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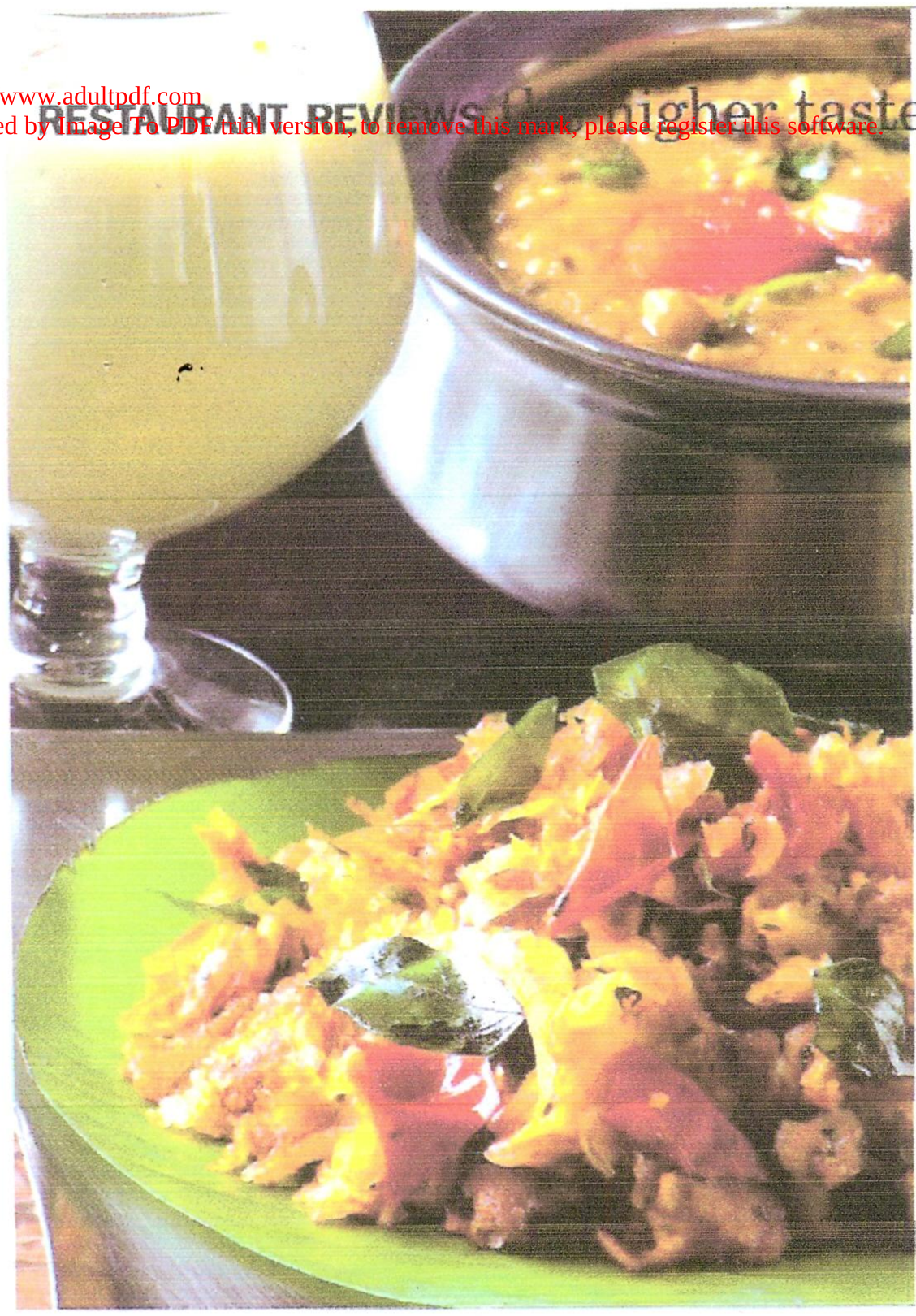

Above from left: A bowl of Arisi Paruppu Satham served with Thakkali Kothu Parota and a glass of Mayapal; Elaneer Karaisal served with Special Dosa; facing page: the vibrantly patterned walls and spacious seating make for pleasing interiors at The Higher Taste

The Higher Taste

If you thought Sattvic translated into boring and insipid, you could be so very wrong. Drawing from a culture and set of traditions that's hundreds of years old, The Higher Taste demonstrates the richness and variety that's possible with this kind of cooking.

I didn't know what exactly to feel. It felt a bit strange to have to dine in style at a place located inside a religious precinct. My own ambivalent beliefs added to the confusion, but I tried to push aside all my heavy thoughts as I entered the cool confines of The Higher Taste just behind the Krishna temple in the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) compound. More intriguing was the fact that it advertised 'Sattvic' food, or food that is vegetarian and excludes certain ingredients such as onion, garlic, caffeine and eggs. In short, Sattvic food refers to any food that can be presented as offerings to Lord Krishna.

As I stepped into the restaurant, wondering if the food could get terribly restrictive, I was pleased with the interiors. Located on two levels, the restaurant was not too large, but exuded a sense of space, especially on the ground level. Throughout, it was wall papered with dominant patterns in pink and lavender, with dark wooden panels and comfy furniture. Upstairs, the tables were flanked by high-backed sofas which gave it the feeling of private cubicles, though the backrests could probably do with a degree of inclination. More interesting was the placemat, which was actually a wooden slab with hollowed out slots for the plate and cutlery. I thought it was a cool thing!

Though the restaurant offers buffet meals for lunch and dinner, I wanted to check out the a la carte section and was pleasantly surprised to find the menu quite extensive, with a fair selection of South Indian and North Indian dishes. Chef Aditya Fatepuria explained that the most dishes on the menu adhered to ancient recipes, and more importantly the