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भारत सरकार

नई दिल्ली - 110 066
MEMBER-SECRETARY
NATIONAL COMMISSION
FOR BACKWARD CLASSES
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
NEW DELHI - 110 066
12. 06. 1998

DO NCBC ADVICE NO. 18 MP/98

Dear Shri Manavalan,

I am sending herewith the Advice of the National Commission for Backward Classes under Section 9(1) of the NCBC Act, 1993 for the rejection of the Request for inclusion of 'Mahapatra' caste/community in the Central List of Backward Classes for Madhya Pradesh, for necessary action by the Central Government under Section 9(2) of the Act.

2. With this, Advices on 255 castes/sub-castes/synonyms etc. have been tendered to the Government by the NCBC, after its reconstitution in 1997, of which 252 are still pending with the Government for Notification.

Kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

(P.S. KRISHNAN)

Shri D.K. Manavalan,
Secretary to Govt. of India
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment
Shastri Bhavan, NEW DELHI 110 001

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR BACKWARD CLASSES

MADHYA PRADESH BENCH

FINDINGS

Case : REQUEST FOR INCLUSION OF "MAHAPATRA" IN THE
CENTRAL LIST OF BACKWARD CLASSES FOR MADHYA
PRADESH.

PER SHRI SAHU AKSHAYA BHAI, MEMBER

I. REQUEST

Shri Sharad Chandra Chaturvedi, 976, Narayan Nagar, Adhartal, Jabalpur made a request to this Commission for the inclusion of "Mahapatra" caste/community in the Central List of Backward Classes for Madhya Pradesh. The party has filled up the NCBC's Questionnaire in respect of this caste/community and submitted to the NCBC.

II. PUBLIC HEARING

2. The 2-Member Madhya Pradesh Bench of the Commission consisting of Hon'ble Members, Shri Sahu Akshaya Bhai, and Prof. U.P. Singh held Public Hearing in respect of this caste/community at Bhopal, M.P. on 25.6.97. Shri Navtej Puadhi, Hon'ble member, NCBC also joined the Bench.

The State Govt. was represented by Shri K.K. Verma, Commissioner of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes Welfare alongwith other officers of Directorate of Social Welfare, Govt. of Madhya Pradesh. The representative of the caste/community was absent at the time of Public Hearing.

III. FACTS

3. The 'Mahapatra' caste/community was not included in the State List as well as Mandal List of Backward Classes for Madhya Pradesh and as such could not be included in the first phase Central List of Backward Classes for the State on the principle of commonality issued in 1993.

4. The information furnished in the NCBC Questionnaire contains following averments in support of their claim for inclusion in Central List of Backward Classes :-

- (i) The 'Mahapatra' caste is regarded as socially backward.

AUTHENTICATED



P. S. Verma
Member
National Commission
for Backward Classes

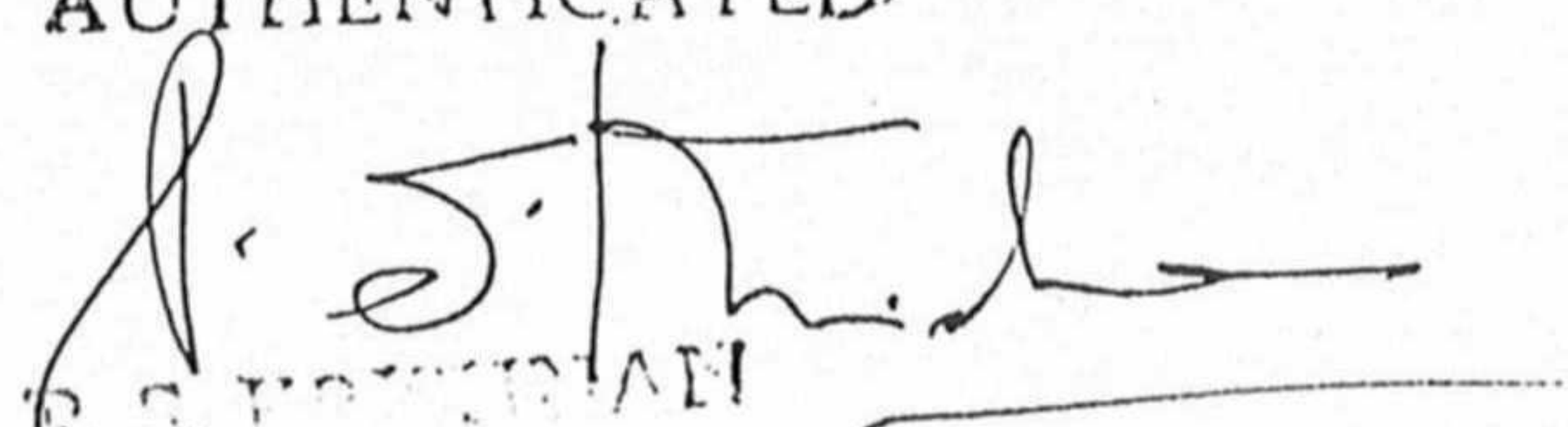
- (ii) They belong to 'Brahman', the main caste and also called as 'Mahapatra and Maha-Brahman'.
- (iii) The main population concentration of the caste/community is in Mukandpur, Ramnagar, Amarpatan, Rewa, Baikunthpur and Satna districts, however they are scattered all over the State.
- (iv) The main occupation in which they are engaged is 'after death rituals'. They are not engaged in any other occupation and as such have no other source of income.
- (v) They are landless and have no traditional occupation or craft. They are not bonded labourers either.
- (vi) There is no representative in State Legislature or Parliament from the caste/community.
- (vii) The representation in State and Central Govt. Services is negligible. Hardly anyone is in profession like Lawyer, Engineer, Chartered Accountant, etc.
- (viii) As far as literacy of the caste/community is concerned, they are sanskrit scholars and educated, though not degree holders. Normally they are having educational qualification upto matriculation, graduates and scarce.
- (ix) Majority of the families of the caste/community in the State live in 'Kachcha houses' and 'Pucca houses' are rare.

