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नई दिल्ली-110 066
MEMBER-SECRETARY
NATIONAL COMMISSION
FOR BACKWARD CLASSES
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
NEW DELHI-110 066
20. 01. 1998

DO NCBC Advice No. 65/97 Karnataka

Dear Shri Baksi,

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 rejection of the Request for Inclusion of "Kunchitiga" caste/community in the Central List of Backward Classes for Karnataka, for necessary action by the Central Government under Section 9(2) of the Act.

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely

(P.S.KRISHNAN)

Encl: As stated.

Shri K.K.Baksi
Secretary to Govt. of India
Ministry of Welfare
Shastri Bhavan
NEW DELHI

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22/11/98

NeBe Advice No. 65/98 Karnataka
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR BACKWARD CLASSES

KARNATAKA BENCH

Findings

Case: Request for Inclusion of 'Kunchitiga' Caste/Community in the Central List of Backward Classes for Karnataka.

Per Justice P.K. Shyamsundar, Chairperson.

This is a request by the Akhila Kunchitigara Maha Mandala (Registered), Bangalore (means Kunchitigara Maha Mandal) dated 21.6.1994 seeking inclusion of the 'Kunchitiga' caste in the list of Backward Classes complied by the Central Government. On receipt of the request, as aforesaid, the Commission had written more than once to the organisation, referred to above, for submitting necessary information enjoined by the NCBC Questionnaire, copies of which, had also been sent. It is regrettable that so far the organisation had not returned the NCBC questionnaire after being duly filled up. Some correspondence available in this regard indicates that the organisation wanted that a questionnaire in the regional language (in Kannada) be furnished to them. Their request could not be complied with from this end and on the other hand they were asked to take the assistance of the State Commission.

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[Signature]

National Commission
Karnataka Bench

Be that as it may, the representation received on behalf of the 'Kunchitiga' community adverted to supra was taken up for public hearing at Bangalore on 28.10.97 by a Bench consisting of the Chairperson and Member-Secretary, Shri P.S. Krishnan. At the public hearing a number of representatives on behalf of the community were heard including the Secretary of the Organisation, Shri V.D. Veerakyathaiah, a retired IAS Officer and Prof. Krishnappa, borne on the faculty of a leading educational institution, Mysore, namely, D. Banumaiah College of Commerce. They along with number of others were at pains to impress on the Commission two points (1) Kunchitigas were different from Vokkaligas and had been wrongly tagged on by successive Commissions in the State of Karnataka as part of the large exogamous group of Vokkaligas with whom it is said the Kunchitigas do not have much in common, notwithstanding the fact that in the past and even of late, the two communities were inter-marrying; and (2) The Kunchitigas are socially backward and economically a non-identity. It was submitted that the Kunchitigas were found mostly in the drough prone areas of Tumkur and Chittradurga districts of Karnataka and are mainly holders of small tracts of agricultural land, from which they gain little because of perennial drought conditions prevailing in those districts where agriculture is possible only if there are rains. It was pointed out that their impoverished condition has prevented them from being educationally advanced resulting in retardation in

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Member
Commission
National
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social status. It is urged that at the moment they do not have any M.L.A., M.P., M.L.C., Minister and nor are they found represented in any elite evocation including the judiciary. Laying stress on the differentia that separated them from the Vokkaliga Community, they also based themselves on some literature, being brief treatises in Kannada authored by Shri V.D. Veerakyathaiah, Secretary of the organisation and a former IAS officer and Dr. Thimmaiah, a well-known economist, presently the Member of the Planning Commission, New Delhi. Reliance is also placed on the writing of ethnographers like Thurston and L.K. Anathakrishna Iyer who are said to be of the view that Kunchitigas are more ethnically close to the Kurubas or the shepherds from whom they are said to have learnt the profession of woollen blanket weaving apart from having garnered a few of the social habits and customs of the Shepered community. Importantly it is urged very pertinently in the writings of V.D. Veerakyathaiah and Dr. Thimmaiah the Kunchitigas appear to have taken for themselves or rooted themselves to the gothra system which is not the hallmark of a Shudra in the hierarchical Hindu Society. Reference is made to the 48 gothras but called as ganas by which different sections amongst the Kunchitigas are identified. It is common ground that Kunchitigas have inter-married only within their own ganas or gothras that permitted such marriage. The fact remains they have also inter-married with Vokkaligas. The writings of Veerakyathaiah and

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Thimmaiah as also the brief excerpts from the endographers indicate a similarity in the marriage customs but more with reference to the disposal of the dead in that the Vokkaligas and Kunchitigas are known to customarily bury their dead instead of cremating a custom that obtained normally in the higher castes like Brahmins.

