

# A Study on Acceptance of Maharashtrian Sweets by the People of Various Religious Communities Residing in Mumbai

Mrs. Sneha Bhandare<sup>1</sup> and Saveer Lopez<sup>2</sup>

Lecturer- Food Production<sup>1</sup> and Student<sup>2</sup>

Anjuman-I-Islam's Institute of Hospitality Management, Mumbai, India

**Abstract:** *Maharashtrian cuisine is deeply intertwined with the culture of the Marathi people, and sweets and desserts are an essential component of this rich culinary tradition. These delectable treats not only reflect the region's unique flavours but also play a vital role in special occasions and festivals. Maharashtra is celebrated for its mouthwatering array of sweets, which are enjoyed during various festivities. Exploring the diverse flavours of these Maharashtrian sweets is a must on any visit to the state. Maharashtrian sweet dishes, or "mithai," hold a special place in the hearts of locals, making every occasion, whether it's Ganesh Chaturthi or a simple family gathering, feel complete. Iconic sweets like Modak, tilladoo, and Shrikhand are integral to these celebrations. Sweets are cherished by individuals of all ages, and some even cater to dietary restrictions, ensuring there's something for everyone at the table. A meal in Maharashtra is typically concluded with the indulgence of these delightful sweet offerings. Maharashtrian sweets are often homemade, with ingredients like jaggery being commonly used. Puran Poli stands out as one of the most beloved desserts in Maharashtra. This rich tradition of crafting sweets at home adds a personal touch to these delectable treats. Sweets in Maharashtra are characterized by their use of jaggery, which imparts a unique sweetness and flavor to the dishes. These delectable creations are enjoyed at the end of a meal, providing a sweet and satisfying conclusion to the dining experience. The desire for sweetness is a universal aspect of human nature, transcending age, ethnicity, and cultural boundaries. Throughout human history, sweet flavors have played a crucial role in nutrition, influencing our eating habits and providing both energy and essential nutrients. Daily desserts often feature a combination of ingredients like water, milk, and fats, creating a delightful conclusion to a meal.*

**Keywords:** lip-smacking, drooling dessert, true essences, mishtan., Maharashtra puran poli, sweets.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Healthy eating doesn't necessitate the abandonment of desserts. Numerous low-fat and fat-free dessert options are available in the market, making it possible to transform traditional desserts into lighter alternatives. For creamy desserts like Ras malai and kheer, consider using fat-free evaporated milk and fat-free condensed milk instead of their full-fat counterparts. When it comes to baking cakes, applesauce is an excellent substitute for butter and oil, keeping cakes moist while reducing their fat content. Additionally, opting for 100% whole-wheat flour over all-purpose white flour can make your homemade cakes more nutritious and filling.

Moreover, for those mindful of their sugar intake, sugar substitutes such as Splenda and natural options like Agave nectar and Stevia allow you to enjoy sweets without exceeding your sugar limit. This isn't just pertinent for diabetics but also for individuals managing their weight and calorie intake. The dessert recipes in this section exemplify delicious options to satisfy your sweet cravings. However, it's important to remember that low-fat doesn't equate to low-calorie, and certainly not calorie-free. Even when opting for low-fat options, moderation is key.

The good news is that with prudent choices and a sense of moderation, you can relish desserts. Fruits can be a fantastic way to gratify your sweet tooth. For instance, indulge in strawberries with a dollop of non-dairy whipped cream and a slice of angel food cake. Another sweet treat to consider is a parfait made with low-fat Greek yogurt, frozen fruits, and a sprinkle of granola when you're yearning for something sweet.

When it comes to Indian cuisine, one aspect that cannot be overlooked is the deep-rooted love for sweets. Indians undeniably have a penchant for sweets, and sweet shops often witness bustling crowds across the country. The sheer variety and abundance of sweets explain their significance in the lives of Indians. Sweets play an integral role in virtually every Indian celebration or festivity, from grand feasts to simple occasions like birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, or any other pretext. Sweets are meant to be shared with the entire neighbourhood during every event, big or small. The colourful display of sweets in Indian sweet shops paints a beautiful picture. Sweets symbolize goodwill in India and are often the first things to be tasted when something newsworthy happens or important decisions are made. In contrast to most countries where sweets are typically the final course of a meal, in India, they are served alongside the rest of the meal. Some traditions, especially during celebrations, dictate that people should have a bite of the sweet on their plate before starting their meal to signify the festive nature of the occasion.

