

Blending Tradition with innovation in Festive Cuisine of Hebbar Iyengars

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Abstract

India with its diversity of culture and traditions built over thousands of years influenced by the growth of multitudes of civilizations which has continued to have its uniqueness. Every community has preserved and nurtured the culture and traditions that were developed based on the central requirement of survival with nature and its changing needs. The communities built up unwritten rules regarding every social activity including the conduct of festivals and the cuisine that dictated the sentiments and mood of the seasons. The research paper covers historical evolution of Hebbar Iyengars community in Karnataka with their festive practices throughout the year. Research also tries to focus on the ingredients used and method of preparation of festive menus along with nutrient aspects that dish is offering in today's calorie conscious generation. Methodology adopted for the research was primary and secondary both. The primary data was based on the experience of locals from the community and Secondary data from various articles.

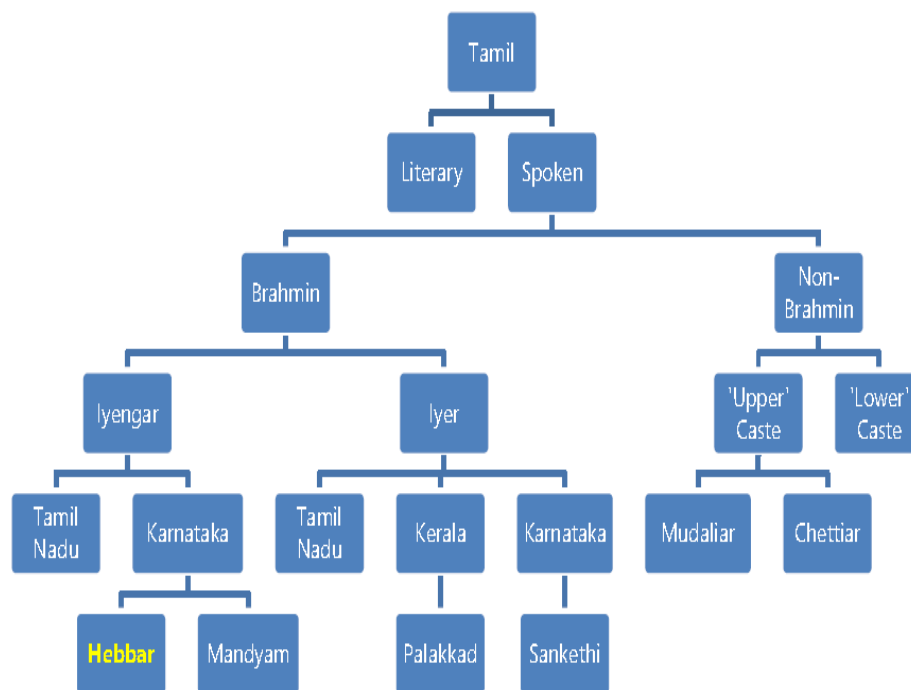
Key words:- Hebbar Iyengars, festive Cuisine, Culture.

INTRODUCTION

Hebbar Iyengars are Brahmins of Karnataka. They are principally followers of Ramanujacharya. They are believers of Vishnu, the protector and worship his various avatars or incarnations on earth. They are predominantly residents of certain districts of Karnataka like Mysore, Bangalore and Hassan. This is a very small community but now spread out all over the world. It is believed that people in these areas could have embraced Shree Vaishnavism when Ramanujacharya took refuge in Melkote near Mysore during the reign of Hoysala Kings in 11th century AD. The then Hoysala king himself embraced Ramanuja philosophy to give up Jainism which was his birth religion. Since Ramanujacharya came from Tamil Nadu, the cultural aspects of tamilnadu were imbibed by the local who lived and admired the religion emerging of mixed culture also leading to fusion of eating habits and preparations. There are two different groups of Iyengars. One group is Mannar and the other group is Thollapar. The cuisine of Hebbar Iyengars has emerged and as a unique cuisine with some remarkable signature dishes which is highly popular in whole of southern Karnataka. This community is known for its rice preparation called "PULIVOGARE" (tamarind rice) with various versions

