

The story of Dadhīci

Dhanashree Nikhil Shejwalkar
Faculty Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth Pune-37
shejwalkard@gmail.com

Abstract

There is a long tradition of seers and sages in ancient India. The Sanskrit literature through ages- right from Vedas, Brāhmaṇas, Upaniṣads, the epics and the Puranas- have numerous examples of these sages and seers. Agastya, Āruṇi, Durvāsa, Jamadagni, Yājñavalkya, Vasiṣṭha, Viśvāmitra, Dadhīci etc are a few among them. In the Sanskrit literature, they are associated with many stories of glory and good virtues. Some sages are mentioned in each type of literature, with same details in the story. They become a symbol of a particular virtue like wisdom, hard work, perseverance, sacrifice and many more.

It is evident from the Sanskrit literature, that each type of literature has a different purpose to serve to the listeners or readers. Various stories are woven in the literature to emphasize the aspect in consideration. One such story is the story of Dadhīci. It has been quoted right from the Vedas up to the Puranas. The main purpose of the story of Dadhīci is to embed the virtue of sacrifice in the minds of the readers. But the same sage is seen to perform some other important undertakings in the *Puranas*.

Present paper is an attempt to note the same story of Dadhīci with various versions seen through different types of literature.

Keywords- *DadhyañcĀtharvaṇa, Dadhīci, Dadhīca, Vedic seers, Tīrtha, Kṣupa, Madhvidyā*

Introduction

कर्णस्त्वचं शिबिर्मांसं जीवं जीमूतवाहनः ।

ददौ दधीचिरस्थीनि नास्त्यदेयं महात्मनाम् ॥

This is a famous *Subhāṣitain* Sanskrit telling the readers about the great virtue of the great souls that there is nothing that they cannot give away as donation. The verse quotes the names of the great souls- Karṇa, Śibi, Jīmūtavāhana and Dadhīci- who donated even their skin, flesh, life, and the bones respectively. Thus, the poet concludes that there is nothing for the great souls that cannot be donated.

We generally have known Dadhīci for his donation of bones. He gave his thunderbolt like hard and solid bones to the Gods to prepare weapons so that they could defeat the demons. This is the common story about Dadhīci that we have been told.

Moreover, Dadhīci has been honoured in various ways by the Indian government. The Indian Government in 1988 had published a philately stamp in the name of sage Dadhīci, mainly to show respect to his benevolent nature. An institute in Delhi for organ donation is named after sage Dadhīci. It obviously symbolises the generous nature of Dadhīci.

The focus of this paper is to trace the story of sage Dadhīci. Where does this story appear in ancient literature? Was Dadhīci specially chosen for this benevolent action? Do we find any other stories regarding Dadhīci? What could be reason of finding such variations in the story of Dadhīci- a Vedic Seer? The present paper tries to find out the answers to these questions.

Different names of Dadhīci

The story of Dadhīci appears in right from the Vedic to Purāṇa literature. He is commonly referred to as Dadhīci or Dadhīca. But his other names include Dadhyañc *Ātharvaṇa* or DadhyañorDadhyañcain *Ṛgveda*. Some scholars like Bergen and McDonnell have talked about the name Dadhyañca and its meanings. The literature in the later period like *BrahmāṇḍaPurāṇa* (2.32.104) mentions him as *Ṛcīka*. The different names of his wife appear as *Suvarcā* in the 24th chapter of *Shiva Purāṇa* and *GabhasthinīVadavāin* 1.1.18 of *SkandaPurāṇa*, and *Prātithēyī* in the 110th chapter of *Brahma Purāṇa*. *Dadhīci* is known to have two sons, namely *Sārasvata* and *Pippalāda*, whose stories are mentioned in *Mahabharata*, *Brahma Purāṇa* and *SkandaPurāṇa*.

Dadhīci as Dadhyañc Ātharvaṇa

Ṛg. 1.116.12 and 1.84.13 mention Dadhyañc *Ātharvaṇa* whereas the knower of two special *vidyās-Pravargyavidyā* and *Madhuvidyā*, given to him by Lord *Indra*. Lord *Indra* had not permitted Dadhyañc *Ātharvaṇa* to teach those *vidyās* to anyone. But when the *aśvidevas* wanted to acquire those *vidyās* from him, they replaced his head with that of a horse. They acquired both the *vidyās* from him. Then Lord *Indra* cut his head for breaching the vow, which was then replaced by the *aśvidevas* by his original head. Lord *Indra* searched a lot for the horse head, which he found in the *Śaryanāvāt* Lake. The commentary of *Sāyaṇa* on *Ṛg.* 1.116.13 states that Lord *Indra* defeated the demons with the help of Dadhyañc *Ātharvaṇa*.

