

NCBC Advice No. 114/Karnataka/2001

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR BACKWARD CLASSES

KARNATAKA BENCH

FINDINGS

Case: Request for inclusion of "Vokkaliga (Urban areas)" in the Central List of Backward Classes for Karnataka.

I. REQUEST

This case arises from the request made to this Commission by Dr. V. Anjanappa, President, Vokkaligara Parishat, No. 845, Tumkur Road, Dasarahalli, Bangalore for inclusion of Vokkaligas residing in urban areas in the Central list of backward classes for Karnataka, Vokkaligas of rural areas having already been included in the central list of backward classes. In his letter of request, Dr. Anjanappa has stated that Vokkaliga community, irrespective of whether they live in urban and rural areas, is socially, educationally and economically backward. Their backwardness is borne out by the occupations that many members of the community are engaged in, such as domestic service and employment in the lowest grades in Government etc.

II. PUBLIC HEARING

2. A two-Member Bench of the Commission consisting of Shri C.T. Benjamin, Hon'ble Member-Secretary and Dr. B.M. Das, Hon'ble Member held a public hearing to examine this request at Bangalore on 19th December, 2000. At the public hearing, the State Government was represented by the Director, Backward Classes Welfare and other officers in the Directorate of Backward Classes Welfare. The community was represented by Dr. V. Anjanappa, Shri J.T. Puttaswamy Gowda and others.

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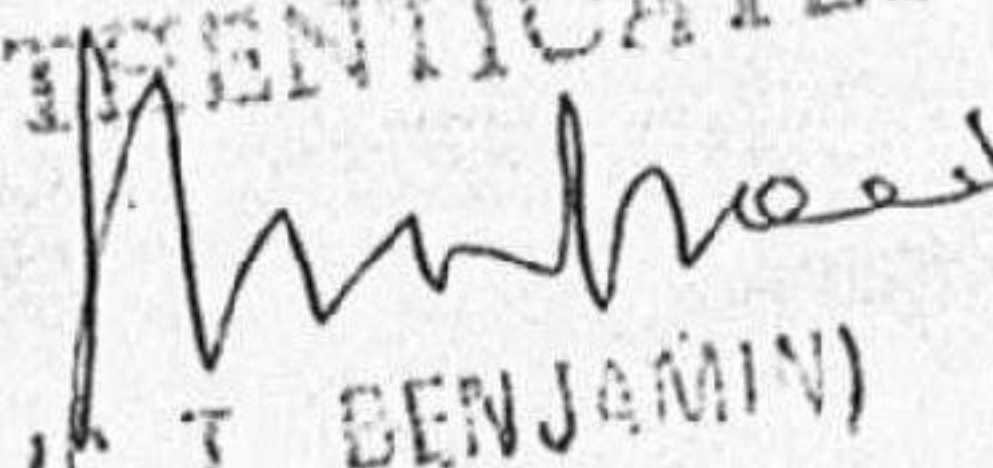
III. FACTS

3. In the first-phase of Central list of backward classes for Karnataka issued by the Government of India in 1993, the Vokkaligas of rural areas are included at entry no. 156 as follows:-

“156. Vokkaliga/
Vakkaliga/ (Rural areas only)
Sarpavokkaliga

The corresponding entry in the State Government's list of backward classes that existed at the time of the preparation of the first-phase central list, based on the principle of commonality included all Vokkaligas including those of urban areas, but since the Mandal Commission's list included only the Vokkaligas of rural areas, the “common (Central) list” prepared by the Government of India included only the Vokkaligas of rural areas.

