

Dakkali Caste: A Special Reference to Costal Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

Dakkali is one of the Scheduled Castes in Andhra Pradesh. It is one of the sub-groups of Madiga community. They don't have permanent settlement and wander one place to another for their livelihood. Basically they are the bard community and they tell the stories to the Madiga community and they will not tell the stories to any other community. According to the Jambapurana, they are not eligible to enter into the Madiga hamlets due to curse over them. Among the sub-groups of Madiga, Dakkali is in the least position. The present paper explains about the origin of the Dakkali caste, and how they became least in the Madiga sub-groups. It also explains how the caste myth is portraying their origin to become least in the sub-castes.

Key words: Dakkali, Caste myth, Madiga, Inter caste relations,

Introduction:

According to Indian Constitution there were sixty one Dalit communities in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Among these heterogeneous communities, Mala and Madiga are in large number. The Mala and Madigas have their own sub-groups along with their own occupations. Based on their occupational activity, the caste relations within these groups have emerged. Mala and Madiga are the larger groups and the other sub-castes are dependent castes on these two categories directly or indirectly. Mala and its sub-groups are right hand castes (*kudivaraam*) and Madiga and its sub-groups are left hand castes (*melavaram*) (Sudhakar Reddy Y.A., 2012: 43). Malas are agriculture labors and they are right hand castes directly involved in the production process. Sometimes they are small scale farmers and they work in cultivable and non-cultivable lands. For their agricultural services they used to get the shares from the crops. These reciprocity norms were based on the ethics of both the peasant and other castes that are tied up with the land to each other. Madigas are left hand castes and they do not directly participate in the production process. They participate in different works like the menial works, skinning and tanning works and disposal of dead carcasses. Their main profession is leather work. So, whoever work in leather and menial professions they were segregated from the society and they

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become the left hand castes.

In the year AD 2000, the government of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh divided the Scheduled Castes into four sub-groups like A, B, C and D as per the recommendations of Justice S. Rama Chandraraju (Rtd. Judge High Court of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh) commission report which is appointed by the government of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh to study the conditions of the Dalits. Madigas demanded the government that Malas are taking all advantages from the government. So, if classification happened based on their population everyone will get the benefits. The government took the initiation on the demand of Madigas and divided them into A, B, C and D. A (Reli and its sub groups), B (Madiga and its sub-groups), C (Mala and its sub-groups), and D (Adi-Andhra and its sub-groups) come under these categories (*The Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservations) Act 2000*: 133-135).

Origin of Dakkalis:

The Dakkali or Dakkala is one of the Dalit castes who are real mendicants and sub-group of Madiga community. They are begging community from the Madigas (Edgar Thurston and K Rangachari, 1909: 104). That is their birth right. He is the elder son of the Jambavantha and Chandanagani. There is a story about the origin of Dakkali community. "One day, a smith was asked to prepare the marriage badge to Lord Siva's marriage. He gets ready to prepare that, with all the elements of bellows, fire-pot and hammer. Jambavantha, the grandfather of the earth calls his elder son to prepare all the necessary implements for the wedding articles. All these things should be prepared with the body parts except the backbone. But, the son uses his backbone to prepare the articles. Gods sees these articles and gives backbone to the life. The son goes to his father Jambavantha, he recognizes him and he does not allow him to enter into the house. He requests his father and narrates his entire story to him. The moment he listens to his son, his father curses him; that he should live as a beggar from the Madigas. Now onwards you are 'Dakkali', because you are born from the vertebral column "(*dakka*)" (Edgar Thurston and K Rangachari, 1909: 104-105). Still even after Independence they do not have permanent settlements. They are depended on the Madiga community. As for the mythologies they carry that curse. They wander from place to the other place.

The Dakkali have the restriction of not entering into the Madiga hamlets. There is a myth behind that; Dakkalis are *Peddintivaru* (big house members). Madigas are *Chinnintivaru* (small house man). Madiga is younger one and Dakkali is elder one. Dakkalis are said to be the gifted

sons of Jambavantha. “One day, Jambavantha took his wife Chandanagani’s ‘Vertebral column’ and threw it out from home, it fell down out of the village fencing. It is said that it never dries from sunlight, and never gets wet in the rain. Even the crows, ants and eagles can never touch it. And it is also said that it never loses its red colour. After nine months the Vertebral column (*dakka*) gave birth to a boy and he came out with the religious chants. One day, the Matanga Maharshi, while going on that way, sees the boy and takes him to the Jambava’s home and tells him about the background. Jambavantha and Chandanagani sees the boy and Chandanagani takes him into her hands. The moment she touches the boy, she feels that the boy is no more, but after sometimes they find him alive. She had a curse because of touching the boy who was born out of her ‘Vertebral column’. If she leaves that boy she can be pure and can stay at home. It is impossible to put them together, so, she puts the elder son out of the village calls it as ‘*Kadaga pettu*’. Then onwards the elder son is called as *Dakkali vadu* and his descendants are called as ‘*Dakkali vallu*’. The son who stayed along with his parents is called as ‘*Madigas*’. His descendants are called as ‘*Madiga vallu*’. From that day onwards *Dakkalis* are not allowed in the *Madiga* village. They stay outside of the village. They should beg only from the *Madigas*. The *Dakkalis* are the custodians of the *Madiga* community. They say the caste history to the *Madigas*. For that, *Madigas* give them both in kind or cash at the end of the program or they get ‘*mirasi*’. The stories are told only to the *Madigas*. Others can listen if they want. The moment they reach the border of the village (or) *Madiga wada*, they inform about their arrival to the head of the *Madiga* (*Pedda Madiga*) community. Sometimes they beat the plate with glasses so that, *Madigas* can recognize their arrival at the village. The *Madiga* head or *Madiga* male have to serve the food to them. Women are not allowed to serve the food to *Dakkali vallu*. Every year after the harvest season they visit their ‘*mirasi*’ villages.

