



Study of traditional masalas in Shikaripura and Hirekerur

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Abstract

Traditional masala is a blend of natural spices and herbs prepared according to regional culinary practices and passed down through generations. It is used to enhance the flavour, aroma, colour, and taste of food and may vary in composition depending on local traditions and recipes. In the present work traditional masalas and their ingredients were studied in Shikaripura and Hirekerur. Total 10 different types of traditional masalas namely Puli-yogare masala, Bisi-bele bath masala, Vegetable palav masala, Tomato bath masala, Sambar masala, Vangi bath masala, Rasam masala, Garam masala, Chat masala and Biryani masala were studied along with their ingredients, among all Puli-yogare masala and Bisi-bele bath masala were highly used in both regions as well as all the parts of Karnataka. These masalas were prepared by using blended dry spices such as *Brassica campestris* L., *Capsicum annum* L., *Coriander sativum* L., *Cuminum cyminum* L., *Curcuma longa* L., *Cinnamomum verum* J. Pres., *Elettaria cardamomum* L., *Ferula asafoetida* L., *Foeniculum vulgare* Mill., *Murriya koenigii* L., *Piper nigrum* L., *Syzygium aromaticum* L., *Sesamum indicum* L. and *Trigonella foenum* L. All these species are belonged to 14 plant species, 14 genera and 10 families, dominant family include Apiaceae (04), Zingiberaceae (02), whereas Brassicaceae, Fabaceae, Lauraceae, Myrtaceae, Piperaceae, Pedaliaceae, Rutaceae and Solanaceae represented by one species each respectively. From the study it concluded that different regions have their own unique masala blends, showing the diversity of food traditions and comprehensive understanding of traditional masala practices across different ecological and cultural regions of Karnataka.

Keywords: Spices, masalas, leaf, flower bud, fruit, seeds, plants, tradition

Introduction

Traditional masala is a blend of natural spices and herbs prepared according to regional culinary practices and passed down through generations. It is used to enhance the flavour, aroma, colour, and taste of food and may vary in composition depending on local traditions and recipes. A spice is a dried/fleshy seed, fruit, root, bark, or vegetative substance used in nutritionally insignificant amounts to flavour, colour, or preserve food. Many of these substances are also in traditional medicines. Globalisation has made these spices easily available, and increasing their popularity (Peter J. H Sharpe (1993)). Spices are an integral part of Indian food with consumption not only in household, restaurants and other eateries but also in food processing industry such as pickles, sauces, instant curry powders, ready to eat food preparation and so on. They are also used in preparing many kinds of cookery and sweets, and some spices like black pepper, ginger, long pepper, clove, pepper mint, ajwain, fenugreek are used in traditional and folk medicine. Therefore, it is important to identify the spices for their traditional and proper use and application. In many Indian dishes, many aromatic spices blend is used to make masala powder which forms heart of Indian dishes. These are usually dried and ground together in specific proportions to create a flavourful and fragrant mixture. Each spice used in masala powder contributes its own unique taste, aroma, and health benefits (A.K Pruthvi. 1993). Common spices used in masala powder include coriander seeds, cumin seeds, black pepper, cloves, cinnamon, cardamom, dried red chillies, turmeric, and fennel seeds. These ingredients may vary depending on the type of masala, such as garam masala, sambar powder, or curry powder (B. M Sharma and R. K Sharma 2018). Spices not only enhance the taste and

colour of food but also have medicinal properties. Many of them aid digestion, boost immunity, and improve overall health. The art of preparing masala powder has been passed down through generation and is an important part of Indian culinary tradition. (Pratibha Karan (1998)).