showcasing its popularity. The Hebbar community acknowledge and consider few days as very important and auspicious i.e Ekadashi and Dvadashi. On Ekadashi i.e., 11th day and Dvadashi, the 12th day, a special therapeutic menu is prepared. On Ekadashi, people do not consume carbohydrates and lentils and sustain on liquids like buttermilk, milk, fruits etc. it is a semi-fasting day and also can be called detox day. On Dvadashi, 12th day of Indian month. The first meal of the day will not be breakfast. A special menu of Nalli Chattu (gooseberry preparation), Athikeerai karimdu, Chatambdu Kannambdu (a green gram lentil preparation) (sweet) is prepared on that day and consumed. This day's meal is filled with medicinal value and total nutrition. The classification of Hebbar Iyenger community

below in Fig. 1 (adapted from Ramanujan (1968)).



Objectives of study:-

- 1) To examine season wise festive cuisine of “Hebbar Iyengars” a community from Karnataka
- 2) To understand the temperament of the community during their festive season and the variety of ingredients used in their recipes.
- 3) To study the Nutritional value of the ingredients used in festive preparations.

Glossary terms of the ingredients of Hebbar Iyengars cuisine used in the Research paper on with their English equivalents.

s.no	Ingredients <u>Hebbar Iyengars</u> cuisine	Brief Description
01	Ambode	a Bengal gram lentil fried item
02	Nalagiri	Semi thick lentil-vegetable ground coconut tamarind gravy
03	Kolombu	Lentil coconut vegetable gravy
04	Obbattu	Bengal gram jaggary filling using Maida batter and toasted
05	Chatambu	A watery lentil without vegetable gravy
06	Morkolombu	Buttermilk coconut vegetable gravy
07	Thair pacchadi	Vegetable, curd dish
08	Morechatambu	Buttermilk spiced gravy
09	Lemon chatmbdu	Lentil lemon spiced gravy
10	Karimbdu	Dry vegetable preparation
11	Kadag puli	Vegetable coconut with mustard tamarind gravy
12	Kosambri	Lentils Salad
13	Ogre	A special rice preparation with multiple variations
14	Narthanga ogre	Rice preparation with citrus fruit juice
15	Manga ogre	Rice preparation with Raw mango gratings
16	Ulund ogre	A Roasted black gram lentil rice
17	Kanambdu	A semi liquid coconut jaggery lentil sweet dish
18	Kadabu	Steamed dish with multiple variations –in combination with vegetables
19	Rasayana	Fruit preparation
20	Panyaru	sweets and savories of the Hebbar Community
21	Nallichattu	Goose berry preparation
22	Vada, happala, peni	Fried rice item, made alternately with beaten or puffed rice
23	pulivogre	Rice and Tamarind preparation
24	Attirsa	Rice flour and jaggary batter deep fried sweet
25	Kolakatte	Steamed rice flour with sweet filling dish
26	sajappa	Deep fried semolina jaggary copra and coconut filling sweet
27	Tenkolu	Black lentil and rice flour deep fried savory cummin seeds
28	chakkli	Black lentil and rice flour deep savory with sesame seeds
29	Kobri obbattu	Dry coconut and sugar filled in refined flour cover and roasted
30	Sakkare puri	Crisp deep fried refined flour item coated with powdered sugar
31	Rava unde	Semolina copra and sugar balls
32	Manavara unde	Deep fried Black lentil flour with sugar syrup balls
33	Paire Muchhoru	Green gram lentil and rice flour deep fried item