References of Dadhīci in Brāhmaṇa texts

Śatapatha, *Tāṇḍya* and *Gopatha* at several places mention the seer *Dadhīca* as a great philosopher who knew *Madhuvidyā* very well. *Brhadāranyakopaniṣad* explains *Madhuvidyā* in detail which earlier appeared in *Ṛgveda*. Hence in these texts, *Dadhīca* is represented as the great scholar to know these *vidyas*.

Change in the story of Dadhīci in the Purāṇa texts

That aspect of Dadhīci having the knowledge of various *vidyas* seems to be forgotten by the time we come to Purāṇa literature. Following paragraphs give the variations in the story of *Dadhīci* as we come to the Purāṇa texts.

- 1) **DevībhāgavataPurāṇa-** 7.36 mentions the story of Dadhīci in detail. It goes like this- The gods feared Dadhīci's wife. Once defeated in the battle with the demons, they came to Dadhīci. That time, Dadhīci's wife was not there in the ashram. The gods left all their weapons in Dadhīci's ashram, and they ran away. Then his wife came to the ashram and saw all the weapons. She tried to convince her husband not to keep and protect the weapons. But Dadhīci did not pay attention to her.

After a while he saw the demons coming to seek the weapons of the gods. He gulped all the weapons so that the demons would not find them.

In due course of time, the demon *Vṛtra* was very aggressive. The gods went to lord *Vishnu* to seek help. He guided the gods to go to Dadhīci's ashram and get his bones. Then the gods would ask *Tvaṣṭṛ* to prepare weapons from those bones and *Vṛtra* would be killed with the help of those weapons.

Then the gods approached Dadhīci and requested his bones. Dadhīci fulfilled their request by killing himself with the power of *Yoga*. Then Tvaṣṭṛ prepared the octagonal thunderbolt- *Vajra* from the bones and gave it to lord Indra, with the help of which he killed Vṛtra. Then the wife of Dadhīci, who was pregnant at that time, cursed the gods that their next generation will not be born. Then she practiced *sahagamana*. Before that, she removed the foetus from the womb by herself and kept it under the *peepal* tree. Then she practiced *sahagamana*.

- 2) **Skanda Purāṇa**-The 31st chapter in Skanda Purāṇa is named *Kṣupadadhīcavivāda*. The verses from 55 to 120 describe the greatness of a holy place *Sthāneśvara*, wherein the story of Dadhīci is mentioned in a dialogue between *Vyāsa* and *Sanatkumāra*. That story is quite different from the usual story of Dadhīci that we know.

There was born a man from the mouth of Lord Brahman, well prepared for the war with all the weapons, like the arrows, the bow, and the sword. He was also ornamented with the crown, the garlands, the earrings, and the armour. Lord Brahman himself named him *Kṣupa*. Lord Indra chose him as the king on the earth, which was not readily accepted by *Kṣupa*. He put forth one condition, on the fulfilment of which, he was ready to accept the kingship on the earth. He said to Indra, “If you offer me your weapon-thunderbolt- then only I will become a king on the earth. Otherwise, I am not interested in going to the earth and becoming a king.” Lord Indra agreed to it. He said, “The thunderbolt will appear in your hand when you think about it, not otherwise.” Thus, *Kṣupa* was ready to go to the earth and become a king. Then the story goes further to state that *Kṣupa* developed friendship with *Dadhīca*, from the family of *Cyavana*. They used to spend quite a time with each other by many types of discussions that would please them.

Once there arose a quarrel between them enrooted in *Jāti- Jātikṛtarāga*. The sizzling topic of discussion was whether *kṣatra*- the warrior class- was great or Brahman was great. Obviously in *Kṣupa*'s opinion, *kṣatra* was greater than the Brahman but *Dadhīca* opined otherwise. They both explained their views with reasons. Then *Dadhīca* was very angry. He was attacked by *Kṣupa* with the thunderbolt and cut into half. When *Dadhīca* called Lord Indra for help, he reminded *Dadhīca* that he himself could join him by *yogamāyā*. i.e., the magical powers. Then he again practiced penance for Lord Shiva who in turn gave his bones the hardness like the thunderbolt, the ability to not getting torn and not getting older.

The story continues further but the focus of stating this story is that the reason stated here for the thunderbolt-like hardness of the bones of *Dadhīca*, which is the favour of Lord Shiva.

In most of the other stories of *Dadhīca* in Purāṇas, he obtains the thunderbolt like hardness of the bones by drinking the power of the weapons of the gods. Then in these stories, he returns the power of these weapons by giving his bones to the gods with his magical powers.

