his own deliberation on detail, he has left little room for failure. ❀

with some disapproval from his parents. Today though, his two operations are a source of pride for them he informs us. "I knew I had to prove myself and stick to my ground when I decided to set shop." And what about his sibling's reaction to him disassociating himself from the family venture? "We're very cordial and recognise that we should give each other space. There are no hard feelings. In fact, I helped design the cover for a book my sister authored recently. And how's he as a boss? "I'm a very demanding boss. I work hard and am very driven, and as a result I drive my team to deliver the best. I have had people who have worked for me for more than 10 years. Perhaps that's proof that they enjoy what they're doing."

### Determining details

A man fastidious about details, Mr Jain's concerns go right down to his food choices as well. Being a staunch vegetarian he ensures that everything that he and his family eat has no trace of meat or even derived food products. He says that his kids too have been taught to look carefully at the food labels to check out the ingredients. He doesn't hesitate to write to food companies to check if their product is suitable for a vegetarian's consumption.

With his voice inflected with a sense of righteousness, he informs me, "Altoids mint is classified vegetarian by the UK

