



सी.टी. बेंजामिन
C.T. BENJAMIN
Tel. : 6183190
Fax : 6183227

सदस्य सचिव
राष्ट्रीय पिछड़ा वर्ग आयोग
भारत सरकार

त्रिकूट-१, भीकाजी कामा प्लेस, नई दिल्ली - ११० ०६६

Member Secretary
National Commission for Backward Classes
Government of India
Trikoot - 1, Bhikaiji Cama Place, New Delhi - 110 066

NCBC Advice No. Tripura 23/2001

22.03.2001

Dear *Asha Das,*

I am sending herewith the advice of the National Commission for Backward Classes under Section 9(1) of the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993 for the rejection of the request for inclusion of "Teli (All Sections)" in the Central list of backward classes for Tripura, duly authenticated, for necessary action by the Central Government under Section 9(2) of the NCBC Act.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]
22/3
(C.T. BENJAMIN)

Smt. Asha Das
Secretary to Government of India
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment
Shastri Bhavan
NEW DELHI

Encl: As stated

NCBC Advice No. Tripura 23/2001

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR BACKWARD CLASSES
FINDINGS

Case: Request for inclusion of "Teli (All Sections)" in the Central list of backward classes for Tripura

I. REQUEST

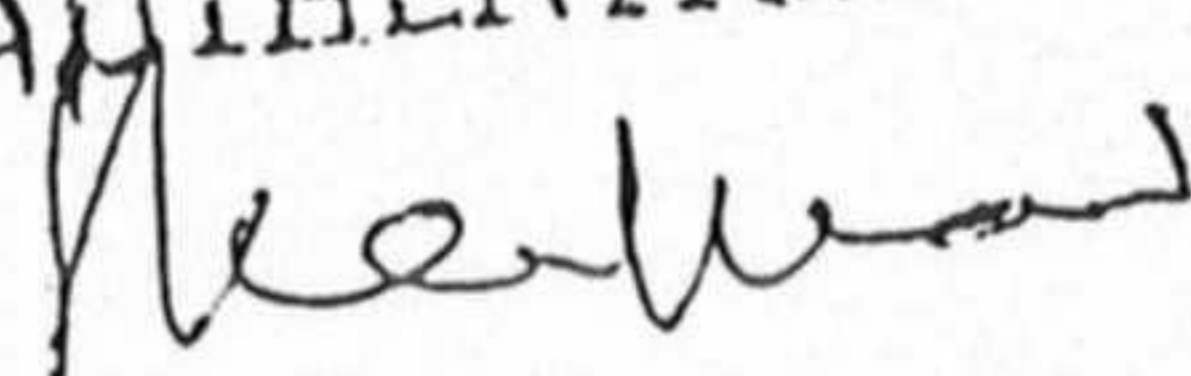
The Commission had received a request from the OBC Federation, Tripura State Committee, Ramnibash, East Sibnagar, PO Agartala College, Agartala for the inclusion of "Teli (all sections) in the Central list of backward classes for Tripura. The request was examined by a Bench of the Commission under our predecessor Members and the findings were formulated. However, the advice of the Commission in respect of this case was not tendered to the Central Government in view of the reservation expressed by one of the Members about the findings reached by the other four Members, and the final decision on this case was deferred to the present Commission.

2. The Commission, after perusal of the findings prepared by the earlier Commission and signed by four Members including the Chairperson, unanimously agreed with the same and decided to tender advice to the Central Government accordingly, without any further enquiry.

3. The facts and findings on this case as recorded by the earlier Bench of the Commission are as follows:-

II. PUBLIC HEARING

4. A public hearing was held by the then Tripura Bench of the Commission to examine this request at Agartala on 6.4.98. At the public hearing, the State Government

AUTHENTICATED

(C.T. BENJAMIN)
Member
National Commission

was represented by Shri S.C. Das, Secretary SC &ST Welfare Department and other officials. Shri K.R. Das, Chairperson, Shri S. Bhowmik, Member-Secretary and Shri Matilal Sarkar, Member of Tripura State Backward Classes Commission were also present at the public hearing and gave valuable information. The caste/community was represented by Shri Kalidas Paul and others.

III. FACTS

5. "Teli" caste/community is included in the Mandal Commission's list of backward classes for Tripura as "131. Teli". In the Tripura State Government's list of backward classes only the Oriya Telis are included. The relevant entry in the State list is "41.Teli(Oriya)". "Teli(Oriya)" is also included in the Central list of backward classes for Tripura notified by the Government of India in 1994. The Telis other than Oriya Telis are not included in the Central list for Tripura notified in 1994 apparently because they are included only in the Mandal list and not in the State list and, therefore, did not satisfy the criterion of "commonality".

