

It isn't all about business, finds **Sonal Shah**. Gujaratis find the time to play as well.



RUBADUTTA

Mama's got a brand new bag

Gujaratis have a long history in Delhi, going back hundreds of years when Gujarati and Marwari traders stayed in the walled city, in the areas of Chandni Chowk and the Clock Market. With a monopoly on textiles and chemicals in Rang Bazar, Gujaratis earned a reputation for being business-minded and deeply connected to their culture, with a high value for education and charitable work.

Despite such a strong identity though, at least according to Jagdip Singh Rana, president of the Delhi Gujarati Samaj, "Gujaratis here are Indians first, Dilliwalas second and Gujaratis third."

Gujaratis in Delhi are no longer clustered within the walls of the old city. As other groups of Gujarati immigrants have moved here, several different neighbourhoods became home. The former residents of the walled city now mostly live in "Gujarat Apartments" in Pitampura and Gujarat Vihar, which is opposite Preet Vihar in East Delhi.

Relatively newer immigrants from the Kachchh region live in Madipur and surrounding areas. The women who sell colourful ghagra cholis and bedspreads on Janpath Lane are from Gujarat, "but we moved here at least 25 years ago", a few of them confirmed. Those who don't sell traditional clothes, which they import from their home state or make here, recycle old clothes. One of the Janpath shopkeepers – who didn't want to reveal his name – told us that he had been so successful in Delhi that he was exporting his items abroad as well.

There are around 100,000 Wagri-speaking

immigrants who live in Jahangirpuri, packing fruit juice and working in the mandis. According to Rana, most of the ladies selling nimboo at street corners are Gujarati. True to their roots, Delhi's Kachchhis also have a monopoly on the timber trade and furniture shops in Kirti Nagar. Many, particularly the Patels, live in Janakpuri or Dwarka's Patel Apartments.

But it's not all hard work for Delhi Gujjus. They've successfully promoted their culture and festivals in the city, with Navratri becoming synonymous with dandiya. The Samaj helps organise the dandiya event at the Garden of Five Senses with the *Hindustan Times* and the DTC, but communities also host their own events: In Jahangirpuri alone, there are at least four venues with over 2,000 revellers.

It's not just dancing that's gaining in popularity. Dhokla, thepla and khandvi can be found in many Bengali sweets and chaat shops, and khakra appears as a low-fat breakfast option in five star hotels.

True to type, Delhi Gujaratis believe in social welfare, and run at least two identity-based charities and countless other services – including a free guesthouse for the families of AIIMS patients.

And they believe in having a good time. Which is why you should invest in a backless choli from Janpath or a pair of dandiya sticks and check our listings for dance venues when this Navratri season comes around.

Restaurants

Gujarati Samaj

The heart of Gujaratis in Delhi obviously has to cater to their stomachs as well. With a sit-down canteen and an outdoor fast food counter, the Samaj is a cheap and yummy place to gorge on dhokla, khutti kadi, and ghee-filled khichdi among the noisy chattering of Gujarati tourists, their families and students.

2 Rajniwas Marg, Civil Lines (2398-1796).

☎ Civil Lines. Daily 10.30am-10.30pm.

Thali Rs 35.



Gorging on Gujju food at the Gujarati Samaj

Farsaan

Slightly fancier than Rajdhani, but with the option of seating on the floor. The food – Gujarati or Rajasthani fixed thali – is served in big silver plates and prepared without garlic or onions. This restaurant has moved from various locations in the city – Lado Sarai to GK to Saket. The Gujarati cuisine can be a touch too stereotypically sweet, though.

303 Yadav Estate, Mehrauli-Badarpur Road, Said-ul-Ajab (2953-1970). Daily: lunch 12.30-3pm; dinner 8-11pm. Delivery available. Thali Rs 190.

Rajdhani

An inexpensive, rotating-menu, fixed thali joint, direct from Mumbai. With two locations in the NCR, it's a good choice for some simple and tasty, almost authentic Gujju grub. The kadi and the desserts are the pick of the menu.

P-90 Daulatram House, Connaught Place (2334-6300). ☎ Rajiv Chowk; MGF Metropolitan Mall, third floor, Mehrauli-Gurgaon Road, Gurgaon (95124-4379001). Daily: lunch noon-3.30pm; dinner 7-11pm. Delivery available. Thali Rs 135.

Suruchi

Swati Hotel started one of the first Gujarati and Rajasthani thali restaurants in Karol Bagh. They also offer packed office lunches.

Swati Hotel, 15A/56, WEA Karol Bagh, Ajmal Khan Road, opposite Roopak Stores (4250-3514). Daily: lunch 11.30am-4pm; dinner 7.30-11pm. Thali Rs 160.

Gujarati goodies

Bombay Bhel House

A one-stop-shop for authentic Gujarati snacks, including a mouth-watering array of namkeens, thepla, khakra, mutthi and delectable dhoklas.

D-12 Kamla Nagar, near Shakti Nagar Chowk (2384-0832). ☎ Vishwa Vidyalyaya.

Delhi Mahila Samaj

A counter run by a cooperative of Gujarati women within the compound of the Gujarati Samaj. The ladies offer a fine assortment of fresh pickles and authentic Gujarati chutneys like chhunda and golkeri, made on the premises in giant vats. They also stock ingredients, including the hard to find kokum.

See Gujarati Samaj. 1kg chutney approximately Rs 100.

Farsaan

Sister store to the Saket restaurant, this shop sells namkeens and other Gujarati snacks to hungry mallrats.

MGF Metropolitan Mall, second floor, Mehrauli-Gurgaon Road, Gurgaon (95124-4379277).