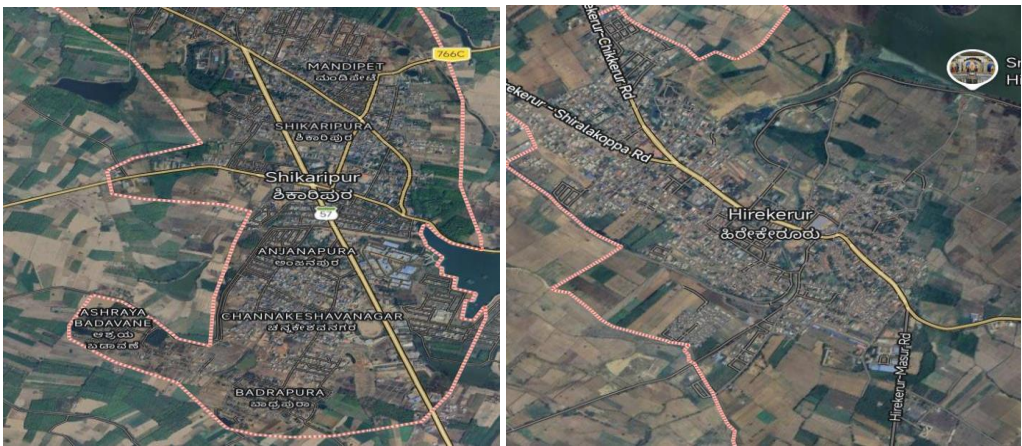
Karnataka, a state in southern India, is renowned for its diverse food culture and rich culinary traditions. One of the most important components of its cuisine is the use of traditional masalas, which are carefully prepared blends of spices that give each dish its unique flavour, aroma, and identity. These masalas are deeply rooted in the cultural practices of the region and have been passed down through generations. Traditional masalas in Karnataka are typically made using locally available spices such as coriander, cumin, black pepper, turmeric, red chilli, and curry leaves. The preparation involves traditional techniques like sun drying, roasting, and grinding, which help to enhance the natural oils and flavours of the spices. Unlike commercially available masala powders, these homemade blends are free from artificial additives and preservatives, making them healthier and more aromatic (B. Champakam & T. J Zachariah (2008)). In addition to improving taste, spices used in these masalas possess significant medicinal properties. Many of them have antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and digestive benefits, making them an integral part of daily nutrition as well as traditional medicine. The variation in climate, geography, and cultural practices across Karnataka has led to the development of different types of masalas in regions such as North Karnataka, South Karnataka, Coastal areas, and Coorg. Each region has its own unique combinations and methods of preparation, reflecting the diversity of the state. This study aims to explore the composition, preparation methods, and

significance of traditional masalas in Karnataka, highlighting their role in preserving cultural heritage and promoting health.

Study area

The present study was carried out in selected regions of Karnataka, namely Shikaripura taluk of Shivamogga district and Hirekerur taluk of Haveri district. These regions were chosen due to their rich tradition of spice usage and preparation of homemade masala powders. Shikaripura is an important taluk headquarters located in the Malnar region of Karnataka. The Shivamogga district is known as the “Gateway to Malenadu” and is characterized by varied topography, fertile soils, and favourable climatic conditions. The region has a strong cultural heritage and traditional food

practices, where the use of freshly prepared masala powders is common in daily cooking. On the other hand, Hirekerur taluk covers an area of about 801 km² and consists of more than 120 villages, with agriculture being the main occupation of the people. Major crops grown in the region include jowar, cotton, rice, chillies, groundnut, and oil seeds. Both study areas represent different Agro-climatic zones of Karnataka-Malnaad (humid region) and Maidan (semi-arid region). This variation influences the diversity of spices used, methods of preparation, and types of masala powders prepared by local households. Thus, the selection of Shikaripura and Hirekerur provides a comprehensive understanding of traditional masala practices across different ecological and cultural regions of Karnataka.



Study area

Aims and objectives

- To explore traditional masala varieties
- To understand traditional preparation methods
- To promote traditional food practices
- To study regional variations
- To preserve cultural heritage

Materials

Raw materials (Spices) Cinnamon, Cardamom, Clove, Fennel seeds etc.

Equipment: Mixer grinder/traditional stone grinder, Weighing balance, Airtight containers, Drying trays, Notebook and pen for recording data.

Methods

The present work has been taken out to explore and document traditional masalas and their ingredients, in Shivamogga Karnataka. For this, regular visits were conducted between January to March 2026. Information collected regarding preparation of different kinds of traditional masalas

Data collection: Data collected through open interview with the house wives, elderly people, local households, especially traditional cooks and chutney and condiments makers. Secondary data was gathered from books, research articles, and local records related to spices and traditional foods. A purposive sampling method was used to select households known for preparing traditional masala powders. Information regarding preparation, analysis, and storage of masala powders was recorded. Details such as ingredients used, proportions, preparation methods, and storage techniques were documented. The collected recipes were prepared using traditional methods: Cleaning and sorting of spices, sun drying to remove moisture, Roasting spices separately to enhance flavour etc. A comparative study was done to identify variations in ingredients and preparation methods across regions. Methods used by locals for storing masala powders were studied. Shelf- life and factors affecting quality (moisture, light, temperature) were observed.

In the present work, 10 different kinds of traditional masalas and their ingredients were studied and tabulated in Table-1

Table 1: List of traditional masalas used in Shikaripura and Hirekerur region.