4. During the public hearing on 19th December, 2000, Dr. Anjanappa, who has made the request, reiterated that the Vokkaliga community is educationally, socially and economically backward, both in the urban area as well as in the rural areas. He informed that there are about 62 sub-castes in the Vokkaliga community which include Gangadikara, Marasu, Musuku, Reddy, Kunchitiga, etc. He stated that they are an agricultural community both in the rural and urban areas. A majority of their members are cultivators, agricultural labourers, etc. Division of families from generation to generation has resulted in the fragmentation of their lands. Therefore, the income they get out of their lands is insufficient to maintain their families or to educate their children. Being an agricultural community, they lack technical knowledge and hence they remain unemployed. Thousands of families have no houses or shelter for dwelling and they are forced to live in small huts, exposed to natural elements like heat, cold and rain. According to him, making a distinction between members of the community who live in urban areas and in rural areas in the list of backward classes “is against the Constitution of India as per Articles 15(4) and 16(4)”. He has pleaded that there should not be any discrimination between rural and urban Vokkaligas for the following reasons:

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- (a) Urban Vokkaligas are also having low social position in the traditional caste hierarchy of Hindu society;
- (b) They are lacking in general educational advancement;
- (c) They have low representation in the Central Government services;
- (d) They have low representation in the field of trade, commerce and industry.

The arguments raised by other representatives of the caste/community in support of inclusion in the central list of backward classes of urban Vokkaligas are similar.

5. At the public hearing, Shri J. Srinivasan, President, Karnataka State Backward Classes United Forum stated his objection to the inclusion of Vokkaligas in the list of backward classes. In his written "objection petition" submitted to the Bench, he has stated that the Vokkaligas are over represented in Government services and therefore do not deserve to get the facilities of reservation under Article 16(4) of the Constitution. He has also requested the Commission that rural Vokkaligas should be deleted from the Central list of backward classes in the interest of social justice. In support of his objection to the inclusion of urban Vokkaligas and also his request to delete rural Vokkaligas, he has cited the statistical information contained in the report of the Karnataka Third Backward Classes (Justice O. Chinnappa Reddy) Commission regarding the posts held by members of the Vokkaliga community in the State Government services, public sector undertakings etc.
6. According to the findings of Justice O. Chinnappa Reddy Commission, "The Vokkaliga community along with Lingayat community is one of the two principal agricultural communities of the State. They occupy a high position in the social hierarchy of Karnataka. Along with the Lingayats they are the principal landowners. ... they share most of the political power. The statistics pertaining to appearance at and passing the S.S.L.C. examinations, admission to professional and post graduate colleges, show that as caste-groups they are well advanced, that is, much more advanced than the vast majority of the Hindu castes. They cannot therefore be classified as Socially and

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Educationally Backward Caste-groups.”. The report has further mentioned that “13.9% of the surplus landholders are from this community. ... The land and literacy percentage as revealed by the Test Survey of 523 villages showed that Vokkaligas cannot be classified as backward. While classifying the Vokkaliga community as an advanced community the circumstance that a large section of the community is poor has also been taken into consideration..... It is true that large sections of the Vokkaliga communities are also poor. But that will not entitle the communities as a whole to be treated as Backward when substantial sections are really well-advanced....”

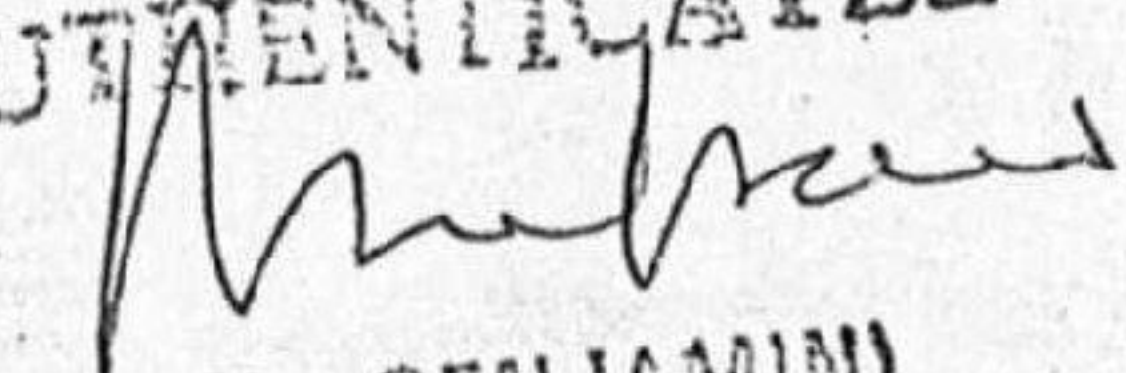
7. According to the Karnataka Second Backward Classes (Venkataswamy) Commission the Vokkaligas “are the landed gentry and the agricultural caste of Karnataka”.