5. Russel and Hira Lal in the book 'The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India - vol. II - first pub. In 1916 and reprinted in 1993 by Asian Educational Services, New Delhi', refers the caste/community under the main caste Brahman, Baman as follows :-

"Brahman, Baman- The well known priestly caste of India and the first of the four traditional castes of the Hindu Scriptures. In 1911 the Brahmans numbered about 450,000 persons in the Central Provinces and Berar, or nearly 3 percent of the population.....The caste is spread over the whole province, but it is in greatest numbers in proportion in Saugor and Jubbulpore, and weakest in the Feudatory States.

.....The hereditary monopoly of the sacred scriptures would be strengthened and made absolute when the sanskrit language, in which they had been composed and handed down, ceases to be the ordinary spoken language of the people. Nobody then could learn them unless he was taught by a Brahman priest. And by keeping the sacred literature in an unknown language the priesthood made their own hands the allocation of the penalties and rewards promised by religion, for which these books were the authority, that is to say, the disposal of the souls of Hindus in the afterlife. They in fact, held the keys of heaven and hell.....

AUTHENTICATED


P. S. HOSKOTIAN
Member Secretary
National Commission
for Backward Classes

.....A much lower group are the Maha-Brahmans(great Brahman), who are also known as Patit(degraded) or Katia. These accept the gifts offered by the relatives after a death for the use of the dead man in the next world during the period of mourning; they also eat food which it is supposed will benefit the dead man, and are considered to represent them. Probably on this account they share in the impurity attaching to the dead, and are despised by all castes and sometimes not permitted to live in the village.

Under the Sub-Head – 'Funeral rites and mourning' authors state.....After the funeral the chief mourner performs the Shraddh ceremony, offering pindas or cakes of rice, with libations of water, to the dead. Presents are made to Brahman for the use of the dead man in the other world, and these are sometimes very valuable, as it is thought that the spirit will thereby be profited. Such presents are taken by the Maha-Brahman, who is much despised. When a late Zamindar of Khariar died, Rs. 2000 were given to the Maha-Brahman for the use of his soul in the next world. The funeral rites are performed by an ordinary Brahman, known as Malai, who may receive presents after the period of impurity has expired.

.....But brahman who take gifts at the time of a death, and those who take them from pilgrims at the sacred shrines are despised and considered as out of caste, though not the priests incharge of temples.