Notwithstanding the bearing of some similarity in social customs and habits, the Kunchitigas hold themselves to be different from the Vokkaligas. It is therefore urged that it is appropriate to treat the Kunchitigas different from Vokkaligas as has been done by Justice O. Chinnappa Reddy in his report where he had observed that it was not necessary to draw a rigid line of separation between the two castes for a stage may come at which these two different entities may become a monolith. In the neighbouring States of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, some portions which abut the State of Karnataka, Kunchitigas are to be found as well. The Mandal Commission has recognised the Kunchitigas living in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh by affording them the backward status. This is a point which is seriously pressed on us for consideration for inclusion of this caste into the Backward Classes List of the Central Government.

The fact that they follow some type of identifying parameters akin to gothra system prevailing

amongst the higher classes of Hindus like Brahmins may not support the argument that they are different from Vokkaligas with whom they are presently clubbed. The identity marks that stimulate a gothra are really not marks of affinity a system of distinction prevailing among higher caste groups in Hindu society. This identity mark among the Kunchitigas is some method or mode of distinction employed more as a measure for confining particular sects of Kunchitigas to that sect only for the purpose of marriage and other social interactions. But many Kunchitigas are now found to marry outside their community and in particular with Vokkaligas. But, the complaint that the Kunchitigas having been pushed into the Vokkaliga fold and thus denied the benefit of reservation appears to be a weak argument. To ascertain and decide whether Kunchitigas have been rightly clubbed with the Vokkaligas or whether it should have been otherwise are not matters on which we should dilate in the discharge of our duties, which is only of identifying any particular caste is Backward or not. The question for consideration herein is whether the Kunchitigas can be treated as a backward caste and whether they deserve the benefits accorded to the backward classes under the Constitution of India? In that view of the matter we do not consider it necessary to deal with the first point for consideration i.e the Kunchitigas should not be considered as part of Vokkaligas in ascertaining their status as a Backward caste. Adverting to the second point for our

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consideration being whether the Kunchitiga community is socially backward and we make it clear again that the said issue falls to be considered by us (i.e) as a community treated as a distinct ethnic entity of its own.

We have heard the community representatives and in main Shri Veerakyathaiah, a former IAS officer and Prof. Krishnappa, currently of the commerce faculty of D. Banumaiah College at Mysore, an institution said to have been endowed by a famous Philanthropist of Mysore Shri D. Banumaiah, a Kunchitiga businessman said to have flourished during the period of the Maharajas of Mysore in the past. There is abundant reference to the charitable dispositions of that Philanthropist in the representation making it clear that Kunchitigas and others were able to avail of University level education. The representations from the community of which we have more than one emphasises the fact that in major cities like Mysore and Bangalore free hostels and boarding facilities are open to the students of the Kunchitiga community. It is clear that the community has access to education through the munificence of the community leaders. However, while underplaying the effort by the community to pull itself up with a view to mingle with the main stream of society, it is nevertheless pointed out that only Kunchitigas living in Metropolitan cities had all the benefits whereas in the drought prone districts of Chittradurga, Tumkar etc.,

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their position is said to be not economically sound leading in turn to educational and social backwardness. It is pointed out that the districts of Chitradurga and Tumkur are traditionally drought prone and are without any irrigation facilities and that Kunchitigas in that areas raise only one crop a year resulting in penurious living. It is also pointed out that the community has no M.L.A., M.P. among them either in the State of Karnataka or elsewhere or at the centre. Great reliance is placed on the fact that in the neighbouring states of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, the kunchitigas have been identified and included in the backward classes list compiled by Mandal. In contrast it is pointed out that the series of Commissions constituted by the State of Mysore now known as Karnataka for identifying the backwards, had not accepted Kunchitigas as a section of the backward classes despite there being a valid claim.