EXTENDED STUDY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Origins of Hebbar Iyengars as a distinct Community in Karnataka is based on the details published long back in the Hebbar Srivaishnava Sabha magazine called "Hebbar Kshema" and also a historical novel written by Smt. Neeladevi about the life of Sri Ramanujaru in Karnataka named "Dhanya" according to which the origin of Hebbar Srivaishnavas/Iyengars dates back to the time when ramanujaru was in Tondanur (Tonnur) near Melukote, a group of elderly Kannada Brahmins came to Ramanjua and offered to convert to Srivaishnava Religion impressed by Ramanujas philosophy of Vishistadvaita. Ramanjua affectionately called the group of Hiriya Haruva (Elderly Brahmin Kannadigas) as Hebbar and thus originated the sect called Hebbar Sivaishnava (Iyengars). So Hebbar Srivaishnavas are originally Kannada Brahmins (Advaitins) who got converted to Srivaishnavas impressed by the teachings of Sri. Ramanuja and not of backward Caste or Jains as said by some. Ramanuja asked them to settle in different places of the then Hoysala Kingdom (Current South Karnataka) hence many of the Hebbar Srivaishnavas concentrate in the southern districts of Karnataka especially, Bengaluru, Ramanagara, Mysuru, Mandya, Tumkur, Hassan, Chikkamagaluru, Kolar, Chikkaballapura and Chamarajanagar districts. They have their kuladaivams or Haath perumal in different places of these districts. Since their mother tongue was Kannada they still have the affliction towards Kannada. Gradually they learnt to speak Tamil mainly to learn the Divya Prabhandams. But still Hebbar Srivaishnavas cannot read and write in Tamil. They read the Ramanujas philosophical works and Alvars divya prabhandams translated to Kannada or English. But they recite Nalayara divyaprabhandams in Temples in Karnataka forming Gostis. They are called Melnaatu Iyengars by those in Tamilnadu as they are residing in the High Deccan plateau of Karnataka. namo naarayanaaya sampige srinivaasa, Bengaluru

Iyengars along with iyers are popularly referred as TamBrahm i.e tamil Brahmin. Iyers and Iyengars differ in their core philosophies. In many religions, Iyers place more emphasis on the Smriti [scriptures], while Iyengars place more emphasis on the Acharyas [teachers]. Iyengars follow the Sri Vaishnava tradition - a more stringent form of Hinduism where the worship primarily centers around the Vishnu pantheon. Iyengars are the followers of Ramanuja and Vishishtadvaita is their primary philosophy. Vishishtadvaita philosophy defines 3 entities - God, living and nonliving things. The goal of the jivas [living] is to merge with the Creator [Parabrahman], primarily through the path of Bhakti [devotion]. Most of the Iyengars speak Tamil, but few iyengars speak Kannada or a dialect of Tamil having roots from Mysore, hence are known as Mandyam, Hemige Iyengars. Some Iyengars even speak Telugu or Bengali depending on their migration from Tamil Naidu few centuries ago as they were invited by then kings of West Bengal. They have two sub committees namely Tenkalai and Vadakalai based on the religious affiliations. Tenkalai ascribes more importance to Tamil works while Vadakalai considers Vedas as more important but categorically they both are vegetarians.

Arvind Iyengar (2013) in "Aphonological overview of Hebbar Iyengar language" stressed that during 12th century CE (see Fig. 2 below), the Hebbar Iyengar community holistically migrated from the Tamil-speaking town of Srirangam to the Kannada-speaking town of Melukote. The resettlement of the community from developed a separate path with bifurcated linguistic surroundings and then got heavily influenced by Kannada. There is an old saying that goes like this "You are what you eat" and **Brahmin Cuisine** follows the concept of shaping the personality, mood and mind. Famous personalities of Hebbar Iyengars community are: Sri Gorur Ramaswamy Iyengar – great kannada writer; Sri G.P. Raja Ratnam – children's kannada literature (poet); Dr. Raja Ramana – Famed nuclear scientist; Dr. M.K. Srinivasan – Famed nuclear scientist; Srimati Neela Devi – kannada novelist.

Arvind Iyengar (2013) in his research piece of information on "Aphonological overview of Hebbar Iyengar language" mentioned that there are around 100,000 ethnic Hebbar Iyengars worldwide. However, many may have switched over to Kannada or even English as the home language, and hence may not speak their traditional language.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Primary data collection questionnaire:

Method adopted:	Telephonic briefs / Interviews and observations from experienced Friends and their relatives within the community. The method tries to understand the traditional cuisine of the community via Kaal chakra.
Data collected from:	Approximately 10-12 families living in Delhi and NCT.
Time taken:	Over a period of 8+ months approximately
Area of study:	Delhi and NCT

Interview questions were framed up to get the answers of the objectives

1. To examine season wise festive cuisine of “Hebbar Iyengars” a community from Karnataka
2. To understand the temperament of the community during their festive season and the variety of ingredients used in their recipes.
3. To study the Nutritional value of the ingredients used in festive preparations.

