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Taste of Love and Revolution

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Abstract: Curry, an indispensable dish of the Indian subcontinent over the past thousands of years, found its way to Japan through the British. Varying in taste and types, curry today is consumed all over Japan. Nakamura Indian Curry, first introduced by Rash Behari Bose, is today known as the 'Taste of Love and Revolution'. This curry is not only unique in taste and flavor, but it carries in itself, an inspiring story of struggle & achievements, grief & love, failures & success. Popularizing Nakamura Curry was a part of Bose's anti-colonial struggle against the British Raj. How curry spread throughout Japan and became 'the soul food' requires extensive findings and research. The main objective of this paper is to trace the path of curry from India to Japan and the impression is created in the Japanese populace. Bose's extraordinary life in Japan, devoted to his motherland India and his deceased wife Toshiko, has also been analyzed in this paper. This paper also discusses the current status of sales, events and uniqueness of Nakamura restaurant located in Shinjuku. This paper ends with a survey on the topic 'Curry' conducted on 200 Japanese individuals.

Origination of Curry

The word curry is an anglicized form of the Tamil word “*kari*” meaning 'sauce' that uses the leaves of the curry tree. Curry is a dish composed of vegetables or meat and vegetables, seasoned with various hot spices. The first appearance in its anglicized form was in Hannah Glasse's 1747 book “The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy” and the first known recipe for curry powder can be found in Beeton's Book of “Household Management”.

India is the home country of curry. From India, it spread to the world. From Southeast Asian Cuisine (Indonesian, Malaysian, Thai, Cambodian) to East Asian Cuisine (Japanese, Chinese) curry is available everywhere and it is consumed by many. The variety and taste of curry vary from region to region. In India itself more than 70 types of curries are available.

So, how did this curry, food of India find its way to Japan and become their soul food? Who introduced curry in Japan and did it bring any revolution? These questions and associated issues have been extensively discussed in this paper.

Curry in Japan

Curry in Japan can be considered as their soul food. In Japan people usually eat it with rice and that is why it is known as Kare- Raisu. Today, more than 2,000 restaurants throughout Japan serve only curry. The Japanese even take pride in preparing curry at home. In the book, “The Evolution of the Japanese Curry” written by Mr. Jinsuke Mizuno, a leading curry expert in Japan and a food writer, states that around 10 billion plates of curry dishes eaten by Japanese natives per year. Moreover, one can easily find instant curry packets in every supermarket of

Japan. It is usually eaten with a spoon, as opposed to chopsticks, because of the liquid nature of the curry. Curry rice is usually served with fukujinzuke or rakkyō on the side. The most popular Japanese curry is the Katsu – Kare (cutlet-curry).

Although curry is famous in Japan, its origin lies in India. The dish was first introduced in Japan by the British during the Meiji era.

Variety of Curry in Japan

Dorai karē: Curry-flavored fried rice, or curry rice with a drier, mincemeat curry sauce.

Yaki karē: Curry rice, topped with a raw egg and baked in an oven. Originally from Kitakyushu.

Soup karē: Soup curry, a watery, broth-like curry sauce served with chunky ingredients such as a chicken leg and coarsely-cut vegetables. Popular in Hokkaido.

Karē Udon: Kare Udon consists of udon noodles mixed with Japanese curry sauce.

Famous Curry Packages: Bon Curry Neo, Ginza Keema Curry, Thai-style Green Curry, The Hotel Curry packages, etc., are also famous.

Besides the above varieties of curry, there are many other kinds of curry that exist in Japan.

Introduction of Curry in Japan

British Type Curry: British introduced curry in Japan during the Meiji era (1868-1912). The British navy adopted Indian curry as a hearty meal for its sailors during the long voyages at sea which later found its way to Japan. The British navy added curry powder to meat stew and made curry thicker than the kinds found in India. In Japan, it is called as *Kare – Raisu*.

Japanese Type Curry: Minejiro Yamazaki known as the Godfather of Japanese curry powder introduced “S&B Red Can” curry powder in 1923. And, in 1966, the company released “Golden Curry” which is now being exported to all around the world to deliver delicious “Japanese curry.” Japanese curry is milder and sweeter in comparison to British curry. It is commonly served in three main forms: Curry Rice (*Kare-Raisu*), Curry Udon (*Kare-Udon*), and Curry Bread (*Kare-Pan*). The main ingredients are vegetables which mostly include potatoes, onion, carrots, and meat (beef, pork, chicken). Besides this, the curry roux is also famous in Japan.

Indian Type Curry: Indian curry (*Indo kari*) was introduced in Japan by the Indian Freedom Fighter, Rash Behari Bose in 1927 under the Nakamura Bakery which later became a restaurant located in Shinjuku, Tokyo. Ingredients include Indian spices, vegetables, and chicken.

