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After spending a quarter of a century practicing law and being successful at it, 45-year-old Sumant Batra felt there was something amiss, for another dream had yet to be realised.

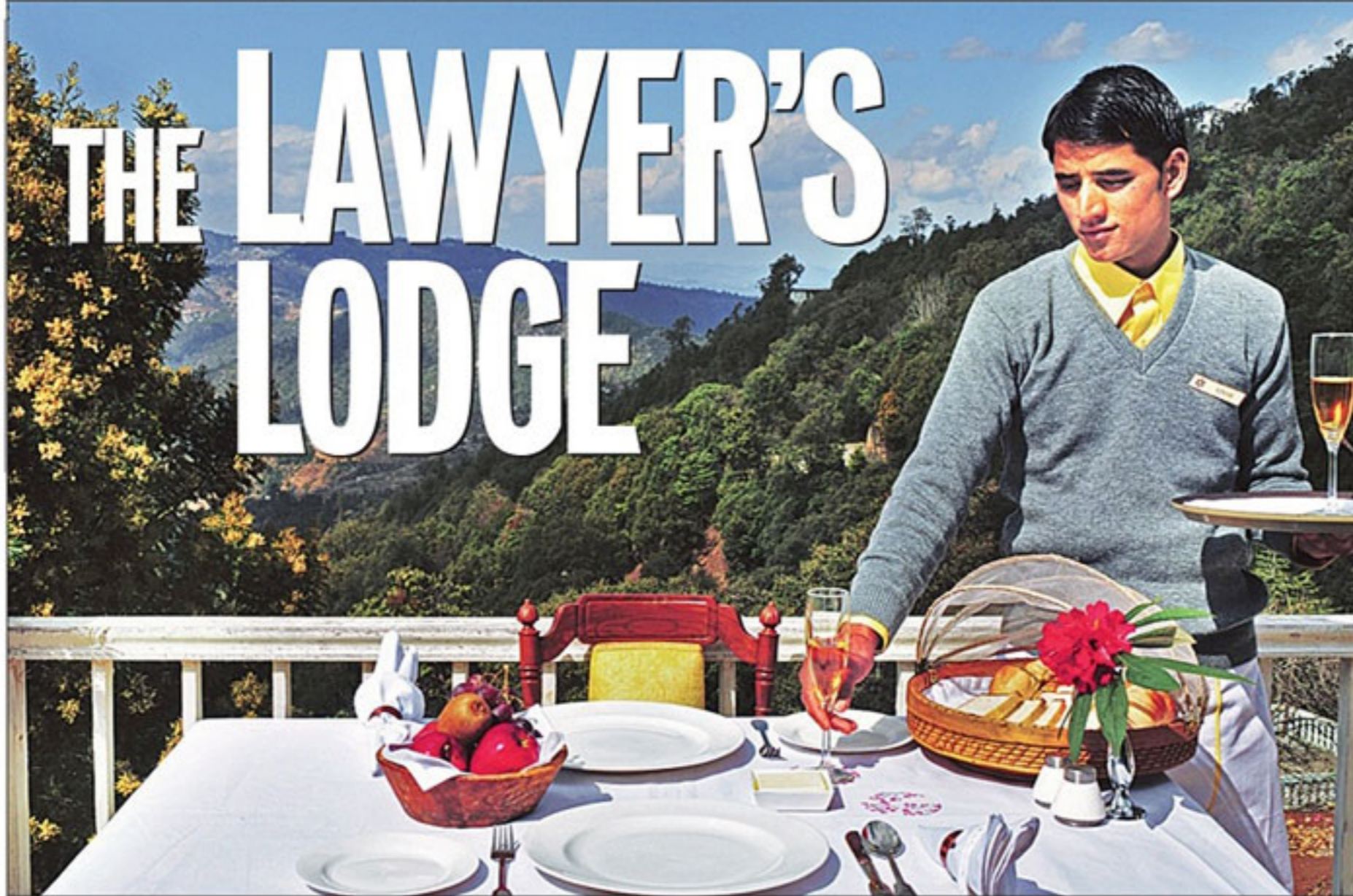
That's when he turned his attention to his love for the hospitality sector. Consequently, in April 2011, he launched Te Aroha, a boutique resort nestled in Dhanachuli, which is a village situated about 12 km away from Mukteshwar, a popular hill station in Uttarakhand.