8. L.K. Anantha Krishna Iyer in his book ‘The Mysore Tribes and Castes’ (Mittal Publications, Delhi, reprinted 1988, Vol. I, pp. 68-69) has observed that the Vokkaligas “form the mass of the well-established peasants. The Gangadikara seem to be a more recent stratum, whose name reminds us of the Ganga kings, who ruled in Mysore in the 10th century. We may regard their connections with the former ancient ruling house as very similar to those of the Arasu, the present-day aristocracy of Mysore, with the present day ruling family.....”

9. The Anthropological Survey of India’s ‘The People of India’ series, Volume VI, ‘India’s Communities’ describe the Vokkaliga as “a major land owning community” of “prosperous cultivators”.

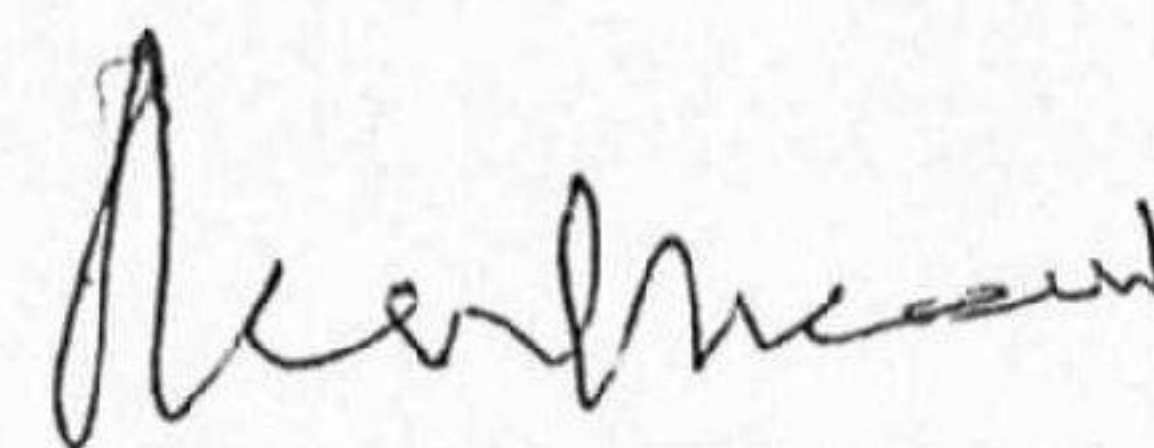
IV. FINDINGS

10. On the basis of the above material, the evidence produced at the time of public hearing etc, the Bench has arrived at the finding that the Vokkaligas of urban areas of Karnataka are not socially backward. It is also the finding of the Bench that the Vokkaligas consist of different castes and the socio-economic status of these different

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castes/communities is not exactly similar as evident from the fact mentioned by L. K. Ananthakrishna Iyer that one of them, namely, Gangadikara, even had royal connections. Besides, it should also be mentioned that one of the sub-castes of Vokkaligas, namely, "Kunchitiga" has already been examined by this Commission after a request received from them for their inclusion and the Commission has found them to be not socially backward and on that basis has advised the Central Government to reject their request for inclusion. The Central Government has already accepted the Commission's advice in this regard. Regarding the request made by Shri J. Srinivasan on behalf of the Karnataka State Backward Classes Forum for deletion of rural Vokkaligas from the central list of backward classes, the Bench feels that the same can be taken up at the time of the comprehensive revision of the lists envisaged under Section 11 of the NCBC Act which is due by 2003.

11. For the reasons mentioned above, it is the conclusion of the Bench that the request for inclusion of Vokkaligas of urban area should be rejected.

V. ADVICE OF THE COMMISSION

12. 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 necessary action by the Central Government under Section 9(2) of the Act:

Request for inclusion of "Vokkliga (Urban areas)" in the Central list of backward classes for Karnataka be rejected as Vokkaligas of urban areas are not socially backward.

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(G. T. BENJAMIN)
Member Secretary

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