

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR BACKWARD CLASSES

MAHARASHTRA BENCH

FINDINGS

Case: Request for inclusion of “Kurmi” as synonym of “Kunbi” caste/community in the Central List of OBCs for Maharashtra

I. **Request**

This case arises from the request received in this Commission from Shri Babulal Singh Patel, President, Maharashtra Kurmi Kshatriya Samaj, Shri Ram Charitar Ram Bhajan Singh and Shri R.S. Kanaujia, Mumbai for inclusion of “Kurmi” as a synonym of “Kunbi” caste/community in the Central List of OBCs for the State of Maharashtra.

II. **Public Hearing**

2. A bench of the Commission consisting of Hon’ble Justice Shri R.S. Singh, Chairperson, Shri M.S. Matharoo, Smt. Neera Shastri and Dr. B. Babu Rao Varma, Hon’ble Members held a public hearing in respect of this request at Mumbai on 5th July, 2004. At the public hearing, the State Government was represented by Shri N.N. Bhadikar, Dy. Secretary and other officers in the Social Justice Department, Govt. of Maharashtra. The Kurmi caste/community was represented by Dr. Babulal Singh Patel and Shri Harish Varma, President and General Secretary respectively of Maharashtra Kurmi Kshatriya Samaj and others.

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III. Facts

3. The position with regard to this caste/community as reflected in different lists is as follows:-

Mandal List	-	143	Kunbi
State List	-	83	Kunbi (sub castes; Lewa Kunbi, Lewa Patil, Lewa Patidar)
Central List	-	70	Kunbi (sub castes; Lewa Kunbi, Lewa Patil, Lewa Patidar)

4. Shri Harish Varma, General Secretary, Maharashtra Kurmi Kshatriya Samaj stated in the NCBC's questionnaire that "Kurmi" is a synonym of "Kunbi". Main caste is "Kunbi" and it is also known as "Kurmi-Kshatriya" and "Kurmi-Kunbi". It is a socially, educationally and economically backward caste/community. The members of their community depend for their livelihood mainly on labour. Ninety percent population of the caste/community live in kaccha houses and only 20% live in pucca houses.

5. In the representation submitted by Dr. Babulal Singh Patel, President, Maharashtra Kurmi Kshatriya Samaj, it has been stated that everybody knows that the work related to agriculture is the traditional occupation of caste "Kurmi/Kunbi" which appears in the Mandal list. They are found throughout India and they are known as "Kurmi, Kurmi Mahto, Kunbi, Kurmar" etc. in the North India. In search of jobs people from different regions have come and settled in Maharashtra. Even though Kurmi community is backward they are not able to get any benefit, as their community is not listed in OBC.

6. Shri R.R. Singh in his request had stated that their caste/community is spread over throughout Northern India and their occupation is agriculture. They have migrated to Maharashtra in search of livelihood some 200 years ago and they are still socially & educationally backward. They are not able to avail the benefits of reservation as their caste/community has not been included in the OBC list. The synonym of "Kurmi" already appears in the Central List of OBCs for the State of Maharashtra as "Kunbi".

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7. At the public hearing, Shri Harish Varma submitted that the Kurmis are staying in the State for the last 125 years and find difficulty in marrying their daughters, because of their educational and economic backwardness. They are forced to marry at a lower age. The Kurmis have close social relations with Kunbis of Maharashtra. They do not face any problem in marrying their children with Kunbis of Maharashtra. In Maharashtra, lakhs of their members are agricultural labourers. They came to Maharashtra, mostly from the States of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and also from Rajasthan. There is no I.A.S or any other top Government official from among their caste members. Dr. Babulal Singh Patel, President, Maharashtra Kurmi Kshatriya Samaj stated that during their residence in Maharashtra for the last so many years, the members of their community have been using both "Kurmi" and "Kunbi" as their caste/community name. The main occupation of the members of the community is cultivation and they are mainly agricultural labourers. They are economically, socially and educationally backward and they have no higher ups in the society to speak on behalf of them. Dr. Babulal Singh Patel emphasized that the Kunbi and Kurmi are really one class of people, though they are known in various parts of the country by separate names.

8. The applicants have filed several documentary evidence which are from the records. On perusal of the revenue entry of the copy of Khatauni of his village in district-Mirzapur relating to the year 1307 fasali (1900 A.D.), it may be seen that the name of Shri R.R. Singh's grandfather was entered as Pratab Kunbi. A Khatauni of 1309 from the records shows the same thing. Thereafter, Khatauni entry of 1347 fasali (1940 A.D.) shows that Pratap's son name was entered as Bhajan Kurmi. Another Khatauni entry of 1376-78 shows that R.R. Singh is son of Bhajan.

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9. The Kurmi caste/community is described in the ethnographic accounts as follows:-

“Hindu Castes and Sects” [Jogindra Nath Bhattacharya, p. 216-219]

The Kurmis and Kunbis are shown under the head ‘The Clean Agricultural Castes’.

“The most important agricultural castes of Northern India and those called Kurmis and Kunbis.”

“Hindu Tribes and Castes” [Cosmo Publications - Rev. M.A. Sherring Vol II Page 100, Chapter X, p. 323]

“Kurmi – The Kurmis and Kunbis are in reality one class of people and yet are known in various parts of the country by these separate designations, and ... they are subdivided into numerous tribes, some of which do not intermarry.”

“The great agricultural class of India is known by various designations appertaining to different localities. One of the most extensive tribes of cultivators is the Kumbhi, otherwise called Kumbhi, Kunbi and Kurmi which is found over a large portion of Hindustan proper and in Central India.”

“Tribes & Castes” [W. Crooke, Asian Educational Services Publication, p. 346]

“Kurmi, Kunbi – A very important cultivating caste widely distributed throughout the province.”