We are not impressed by this submission. We are not satisfied that Kunchitigas as a caste is entitled for inclusion in the backward classes list. Their social mobility either forward or backward has got to be necessarily linked with the progress recorded by this community alround. It appears to have secured a better return on all aspects particularly in the field of education.

The benefit of education appears to be available in abundance to the Kunchitigas whether they

lived in cities or in rural areas particularly in the districts of Chittradurga and Tumkar even according to the representations received and the submissions made on behalf of the memorialist at the public hearing. It cannot therefore be said that a community which has access to facilities and benefits by availing which it can raise itself to comparable heights in society in particular on par with the advanced sections should not clamour for being listed as a backward caste. Such a community cannot be heard to contend that it had remained backward even when the doors of prosperity was kept very much wide open. It does appear that for a small community with a population said to be 12 to 18 lakhs as mentioned in the representations, it had certainly done well not merely in the traditional field of business but in public administration, in private enterprises, self employed professions like lawyers, engineers, doctors etc..

It is claimed in the memorandum that they do not have any M.L.A or M.P in the State of Karnataka. But according to authentic information available to the Commission there are at least two M.L.As both hailing from the district of Tumkur (i.e) Shri Satyanarayana and Shri Jayachandra are Kunchitigas. Of them, Shri Satyanarayana is said to be the Minister incharge of labour portfolio at present in the Janata Dal Govt. now in office The late Shri Mali Mariappa who represented Madhugiri for a number of years was a Kunchitiga. Sri

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[Signature]
P. S. KRISHNAN
Member
for Bangalore

Mariappa was also a Minister in the Govt. of Mysore during 1960s and was also a M.P from Tumkur before he passed away. Likewise, one Shri Masiappa was a M.L.A from Chittradurga District for a long time. He was also a Minister in the Congress Government in Karnataka. Similarly, Shri B.L. Gauda, a M.L.A from Chittradurga district, was a minister in the erstwhile Janata Dal Govt., later became the Chairman of the State Public Commission was also a Kunchitiga. Besides the two memorialists Shri V.D. Veerakyathaiiah and Shri Krishnappa, who have themselves to their credit incumbency in high positions in the administration and the teaching faculty appear to overlook the presence in their midst of Dr. Thimmaiah, another of their distinguished casteman, a well-known economist of the country who is currently the Member of the Planning Commission, New Delhi. This small coterie of Kunchitiga who distinguished themselves in their own spheres of activity very well supplement the not too small band of M.L.As and Ministers in the State of Karnataka to whom there has been abundant advertance herein before. It is, therefore, clear to us that this is not a community which has just sprouted spradic personalities of distinction one on the other hand, it is well-served by a host of well-educated people and cannot, therefore, plead their backwardness and hence press for inclusion in the list of Backward Classes on grounds of social and educational backwardness. The claim, if any, appears to be least tenable. The reference made to the

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distinguished personages (supra) is based on common knowledge available to anyone who hails from the State of Karnataka.

It seems to me that the community should have little grievance about its social status and should really have no doubt about its social standing as evident from the small treatise jointly authored by Shri Veerakyathaiah and Dr. Thimmaiah that was produced before us at the hearing. The well known ethnographer, L.K. Ananthakrishna Iyer, states in the book "The Mysore Tribes and Castes" (Mittal Publications, Delhi Reprinted 1988, Vol 4):

"The chief occupation of the Kunchitigas is agriculture. A large portion of them hold lands directly while some are tenants, who eke out their living also by working for wages. They are very successful as carpenters in places like Bangalore, while an appreciable number earn money as contractors and money-lenders. A good proportion of them are educated, and occupy a respectable place in society.

Kunchitigas occupy the same social position as other Vokkaligas, e.g., Gangadikars, and labour under no special disabilities. Brahmans freely officiate at their ceremonies. They do not admit outsiders into their caste.