Trace the Path of Indian Curry in Japan

As mentioned above Indian curry was introduced by an Indian Freedom Fighter Rash Behari Bose in 1927. During that time, India was under colonial rule.

“I am a fighter, one fight more, the last and the best ”

Rash Behari Bose

In 1912, Bose made an assassination attempt on the British Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, however, it failed. Facing a certain death sentence if captured by the British government, Bose fled to Japan in 1915 and continued to serve the cause of Indian freedom.

Toyama Mitsuru, an influential politician used his contacts and arranged a new residence spot for Bose in Shinjuku at Nakamura Bakery owned by the Soma family.

Love and Revolution

As time passed by, a strong and affectionate bond developed between the Soma family and Bose. As Bose was residing with the Soma family, he started learning the Japanese Language quite enthusiastically. He knew that to spread awareness among the Japanese about India's terrible situation under British colonial rule he needs to learn the Japanese Language as soon as possible. And with his dedication towards his motherland India, he learned Japanese Language only within three to four months with the constant support and guidance of the Soma family.

At the time, the Soma family was hiding Bose, Kokko Soma the wife of Aizo Soma was pregnant. However, being under severe stress and anxiety of being under the suspicion of the police detectives, Kokko Soma lost her baby. Kokko Soma later said, "I have lost my baby but I got close contact with the spirit of great Mother India."

When Bose was spending his life at Nakamura, the *Tenyo Maru* incident took place in the outside world. A British naval ship fired at the Japanese ship *Tenyo Maru* and forcibly sailed it to Hong Kong. The Japanese Foreign Ministry who wanted Bose and Gupta to get freedom from deportation order took this incident as an opportunity to withdraw the deportation order against Bose and Gupta. This led to the freedom of Bose from Japanese police however, British authorities were still after him.

Bose even after getting protection from the Japanese government was still hiding and continuing his life underground as the British government detective was in search of him. Toyama to save Bose suggested Soma family marry their daughter, Toshiko with Bose. Initially, upon hearing this proposal Soma's family was upset. However, they too loved Bose as their son so they decided to talk to their daughter. Toshiko requested some time to think about this proposal. After some days, she replied "Mother, please let me go to Mr. Bose, and allow me to be his flesh shield. I am determined."

Toshiko and Bose's marriage ceremony was secretly performed at Toyama's residence in 1918. During 1918-23, they both had to change their house more than seventeen times ("Bose and Tosiko" by Mrs Kokkoh Soma, p. 36). Toshiko gave birth to two children Masahide in 1920 and Tetsuko in 1922. And, it was only in 1924 that Bose got naturalized and was able to live freely with his family. However, in 1924 Toshiko's health condition started deteriorating since she was suffering from pneumonia. Unfortunately, on March 4, 1925, Toshiko passed away at the young age of twenty- eight leaving behind two young children. Later Bose recalls, 'our married life was very short but it was bliss. I had a feeling that I enjoyed total

happiness during those few years.’ Bose and Toshiko by Mrs Kokkoh Soma, (Soma 1999: 220 -21). After Toshiko’s death, there were many proposals for remarriage but Bose rejected all of them by saying, ‘I don’t think I will have with any other woman the connection I had with Toshiko’, and ‘I do not intend to have any other parents than Aizo and Kokko.

After two years of Toshiko’s death in 1927, Bose decided to partner with his father-in-law, Aizo Soma to set up a small restaurant on top of a bakery that would sell Indian Curry, called “Nakamura Curry.” It is said that Bose had dissatisfaction with the curry that came from the West (*Kare- Raisu*) saying, ‘Curry eaten by Indian royalty is not at all such a curry.’

According to Bose of Nakamura, a biography written by Hokkaido University Professor, Takeshi Nakajima, Bose wanted the Japanese to turn their eyes towards the “Real India.” He devoted his life to introducing the real taste of Indian curry in Japan, the way it was prepared by Indians. Professor Nakajima also says that popularizing Indian curry among the Japanese was a part of his anti—colonial struggle, by winning back India’s food culture from British hands.

Even the brand name of Nakamura’s curry is pronounced as *Indo kari* not as *kare*. This minute change in the brand name from *Kare* (British version name) to *Kari* (Indian version name) was Bose’s method of resistance against British authority. Nakamura’s Indian curry evoked a tremendous response immediately after it was launched and became the most popular item. Although the price of *Nakamura Indo kari* was 8 times higher than the other curry it grew into such a big venture that it became one of the first food companies to go public on the Japanese stock exchange. It gradually became a status symbol for the rich and men of culture to eat Indian curry at Nakamura’s shop. Nakamura’s Indian curry was mentioned in the letters of many writers and the intelligentsia and its brand equity increased even more. With the popularization of ‘Indian curry’, Rash Behari Bose, who was not so well known outside a limited circle, came to be widely known as ‘Bose of Nakamura’. Customers visiting Nakamura’s coffee shop talked about the ‘genuine curry introduced by Bose’ while eating and also discussed the series of events starting from his hiding at Nakamura to his romance with Toshiko.