Secondary source of Data Collection:

To fulfill the primary objective secondary sources were scrolled to find out List of festivals celebrated by Hebbar Iyengar community, Availability of seasonal vegetables and their impact seasonal festivals, Significance of the festivals and practices involved in their celebrations and to get an idea on the behavior of the community during festivals.

References are made to internet sites with regard to Indian calendars, festivals, seasons, Ingredients calorific values, nutrition aspects, seasonal vegetables, and community specialties for making the project report more comprehensive.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:-

Primary Data Analysis:

- a. Information gathered from : used 10-12 different family from same community
- b. Age of the members used for survey : Between 30 -95 year old
- c. Ancient practices: From different family sets – Matched between 95 to 100%
- d. Current practices - Varied greatly between traditional households and
 - Urban influenced households
 - It showed variance between very senior household members and junior members
- e. Variations in the preparations: Greatly influenced by current societal trends, and advent of internet and social media

Festivals, their significance & the menu:- “Hebbar Iyengar” is a Community of South India, they celebrate traditional new year on a grand fervor in spring season. In India right from ancient times seasons are divided into six periods. It starts with Vasantha ritu, Grishma, Varsha, Sharad, Shishir and Hemantha are the other seasons and Indian months are classified into Chaitra, Vaishaka, Jyesta, Aashada, Shravana, Bhadrapadha, Asvayuja, karthika, Margasira, pausa, Magha and Palguna.

