



Miss Sake India Pageant – A Platform to Promote Japan – India Cultural Ties

Description

On December 5, 2024, UNESCO recognized Japan’s traditional knowledge and skills of sake-making with koji mold as an **Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**. This recognition brought a lot of happiness for the Sake lovers all over world and the celebration has been continuing ever since. In this context, it was a great honour for me attend a special **Sake Soirée** at the **residence of the Ambassador to Japan** at New Delhi on 16th April 2025, which was organised to **celebrate this momentous achievement**. [Read about it on my post here.](#)



lâ??m in frame with the Ambassador of Japan to India at his residence, standing on his right side.

In a planned continuation of the festivities, on the next day i.e. 17 April 2025, the **Miss Sake India Pageant** was held at **The Japan Foundation** New Delhi. The aim of this pageant was to select the **Miss Sake India 2025** as also to **celebrate UNESCO Recognition of Sake Craft**. This entire event was curated around the theme promoting mutual cultural heritage and the growing friendship between Japan and India.



Organisers of the Pageant

The event held under the overall aegis of the Embassy of Japan, was organised by **Mr Kojiro Honda** â?? a prolific entrepreneur who owns the **Kuraku Japanese Restaurant** at Gurugram, in association with **Ms Mika Onishi** â?? Representative Director at **Miss SAKE Association**.



Kojiro Honda



Mika Onishi

Opening Talk by Mr Kojiro Honda

Mr Kojiro Honda, who was the main force behind organising this remarkable event, took to stage to address the audience, Judges and the participants. He brought out how the Miss Sake India title serves as a platform for cultural exchange between Japan and India especially between the youth of the two countries. He further bolstered the confidence of the participating girls by assuring them that all of them are already winners by reaching this stage and now they should give their best in the competition in a relaxed and a calm way.



Kojiro Honda addressed the audience and welcomed the participants to the stage

Elaborating further he explained how the last year's winner **Ms Menaaka Rai**, visited Japan as a cultural Ambassador and helped positively in exchange of goodwill amongst the youth of both countries towards each other.

Address by the Ambassador of Japan



Address by Ambassador of Japan

The event also saw an address by **H.E. Mr Ono Keiichi, Ambassador of Japan to India**, where he shared his views about the competition. His remarks underscored the growing bond between Japan and India and about how this pageant formed an important part of the broader initiative of furthering the growing friendship between the two countries.



A group photo of the Ambassador with the participants

The Panel of Judges

Once all the participants and the guests settled down, it was time for each the four Judges to introduce themselves, wherein they talked about themselves and their background.



Panel of Judges for the pageant

The august panel of judges for the pageant included the following:

1. **Mr Sato Koji** ??? **Director General of The Japan Foundation**
2. **Ms Mika Eoka** ??? **Sake** Importer and Sake trainer based at New Delhi.
3. **Ms Kotoko Yamada** ??? Miss Sake Japan 2023
4. **Ms Menaaka Rai** ??? Miss Sake India 2024

Conduct of the Pageant

THE FINALISTS OF MISS SAKE INDIA 2025



THOI

- Manipur
- Japanese Restaurant



SONU RANI

- Sirsa, Haryana
- Fund Accountant



AAKANSHA SRIVASTAVA

- Gurugaoon, Haryana
- Marketing



SAKSHI DESHMUKH

- Mumbai
- IT Engineer



NAVNEET KAUR

- Delhi
- HR/Japanese Teacher

The finalist contestants

The conduct of the competition involved each of the participants going through four stages:

1. **Self Introduction**
2. **Telling as why why she deserves to be the winner of the title**
3. **Talent round (performance of a dance or recital of a poem etc)**
4. **Finally the facing Question from the Jury**









It was remarkable to note that each of the contestants was highly motivated and had a strong belief in the Miss Sake India platform and a confidence that they could do justice to the title if won by them.

Special Sake Tasting





Tasting with Four Sake Wine by Mika Eoka

The culmination of the judging rounds was followed by a **Special Sake Tasting** by Ms Mika Eoka which served as an apt tribute to the art of Japanese sake. This tasting assumed significance since the Indian girl who won the coveted title of Miss Sake India 2025 was further required to serve as a **goodwill ambassador** who would represents and promote the elegance of Japanese sake and its cultural values.

Lunch with Sake



After the end of the pageant contest, everyone proceeded for the lunch at the premises itself which allowed everyone to engage in conversations and enjoy the multi cultural spirit of the event. **All this over some scrumptious Japanese cuisine and pours of Sake.**

And the Winner Is ..

The title of Miss Sake India 2025 was won by **Ms Aakansha Srivastva.**



Congratulations, Well Deserved and Kanpai !!