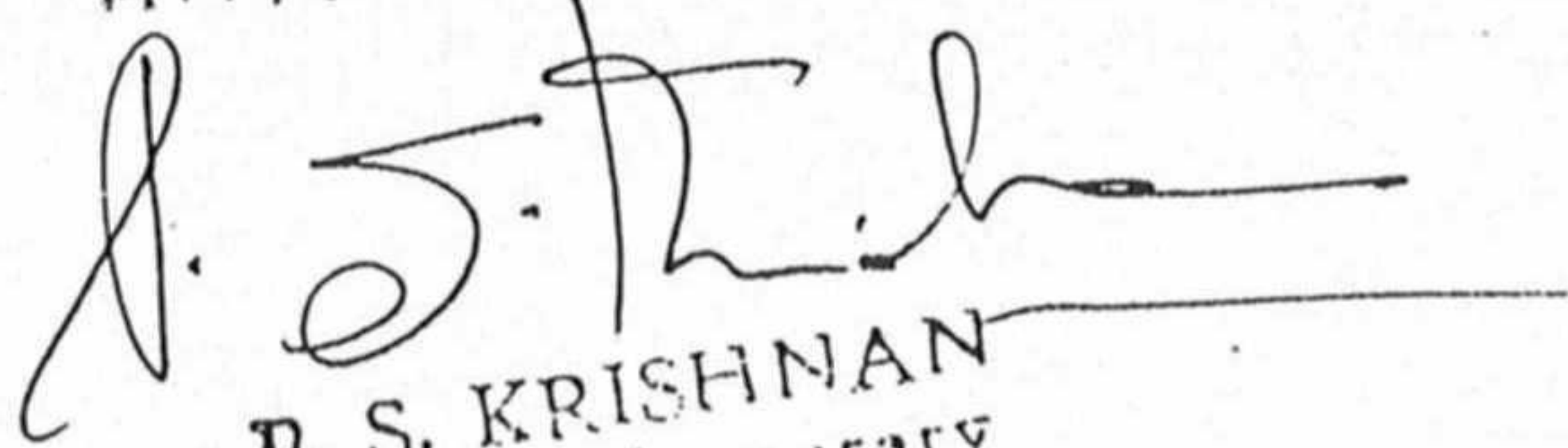
.....Those who are very poor adopt the profession of a Maha-Brahman or Mahapatra, who takes gifts for the dead. Respectable Brahman will not accept gifts at all, but when asked to a feast the host usually gives them one to four annas or pence with betel-leaf at the time of their departure, and there is no shame in accepting this.

6. Mahapatra caste/community has been referred to by General editor, K.S. Singh in "People of India-vol.XX-Delhi-Pub. Manohar-1996" as follows:-

The Mahapatra are also known as Mahabrahman and Keseva. Rose(1914:132) includes them under the impure Brahman, and says, Maha Brahman is usually said to be synonymous with Acharya. The Acharya as a substitute for the Mahapatra is not in vogue in Delhi. Rather, 'Mahabrahman', as 'Katwa', and 'Kasthahari'(one who collects wood for the pyre), are the substitutes. However, some persons of this community use 'Acharya' or 'Acjarya' as a third surname. Sherring(1881) mentions Mahapatra as the synonym of Maha-Brahman. About the function of the community Rose says, "The function of the Maha-Brahman or Acharya is to accept the offerings made after a death in the name of the deceased.....Rose adds.....Those who accepted offerings made within 13 days of a death were ex-communicated by the other Brahman and formed a sub caste(Rose, Ibid)

7. It may be mentioned that Mahapatra/Maha Brahman was not included in the list of Backward Classes in the States of Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Madhya Bharat by the First Backward Classes Commission(Popularly known as Kaka Kalelkar Commission)

ATTESTED


P. S. KRISHNAN
Member Secretary
National Commission
for Backward Classes

8. It may be noted that in the Central List of Backward Classes the entry is – Maha-Brahman(Acharj) in the State of Rajasthan. The inclusion of this community in the Central List of Backward Classes for Rajasthan has been done not on the basis of this Commission's Advice and apparently not on the basis of any indepth analysis of the social and educational status of the community. For this reason and also other obvious reasons, the Rajasthan instance need not be and should not be treated as a relevant precedent. The caste with this nomenclature 'Mahapatra' has not been specified in Central Lists of Backward Classes in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh.

9. As per People of India, National Series vol. VIII-Communities, Segments, synonyms, Surnames and Titles by K.S. Singh-A.S.I.- 1996 in Appendix-A, refers to the existence as follows :-

Maha-Brahman – Census year : 1931; earlier distribution: Rajputana Agency

Maha-Brahman – Census year : 1881; earlier distribution : North West Province

As per Appenix-B of the same publication it refers as :-

Brahman

Synonyms :- Acharaj, Ararpop, Bhateroo, Dahoti Brahmin, Gaur.....(H.P.)

