

The Telegraph

4th June, 2018

FIVE-STAR RESTAURANT SERVES ILLUSIONS UP CLOSE WITH TABLE-HOPPING TRIO

Sunday brunch seasoned with abracadabra

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Alipore: Parul Sachdev's visit to a five-star hotel for lunch was marked by some unusual happenings. First, her glass vanished before her eyes. Next, she found herself sitting on a card that she swore wasn't there when she came in.

Parul, a Mumbai-based pilot, was among the many guests left spellbound by the table-hopping magic served with their food at Cal-27, the all-day diner at the Taj Bengal.

The look of bewilderment on every other face at the big reveal is a common sight during

Sunday brunch, when veteran magician Prince Sil and his team go around the tables. They have been at it since last November, entertaining guests with close-up magic designed to make jaws drop.

Table-hopping magic has featured on the entertainment menus of Calcutta restaurants and nightclubs on and off since the Seventies. Sil had previously performed at Kenilworth, Hindusthan International and The Park.

Targeted at adult guests, these performances break the stereotype that magic is primarily meant for kids. "When I first started out in

in nightclubs and restaurants, magic was part of the cabaret performance and offered us little chance to interact with guests. I would perform tricks up close after the main show," said Sil, who has now been joined by daughter Roshni and son-in-law Susmit.

David Blaine, the king of street magic in the West, had started off with table-hopping performances. The French actor David Stone also specialises in close-up and table-hopping magic.

Sil draws inspiration from David Copperfield and the father-son duo of PC Sorcar Senior and Junior.

Timing and mood hold

the key to getting a guest's attention when performing in a restaurant. According to Roshni, the main challenge is knowing how to handle "a situation" and "subtly hook" uninterested guests. "You need a few minutes to capture a person's mood and psychology," she said.

Susmit believes that magic needs to move with the times. "The more interactive it gets, more it will appeal to the young," he said.

Samrat Datta, the outgoing GM of Taj Bengal, is delighted that Sil and team have spiced up Sunday brunch. "It's great to add a touch of magic," he said.



Guests at Cal-27, the all-day diner at Taj Bengal, being entertained with table-hopping magic. Picture by Gautam Bose