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त्रिकूट-१, भीकाएजी 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. Orissa 85/2001

19. 9. 2001

Dear Smt. Asha Das,

I am sending herewith the advice of the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) under Section 9(1) of the NCBC Act, 1993, for the rejection of the request for inclusion of 'Maahaata and Maahaanta' in the Central list of backward classes for Orissa, duly authenticated, for necessary action by the Central government under Section 9(2) of the Act.

Yours sincerely


(C. T. Benjamin)
c/c

Mrs. Asha Das
Secretary to Government of India
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment
Shastri Bhavan
NEW DELHI 110 001

Encl: As stated

NCBC Advice No. Orissas/2001

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR BACKWARD CLASSES

ORISSA BENCH

FINDINGS

Case : Request for inclusion of "Maahaata", 'Maahaanta' in the Central List of Backward Classes for Orissa.

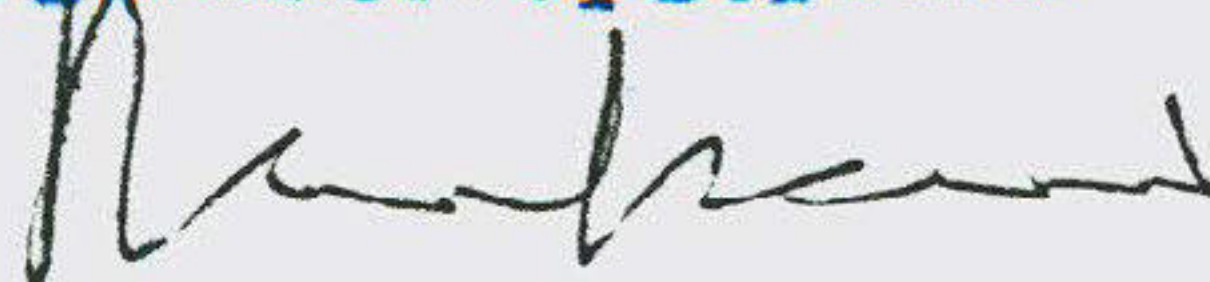
I. Request

This case arises from the request received in the NCBC from Shri Govinda Chandra Mahanta, General Secretary, Orissa Kudumi Samaj, Barbil Basti, Dist. Keonjhar, Orissa for inclusion of 'Maahaata', 'Maahaanta' in the Central List of Backward Classes for Orissa.

II. Public Hearing

2. A Four-Member Bench of the Commission consisting of Justice B.L. Yadav, Hon'ble Chairman; Smt. Neera Shastri; Dr. B.M. Das and Shri M.S. Matharoo, Hon'ble Members held a public hearing on 19-4-2001 at Bhubaneswar. At the public hearing the State Government was represented by Shri P.C. Patnaik, Director (OBC)-cum-Joint Secretary and Shri M.K. Mallick, Under Secretary, Minorities & Backward Classes Welfare Department. Dr. N. K. Behura, Dr. K.C. Jana and Dr. Srinivas Sahu, Hon'ble Members represented the State Commission for Backward Classes. Shri Govinda Chandra Mahanta, General Secretary, Orissa Kudumi Samaj, Shri Kshetra Mohan Mahanta, Shri Balaram Mahanta and others appeared before the Bench on behalf of the 'Maahaanta/Maahaata' community.

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III. Facts

3. In his request for inclusion of Maahaanta and Maahaata in the Central List of Backward Classes for Orissa, Shri Govinda Chandra Mahanta, General Secretary, Orissa Kudumi Samaj, Barbil Basti, has stated that 'Maahaanta' and 'Maahaata' of the Bonei Sub-division of Sundargarh district are synonymous with Kurmi, Kurumi, Kurumi Kshatriya, Kudumi, Kudumi Kshatriya, Kurmi Maahaato which are already included in the Central List of OBCs at Sl No. 179. It has been stated that Maahaanta and Kurmi/Kudumi are the same and Maahaanta is synonymous with Kurmi and Kudumi. In support of his statement he has enclosed two R.O.Rs (Record of Rights) in respect of Shri Jagannath Maahaanta S/o Akala Maahaanta, Village Jalda, P.S. Raghunathpalli, Distt. Sundargarh. In one R.O.R. issued by the Addl. Tahasildar, Bonai the caste is written as Maahaanta whereas the other R.O.R. issued by the Addl. Tahasildar, Panposh mentions the caste of the same person as Kurmi.

4. The NCBC's questionnaire filled-in by the Orissa Kudumi Samaj contains the following information:-

- (i) Maahaanta/Maahaata is synonymous with the main caste Kurmi/Kudumi. The caste is also known as Kurumi/Kurmi/Kshatriya/Kulmi/Mahato/Mahanta/Mohanta/Mohonto
- (ii) The population of the caste/community in the State is 19 lakhs.
- (iii) The caste/community is considered socially backward. The occupation on which the members of the caste/community mainly depend for livelihood is cultivation which involves manual labour.
- (iv) Ninety-six percent of the population of the caste are landless manual labourers.
- (v) The number of literates of the caste/community in the State is approximately 2.5 lakhs out of which 7500 are matriculates and 400 are graduates.

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- (vi) Ninety-nine percent of the families of the caste live in the Kachcha houses. There were seven cases of surrender of agricultural land in the State under the Land Ceiling Act of the State pertaining to the caste.
- (vii) They consider Teli, Chasa and Khandayat castes at a level immediately higher than their own caste and Kulta and Gouda at a level more or less at the same level as their own caste.

