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RITU'S B'DAY WISH



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# THE PARK'S 50-HOUR GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION WAS 'ANYTHING BUT ORDINARY'

**DAY ONE: THE BIG BASH**

"Let's meet at The Park"  
If you're guilty of having said this one too many times, then you probably have dozens of memories at this landmark hotel on Park Street. On November 1-2, the Paul family kick-started the golden jubilee celebrations at their flagship Calcutta property. The 149-room hotel was blocked for outstation guests and a list of 1,000 names from the city was drawn up to invite for the big dinner. t2 checked in and joined the celebrations...



Shirin Paul (seated) flanked by daughters Priti (left) and Priya, grandsons Vir (Priya's son) and Jai (Priti's son) and son Karan at #TheParkTurns50 celebrations on November 1.



A 'Cheers' moment between the Pauls and Team Park (general managers and senior management) many of who flew in from the other 14 properties.

I never thought when I started working with my father (Surrendra Paul) that The Park would become this fantastic hotel that has changed the way hoteliering is seen in India. I want to thank my family for supporting that idea and letting me just create and be free and wait sometimes patiently for those returns. I am happy to have started this celebration in Calcutta because November 1 is the birthday of The Park, Calcutta. My parents would have this fabulous party every November 1, which many people would remember, and they would invite all of Calcutta to come and celebrate. That's a fitting remembrance to start tonight with — Priya Paul, chairperson, Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels



Karan with daughter Uma Kismat.



Priya with husband Sethu Vaidyanathan.



Malini Ramani and Manoviraj Khosla.



Managing director of The Park Hotels Vijay Dewan (in picture with wife Sonia) joined The Park in 1991. "Our strength is derived from our culture and values. From the late Surrendra Paul, we acquired the values of teamwork, fairness and fun. And from the late Jit Paul, the values of reliability, trust and integrity. These values are our source of guidance and inspiration. In 1995, under the leadership of Ms Paul (Priya), a new vision was created. Since then we have been able to establish ourselves as a hotel known for events, entertainment, food and unique experiences," said Dewan.



Indrani Dasgupta stood out in a pastel embroidered Maulshree Ruia gown, with hubby Karan by her side. Never mind Baby No. 2 on the way, she simply picked up her pleats and strode her way through the crowd from Rosewood to Roxy, Saffron to Someplace Else!



"Jit and Surrendra (Paul) loved Calcutta, Park Street and The Park," said Karan Paul about his uncle and father — the founders of the Apeejay Surrendra Group, as we know it now. "They would be thrilled to see so many well-wishers celebrating our success. There are many among us who have had a role to play in building this legacy... but I only want to call out one... Priya," added Karan, as his sister walked on to the stage.



Chinese consul-general Ma Zhanwu with Nitin and Kittie Kothari.



Parambrata Chattopadhyay.



Varun Thapar.



Madhu Neotia.



Arijit and Esha Dutta.



June flanked by Dev (left) and Nil.



French consul-general Damien Syed and director of Alliance Francaise, Fabrice Plancon.



Rituparna Sengupta with Ratul Sood.



Anupam and Piya Roy.



Shaun and Pinky Kenworthy with Alexey Idamkin, the consul-general of Russia.



Sanjay and Minu Budhia.



Shamlu Dudeja, Italian consul-general Damiano Francovich and Malika Varma.



Jonathan Ward, principal commercial officer, US Consulate General.



Swastika Mukherjee with daughter Anwsha.



Archana Vijaya.



Raj Mahtani.



Sister Cyril, who was headmistress to Priya (and Priti) in Loreto House.



Shamlu Dudeja, Italian consul-general Damiano Francovich and Malika Varma.



Shaheb Bhattacherjee and Mumbai-based RJ Gunjan Saini, who hosted the event on stage.

**DAY ONE: THE FOOD CIRCLE**



**Meals on wheels**

The airport pick-up cars were equipped with kits that packed Ajwa dates, pine nuts and chilled coconut water to get guests ready for the humidity of Calcutta!