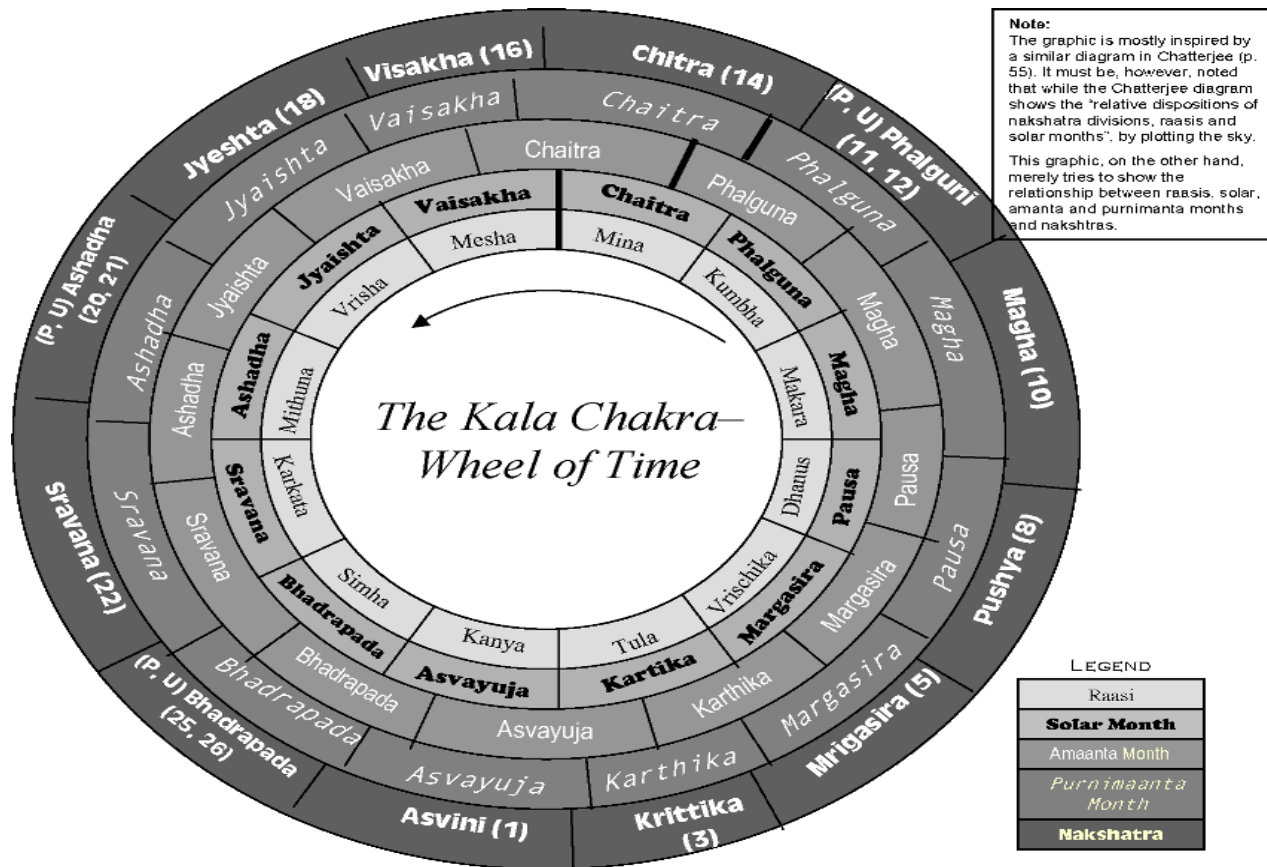


Figure 3:-

The kaal chakra.

There are 12 months in Hindu lunar Calendar:

1. Chaitra (30 / 31* Days) commences March 22 / 21*
2. Vaisakha (31 Days) commences April 21
3. Jyaistha (31 Days) commences May 22
4. Asadha (31 Days) commences June 22
5. Shravana (31 Days) commences July 23
6. Bhadra (31 Days) commences August 23
7. Asvayuja (30 Days) commences September 23
8. Kartika (30 Days) commences October 23
9. Margashira (30 Days) commences November 22
10. Pausa (30 Days) commences December 22
11. Magha (30 Days) commences January 21
12. Phalgun (30 Days) commences February 20

* Leap years

(March-April)- On set of chaitra month

Hebbar new year coincides with the New Year celebrated all over Karnataka as “Ugadi”. This comes in the season of Vasantha Rithu and Chaitra month. The festive day starts with the intake of tender neam leaves and jagerry. This is a mixture of sweet and bitterness and symbolizes the ups and downs of one’s life. On **Ugadi festival**, the specialty items are Mango Rice, Obbattu served with saffron flavor milk or ghee. Ambode, a Bengal gram lentil fried item is also prepared.

Hebbar Iyengar festival of wishing long harmonious couple hood comes in the month of Chaitra- Vaisaka i.e in starting summers of April. It is called **Charudu pandige** similar to Karva Chauth of North India. Husbands tie yellow thread symbolizing mangalasutra around their wife’s neck sharing long harmonious association. Mothers tie it around their unwedded daughters wishing them good life partner in future. This festival is also

called munu dosai pandigae and is marked with a special DOSA preparation with three layers to it. The filling will be made of Bengal Gram Lentil and Jaggery preparation called Purna. It is the same as the filling mixture of Obbattu. It is eaten with pure ghee. In Lunch menu normally comprises ten course menus with any one of the special rice preparation with payasam. Ram Navami also falls in Vaishaka ie April. It is peak summer time in Karnataka. The festival menu is entirely based on the seasonal produce and items that have cooling effect to the body are prepared.

1. Kosumbri is made of finely cut cucumber without lentils.
2. Panaka is a special drink is prepared using lime, jiggery, cardmum and edible camphor (Paccha Karpura).
3. Seasonal fruit (Bhel Fruit) drink is also prepared by extracting the pulp of bhel, jaggery, cardmum powder and edible camphor.
4. Rasayana is a fruity indulgence made of ripe banana, Jaggery, cardmum poder and coconut gratings.
5. Neer More is a butter milk preparation is prepared and seasoned with salt, curry leaves, ginger, astafetida and crushed green chilies. It is consumed in large quantities on Ram navami.
6. In lunch, simple pigeon pea lentil- Parpu Chatambdu, a dry curry, one more version of mango rice is prepared.
7. Sago payasam is also preferred as it has cooling effect in our body.

May-June (Vaishaka Jaista) is pre monsoon period of Karnataka.