The Kunchitigas are a tribe of Sudras of

Karnataka descent. They formed part of the native militia in ancient times. Their hereditary chiefs are called gaudas whether they are headmen of villages or not. Women were once burned with the dead bodies of their husbands. Agriculture is their chief occupation. Some are merchants, while others are skilful in carpentry."

(emphasis applied)

We agree with the statement as aforesaid which clearly indicates that the Kunchitigas are not backward. We may, in this context also draw attention to one excerpt from the representation received from the community addressed to Shri P.S. Krishnan, Member-Secretary dated 26.11.97.

"In this way though they belong to the group of common people they are 'Humanitarians'. It is not an exaggeration. When they got the real opportunity they will come to light, and only some of them they rendered their precious service and have been rendering in social field as per the proverbs 'Alilu Seve Malalu Bhakthi. After listening the call of the country and the public they had rendered their maximum service during the struggle for freedom and also after attaining the freedom. The number of persons who are in Government service is very rare. They have not attained such highest position in

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Member-Secretary
National Commission
for Backward Classes

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Government service. This is due to their social status and their economic conditions.

Nowadays they are giving more prominence for the development of present children who will become their future generation. During the last several generation their hearts were filled with darkness. All precautionary measures are taken to establish the light of knowledge in their minds.

If we observe this, there is no doubt that this community people will attain prosperity and progress in the near future.

In Kunchitigas, only few persons belong to the middle class group. When we investigate the Kunchitiga Community in Karnataka we will find that 90% of them are living in villages. In the villages, their main profession being agriculture their Economic status is not found to be of better standard, still within their limitations, they are struggling to maintain clean houses and wear clean dresses and also safeguard and protect their body from diseases and ill health. Though they are suffering from Economic crisis they will not raise loans and simply lead their lives within their reach. It is the principle of their community.

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These people cannot raise to the higher level nor tumble down to the lower level but are remaining in the same economically backward position from ancient time to the present day. When we examine, Kunchitigas are mainly, depending on agriculture and agricultural labour and are continued to be in poorest class group. They will not exploit others. They will not be subjected to humiliation. They will be spending time always thinking in their own way. They will not aspire for higher social status and for awards and prizes. Therefore Kunchitigas may be considered to be the people economically, socially and educationally backward."

(emphasis applied)

The somewhat lengthy statement supra produced on behalf of the memorialist parts of which are indeed self-contradictory nonetheless fails to support the argument that for want of special attention of the State the Community has therefore remained backward. We do not find any substantial material on record to hold that the Community had suffered for want of opportunity to surge ahead in the social and economical field.

We notice the grievance that they are not adequately represented in Govt. service or that they

have not got benefits from the administration apart from being a self-serving statement, is also not supported by facts and figures and hence the said assertion cannot be countenanced.

The case, if any, based on inclusion of the Kunchitiga caste in the Mandal list pertaining to the States of Tamil Nadu and Andhar Pradesh will not avail. The factum of being considered backward in the neighbouring States cannot be the sole ground for inclusion in the list of backward classes for other States. Moreso, in the instance case, as we have found the Kunchitigas of Karnataka are not found to be wanting in any manner. They do not need special assistance by being included in the list of backward classes.

For the foregoing reasons, we record a finding that the Kunchitiga caste in the State of Karnataka is not a socially backward caste and is not entitled to be listed in the backward classes' list compiled by the Central Government. We accordingly advise the Central Government to reject the claim as aforesaid.

P. S. Krishnan
2-1-98

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Advice of the Commission:

The Commission considered and agreed in full with the above Findings of the Karnataka 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 "Kunchitiga" caste/community in the Central List of Backward Classes for Karnataka be rejected, as it is not Socially and Educationally Backward.

P. S. Thidha

2.1.98

P. K. Shyamsundar

21/1/98
JUSTICE P. K. SHYAMSUNDAR
Chairperson
National Commission For
Backward Classes
Government of India
New Delhi.

K. V. Balhi
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K. V. Balhi
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K. V. Balhi
15.1.98

ACCEPTED

P. S. Thidha

P. S. THIDHA
Member
National Commission
Backward Classes