Sumant credits the birth of the enterprise to his love for travelling as he recalls, "Even when I was in college, I travelled a lot. From the past 15 years, I have been travelling because of work and seen almost 60 countries in the meanwhile." Incidentally, during one such journey 15 years ago, Sumant had discovered a non-descript, enchanting little village in the foothills of the Himalayas in Uttarakhand. He shares, "I instantly fell in love with the place, only to climb a small mountain and come across a piece of land that belonged to a tea vendor. With only ₹10,000 in my pocket, I didn't have to think too hard and paid the vendor ₹8,000 and bought that piece of land. A week later, I had the land registered in my name and set out to build my dream house." And, three years ago, this house was converted into a resort.

The lawyer, who also indulges in writing and poetry, was brought up and educated in Chandigarh. After earning a degree in law from Panjab University, Sumant shifted base to Delhi in 1993 and set up a law firm called Kesar Dass B Associates, which figures in the top 20 Indian law firms today.

Besides being a senior consultant to the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Organisation For Economic Cooperation & Development and Asian Development Bank for problems related to insolvency and corporate governance, Sumant tries to perfect himself as a host at his resort.

Te Aroha is a Maori word that means 'place of love'. Accordingly, this 10-room resort has been designed on



Te Aroha is a boutique resort owned by lawyer Sumant Batra in the hills of Uttarakhand, offering peace and nature's beauty to guests



the theme of romance, as informs Sumant, "It's my poem and depicts my personality, as it has been completely designed by me. The place is a harmonious blend of traditional architecture and contemporary comforts. While reconstructing the property, the original structure of the summerhouse was preserved to retain its original charm."

Large terraces, antique furniture, massive glass windows with breathtaking views of the landscape and a high ceiling lobby, replete with carefully selected furniture, can transport you in time to the bygone elegance of the colonial era, shares Sumant. "Personalised services, presented in an atmosphere of understated elegance, are sure to leave



guests with wonderful memories," he adds.

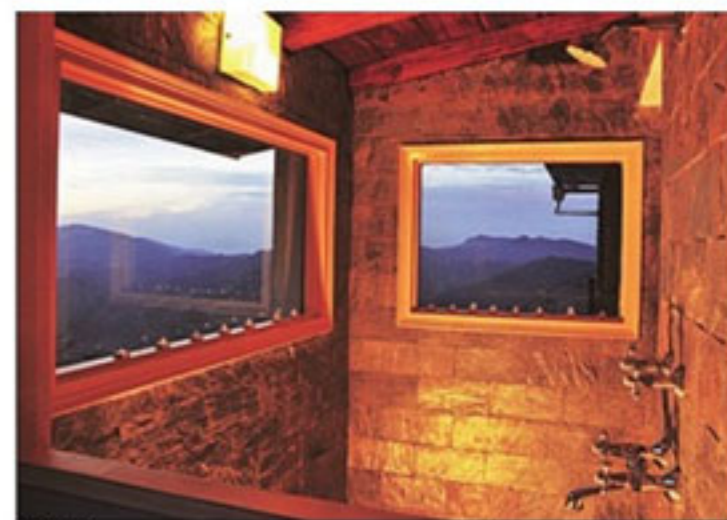
Another interesting feature on the premises is a museum café called Café Flashback. As the name sug-

gests, its houses an interesting mix of paraphernalia that makes up Sumant's life. "It is a huge collection of film rolls, advertisements, Bollywood memos, the first

comic that I read, an old scooter, old transistors, knives and rare pictures of Madhubala. Also, the furniture at the hotel is 100 years old and has been collected

Rates at Te Aroha

SUITE: ₹15,000 for one night (per couple)
LUXURY ROOM: ₹11,000 for one night (per couple)
FOOD: Breakfast: ₹550 Lunch: ₹650 Dinner: ₹630 (per person)



HT PHOTOS



PLACE OF LOVE (clockwise from top left) Terrace dining; the view from the shower; the cosy interiors; resort owner Sumant Batra; Te Aroha (about 321 km from Chandigarh) surrounded by snow; one of the resort's suites

hilly terrain, they can also venture on a leisurely stroll in the woods. Nature lovers will be especially ecstatic to learn that the area surrounding the resort is home to a variety of interesting birds such as the Himalayan griffon and shikra, and animals such as pine marten. Most trails here meander through tiny villages, where one can catch glimpses of the local architecture and life.

If not an outdoor person, then one can instead spend time in the warm environs of the resort and enjoying the beauty of the mountains. Guests can also try their hands at playing croquet or cards. A quiet evening with a book at the resort's tea lounge can be refreshing too.

With the rooms overlooking snowcapped mountains in the day and millions of stars in the sky at night, this seems like the right place to revitalise one's cells before heading back to city life.

from UP and Rajasthan," Sumant tells us.

At the resort, there are multiple options for the guests to explore. Apart from going for a walk on the