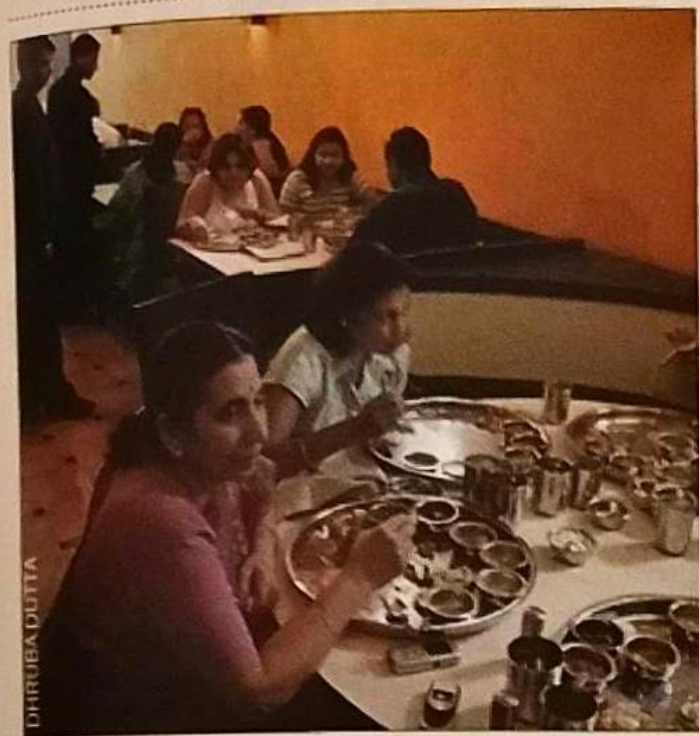


New review

Rajdhani



Serving up a capital thali.

Mumbai's legendary Gujarati thali establishment opened recently in the NCR with two outlets, one in CP and one in Gurgaon. We ate at the CP restaurant, which is a basic place – aesthetically it's the slightly fancier Gujju cousin to a Saravana Bhawan or Sagar Ratna. A man with a bandhani turban greets you at the door and seats

you on one of two levels. Upstairs, there is a nice naturally-lit table next to a large window.

The menu is a simple slate board, which is written up everyday. There's no point in looking at it to decide on an order though – this is a thali restaurant. The waiters aren't quick on the uptake when asked a question, so curious types may like to see the names of their food written out.

Service is a bit slower than at similar establishments in Gujarat and Mumbai, where food is literally flung from bucket to plate with bullseye precision. This is a quibble, though, as Rajdhani is the kind of place where you can holler for a refill without feeling rude.

The highlight of the savoury food was the pale white dahi kadi, which was both sweet and sour. There was also a choice of thin

sweet dal or mirchi dal. The vegetable dishes were decent, but nothing to start shouting about. We had a mixed vegetable dish with an odd qorma-like consistency; rangoli var, which is a flat white bean in a bland sauce; methi shaak of a dry but tender consistency; and a potato curry that was just crying out for puris. Instead, we had bajra rotlas with ghee and gud, chapattis (thin, but not authentically paper thin) and theplas. The meal ended with rice rather than khichdi, though in Gujarat you usually have the option of either. The pharsaan included khatta dhoklas and vegetable kachori, both of which tasted fine. There was garlic chutney, the ubiquitous pachranga-style mango pickle, a green chutney and a sweet-sour tamarind chutney. Sadly missing were typical Gujarati chutneys like crystalline mango chhunda.

What the food lacks in authenticity, it makes up for in other ways. The dishes weren't as ghee-filled as Gujarati restaurant cuisine could

be and, therefore, were less filling. Though the temperature was a little varied, each dish had a unique taste, which is more than one can say about most thali places.

The choice of sweet dishes was good, if a bit too saccharine. Shrikhand in any form is exciting, and even though Rajdhani's version tastes like fruity yogurt, it's close enough. The aamras – more mango-ey than creamy – is conducive to second helpings. Save your pharsaan dhoklas to mop it up with. The third dessert option, moong daal halwa, was the best of the three, even though the least typically Gujju one.

The menu at Rajdhani changes every day, so you may get something completely different. But at Rs 135 for an all-you-can-eat vegetarian feast, you really can't go wrong. *Sonal Shah*
P-90 Daulatram House,
Connaught Place, opposite PVR
Rivoli on Baba Kharag Singh Marg
(2334-6300). Daily noon-3.30pm;
7-11pm. Rs 135 per thali.