

RAAJKUTIR — A BOUTIQUE HOTEL MODELLED ON AN OLD BENGALI RAJBARI, AT SWABHUMI — OPENS TODAY. BEFORE THAT, t2 TOOK A WALK-THROUGH

Raja Kaliprasanna Singh of erstwhile Hogleadanga fought for freedom from the British sometime in 1857, helped by his eldest son Nrishinghoprotap Singh. They managed to oust the British from Hogleadanga and Kaliprasanna Singh declared his eldest son Raja of his Hogleadanga province and rechristened it Swabhumi or 'my own land'. The Raja lived there with his immediate and extended family, until circumstances led to his downfall and robbed him of the property. The mansion lay in a state of disrepair for several years till the Ambuja Neotia Group chanced upon it and resurrected it to convert it to a hotel, to be known as Raajkutir.

The above story is a work of fiction, but when it is narrated to you as you are strolling through Raajkutir, you start believing it. Right from the old banyan tree with threads hanging from its branches to the rooms steeped in character, the old *rajbari* feel draws you in and leaves you overwhelmed. Every room named and modelled on the character of a member of the fictional family, a restaurant serving colonial Indian cuisine, old-world furniture, fittings and artefacts strewn around the property — Raajkutir recreates a bygone era to perfection, designed by architect Vivek Rathore. t2 checks in...



The Uthon or courtyard is where the heart of Raajkutir lies. The huge open space with rooms lined up on one side lets you soak in the vibe of the hotel. This space, like the rest of the property, has lots of greenery.



An old carriage, a huge brass *pradip* for the evening *arti*, a water fountain... there are ample elements to create the *rajbari* ambience.

What: Raajkutir
Where: Swabhumi, off EM Bypass
Opening: Today
Number of rooms: 33
Tariff: Rooms start at Rs 9,000
For bookings: Call 40844848



There are three banquets at Raajkutir — Rangmanch, Raasmanch and Rangdurbar. With a midnight blue dome, huge chandeliers and chequered flooring, Rangmanch is designed to look like a chapel and can offer cluster seating for around 450 people. "All the three banquets combined is about 40,000sq ft space. We are looking to host many weddings here," said Debnath.

The poolside of Raajkutir is probably the prettiest we have seen in the city.



The Botthhtola bowls you over with its authenticity, with sacred threads hanging from branches of the old banyan tree, a cage (where a macaw is supposed to come in) and a Durga idol.



Rajababur Ghor, belonging to Nrishinghoprotap Singh and his wife Soudamini, is the only suite at the hotel. The furniture here is vintage like in rest of the rooms, from the sofa in the living room to the four-poster bed. What stands out visually here is the pink wallpaper that lends it character.



One of the rooms on the ground floor, Mamababu-er Ghor houses the fictional *mamababu's* belongings, like a hookah standing tall in one corner. The furniture and fixtures are totally vintage, from the bed to the mirror to the ceiling fan and chandelier.



The East India Room, the main restaurant at Raajkutir, has the look and feel of an old Bengali dining room with wooden furniture, stained glass window arches, portraits on the walls and fans inspired by the old hand-pulled *pakhas* hanging from the ceiling. The cuisine served is food of "pre-Independence



Bengal with British influences". "There's no concept of breakfast buffet here, it will be sit-down breakfast with personalised service... as boutique as we can go," says Subrata Debnath (inset), business head, Raajkutir.

"We are pitching this as a boutique resort property and one of our USPs is that we are in the heart of the city. There are few firsts in the city that we are planning to do. One of it is the British colonial cuisine. The Swig bar will extensively concentrate on malts of the world, because at that time people mostly used to drink whisky. Even the cocktails will be very simple and classy. Then there will be Loafer's Cafe, the deli where we will have the Victorian high-tea concept, which we will also keep open for outside guests. Then there will be morning and evening rituals like the *arti* where the guests can take part. There will be a walk-through of the property once a day. So the guest can choose to be part of the story. It will not be in-your-face but very subtle. There will also be an arcade which will have some exclusive retail brands," said Nitin Kohli, whole time director, Ambuja Neotia Group.