This period is hot and humid. The family deities of this community are Srinivasa, Narashimha, Ranganatha and Varadaraja Swamy. All are manifestations of lord Vishnu. Two sacred festivals of this season are Srinivasa Rathotsava and Narashimha Jayanthi. The highlight event of these festivals in the temples of Karnataka is the rath yatra of the presiding deities. The car or Rath is embellished with exotic flowers and procession of the presiding deity will be taken out in the streets surrounding the temple for elaborate pujas.

On **Srinivasa Rathotsava**, the festival menu is Kosambri, Morkolmbu, Chatmdu, puliyogre and Bonda along with the usual items. Gasgase Kanmbdu-a poppy seed preparation is the sweet speciality. A special fruit preparation from ripe Mango is called Sihikarni in the peak season.

On **Narasimha Jayanthi**, lord Narashimha is worshipped and the lunch menu has lemon rice and Bengal gram lentil payasam. The special sweet dish for this day is Appamudu i.e a shallow fried sweet dish made out of the ground batter of soaked rice, jaggery, fresh coconut and cardmum &/or Ripe Bananas cooked with ghee in “panyara mould” and served hot.

Note: Some households make a batter of wheat floor, jaggery, coconut gratings.

June-July: Ashada- Shravana-

There are no festivals in mansoon as it rains heavily in many parts of Karnataka during this period.

July –August: Shravana-Bhardrapada

Aadi Shukravara festival is celebrated for five successive Fridays in this season and is dedicated to Goddess Lakshmi in which ghee lamp is lit every friday. Specialty of this lamp called Arshi Tambittu valakku is that it is edible and is prepared of raw rice floor, ghee, coconut grating and jaggery. Every Friday anyone of the rice preparation like Uland ogre, Narthanga ogre, Lime Ogre, Attena ogre, or puliyogre are prepared. Fried items happala, peni kolhappala, uppmalaka are made as people like eating hot and spicy. Any one of the payasam (Kanambdu) like Kadala Parrapu , Puri, shavige, Rice Kanmbdu is made.

“**Tiruvadipuram**” festival is celebrated on the occasion of birth day of south india’s Meera bai i.e Andal who loved lord Ranganatha (Vishnu sleeping on Adhishesha) and mentally accepted him as her husband. On this day special steamed preparations called Ulluthu kolkatte and sihi kolkatte are made. Uluthu kolkatte is a banana wrapped steamed preparation made of black gram lentil thick batter.

The next festival in this month is Vara Mahalaksmi festival. On this day along with rice, kolombu, more chatmdu, lemon rice with capsicum is prepared as Capsicums are available in plenty. It is called Dhonna Malaka (big Chilies) ogre.

August- September: Bhadra-Ashvayuja

The Grand festival of Hebbar Iyengar is **GOKUL ASTAMI**. It is celebrated on two days by two different groups of Iyengars. Mannar group celebrates on the astami i.e Lord Krishna's birthday and the other group i.e.Thollapar celebrates the Rohini nakshatra based on the star in which Krishna was supposed to have been born. It also signifies the death of Kansa. During Gokul Astami, Each and every Iyengar house hold decorates and displays the items made.In savories Chakkali, Thenkolu, kodbale, pairmuccheru, karasevu are prepared. In sweet category Puriunde, gulpavatae unde, pair mau unde, rava unde, aralu unde are prepared. Sajjapu, Kobri mitai, Garg Obbattu,kobri Obbattu, kadale Ki Mithai are prepared.

The number of panyaru varies from a few to 27 depending on the capability of ladies as they prepare all these items fasting till they finish the target of that day. In dinner various version of the beaten rice is prepared as it was favorite of Krishna. Gojju Avalakki, Sweet Avalakki, Thair Avalakki, Kosumbri, Thair vade, Chukku Vellu (a digestive mixture as food is heavy on this day) is prepared.

Season special produce preparations:

Hunse ki Thokku: It is raw Tamarind spicy chutney. All fruits rasayana made of apples, bananas, grapes, guavas, jackfruit, sweet lemon, jagerry and cardmum powder are made. All the savories and sweet are offered to god and savored on that day. Usual chatmbdu and one of the ogres and payasam are also prepared. Two other festivals are celebrated **UPAKARMA** the sacred thread POONAL is changed by the men folk. The next day recital of Gayatri Mantra is done. This festival menu is idli, attirasam, savoury, ulutu kolikattai and sehi kolikattai Rice kanamdu is made.

