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Main Copy

सदस्य-सचिव
राष्ट्रीय पिछड़ा वर्ग आयोग
भारत सरकार
नई दिल्ली-110 066
MEMBER-SECRETARY
NATIONAL COMMISSION
FOR BACKWARD CLASSES
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
NEW DELHI-110 066

D.O. Case No. WB/5/95/
November 2, 1995

Dear Shri Saxena,

I am sending herewith the unanimous advice of the National Commission for Backward Classes under Section 9(1) of the NCBC Act, 1993, in respect of "Tanti, Tantubaya" community to be included in the Central List of Backward Classes for West Bengal, for necessary action under Section 9(2) of the Act by the Central Government.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

P. S. Krishnan
(P.S. KRISHNAN)

Encl: As Stated

Shri K.B. Saxena
Secretary
Ministry of Welfare
Shastri Bhavan
New Delhi

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR BACKWARD CLASSES

WEST BENGAL BENCH

Request for inclusion "Tanti" of West Bengal in the
Central List of Backward Classes for West Bengal

REQUEST

1. The Government of West Bengal, vide letter of the Secretary, Scheduled Castes and Tribes Welfare Department No. 344-TW/EC dated 2nd May 1995 to the M-6/82(I)

Commission has, inter-alia, requested that "Tanti" be included in the Central List of Backward Classes for West Bengal.

2. Subsequently, the Paschim Banga Tantubaya Samaj Unnayan Samity also made a request substantively to the same effect, but in their request the name of the community has been given as "Tantubaya(TANTI)."

PUBLIC HEARING

3. The Two-Member Bench for West Bengal hold a Public Hearing at Calcutta on 29th August 1995 to examine this Request. It was during this hearing that Tantubaya Samaj Unnayan Samity presented its Request.

At the Public Hearing, the State Government was represented by the Special Secretary, Joint Commissioner of the SCs and Tribes Welfare Department and Director, Cultural Research Institute of West Bengal. Shri Kumarosh Chandra Biswas, Acting Secretary, Tantubaya Samaj Unnayan Samity represented the Samity along with certain other members of the Samity.

ATTESTED
S. KRISHNAN
Member Secretary
National Commission
for Backward Classes

FACTS

5. The State Government of West Bengal had no list of Backward Classes till after the Supreme Court Judgement in the Mandal Case, delivered on 16th November 1992. For this reason, the Expert Committee on Backward Classes could not recommend a Central List of B.Cs for West Bengal as it could do for 14 other States, which already had their respective lists of BCs, on the basis of the principle of commonality, and therefore the Central Govt. also could not issue a Central list of BCs for West Bengal in 1993. The Govt. of West Bengal issued its first list of Backward Classes by its Notification No. 346-TW/EC

M-6/82(I)

dated 13th July 1994 in the Calcutta Gazette of the same date, which consisted of 14 entries. The Government of India, Ministry of Welfare, by its Notification No.163 dated 19.10.1994, published in the Gazette of India of 20.10.1994, issued a common list of OBCs for West Bengal which consisted of the same 14 castes/communities.

6. Nearly a half-year later, the Government of West Bengal issued its second instalment of Backward Classes consisting of 12 castes/communities by its Notification No.705-TW/EC/M-6/82(I) dated 13th December 1994 in the Calcutta Gazette of the same date and after yet another nearly half-year, its third instalment of 3 castes/communities was issued by its Notification No. 370-TW/EC dated 12th May 1995,

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published in the Calcutta Gazette of the same date. "Tanti" is one of the 12 castes/communities included in the second State list of Backward Classes issued on 13th December 1994, in respect of which the State Government's request was received on 2nd May 1995.

UNAUTHENTICATED

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Member Secretary
National Commission
for Backward Classes

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7. The corresponding entry in the Mandal Commission's List of Backward Classes for West Bengal is as follows:-

169. Tanti, Tantubaya

8. According to the data furnished by the State Government in the Questionnaire communicated by the NCBC, this Community is identified/linked with the traditional craft of weaving. The State Government has furnished some more useful information about the community. 92% of its adult members are still engaged in the traditional occupation of weaving. Of the balance, most i.e. 5% are engaged in manual labour on daily wage and only 2% and 1% respectively in cultivation of own land and other occupations like services. It is also seen from the State Govt.'s data that the population of this caste is close to 6 lakhs and it is thus seen that it is one of the more numerous castes of backward classes in West Bengal.

9. According to the data furnished by the Samity, most of the members of the community, though the percentage mentioned by the Samity (80%) is slightly less than the percentage mentioned in the State Govt.'s data, are engaged in weaving. Most of those who have been forced out of this occupation on account of the tender mercies of the market are engaged in various low-paying and strenuous occupations like rickshaw-pulling. They not only pressed their demand for inclusion in the Central list of backward classes but were anxious to have the name Tantubaya also to be added as synonym because the community has chosen for itself this name as a better and more respectable name than the old name to which some pejorative tone has in practice come to be attached over time.