Masala powder name	Ingredients used	Preparation
Garam Masala	Coriander seeds, Cumin seeds, Black pepper, Cloves, Cardamom, Cinnamon, Bay leaf, Nutmeg, mace, fennel seeds, star anise, Ginger, Garlic, Dry red chilli etc.	Clean the spices to remove dust and impurities. Dry roast all whole spices on low flame until the aromatic. Cool completely to retain flavour. Grind into fine powder. Store in an airtight container.
Puliyogare Masala	Coriander seeds, Dry red chillies, Fenugreek seeds, Mustard seeds, Cumin seeds, Black pepper, sesame seeds, Curry leaves, Asafoetida, Turmeric powder, Ginger, Garlic, Tamarind etc.	Heat a pan and add a little oil. Fry chana dal and urad dal until golden brown. Add all spices, roast on low flame until aromatic. Add curry leaves and saut until crisp. In the same pan, dry roast sesame seeds separately until they splutter. Turn off the heat and

		add Asafoetida. Let all the ingredients cool completely. Grind everything into a fine powder.
Bisi-Bele-bath Masala	Coriander seeds, Dry red chillies, Chana dal, Urad dal, fenugreek seeds, Cumin seeds, Black pepper, Cloves, Cinnamon, Cardamom, Ginger, Poppy seeds, Garlic, Dry coconut, Curry leaves, Asafoetida etc.	Heat a pan and add 1-2 tsp of oil. First, fry chana dal and urad dal until they turn golden brown. Add spices on it and roast on low flame until you get a nice aroma. Add cloves, cinnamon, and cardamom, and roast lightly for a few seconds. Add poppy seeds and curry leaves and saut briefly. In the same pan, roast dry coconut separately until it becomes light brown. Turn off the heat and add a pinch of asafoetida. Allow all the roasted ingredients to cool completely. Grind everything into a fine powder.
Vegetable Palav Masala	Coriander seeds, Cumin seeds, Fennel seeds, Black pepper, Cloves, Green cardamom, Black cardamom, Cinnamon sticks, Bay leaf, star anise, Mace, Nutmeg, dry red chillies, Poppy seeds, Stone flower, Dried ginger powder or small piece of dry ginger. Garlic flakes etc.	Take all the ingredients and clean them to remove dust or impurities. Heat a pan on low flame. Add ingredients one by one or in batches: first roast coriander seeds, cumin seeds, fennel seeds. Then add whole spices. Finally add dry red chillies, poppy seeds, and stone flower. Roast until you get a pleasant aroma. Allow them to cool completely. Transfer the cooled spices into a mixer/grinder. Grind into a fine powder.
Rasam Masala	Coriander seeds, Cumin seeds, Black pepper, Dry red chillies, Toor dal, chana dal, Mustard seeds, Fenugreek seeds, Curry leaves, Asafoetida, Ginger, Turmeric powder, garlic, Cloves, Cinnamon, Fennel seeds etc.	Heat a pan on low flame. Roast all the ingredients separately. Dry roast curry leaves until crisp. Add a small piece of asafoetida at the end and warm it slightly. Let them cool completely. Transfer the cooled ingredients to a mixer/grinder. Add turmeric powder and grind into a fine powder.
Tomato bath Masala	Coriander seeds, Dry red chillies, Cinnamon Cloves, Fennel seeds, Cumin seeds, garlic, Ginger, Grated coconut, Black pepper, Poppy seeds, Roasted gram dal etc.	Heat a pan on low flame. Roast coriander seeds, cumin, fennel, black pepper cinnamon, and cardamom until aromatic. Dry roast red chillies until crisp. Lightly roast dry coconut and roasted gram until golden. Let all ingredients cool down fully. Grind everything together into fine powder.
Sambar Masala	Dried red chillies, coriander seeds, cumin seeds, black pepper, Fenugreek seeds, Ginger, Garlic, mustard seeds, curry leaves, Asafoetida, Turmeric powder, Dry coconut, Garlic, cloves etc.	Heat a pan on low flame, roast coriander seeds, chana dal, and urad dal, red chillies, cumin pepper, fenugreek, curry leaves separately for best flavour. Let it cool. Add all roasted ingredients to a mixer, add Hing and turmeric powder. Grind into a fine powder.
Biryani Masala	Bay leaves, cinnamon sticks, green cardamom, black cardamom, cloves, star anise, mace, nutmeg, coriander seeds, cumin seeds, fennel seeds, black pepper, dried red chillies, turmeric powder, dry ginger powder, garlic powder, poppy seeds, stone flower, dried rose petals, saffron.	Heat a pan on low flame, roast all whole spices one by one until aromatic. Roast seeds till lightly golden. Roast red chillies until crisp. Let it cool, add everything to a mixer and grind into a fine powder.
Vangi Bath Masala	Coriander seeds, cumin seeds, urad dal, chana dal, red chillies, sesame seeds, dry coconut, cinnamon, cloves, Ginger, Garlic, peanuts, curry leaves, mustard seeds, turmeric, tamarind pulp etc.	Heat a pan on low flame, roast coriander seeds, chana dal and urad dal, red chillies, cumin, fenugreek, sesame seeds, dry coconut, cinnamon and cloves, peanuts separately. Let them cool completely. Transfer everything to a mixer and grind into a fine powder.
Chat Masala	Cumin seeds, coriander seeds, black pepper, asafoetida, mint powder, carom seeds, Ginger, fennel powder, red chilli powder, dry ginger powder etc.	Heat a pan on low flame roast cumin seeds and coriander seeds. Let them cool. Grind roasted spices into a fine powder and mix well.