The women folk of Karnataka celebrate **Gowri** (the mother of Ganesha) festival. On this day Obbattu and payasa are special items of this day. Next day, Ganesha festival is celebrated on a small scale in which a special item called karigadabu is prepared.

September-October (ashvayuja-Kartika)

Famous dolls display festival occurs during this month in karnataka . on all the ten days of sharad ritu, goddesses are worshipped with last day as Vijayadashami. Each day, as an offering to the gods, one of the Panyaru is made and distributed to people who are invited to enjoy the dolls display. On Vijayadashami four kinds of rice preparation are made i.e kadambad sadhu, Ogre, Sakkar Pongal, Thair Saadu.

October- November (Karthika- Margshira)

Diwali festival is celebrated in a great fervor. It is three days celebration in which 10 course menu is prepared with sweets like Sajappa,chiroti, mysore pak etc .First day is 'Neeru Thumbuva Habba'. Second day is Narakha chaturdashi. Amavasya is not celebrated as a festival. Bali padyami is the festival of lights as all houses are lit with many lamps and is a scene to enjoy.

December – January (Pousa- Magha)

Some people who have this specific practice, celebrate Subramanya Shasti. Lord Subramanya is worshipped. It is mildly cold season in Karnataka and the yield of Hyacinth beans (avare kalu) is obtained in this month. It is mostly grown in Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

The menu for the feast is avare kalu chatambdu, a mixed vegetable kareembadu called kootu curry and sweet potato kannambdu are prepared. Black gram lentil vada is also fried. Kootu curry has vegetables like raw plantain, sweet potato, wide beans, French beans and avare kalu. It is a mildly spiced curry.

January –February (Magha-Phalguna)

In the month of January, three days festival of UTTARAYAN period is celebrated. The first day is BOGI festival. This is Brother-Sister bonding celebrations. On this day brothers go to their sister's house and enjoy

the festival menu – Hyacinth beans kolambu, sweet pumpkin curry and Obbattu (puran poli) and badami Palu are prepared.

The next day is MAKAR SANKRANTHI.

On this day a special dry mixture of Jaggery, roasted ground nuts, sesame seeds and copra pieces called YELLU is consumed. It contains oil based nuts and jaggery which are needed for cold season. Ghargobbattu, pongal, Sakkara pongal thair pachidi are the special items of the day. They are salt and sweet preparations of rice and green gram lentil. The newly harvested rice is used by people who are farmers by profession.

The next day is celebrated as KANU PANDIGAI. This is celebrated by women, wishing prosperity and progress to their parents and siblings. On this day, a special Dosa is prepared and eaten with sesame sweet chutney. Lunch menu has kolambu, ogarae, bonda and shalyanna. The festival of RATHASAPTHAMI i.e., celebrating the earth's position with respect to sun is observed and sun god is worshiped. From this day onwards weather in Karnataka tends to become hot. On this day rice preparation like Puliogarae savory called sakkarae poori or ravae unde are made as special items along with normal menu.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Hebbar Iyenger is a peace loving community with simple and modest thinking and temperament. One festival that has stood clearly out of all the festive celebrations of Hebbar Iyengars community has been Sri Krishna Janmastami. One trademark item has been Pulivogre, considered as special in the community. All festival cuisines have been influenced from the availability of seasonal vegetables and have attached importance of consuming local seasonal vegetables for healthy living. Thus, throughout the year based on the availability of seasonal vegetables dishes are made, providing necessary nutrients needed for our bodies. Globalization has opened the options of using wide variety of vegetables and fruits that do not grow in the local soil. So, dishes now prepared are new versions of the dishes prepared in olden days. Innovation is beauty of life. Cooking is a highly creative art and innovation has enhanced the taste of this cuisine all the more.

Effect of changes by the local environment: The Hebbar festive cuisines have maintained traditional methods of preparation while certainly the presentation, item mix and specialties have changed from time to time. Innovative ways of marking festivities have evolved while new dishes have been added in some households.

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