AUTHENTICATED

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Member Secretary
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10. H.H. Risley, in his ethnographic glossary entitled "Tribes and Castes of Bengal" published by Firma Mukhopadhyay, 1st Edition 1891, Reprint: Calcutta 1981 (Vol. II, PP. 295-304) under the Head "Tanti, Tantrabaya, Tantubaya, Tatwa, Tantwa" describes it as the weaver caste of Bengal and Behar. The Tantis are one of the Navshakha group and the displacement of large numbers of Tantis from "their immemorial profession" of weaving "by the influx of cheap machine-made goods", has been noticed by Risley--a trend which has only acquired greater tempo after Independence and in recent years. The Bench noted the plight of the displaced Tantis and the difficulties with which the rest still hold on to their traditional occupation. Their skills and the finesse of their work were noted at the beginning of the 16th century by the Roman Vartomannus (Ludovici Vartomanni Navigatio, p. 259) and a little later by the Arab author of the "Muhit" in 1554 (Journal A.S. of Bengal, Vol. v, 467).

11. The fall of the weavers has been sketched by Mr. James Taylor, a Former Resident of Dacca (A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Cotton Manufacture of Dacca, in Bengal, 1851), by Mr. Bolts (Considerations, part i, 193) and by Edmund Burke (Burke's Works, Bohn's edition, iv, 73 p. 303). From their accounts, it is possible to trace the cruelty inflicted on weavers beginning from the times of Siraj-ud-daulah (1756-57). In the British period, Risley traces "the first decline" to what he calls "the rapacity of the 'banyans' and gomastas", and the British Chiefs of Dacca like Thomas Kelsall whose atrocity on a weaver Shri Krishna Pal Kumar is an instance recorded vividly. Another Chief of Dacca, Mr. Rouse has depicted in a letter written by him and cited by Burke in the following words:

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"The weavers are in general a timid, helpless people, many of them poor to the utmost degree of wretchedness, incapable of keeping accounts, industrious as it were by instinct, unable to defend themselves if oppressed, and satisfied if with continual labour they derive from the fair dealing and humanity of their employer a moderate subsistence for their families." This is also the period when Arkwright obtained his patent in 1769 and Crompton invented the mule in 1779, thus adding technological inequality to the process of annihilation of the weavers and the weaving industry.

12. It is significant that even Risley refers to this community as not merely Tanti, but also as Tantubaya as a synonym for Tanti. The Mandal Commission also has taken care to include this synonym. It is then not known why the State Government has listed only Tanti and not Tantubaya. They seem to have gone by the Advice of the State Commission for Backward Classes. But that does not answer the question. It is absolutely essential for all authorities and those who advise authorities to take note of the sensitivity of those who have been oppressed and humiliated over the centuries. The State Government too has mentioned in the appropriate columns of the questionnaire that Tantubaya is another name or synonym of Tanti. The Bench considers that the failure of the State Commission or the State Government to take note of the sensitivity of a backward community in this case, as in some other cases of West Bengal too, is no reason for the National Commission to feel constrained on this account. The preferred name which has been attested by different authorities since a long time should be recognised and brought into the Central list of Backward Classes for West Bengal without waiting for the State Commission and the State Government to do so and in fact catalysing the State Commission and the

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State Government in this direction and prompting them to do so in the future cases. The Bench has also suggested to the State representatives to look into this aspect and add this synonym in their list.

FINDINGS OF THE BENCH

13. The Bench found that "Tanti, Tantubaya" has been and continues to be socially backward and is linked with the traditional craft of weaving. Weaving is a traditional artisanal craft which is one of the occupations referred to in Para 7 of the Procedural clarification on Guidelines and covered by "A.SOCIAL, Item No.2(e)" of the Commission's Guidelines for Consideration of Requests for Inclusion and Complaints of under-inclusion in the Central List of Other Backward Classes. This is part of the "Fast Track" designed by the Commission. This caste undoubtedly qualifies to be included in the Central List of Backward Classes. The entry in the Central List should be "Tanti, Tantubaya" and not merely "Tanti".

K. S. D.

Member, West Bengal Bench

P. S. Krishnan

Member, West Bengal Bench

ADVICE OF THE COMMISSION

ATTESTED

14. The Commission considered and agreed in full with the Findings of the West Bengal Bench and decided to tender the following Advice to the Government as per Section 9(1) of the NCBC Act, 1993:-

P. S. KRISHNAN

Member Secretary

National Commission for Backward Classes

"Tanti, Tantubaya" be included in the Central List of Backward Classes for West Bengal.

K. S. D.

P. S. Krishnan

P. S. Krishnan
13/10/23
Justice R. N. Prasad
Chairman
National Commission for Backward Classes

P. S. Krishnan

C. M. S. H. C. T. H.