- 3) **Liṅga Purāṇa**-Again another story of *Dadhīca* appears in the *Liṅga Purāṇa* in the 35th and 36th chapters. In that, the king *Kṣupa* is defeated by *Dadhīca*. Then in the counteract with the thunderbolt, *Dadhīca* is totally defeated by king *Kṣupa*. Then *Dadhīca* obtains a body resembling the thunderbolt by the favour of *Maheśvara* and defeats king *Kṣupa*.

Reference of Dadhīci in the Vatsagulmamāhātmya (VGM)

The *sthalamāhātmya* texts are peculiar in many ways. The description of various holy places is the peculiarity of these texts. VGM is a text which affiliates itself to the *Padma Purāṇa*, wherein 108 holy places are described in the vicinity of *Vatsagulma*- ancient *Washim*. In the 23rd and 24th chapter of VGM, the author describes the *Upākhyāna* of *Padmatīrtha*. The titles of the chapters are *Dadhīciprāṇamokṣaṇam* and *Dadhīcibhāryāgnipraveśavarṇanam*. There occurs the story in very elaborate form just as in *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa*.

The story resembles in many aspects to that in *Devībhāgavata* with some slight variations.

1st variation -Dadhīcihimself denies the safe keeping of weapons as he thinks himself weak and not capable of protecting the weapons.

2nd variation -Dadhīci drank the power of the weapons in the form of water.

3rd variation - Details in the *sahagamana* and the praising words for it.

With these slight changes, the author of the VGM states that the holy place of *Padma tīrtha* had witnessed these events and hence holds the sanctity.

Observations and Conclusion

The different roles of *Dadhīci* are- in Vedas, he is the great seer who knew many *vidyās* and a great ṛṣi to sacrifice his bones for the wellbeing of the Gods. In Purāṇas, he is a Brahmin battling with Kṣupa. Then sometimes he is the symbol of valour and sometimes he is shown weak. Then there are holy places in *Bhāratavarṣa*, where the great sacrifice by *Dadhīci* is said to have taken place.

What can be the probable reasons for this transition?

We can see the transition of the same seer to the symbol of sacrifice. Considering his tussle with Kṣupa, was he awarded the honour in the later literature?

The myths in the Purāṇas are very significant. They do not arise out of nowhere. The authors of the Purāṇas very cleverly interweaved the glory of a certain place and its association with some Vedic seer. The story of *Dadhīci* is one of the few that can be traced from Vedic to Purāṇa literature. It has gradually changed from the story of a very wise seer from Vedas to a benevolent sage in the Purāṇas. With the character of *Dadhīci*, they could elaborate the concepts of culture of Purāṇa and embed those in the minds of the devotees.

Not only the good virtue of donating the own belongings, but also offering the helping hand to the good-natured people was emphasised by the character of *Dadhīci* in Purāṇa. Moreover, the holy places associate with them various myths and legends. The Vedic focus was to attain something by sacrifice. But the concept in the Purāṇas seems to be the favour or the majestic powers at the *Tīrthas*. That thought seems to get highlighted by mentioning the story of *Dadhīci* with reference to the holy place.

Therefore, the story of *Dadhīci* is a very good example of moulding the Vedic culture into the Purāṇa culture.

Bibliography and References

Printed Books

- 1) Chitrav,
Siddheshvarshastri. 1968. Bharatvarshiya Prachin Charitakosha. Pune: Bharatiya Charitakosh Mandal.
- 2) Dange, Sadashiv A. 1987. Encyclopaedia of Puranic Beliefs and Practices (Volume III). New Delhi: Navrang.
- 3) Deshpande Papalkar, Yashvant. 1951. Vatsgulmamāhātmya (Prācīna Vāsīma). Washim: Shankar Gopal Dabeer.
- 4)
Joshi, Mahadevshastri. 1967. Bharatiya Sanskritikosh (Volume IV). Pune: Bharatiya Sanskritikosh Mandal.

Websites

- 1) dadichi rishi article
<https://www.scribd.com/document/192546641/Rishi-Dadhichi-pdf>
- 2) Important sages in ancient India
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336116034_Article_26_Ancient_Saints-Maharshis_of_Satya_Yuga/link/5d8f3fec92851c33e9430b96/download
- 3) madhuvidya in bruhadaranyak
<https://hinduism.stackexchange.com/questions/7729/how-was-the-madhu-vidya-passed-down-before-dadhichi>
- 4) Sthalapuran importance
<http://www.kamakoti.org/hindudharma/part14/chap18.htm>