Indian sweets are referred to as 'Mithai' and are characterized by their reliance on sugar, milk, condensed milk, and frying techniques. While the ingredients remain consistent, the bases and styles of sweets can vary by region. Indian sweets are known for their intense sweetness and richness, surpassing Western desserts, and they tend to be quite heavy since they are primarily prepared using Ghee, which is clarified butter.

Ancient Sanskrit texts from India make mention of feasts and offerings that included "mithas," or sweets. The Rigveda specifically references a sweet cake made from barley known as "apūpa." This barley flour was either fried in ghee or boiled in water and then dipped in honey. The tradition of "malpua" closely preserves the name and essence of this preparation. One of the most comprehensive surviving texts that provides extensive descriptions of sweets and their preparation is the "Mānasollāsa." This ancient encyclopedia covers various aspects of Indian arts, including food and music. It was composed around 1130 CE by the Hindu King Somesvara III. Within this document, there are descriptions of meals that include a rice pudding referred to as "payasam" in the languages of the Indian subcontinent, which is known as "kheer." The text also mentions seven different varieties of rice.

"Mithai," which are sweets and confectionery, have a rich tradition in the Indian subcontinent. Thousands of specialized shops in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka exclusively sell a wide variety of sweets. Sugarcane has been cultivated in the Indian subcontinent for thousands of years, and the art of sugar refinement was developed there around 8000 years ago (6000 BCE) by the Indus Valley Civilization. The English word "sugar" is derived from the Sanskrit word "sharkara," referring to refined sugar, while the term "candy" originates from the Sanskrit word "khaanda" for unrefined sugar – one of the simplest forms of sweetness. Over its long history, the cuisines of the Indian subcontinent have developed a diverse array of sweets, making it a region known for the sheer variety, abundance, and cultural significance of sweets like no other.

In the various languages of the Indian subcontinent, sweets go by numerous names, with one common term being "Mithai." These sweets incorporate sugar and a wide range of ingredients, including various flours, milk, milk solids, fermented foods, root vegetables, raw and roasted seeds, seasonal fruits, fruit pastes, and dried fruits. The preparation methods for these sweets vary, with some being cooked, others baked, roasted, fried, frozen, or involving creative combinations of techniques. The composition and recipes of sweets differ by region.

Sweets, or Mithai, are often served with meals and hold significant cultural importance in the Indian subcontinent, being included in greetings, celebrations, religious offerings, gift-giving, parties, and acts of hospitality. They play a central role in South Asian festivals like Holi, Diwali, Eid, and Raksha Bandhan, where they are both homemade and purchased and then shared. Social gatherings, weddings, and religious festivities frequently involve a communal celebration of food, and the flavours of sweets are a fundamental part of these celebrations. Indian cuisine reflects a diverse tapestry of flavours stemming from the vast diversity of the country's landscape, climate, and culture. Maharashtra's culinary culture, in particular, showcases this diversity, offering a range of tastes from the fiery flavours of the coastal areas to the milder ones of the inland regions. Maharashtra's traditional dishes provide a wholesome and comprehensive representation of the Indian subcontinent's culinary heritage.

#### **Types of Maharashtrian sweets:**

Maharashtrian cuisine offers a delightful array of sweets and desserts. Here are some popular types of Maharashtrian sweets:

**Puran Poli:** Puran Poli is one of the most iconic and beloved Maharashtrian sweets. It consists of a sweet lentil filling (usually chana dal or toor dal) encased in a thin, soft wheat flour flatbread. It's often flavored with cardamom and served with ghee.

**Modak:** Modak is a steamed or fried sweet dumpling with a sweet filling, traditionally made with coconut and jaggery. It's particularly popular during the Ganesh Chaturthi festival.

**Shrikhand:** Shrikhand is a creamy and luscious dessert made from strained yogurt (hung curd) mixed with sugar and flavored with saffron, cardamom, or other spices. It's often garnished with chopped nuts.

**Basundi:** Basundi is a thick, sweet, and creamy milk dessert that's flavored with cardamom and saffron. It's somewhat similar to rabri and is typically served chilled.