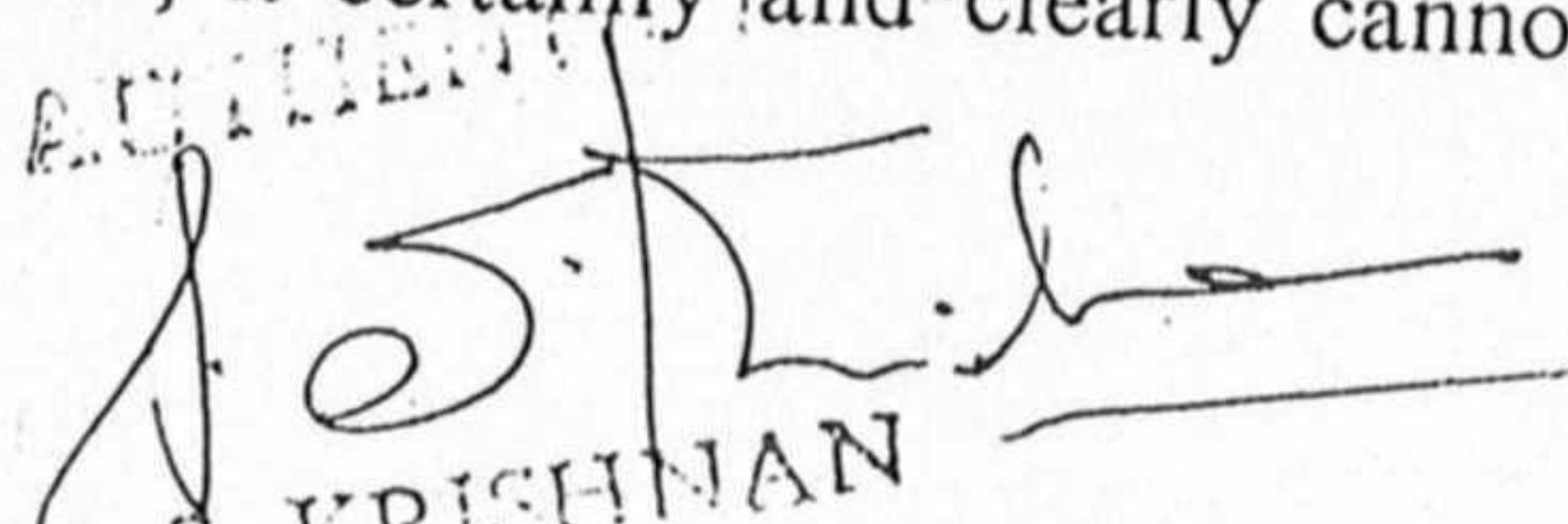
Mahapatra

Synonyms :- Acharaj, Katwa, Mahabrahman, Masania Jogi(Delhi)

Surnames :- Mahapatra, Sharma(Delhi)

IV. FINDINGS

10. Historical and Ethnographic accounts given in the preceding paras show the existence of Mahapatra also known as Mahabrahman in Madhya Pradesh and almost in all adjoining and other States. They are also known in various ways mainly Acharaj. The caste/community belongs to the main caste of Brahman. Brahman is an upper caste as per Hindu religion and system of caste hierarchy. By virtue of their occupation of performing rituals of after death ceremony, they are considered as impure and even Brahmans treat them with contempt and outcaste. But of their being Brahmans cannot be ignored. So far as educational level is concerned, they are scholars of sanskrit in their profession of after death rituals. They are considered well versed in Sanskrit. In the filled-in questionnaire the caste/community has said that they are literates and most of them are having education upto matriculation level, though persons having higher qualifications are not there. The caste/community has demanded inclusion mainly keeping in view their poor economic condition which is not the determining factor for inclusion in the Central List of Backward Classes. The picture of this caste that emerges from the totality of evidence is not of a socially backward class; it certainly and clearly cannot be considered to be an


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educationally backward class. Therefore the Request for inclusion of 'Mahapatra' caste/community in the Central List of Backward Classes for Madhya Pradesh is rejected.

Ashaya
27.05.98
(SAHU AKSHAYA BHAI)

U.P. Singh
28.5.98
(U.P. SINGH)

V. **ADVICE OF THE COMMISSION**

11. The Commission considered and agreed in full with the above Findings of the Madhya Pradesh Bench and decided to tender the following Advice to the Central Government under section 9(1) of the NCBC Act, 1993, for action under section 9(2) of the Act :-

The Request for inclusion of 'Mahapatra' caste/community in the Central List of Backward Classes for Madhya Pradesh is rejected as it is not a Socially and Educationally Backward caste.

Ashaya
27.05.98

U.P. Singh
28/5/98

P. S. Kishore
5.6.98

K. S. Dhilli
1.6.98

AUTHENTICATED

P. S. Kishore
P. S. Kishore
Member Secretary
National Commission
for Backward Classes

K. S. Dhilli
11.6.98