

# Higher taste

ANITA RAO-KASHI

**F**or some illogical reason, sattvic food always equalled bland and boring in my head. So when The Higher Taste, advertising pure sattvic cuisine in a fine-dining setting, opened in Bangalore's ISKCON premises, I had no intention of dining there. In retrospect, my lack of excitement was a good thing because it meant I had few expectations and so enjoyed myself better.

Located behind the main temple, The Higher Taste is unobtrusive. Spread over two levels, the restaurant is done in elegant colours and furniture. The lower level was crowded and a bit noisy, as the lunch-time buffet was in progress, but the first level was more formal and tranquil. Gentle strains of music played in the background.

The menu was extensive, with cuisines from all across the country, trying to make a convincing case for sattvic food

(vegetarian; no onions, garlic, eggs or caffeine). Considering how restrictive it could be, I was curious to see how the restaurant could manage so many dishes.

To begin with, I was offered a Kesar Shikanji, which set the stage for the starters: cauliflower bhajia (Kavipoo Varuval) and dal vada (Inji Vada), both of which were simple and crunchy. More surprising were Tiranga Paneer Tikka, paneer marinated in three kinds of masalas and grilled, and the Kakori Seekh Kabab. Both dishes were interesting, and deliciously spicy. This was followed by Makai ka Shorba, corn soup with

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Elaneer Karaisal, a light gravy of tender coconuts and cashew

a piquant twist.

For my mains, I tasted an array of dishes, of which many stood out: Mohana Kalavai (tur dal and tender coconut flesh gravy), Vazhipoo Murungai Kolambu (tangy and unusual combination of drumstick and banana flowers), Sabz e Khansama (a mixed veg curry, with some exotic vegetables), Chilli Cheese Naan (a kicker punch to the palate with the chillies), Kaikari Kothu Parota (a traditional South Indian dish of minced flaky parota tossed with tomatoes and spices) and Kaikari Idiappam (crumbled string hoppers seasoned with spices).

To end, I had Nendrapazham Dosai, sweet coin-sized dosas made with bananas and topped with cashewnuts, and Elaneer Payasam, a light liquid dish with the distinctive taste of the tender coconut flesh.

Surprisingly, I had not once during my meal missed onions, garlic or even non-veg.

(Anita Rao-Kashi is a Bangalore-based freelance writer)

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ISKCON Temple & Cultural Complex, Hare Krishna Hill,  
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Meal for two: Rs 850 (plus taxes) for a la carte dining  
(Rs 300, plus taxes, per head for buffet)