**Gulab Jamun:** While Gulab Jamun is a widely popular Indian sweet, it is also commonly enjoyed in Maharashtra. These deep-fried milk-based dumplings are soaked in sugar syrup, resulting in a sweet and syrupy treat.

**Anarsa:** Anarsa is a traditional Maharashtrian sweet made from rice flour, jaggery, and sesame seeds. The dough is deep-fried to create crispy, sweet discs.

**Karanji (Gujiya):** Karanji is a fried pastry filled with a sweet mixture of coconut, jaggery, and spices. It's often shaped like a half-moon and is a favorite during Diwali and other festivals.

**Rava Ladoo:** Rava Ladoo is a quick and easy sweet made from semolina (rava), ghee, sugar, and flavored with cardamom. It's shaped into round balls and is a popular choice for festive occasions.



Fig. 1



Fig.2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Arusha Babbar 2019** Sweets and desserts hold a significant place in showcasing the culture and flavours of any region. Maharashtra is no exception, boasting a rich tradition of delectable sweets and desserts that are enjoyed during special occasions, festivals, or simply as a part of everyday life. Not experiencing these mouthwatering sweet treats when

visiting Maharashtra is a missed opportunity. Sweets are a vital element of cultural expression, and Maharashtra is renowned for its diverse and delicious array of sweet delicacies. Your journey through Maharashtra would lack a crucial dimension without indulging in these delightful confections.

#### **Susan L. Johnson**

The introduction of traditional Maharashtra cuisine might have initially surprised those not accustomed to it, especially when the dessert arrived at the table. For adventurous food enthusiasts, the sight of diamond-shaped sweets drenched in aromatic gulab jamun syrup can be irresistibly tempting. Just one bite of these exotic Indian desserts can leave a lasting impression. During the first day of Diwali, a significant Hindu festival, sweets play a vital role in enhancing the celebration and making it more delightful. Indian sweets are typically prepared by baking rather than cooking over an open flame, although this can vary by region. While the ingredients may not seem overly complex, a skilled chef can effortlessly transform them into delectable dishes filled with flavour and care. Milk holds a prominent place in Indian cuisine as it features in numerous dishes, including puddings, dumplings, and more. It serves as a crucial ingredient that enhances the taste and texture of these traditional recipes.

#### **Rahul Verma**

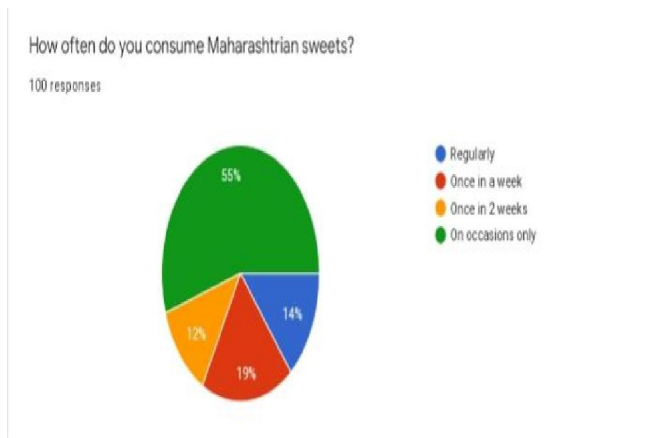
At the pinnacle of Indian sweets hierarchy stands the beloved laddoo. It's a treat that's shared in various life events, from the birth of a child to moments of success. Mysore Pak, on the other hand, doesn't quite evoke the same sentimental response. Laddoos are typically crafted from lentils and are a popular choice for sweets in Maharashtra. When we graduate from college, it's customary to distribute laddoos to teachers, the principal, and college staff. They are most adored; some might even say they're a sign of a generous heart. Laddoos can also be prepared at home, and the ones made by mothers are particularly delightful due to the love poured into their making. Sharing laddoos with neighbours, relatives, friends, and family strengthens relationships. Laddoos always find eager takers, and if India were to select a national sweet, laddoos would likely be the top contender. They have a soft, age-friendly texture, and they're gentle on the palate.