**Checking in**

On arrival, guests were served exotic canapes, champagne with gold leaf and chunks of traditional sandesh gold-dusted.

**CHAMPAGNE, CAVIAR... THE WORKS!**

**In the room**

The Calcutta experience — a platter of Marinated Bandel Cheese, Jol Bhora Sandesh and Panchphoron Nimki. And at night, a detox platter.



**Banquets**

Moët & Chandon, caviar, sushi and freshly shucked oysters that were flown in from Kochi at 4am on the day of the event!



**Starters**

Snack trays or "memories in frames" like this Bisi Bele Arancini with gondhoraj chutney presented on a bark. Or '007's Cheese Sticks (from the days of a club called 007 at The Park, Calcutta). #ThrowbackTreats

**Oriental specialties @ Zen**

Chinese, Thai and Japanese specials from The Park's dining brands Lotus and Zen. Think Gurjali Maachh grilled on a teppanyaki with Japanese truffle sauce, Honey Glazed Barbecued Pork and New Zealand Mussels in Lobster Sauce.



**Biryanis from across the country @ Saffron**

From the lesser-found Prawn Balchao to the experimental Paan Patta Biryani.

**Indian creative menu @ The Bridge**

A collection of fusion dishes from the 15 Park properties like Martaban Ka Gosht from The Park Visakhapatnam and Chikoo Ki Kadhi from The Park Navi Mumbai.

**Pizza & pasta @ The Bridge Terrace**

An inspiration from The Park brand Italia, the menu had Five Grain Risotto Milanese to Pizza Capri.



**Malt & cigars @ The Well**

Looking to just lounge? Guests headed to The Well, a private space where they were served malts and cigars 24/7.



**Desserts @ The Terrace**

The circle finished on the rooftop with this entire terrace dedicated to dessert! A secret passage — left as you stepped out of the lift on the first floor, and opposite The Bridge — led to this fairy tale zone with tables stacked with s'mores, Chhena Paturi, eclairs, pastries and a lot more.



Rubik's Cube Pastry Tier.



S'mores.

Text: Karo Christine Kumar

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# #THEPARK@50

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## SWAPAN SETH SAYS IT LIKE HE SEES IT



God lies in the details. A few steps behind him stands Priya Paul. Or what can explain the masterful meticulousness that received me at Calcutta airport when I landed? The car had none of the meaningless mints that hover around in the back seat of airport pick-up cars. Instead it had Ajwa dates that are considered to be the presiding deity of dates and it had pine nuts. The note accompanying them both stated that the dates would provide one with energy and the pine nuts would fondly wave fatigue, goodbye. Yet subtly it warned you that you would need to accumulate all the energy that you could muster to party with the Pauls and The Park.

It was supposed to be 50 hours of non-stop partying. It is enough to even kill Kim Kardashian. I opted for half the happening hours and arrived on Day Two (November 2).

Expectedly, I was told of the excessiveness of the night before. Of how people finished floating their boat up until 5am that morning. I congratulated myself on my wisdom.

Those who know me do know that I am socially challenged. I seldom participate in the romps of Delhi. They are mostly dotted with utterly boring people who drearily discuss Mr Modi. And in more recent times, a certain Mr Weinstein. It is agonisingly annoying. But I did know that the Pauls had this amazing agrarian ability to separate the wheat from the chaff. I knew that I would be in for some great company, astonishing conversation, fine food and design delight.