5. Maahaanta/Maahaata has not been included in any List of Backward Classes for Orissa, however, the relevant entries in different lists are as below :-

Mandal List

"115. Kurmi."

State List

"183. Kurmi, Kuruma Chasa, Kudumi, Kurma, Kurmi Mahto, Kurmi Khetriya, Kurumi, Kudumi Kshyatriya"

Central List

"179. Kurmi, Kurma Chasa, Kudumi, Kuduma, Kurma, KurmiMahto, Kurmi Kshetriya, Kurumi, Kudumi Kshyatriya."

6. H.H. Risley in his book 'The Tribes and Castes of Bengal' Ethnographic Glossary Vol. II, p. 38-39 has made a mention of Mahanta, Mahata, and Mahatha as below :-

"Mahant, S.; the head of a religious establishment of the mendicant orders of the Hindus.

"Mahanta, a priest of the Jugi caste in Tipperah; a spiritual guide in the Vaishnava sect; a title of Kurmis in Western Bengal."

"Mahata, a title of Khatris in Bengal"

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7. In 'People of India, National Series, India's Communities,' Vol VI, K.S. Singh, Anthropological Survey of India, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 1923-1933, the 'Kurmi' caste has been described as follows :-

"KURMI They are a numerically large and widely distributed community.....In Orissa the Kudmi (Kurmi) have surnames, such as Mohanta, Mahanto, Singh and Singdeo....."

8. At the public hearing Shri Govind Chandra Mahanta stated that Maahaanta is a surname of Kurmi. The main caste is Kurmi. In Bihar they are called Mahato and in Orissa, they are called Maahaanta. In Bonai sub-division their surnames are written in pattas instead of their caste. State Government officials who were present at the public hearing also stated that it is a surname and not a caste. Their request for inclusion is also pending with the State Commission. In response to a query of the Bench, for more evidences regarding their pattas, it was stated by the representatives of the community that they would submit more documents to the Commission shortly, but no documents/material has been sent by them.

IV. Findings

9. From the foregoing, it is clear that Maahaanta and Maahaata are not castes/sub-castes/communities but surnames used by the members of the Kurmi caste and some other castes. The request itself contains the fact that Maahaanta is not a caste but a title. Kurmi is the caste name and they want inclusion of the title Maahaanta and Maahaata because in some of the pattas the title has been shown as their caste. The request-maker has enclosed two RORs (Record of Rights also called 'Patta') issued by two different authorities in favour of the same person, showing his caste as Maahaanta in one and Kurmi in another. Keeping all these in view, the Bench finds that 'Maahaanta' and 'Maahaata' are titles/surnames used by the members of Kurmi caste. These titles have not been included in the State List of Backward Classes. Since the Kurmi caste has already been included in the Central list of Backward Classes for Orissa at Sl. No.179,

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there is no need of including titles/surnames used by the members of the caste and also by other castes. Therefore recommends that the request for inclusion of 'Maahaanta, Maahaata' in the Central list of Backward Classes for Orissa be rejected. Inclusion of such titles may lead to misuse of the same by other sections including higher castes.

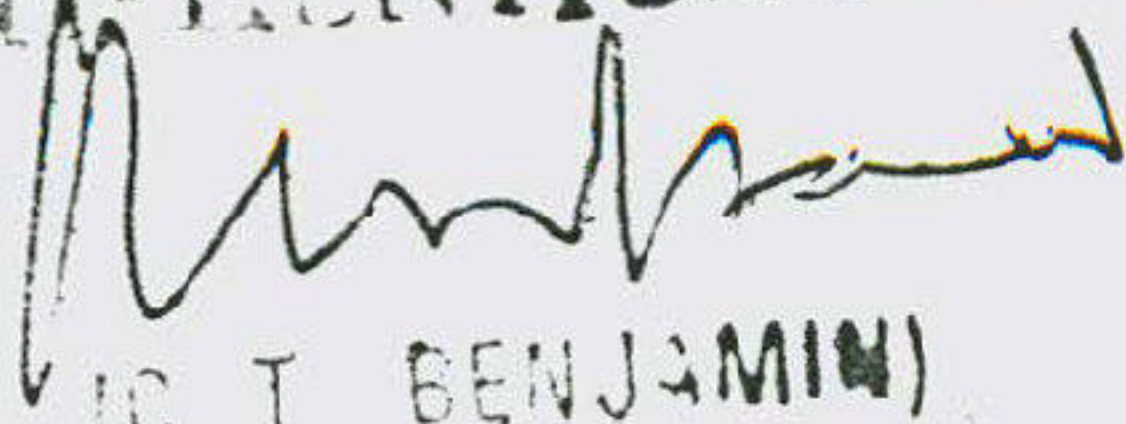

(Justice B.L. Yadav)


(M.S. Matharoo)


(Dr. B.M. Das)


(Neera Shastri)

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National Commission For
Backward Classes

V. Advice of the Commission

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

Request for inclusion of 'Maahaata and Maahaanta' in the Central List of Backward Classes for Orissa be **rejected** as these are merely titles and not castes/sub-castes/communities.

[Handwritten signatures and initials]

ATTESTED

[Handwritten signature]

(S. T. J. MIN)

Member Secretary

National Commission For

Backward Classes