Table 2: List of spices used as ingredients in traditional masalas.

Si no	Local name	Scientific name	Family name	Part used	Uses
1	Fenugreek seeds/Mentye Kalu	<i>Trigonella foenum L.</i>	Fabaceae	Seeds	Used in pickles and masala powders for slight bitterness
2	Mustard seeds/Saasive Kalu	<i>Brassica campestris L.</i>	Brassicaceae	Seeds	Adds flavour to curries, chutneys, and pickles
3	Fennel seeds/Agase	<i>Foeniculum vulgare Mill.</i>	Apiaceae	Seeds	Adds sweet aroma to dishes
4	Coriander seeds/Dhaniya Kalu	<i>Coriander sativum L.</i>	Apiaceae	Seeds	Used in spice blends for flavour
5	Cumin seeds/Jeerige	<i>Cuminum cyminum L.</i>	Apiaceae	Seeds	Adds earthy flavour to curries and rice dishes
6	Black pepper/Menasu	<i>Piper nigrum L.</i>	Piperaceae	Dried fruits	Used as a spice and seasoning
7	Turmeric/Arishina	<i>Curcuma longa L.</i>	Zingiberaceae	Rhizome	Used for colouring and flavour
8	Dry red chillies/Menasinakayi	<i>Capsicum annuum L.</i>	Solanaceae	Dried fruits	Adds heat and colour to food
9	Cloves/Lavanga	<i>Syzygium aromaticum L.</i>	Myrtaceae	Flower buds	Adds strong aroma to dishes
10	Cinnamon/Chakke	<i>Cinnamomum verum J. Presl</i>	Lauraceae	Bark	Adds warm flavour to dishes
11	Cardamom/Yelakki	<i>Elettaria cardamomum L.</i>	Zingiberaceae	Fruit	Used in sweets and beverages
12	Curry leaves/Karibevu	<i>Murriya koenigii L.</i>	Rutaceae	Leaves	Adds aroma and flavour to curries
13	Sesame seeds/Yellu	<i>Sesamum indicum L.</i>	Pedaliaceae	Seeds	Adds nutty flavour to dishes
14	Asafoetida/Hing	<i>Ferula asafoetida L.</i>	Apiaceae	Resin	Enhances flavour, especially in vegetarian dishes



Fig 2: Dry roasting of spices



Fig 3: Puliyogare Masala



Fig 4: Bisi Bele Bath Masala



Fig 5: Garam Masala



Fig 6: Rasam Masala



Fig 7: Tomato Bath Masala



Fig 8: Vangi Bath Masala



Fig 9: Sambar Masala



Fig 10: Pulao Masala



Fig 11: Chat Masala



Fig 12: Biryani Masala

Discussion

The present study on traditional masala highlights the importance of spice blends in enhancing the flavour, aroma, and nutritional value of daily food. The findings indicate that traditional masala powders are prepared using a combination of locally available spices such as coriander, cumin, pepper, turmeric, and dried chilies. These ingredients are carefully selected, roasted, and ground to achieve a balanced taste and long shelf life.

The study reveals that the preparation methods vary slightly from region to region, but the basic principles remain the same. Roasting plays a crucial role in improving the flavour and preserving the spices by reducing moisture content. It was also observed that homemade masala powders are preferred over commercially available ones due to their freshness, absence of preservatives, and better taste.

Conclusion

The study of traditional masala shows that it is an important part of daily cooking and Indian culture. Traditional masalas are made using natural spices like cumin, coriander, turmeric and pepper which add taste, colour, and aroma to food. The study also shows that these spices have health benefits such as improving digestion, reducing inflammation, maintains health condition of body parts and protects it from diseases.

It is observed that homemade masalas are better than readymade ones because they are fresh and do not contain harmful chemicals or preservatives such as tasting powder etc or artificial colours so thereby protect us from various side effects, diseases.

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