Ganesh Chaturthi is a prominent festival for laddoo preparation. Laddoos are round and consist of tiny, pearl-like balls. Originally referred to as "Hali" in the northern region, laddoos are often made using ghee, resulting in their characteristic orange color. These delectable sweets have a rich history and are mentioned in ancient texts from both South and East India. Laddoos are traditionally made from ingredients like koya, jaggery, and ghee. The idea of forming laddoos using tutored techniques originated with sugar. In ancient times, during the busy foot century, the revered combination of sugar, jaggery, and peanuts was recognized for its nutritional value, paving the way for the creation of these delightful laddoos. Laddoos are closely associated with joy and delicious memories.

#### **Objectives:**

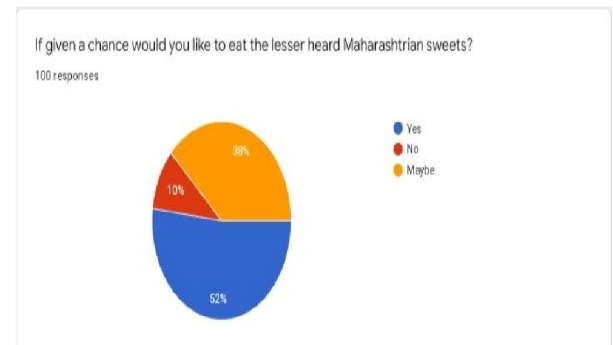
- To study the variety of sweet dishes made in Maharashtra.
- To get familiar with ingredients used in making sweets in Maharashtra.
- To understand the acceptance of Maharashtrian sweets by people belonging to various religious, communities in Mumbai.

**III. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:**



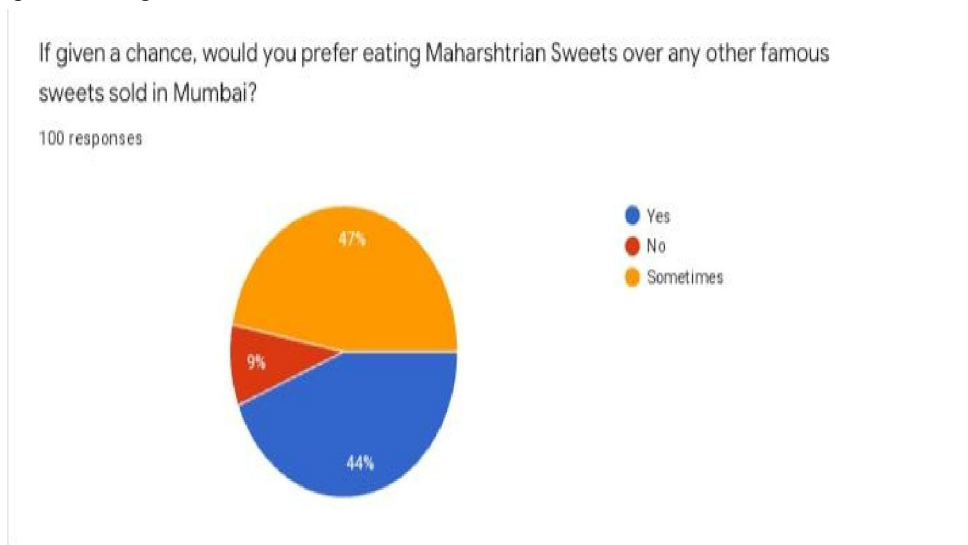
**Fig.5**

55% of the responses is on occasion only  
12% of the responses is once in 2 weak  
19% of the responses is once in a weak  
14% of the responses is regular



**Fig 6**

52% Of the people prefer yes.  
10% of the people prefer no.  
38% of the people prefer maybe



44% of people have voted yes  
47% of people have voted sometimes  
9% of people have voted no

**IV. RESULT**

Maharashtra is celebrated for its delectable array of sweets and desserts, savored during every special event and festival. A true exploration of Maharashtrian cuisine would be lacking without relishing the delectable homemade sweets.

Maharashtrian desserts encompass a rich diversity of flavors, featuring ingredients ranging from yogurt and rice flour to mango and jaggery.

In addition to the ingredients mentioned above, a wide assortment of fruits, vegetables, various legumes, pulses, and grains find their way into the sweet preparations of Maharashtra.

In virtually every Maharashtrian household, you can expect to find at least one sweet dish prepared during occasions and festivals.

### V. CONCLUSION

Majority ie. 52% of the respondents belonging to various religious communities residing in Mumbai, would choose Maharashtrian sweets over any other sweets available in the market.

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