Episodes about the relationship between Bose and the Nakamura were often written about in newspapers and magazines, sensationalizing the romance. Through such articles, many Japanese discovered the existence of Rash Behari Bose and gradually the ‘Indian curry of Nakamura’ was called, the ‘Taste of Love and Revolution’. The commotion caused by the hiding and Bose of Nakamura’s love story became widely known. From a political refugee, Bose became “Bose of Nakamura who aroused romanticism among the Japanese.

Taste of Love can be described as Rash Behari Bose’s love for his deceased wife and his motherland, India. Whereas revolution is the change in the mindset of the Japanese regarding the sympathy towards the Indian Freedom struggle.

In 1943 the Japanese Government honored Bose with the prestige award “The Order of the Rising Sun (2nd grade).”

The Uniqueness of Nakamura Curry

I. The uniqueness lies in the curry powder which is imported from India and used for making Nakamura curry. That is why it has the “Real Indian Taste.” Currently, Nakamura's Indian curry is using more than 20 kinds of spices. (NAKAMURAYA CO., LTD.)

II. The curry of Nakamura is determined by the onions. The one used is cultivated on Awaji Island. One can feel the onions in the curry sauce. That is one of the deliciousness of Indian curry. (NAKAMURAYA CO., LTD.)

III. The reason why Nakamura's Curry is "*Indoshiki* " is that it doesn't use flour as a sauce. Instead of flour, homemade yogurt and bouillon are used. The bouillon is made from the rich gelatinous chicken bones used in curry. These two ingredients add thickness and umami to Nakamura's curry. (NAKAMURAYA CO., LTD.)

Current Status of Nakamura Curry in Japan

The Nakamura restaurant continues to flourish and still stands in its original location in Shinjuku Tokyo. Even today, curry lovers from throughout Japan and overseas come to eat Nakamura Indian curry, Taste of Love with Revolution. The total sales amount to 31,950 million yen as of March 31, 2021. (NAKAMURAYA CO., LTD.) Also, every year on 12th June Nakamura restaurant celebrates its anniversary.

The best part about the Nakamura curry is that it is still made according to the recipe given by Bose. Although Bose passed away in 1945, his altruism for his country can be felt through Nakamura's Indian curry even today.

Consequences

I. Curry as a bridge joining India and Japan

Curry is not just food for either India or Japan. It unites both nations, Japan and India together for long. Starting from 1927 till now Japanese are connected with India through Curry. It holds deep history and importance. Japanese and Indians devoted their life to India's freedom and Japan's cause. It is a taste of “Love and Revolution ” as it was introduced by Bose's love & admiration of both India & Soma. It was revolutionary as it fostered the true nature of India and showcased her struggle against the British Raj.

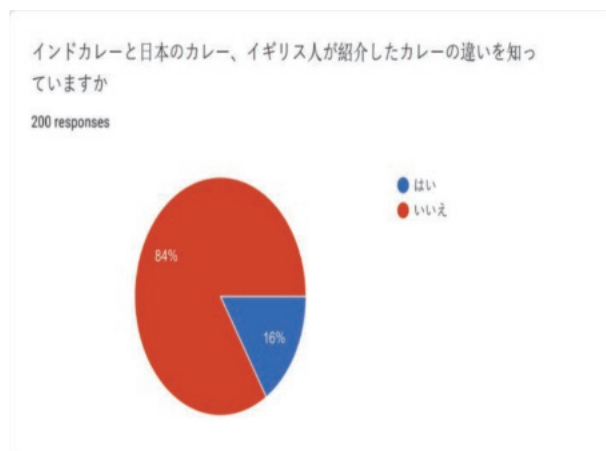
II. Formation of Indian National Army (Azad Hind Fauz)

One of the other significant events which took place after Bose's tryst with Japan was the formation of the Indian National Army. It was Bose who had laid the foundation of Indo—Japanese collaboration which implicitly helped in getting more support for India's struggle for independence.

