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2 February 2025

### Ugadi Pachadi – The Flavors of Life

Ugadi is a festival marking the start of a Telugu new year and the welcoming of spring, celebrated in many southern parts of India, especially in places like Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Maharashtra (where it is known as Gudi Padwa), Goa, and more. This festival's name is made up of two words: "Yuga," meaning era, and "Adi," meaning new. It marks the start of a new era and is the day which, as per Hindu religion, is known as the day Lord Brahma created the world. It is celebrated around March or April, depending on the first day of the Hindu month Chaitra. This festival welcomes spring and symbolizes prosperity and renewal.

On this day, families clean their homes and decorate them by drawing designs outside their homes with chalk on the floor, known as Rangoli. They also place mango leaves on their doors to attract positivity, take part in giving gifts to others, and, most importantly, make a special dish called the Ugadi Pachadi, which is offered as the first dish to God on this day. It is also provided to the worshippers as a religious offering called Prasadam, which is generally given after the religious ceremony called a pooja.

This dish is what I chose to talk about in my artifact analysis, as it is one such dish my family makes every year at home which has a special taste to it and is memorable. It is exclusively made on the day the event is celebrated. To the right is the image of the Ugadi Pachadi with visible chunks of mango, tamarind liquid, neem flowers, and several other ingredients.



In my family, this festival is celebrated every year by us buying new clothes for the day and making different dishes. We call all our relatives over for a get-together, followed by the pooja or ritual to God, and feasting afterward. The image to the left shows how a pooja looks after it has been completed, with

the Ugadi Pachadi on the right side in a pot, several mango leaves on top, and candles lit around. Some people even have astrologers reveal predictions of the new year, called Panchanga Sravanam.

Before getting to the meaning behind the Ugadi Pachadi, I must mention the procedure for making and the flavor of such a dish. After interviewing my father, who normally makes this dish every time the festival comes around, I have obtained the procedure for preparation. This dish is made of a mix of six flavors, going from sour to salty, sweet, tangy, spicy, and bitter. All these different flavors originate from the ingredients used to make this dish, which are prepared as follows: Begin by soaking tamarind in water for around an hour (for the sourness) and

squeezing the pulp. Then, add jaggery to the tamarind pulp and mix for the sweet taste. Add chopped raw mango for the tangy taste, followed by neem flowers for a bitter taste. Finally, finish with chopped green chili and black pepper for the spicy part. There is no heating required, and it is all made in one bowl. This dish, when consumed, brings about all types of flavors in one. Although it may seem like a bad idea to mix everything in one, it surprisingly tastes quite interesting when consumed.

Having not known much about the history of Ugadi except for the ritual being practiced, the snacks, and special dishes such as the Ugadi Pachadi being made, I have taken time to interview my mother about the history of and the meaning behind the ingredients that make up the Ugadi Pachadi. Regarding the importance of the Ugadi Pachadi and its symbolism, the different parts of this Pachadi have different meanings. The sweetness of the jaggery is meant to symbolize happiness and joy, the saltiness for fear and anxiety, the spiciness for anger, the tangy taste for disappointment, bitterness for sadness, and sourness for surprise. This tells us that we, as people, should embrace different aspects of life and that we should grow from these experiences.

Although we have talked about the importance of the Ugadi Pachadi as a whole and the meaning behind the ingredients, it is also just as important to know why the ingredients were chosen as the ingredients for the dish and what benefits they give. Neem flowers, which were used for the bitter taste, are from the neem tree, which has special importance in Indian culture. Due to its medicinal properties, it symbolizes resilience. Jaggery, the sweet element, is used in many Indian sweets and is made up of sugar, which is meant to remind us that good times are meant to be celebrated. Raw mango, which is used in many Indian dishes, including spicy pickles, is also a major ingredient. Having been one of my favorites in pickles and my dad's favorite, eaten plainly with salt and red chili powder on top, this element of surprise in the Ugadi Pachadi is the visible

cut pieces coming in while drinking the Pachadi. Tamarind is another ingredient used in many Indian dishes as the first ingredient, which has a tart taste to it. It adds flavor and depth to a dish. Green chili, a commonly used type of chili in many authentic Indian foods, adds the spiciness. This Pachadi also has antioxidants and vitamins that help in digestion. All this makes it a healthy dish while connecting traditional choices of ingredients for Indian cooking as well.

In conclusion, despite being just a dish, this Pachadi is more than just for consumption. It symbolizes the many aspects of human emotions brought about by the ingredients used to make it. By accepting such emotions into the new year, we would be able to live prosperous lives. This tradition of it being prepared by my family has a connection to beloved memories I have had growing up, making the day of Ugadi a memorable one and the dish even more special.

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