“Encyclopaedia of Caste, Customs of Northern India” [H. M. Elliot, Vol 1, p. 155-156]

“Kurmi – A large class of cultivators in the Eastern Central portion of this presidency. Under the different names of Kurmi, Kumbhi, Kunabi or Kumbhi. There are several Kurmis or Kumbhis among the Marattas.”

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“Caste in India” [J. M. Hutton, Oxford University Press, p. 34]

“The great cultivating caste of Bihar and Awadh is that of the Kurmi a caste equivalent in status to the Kunbi of the Maratha country.

“Castes and Class in India” [S. S. Ghurye, Popular Book Depot, Bombay, p. 2]

“**Kurmi, Kunbi and Kanbi** perhaps signify the occupation of the group viz that of cultivation.”

“The Tribes and Castes of Bombay” [R.E. Enthoven, Vol II, p. 284]

“**KUNBIS** corresponding to the Kunbis of Gujarat, numbering over two million (1901).....Kunbi is commonly derived from Kulambi or Kutumbika is a Marathi term meaning a husbandman, Kanbi being its Gujarati equivalent, the Bombay Kunbis are represented in the United Provinces by Kurmis, who are also known as Kunbis. There seems little doubt that strictly speaking, the term Kunbi, like Rajput, denotes a status and not a caste and may be compared in this respect with the latter term, which has no necessary ethnic significance. ...”

“India’s Communities” [Edited by K.S. Singh, Anthropological Survey of India, p. 1897]

“**Kunbi** - It may be derived from the Hindi word Kunba meaning large family, or from the words *kun* meaning who and *bi* meaning seed denoting the people who germinate seeds; or from the word *kutumbin* meaning cultivator family or household; or from *kulambi* meaning husbandmen. The Kunbi are distributed in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat and Karnataka. Enthoven (1922) observes that the Kunbi are a class of landholders and husbandmen, while Russell and Hiralal (1916) describe them as the great agricultural caste of the Maratha country. ...”

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“The Tribes and Castes of North Western India” [W. Crooke, Asian Educational Service Publications, Vol. III. pp. 353-354]

“Kurmi, Kunbi – Their social status is respectable. They will not eat *kachchi* even if cooked by a Brahman who is not their Guru. The same rule applies to *pakki*. Some local Brahmans will eat *pakki* from their hands, and the same is the case with respectable Kshatriyas. All other castes eat *pakki* from their hands without hesitation. In Farrukhabad it is reported that they will eat *pakki* from the hands of Kayasths, *Kachchi* of Brahmans; they will drink from the vessels of Banyas, but will smoke only with members of their own caste. Rajputs will eat *pakki* from them and Nais and Malis their *kachchi*, while the latter will drink water from their vessels. In Oudh they have traditions of having been land owners before the Rajput conquest, and Mr. Butts remarks that the same is the case in Lucknow, where “they do not seem to have been a low caste tribe...” They are about the most industrious and hard-working agricultural tribe in the Province.

10. During the Public Hearing, those present who were from the different sections of society as well as the State Government representatives did not object to the proposed inclusion of **“Kurmi” as a synonym of “Kunbi”** in the Central List of OBCs for the State of Maharashtra.

11. The Bench observed that the caste/community in terms of caste system is identified/linked with traditional occupation of ‘Agriculture’. At present the caste/community is engaged in agriculture labour and other manual work. Many of them are landless and is a socially backward class. The documentary evidence produced by the applicant clearly shows that in the year 1900 in the revenue records, the name of the applicants’s grandfather was recorded as Pratap Kunbi and in the subsequent year the applicant’s father’s name is recorded as Bhajan Kurmi. The Kurmi, Kunbi caste/community also appears at serial No. 36 in the Central List of OBCs of Madhaya Pradesh. Therefore, from the documentary evidence it is fully established that the Kunbi and Kurmi are one and the same. It is also evident from the ethnographic accounts that the ‘Kurmi’ caste/community is a synonym of ‘Kunbi’ and it is also known as ‘Kurmi-Kshatriya’ and ‘Kurmi-

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Kunbi'. As such the caste/community deserves to be included in the Central List of OBCs as a synonym of 'Kunbi' for the State of Maharashtra.

IV. Findings

12. From the evidence and documents presented at the time of public hearing and also on a perusal of ethnographic literature by eminent authors, the Bench finds that the "Kurmi" caste/community of Maharashtra is akin to the Kunbis of Maharashtra and is a socially and educationally backward class in Maharashtra whose traditional occupation was agriculture. Therefore, the Bench decided that **"Kurmi" as a synonym of "Kunbi" should be included at the entry No. 70 of the Central List of OBCs for the State of Maharashtra, so that the amended entry reads as follows:-**

**"70. Kunbi, (subcastes; Lewa Kunbi, Lawa Patil, Lewa Patidar)
Kurmi"**



(Justice Ram Surat Singh)



(M.S Matharoo)



(Neera Shastri)



(Dr. B. Babu Rao Varma)

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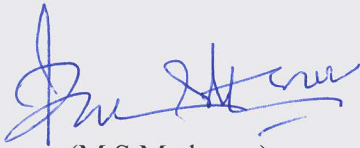
V. Advice of the Commission

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

“Kurmi” as a synonym of “Kunbi” be added at entry No.70 in the Central List of OBCs for the State of Maharashtra, so that the amended entry reads as below:-

“70. Kunbi, (subcastes; Lewa Kunbi, Lawa Patil, Lewa Patidar) Kurmi”


(Justice Ram Surat Singh)


(M.S Matharoo)


(Neera Shastri)


(Dr. B. Babu Rao Varma)

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