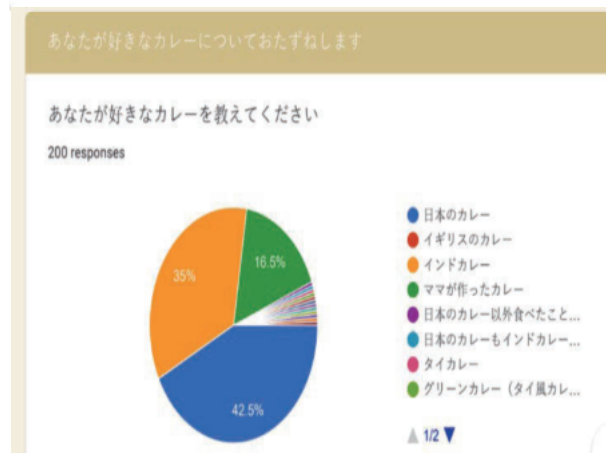
Survey on Curry

The following contains an internet survey that was conducted in July 2020. In the survey, some 200 Japanese participated. 40% of the participants were in their 20s age group, 23% were in their 30s, 18% were in their 40s, 10% were in their 50s, and the rest were in their 60s. 55% were females, 42% were males, 3% didn't respond to this question.

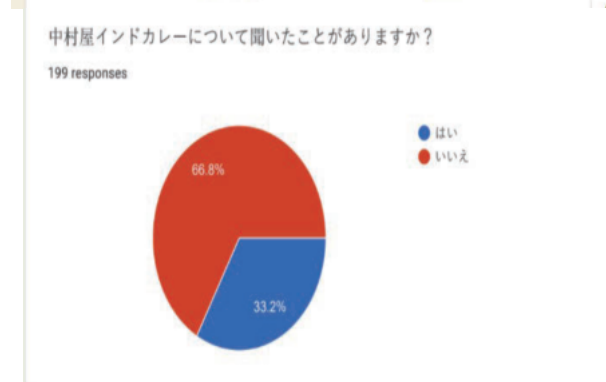
The survey was an attempt to check the knowledge of common masses in curry and its origin as well as types. Although eaten throughout Japan, there is a paucity of information on curry among people. The survey also attempted to ignite curiosity in the minds of the Japanese regarding curry. Therefore, this survey, though has a small sample, was received very enthusiastically and was able to reveal information which has been discussed below.



The question was on whether one knows the difference between the British, Japanese, and Indian Curry. 84% of Japanese did not know about the difference between the British, Japanese, and Indian Curry. Only 16% of people are well aware of the curry difference.



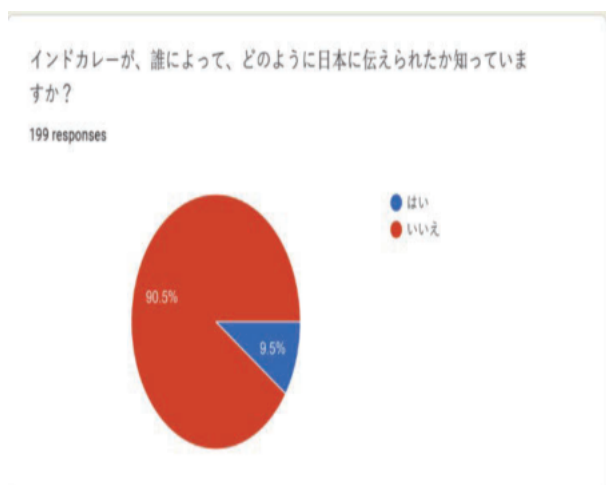
When asked about their favorite curry, Japanese participants responded with 42% liked Japanese curry. On the other hand, 35% liked Indian curry.



To the question “Do you know about the Nakamura Indian Curry” around 66% of Japanese replied “No”. On contrary, only 33% of

Japanese know about the Nakamura Indian Curry.

This shows that still many people in Japan are not aware of the true taste of Real India.



In a survey, a question was asked on Rash Behari Bose. The question was “Do you know by whom and how Indian curry was introduced in Japan?”

If we look to the answer, we observe only 9.5% of people are aware of the

struggle and devotion of the Indian Freedom Fighter, Rash Behari Bose. Except that, 90% of the people are still not aware of the “Taste of Love and Revolution.”

Conclusion

The above survey shows that majority of Japanese are ambivalent on the difference between the three types of curry. Two-thirds of participants had not even heard about the Nakamura Indian curry. And only one-tenth were aware of Rash Behari Bose. This begets the conclusion that more awareness about curry, its origin, and its various types is the need of the hour. In-depth research is needed to unearth the hidden story of the introduction of the Indian curry in Japan. This research will not only lead to the dissemination of knowledge but also pay due respect to the contribution of Rash Behari Bose and other hidden actors who played an important part in introducing Indian curry. This research will also lead to more appreciation and respect between the culture of India and Japan. Therefore, this research needs to be conducted further on a larger scale to throw light upon the struggle and devotion of many Japanese and Indian individuals who were pivotal in introducing and spreading Indian curry in Japan.

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