As I opened the door to my suite, I saw a teal sofa with a grey unpolished wood table in my room. It was such an edgy combination. I then noticed a purple button flower on top of the soap. In the lobby, Seal's *Crazy* was playing on the sound system. The vibe was vivid. The air

“The Pauls have this amazing agrarian ability to separate the wheat from the chaff. I knew that I would be in for some great company, astonishing conversation, fine food and design delight



“The desserts were divine: a troika of Raj Bhog, Mihidana and Gold-dusted Nolen Gurer Ice cream



pregnant with elan. The flower arrangements by Twelve Tomatoes were just lovely. The celebrations started with a Rajbari sit-down lunch served with precision and passion against a backdrop of some splendid singing. A pianist was playing Rabindrasangeet. It epitomised the Park ethos: anything but ordinary. Lunch was staggering: Komola Lebu and Aadar Shorbot. The starters had amazing Bok Phool Bhaja, Ilish Paturi. The mains had Kalo Jeera Rice, Curry Patta Aloo Jhuri Bhaja, Suktuni, Golda Chingri Malai Curry, Khasir Mangsho. The desserts were divine: a troika of Raj Bhog, Mihidana and Gold-dusted Nolen Gur Ice cream. The food was indeed fabulous. I had Sal Tahiliani and Subodh Gupta sitting besides me. The conversation jumped from Andhra cuisine to the Bihar Museum to football. No mention of any minister. Mercifully.

The Park had assembled the works. Guests had the option to visit Kalighat. Or travel in trams. Or even jump on to a yacht and do a recce of the Hooghly.

I opted for a rejuvenating massage at their smashing spa: Aura. The evening commenced with a fantastic do at the Paul residence. Hari and Sukhmani belted out some great music. The wine was Margaux and the pork belly was emphatic. As was the mushroom risotto.

The party then moved to Tantra where I receded into the background with one of my favourite Calcutta couples: Sonia and Vijay Dewan. Soon a LED drummer put together a poetic performance. And as I got into bed, I could hear Nikhil Chinapa scratch the vinyl. I suppose the party had just begun.

And through the day, I saw all the stakeholders of The Park celebrate with all of us. The culture of family is very integral to the Paul ethos. As is the element of trust.

Vijay Dewan isn't careless with his words. And he uses very few. But he nailed it when he told me that “our culture is our brand. And our brand is our culture”.

Once again, anything but ordinary.

Copywriter, author, art collector, wine collector, son, brother, husband, father.... Swapan lives in Gurgaon. His heart, however, is in Calcutta

## DAY TWO: THE RAJBARI FEAST



### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FEAST

The 12-item *kasha* thali was served to around 100 guests. “A Rajbari-style meal is food consumed by the royalty, so it has to be things you don't normally eat at home. We asked and read, researched and spoke to caterers who have been doing it for a long time. We've never done a sit-down lunch of this magnitude or opulence,” said Sharad Dewan, regional director, food production, The Park.

1. Rajbari Khasir Mangsho
2. Thakurbarir Suktuni
3. Golda Chingri Malai Curry
4. Motor Daler Dhokar Dalna
5. Chandramukhi Aloo Jhinga Posto
6. Chholar Dal
7. Kancha Aamer Chutney
8. Komola Lebu aar Aadar Shorbot

9. Luchi
10. Steamed Kalo Jeera Rice
11. Curry Patta Aloo Jhuri Bhaja
12. Papor Bhaja



A heavy Indian meal demands paan after.



Aunt Priti with little Uma Kismat.



Indrani and Karan Paul with buddy Ratul Sood.



Swapan Seth.



Musicians Ehsaan Noorani and Loy Mendonsa, who performed at Someplace Else on Day One.



Priya, Sethu and Priti.



(L-R) Cousins Jai (Priti's son) and Vir (Priya's son).



Priya plays host.



Music by Sourendro and Soumyojit made it a magical meal. “We were approached with this idea of an old Bengal-style portico and we wanted to keep Tagore at the centre and explore other kinds of music. So, we managed to keep the music Bengali but at the same time, cosmopolitan, mainly because the audience was so varied,” said the duo, who launched their debut album *Back To The Future* with Kavita Krishnamurthy, at The Park. *Ekla cholo re, Mile sur mera tumhara, Amaro porano jaha chaay* were some of the tunes performed.

Text: Deborima Ganguly  
Pictures: Rashbehari Das