6. Anthropological Survey of India's People of India series on Tripura (General Editor K.S. Singh, Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1996) contains the following account of "Teli" by Mukul Hazra:-

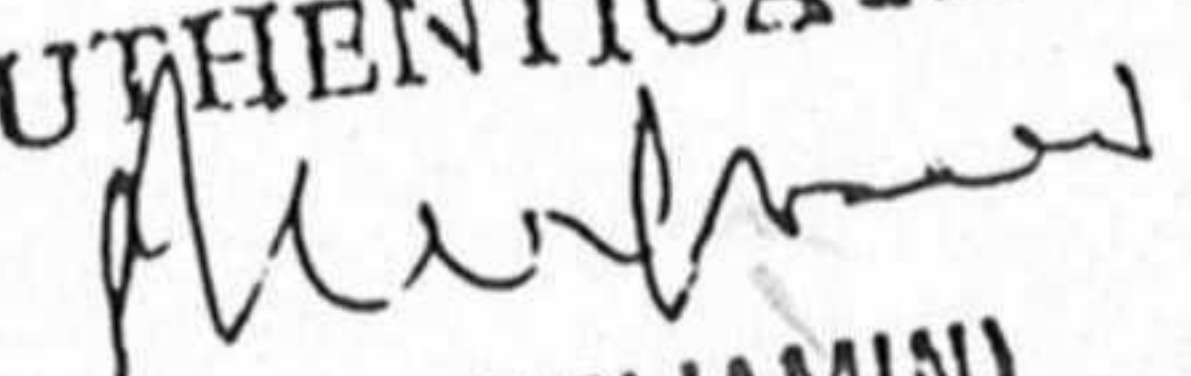
".....

The Telis live in all the three districts of Tripura with the major concentration in the West Tripura. They live in the plains which have a warm and temperate climate. They speak a Bengali dialect at home and with the kinsfolk. With outsiders too, they speak Bengali.....

.....

..... The Telis place themselves somewhere in the middle of the local social hierarchy. They consider the Brahmans, Kayasthas, and Baidyas as higher in social status, while the Baniks, Karmakars, Bauris and Goalas are supposed to be their equals. They consider the Namasudra, Malakar, Deb Barman and Chamar communities as lower in social status. They are aware of the Varna system, and claim to have a Vaisya status.

Their neighbours consider them to be a clean Sudra group.

AUTHENTICATED

 (C. T. BENJAMIN)
 Member Secretary
 National Commission For
 Backward Classes

.....

Land is the major economic resource of the community. Individual ownership is prevalent. Landless families also exist. Trading in oil used to be the primary occupation.

These days agriculture, service, teaching and trading in *muri* have become the primary source of income. Telis have trade links with local markets, where all transactions are cash-based. Child labourers are paid wages in cash. The post-Independence migration resulted in a large number of the Telis leaving behind their landed property in what is now Bangladesh. This gave rise to a huge number of agricultural and wage casual labourers.

.....

The Brahmans accept *sidda* and uncooked food from the Telis. The Telis do not accept food and water from the Kahars, Sahas, Deb Barmans and Musalmans. Inter-community marriages are rare.... They share roads, schools, temples and crematoria with their neighbours. The Telis engage the Laskars, Namasudras, Haluadasas and Deb Barmans as agricultural labourers and sharecroppers. They have socio-economic ties with several other communities.

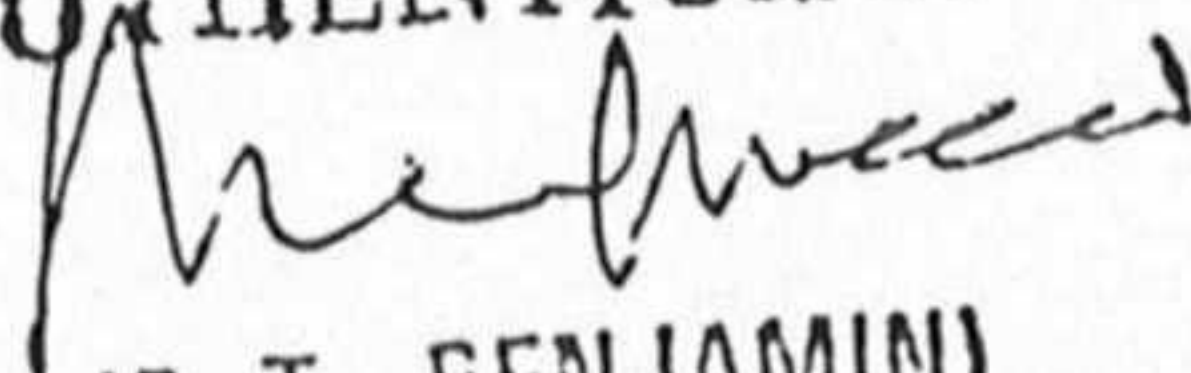
The Telis are keen to get their children educated. The schools provide mid day meals to the students. They rely on both traditional and modern medicare. They have a favourable attitude towards family planning. They enjoy the supply of safe drinking water.

.....”

