

# Ode to *Bhat*



NUREN IFTEKHAR

Back in 2012, when Passenger was booming in everyone's radio with their hit new single, one line in particular stuck with me, "Only know you love her when you let her go". Since my social life is as dull as a golfing tournament, it only makes sense that I would finally relate to that song through an inanimate object. That is also what brings us to the topic mentioned in the title of this write-up. *Bhat*, the epitome of soul food. I know what you're thinking. Here's another person trying to glorify a quintessential aspect of mundane life. But believe me, this is not glorification. This is an ode to the quietly brilliant part and parcel of our everyday meal. This is to the ever-so-humble *bhat*.

To me, *bhat* was always just there. Something that I regularly consumed but did not pay second glance to. You make a mental note when you go out and have some fancy food. But you don't particularly notice the ubiquitous *bhat*. The brilliance of *bhat* is in the fact that it's taken for granted. To truly realise how down to earth and homely a plate of *bhat* can be you need to first accustom yourself to a situation where it isn't the staple. Whenever someone used to complain that they're having a hard time without *bhat*, I'd think that they were

overreacting. But as soon as I started a diet without *bhat*, it dawned on me that not a bit of it is an overstatement.

We all know *kacchi biryani* is amazing. The *biye barir polao* hits the right note as well. And when it comes to food that isn't oriental, the general enthusiasm is undeniable. However, there is a difference between 'good food' and 'soul food'. As good as the food I've mentioned before are, they are nowhere close to being soul food. *Kacchi* can be the best thing in the world but you wouldn't be able to withstand a month of *kacchi*. The food items that we look forward to having, translate terribly to everyday food. But *bhat* doesn't have that problem. *Bhat* fits in after a scorching hot day or a rain soaked one. *Bhat* fits right in after the sad blues or the happy cheers. *Bhat* adapts itself to whatever situation you are in at the moment.

While *bhat* on its own seems pretty basic, it can display a wide variety of tastes depending on what you are having it with. It can go full on fancy with *rezala* and *tikka*, it can go nutritious and wholesome with vegetables and *bhorta*, and it can also go low effort but brilliant with an egg and *dal*. *Bhat* is brilliant, because it's flexible. And it can be all these things with a minimum amount of effort. *Bhat* is one of the easiest things to make. This lack of

effort required coupled with how filling it is makes *bhat* the ultimate comfort food. We might not go to a fancy restaurant to have *bhat* (although restaurants specialising in *bhat* are gaining popularity these days), but we truly learn to appreciate it on a hungry stomach coupled with some *dal*, *alu bhorta* and eggs. As the tiredness of the day, and the pent up hunger disappears to oblivion after a

plate full of *bhat*, one cannot help but appreciate the comfort that only *bhat* is able to offer.

*Nuren Iftekhar* is your local stray cat in disguise; he interacts with people for food and hates bright light. He got Hufflepuff 3 times straight in Pottermore so no walking around that one. Send him obscure memes at [n.iftekhar18@gmail.com](mailto:n.iftekhar18@gmail.com)



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