



Diners at Bukhara in Roppongi, Tokyo, enjoy a belly dance performance.



Japanese and South African co-workers share a laugh at Bukhara.

Indians Assist Those Disaster-stricken In Tohoku

On March 11, the great earthquake and subsequent tsunami caused extensive damage in the Tohoku region. Some people from India now residing in Japan decided that they wanted to help as much as they could, but in a method that would be warming to the soul as well as the body. Ethnic restaurant owner Markus, the Indian chef he employs and his crew from the kitchen prepared to distribute servings of curry to those taking refuge after the disaster. In all, they have made two trips up to the stricken northeast area of Japan. In the Japanese capital of Tokyo, people have the opportunity to

enjoy all types of food but those being served emergency rations do not have much choice.

Originally from Delhi, India, Markus had opened an ethnic restaurant near the center of Tokyo which attracts many foreigners, as there are many restaurants serving international dishes in the vicinity. His is an Indian restaurant named Bukhara, which holds various events such as belly dancing and Maharajah nights featuring Indian dances. Bukhara has been very busy, even after March. In late May for example a party was held by a foreign-affiliated company to highlight the global makeup of his customers.



Indian and Japanese volunteers prepare and serve hot curry meals to victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake, here in Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture in May. Restaurant owner Markus stands at right in the largest of the three photographs.

The owner of Bukhara also is managing director of Asahi Travel Service, a travel agency in India with a branch in Tokyo, as well as head of a business consulting company. It was when he had traveled back to India on March 13, of course to fulfill a prior tour commitment (he returned on March 25), that Markus held an ad-hoc meeting with other Indian businesspeople aboard the plane on how to assist Japan in the aftermath of the quake and tsunami disaster. As he had connections with Buddhist temples in Tohoku, he asked what was needed and received the reply that warm food would be most welcome to those in the cold northeastern climes. Since Markus realized that he and his Indian employees could offer what they made best in large amounts while providing “visible support” (seeing foreigners ladling out food) would be an ideal way of showing the refugees that they cared.

The Buddhist temple in Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture, that had conveyed the need for warm food became

the temporary base for feeding a total of 1,000 people (in three locations nearby) over a two-day period from April 18 to 20. The second time Markus visited Tohoku, on May 21 and 22, he went to Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture, which is home to the Ishinomori Manga Gallery and nearby the Ishinomaki MANGA Island that had been devastated by the tsunami. The second northeast excursion, which entailed serving some 1,000 refugees simultaneously, saw the Indians from Bukhara Restaurant being assisted by over a dozen volunteers from the Japanese company Mega with which Markus had connections. The Indian entrepreneur indicated that he would continue his efforts as long as they were requested by those in need in the disaster-stricken areas, this time as the weather gets warmer considering offering other fare (although actually spicier curry can help beat the summer heat as well) in addition to other items, apparently readying warm clothing in advance of the colder times to come later this year. 