7. Jogendra Nath Bhattacharya in his “Hindu Castes and Sects” (Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1995, originally published in 1896) writes about the Telis of Bengal as follows:-

“The Telis of Bengal are a very important caste. The majority of them being shopkeepers and grain merchants, they are a very well-to-do class. Some of them as, for instance, the family of the celebrated Rani Swarnamayi of Moorshedabad, and the Rajas of Digapatiya have become very rich landholders under British rule....

There are very few among the Telis of Bengal who are quite illiterate, while, under the British rule, some of them have attained great eminence as scholars. The most

AUTHENTICATED

 (C. T. BENJAMIN)
 Member Secretary
 National Commission for Scheduled Castes

distinguished among them was the late Rai Kisto Das Pal Bahadoor, whose name is sure to be remembered for along time as one of India's greatest journalists and public men. The late Babu Rasik Krishna Mallick, who was one of the distinguished batch of scholars turned out by the Hindu College of Calcutta at a very early period of its existence, was also a Teli. Among the living celebrities of the caste, the name of Srinath Pal may be specially mentioned here.... As a student he attained some of the highest honors that the University of Calcutta can confer...

....."

8. Jogendra Nath Bhattacharya further mention while writing about Gandh Baniks that, "... The majority of the shopkeepers of Bengal are either Gandh Baniks or Telis. There are not among the... Gandh Baniks, such big traders as among the Telis...."

9. During the public hearing the representatives of the community stated that at present only Oriya Telis are included in the State and Central lists, but the Bengali Telis also should be included as they are also socially backward. The request-makers and the representatives of the community have not furnished any specific socio, economic and educational data regarding the Telis other than Oriya Telis by filling up the NCBC's Questionnaire or otherwise.

10. During the public hearing, the representatives of the State Government and State Commission informed that "Teli (Oriya)" has been included in the State list on the advice of the State Commission, but the State Commission did not find any merit on social, educational and economic grounds in the information furnished by the representatives of "Teli (Bengali)" community to recommend for recognition of the community as OBC in Tripura.

IV. FINDINGS

11. - Generally speaking, the Teli community is socially backward in different regions of India. It is an artisanal community which, in terms of the caste system, has been linked with the extraction of oil and trading in oil. In some parts of India, their socio-occupational counterparts are known by different names but their social position is

AUTHENTICATED

(C. T. BENJAMIN)

Member Secretary

National Commission for

Backward Classes

similar. However, from the available data/information, the position of Telis in Bengal seems to have undergone considerable change even during the period of British rule. While in many parts of India, with the loss of traditional occupation consequent on the advancement of technology, the Telis have abandoned their traditional occupation, but have not been able to rise, having shifted only to other artisanal occupations or general labour, and thus the loss of traditional occupation having resulted only in horizontal mobility, in Bengal, it appears, they had the good fortune of experiencing improvement to the extent of being characterised as "a very important caste", "a very well-to-do class" by Jogendra Nath Bhattacharya even late in the 19th century. Jogendra Nath Bhattacharya's account shows that not only was there very little illiteracy among them, but there were also a number of eminent scholars from the community. The majority of them had become shopkeepers and grain merchants. Apparently, it is on account of this significant improvement in their social and educational status based on their upwardly mobile economy, that the State Commission, while finding "Teli(Oriya)" to fit the general profile of the Teli community in most parts of India, found the rest of the Teli community in Tripura which is Bengali-speaking to be not socially and educationally backward. It embodies characteristics of the community in Bengal; Tripura sharing many aspects of the Bengali society as Bengali-speaking people constitute a major part of Tripura's population. The fact that Teli is included in the Central list of backward classes for West Bengal cannot be a valid ground here for their inclusion in the Tripura list because the inclusion of Teli in the Central list of backward classes for West Bengal was not based on the advice of this Commission or based on any objective in-depth examination of data/information to establish social backwardness. The present request-makers and the representatives of the community have not furnished any data/information in support of their claim of social backwardness of Telis other than Oriya Telis of Tripura. In view of these facts and position, the Bench is of the view that Teli other than "Teli(Oriya)" are not socially backward and, therefore, the request for inclusion of "Teli (all Sections)" in the Central list of backward classes for Tripura should be rejected.

14.3.2001
13/02/01
14-3-2001
21/3/2001

AUTHENTICATED

(C. T. BENJAMIN)

Member Secretary

V. ADVICE OF THE COMMISSION

12. The Commission considered and agreed in full with the above findings formulated by the earlier Tripura Bench of the Commission and decided to tender the following advice to the Central Government under Section 9(1) of the NCBC Act, 1993 for necessary action by the Central Government under Section 9(2) of the Act:-

The request for inclusion of "Teli (All Sections)", i.e., Teli other than Oriya Telis who are already included, in the Central list of backward classes for Tripura be rejected as the Telis other than Oriya Telis of Tripura are not socially backward.

[Signature]
12/03/01

[Signature]
14.3.2001

[Signature]

[Signature]
21/3/2001

[Signature]

ATTESTED

[Signature]

(S. T. BENJAMIN)

Member Secretary

National Commission For

Backward Classes