As per the *Dakkali* stories they are very intelligent. One day Jambavantha said to *Dakkali vadu* to meet ‘*Viswabramha*’ because he is the creator of the *Dakkali*. He goes to *Viswabramha* and praises him like “*Viswabramha, Jagathguru, Kanaka kundala Barana Kalika Devi*”. The *Dakkali* takes the blessings from him and expresses his desire to *Brahma*. The desire is that he wants to write something on the toddy leafs, for that he wants ‘*Gatam*’. *Viswabramha* gives it to him. He reaches to his place where he stays outside of the village (or) ‘*gevita*’ (village boundary) and informs to his father. His father gives an assurance that even if you stay outside the village where you were born, I will take care of your food and stay. The following verse will give an account of Jambavantha taking care of *Dakkali*.

Telugu version

“Dokkolo puttina dakkanivadu
Viswagana putrundu veedu
Maa inta unduta kadani,
Voouri bayata unchi,
Yedadi koka dinamuna yedukatonu
Chekoni pellillu chesina
Bhaktito vidhyanu bhavakattadiyunu”.

English version

“He is born from the Vertebral column but he is invisible
He is the gifted son from Viswamitra,
He cannot stay at home,
So that put him at the outside the village,
Yearly once, as a festival we reach him
But not allowed him marriage with Madiga,
If he has *Bhakti* or prayful towards
The Madiga he will get ‘*Mirasi*’.

It is a curse to Dakkali. They call as ‘*Peddinitivaru*’. It means that ‘the son of big house’. There were two endogamous sects in the Dakkali. These are based on their *gotra*. The *gotras* are ‘*Palavelli*’ and ‘*Gangadaram*’. *Palavelli gotram* is very famous for them, because it comes from their ancestor ‘Jambavantha’. There is a story behind the ‘*Palavelli gotram*’. The story goes like this, ‘Jambavantha is the first person on the earth in the 18 *Yugas*. In the Anantha *Yuga* there were rivers, mountains. In that mountain, water was born, in that water ‘*Shankam*’ (shell) was born, in that *Shankam* Jambavantha was born. He had another name called as ‘*Shakanandanudu*’. Since he is born from the *Shankam* he has the colour white *Palavale unnadu*, (he look like milk) and the *gotram* ‘*Palavelli*’ comes to them.

Dakkalis are the followers of the mother goddess Matamma. They celebrate the Matamma *Jatara* (festival) once in three years. The Dakkalis wear the scared thread on their body. There is a story about that sacred thread and how it came to them. “Jambavantha is born with *lingas* and scared thread on his body. He grew up with these things. One day Jambavantha ate the meal along with liquor and beef. The moment he ate the beef, the *lingas* fell down. He stopped eating that food and tried to catch that *lingam*, but *lingam* started moving to the front. Jangam devaras (Shaivite religious mendicants), who were moving around the village saw that *lingam* and took it with them. After losing the *lingam*, he had only the sacred thread with that he felt like

‘*lingalanni Jangalu palayee, govu mamsam naaku migile, enthakanna ruchi emiuntundi*’, which means, ‘All *lingas* gone to Jangams, the beef has remained to me, it is enough to us, because it is very tasty’. Along with *lingam* he lost *Shankam* and wheel to Jangams. He lost his lively wood, so he threw the sacred thread on ‘Tangedu Tree’ (*Cassia auriculata*). The sacred thread went to Brahmins. Therefore, the Brahmins are wearing the sacred thread”. Even now, the Dakkalis are wearing the sacred thread because Jambavantha wore that and it came to them because, he is the elder son of Jambavantha. Even Jambavantha left the sacred thread, we did not remove it and still we are continuing it.

Inter-caste relations in the Madiga:

The inter caste relations among the sub-groups of the Madigas are very strict. Within them they strictly follow the caste rules and regulations (Singh T.R., 1969: 36-38).

Table No-1: Acceptance or non-acceptance of food by one another:

Caste	Food cooked by them accepted by	Food cooked by them not accepted by
Sangari	All castes	None
Madiga	Sindu, Mashtu, Dakkali, Baidla (in some villages)	Sangari Baindla (in some villages)
Sindu	Madiga	Baindla, Mashtu, Dakkali, Sangari
Baindla	Madigas (in some villages)	Madiga (in some villages), Sindu, Mashtu, Dakkali, Sangari
Mashtu	None	All castes
Dakkali	None	All castes

Table No-2: The acceptance or non-acceptance of water from one another:

Caste	Water touched by them accepted by	Water touched by them not accepted by
Sangari	All castes	None
Madiga	Sindu Baindla Mashtu Dakkali	Sangari
Sindu	Madiga	Baindla, Mashtu, Dakkali, Sangari
Baindla	Madiga	Baindla, Mashtu, Dakkali, Sangari
Mashtu	None	All castes
Dakkali	None	All castes

If we observe the above tables, the Sangaris are highest in Madiga caste structure. They do not take food and water from the other satellite castes of the Madiga. It means that, they are superior to the other sub-groups. In this, Dakkalis are the lowest; others do not take food and water from them. The Dakkali will accept food and water from the Madiga only.

Conclusions:

The Dakkalis dependent caste on Madiga and they are having least position in the Madiga sub-groups. They are not allowed inside the Madiga Hamlets. As per their caste myth is concern they are accepting their low status in the sub-groups of Madiga and they beg only from the Madiga. They claim they are equal to the Brahmin caste, because they were sacred thread and they act as priest to the Matamma goddess in their community. They tell the stories to the Madiga and collect the *mirasa* from them.

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