

National Commission for Backward Classes

ORISSA BENCH

FINDINGS

Case: Request for inclusion of the caste/community Koppala Velama with its variations in the Central List of Backward classes for Orissa.

I. Request

This case arises from the request received in the NCBC from Shri M.Satyanarayana, President, District Koppala Velama Welfare Society, Rayagada, Orissa for inclusion of the caste/community **Koppala Velama with its variations** in the Central List of Backward classes for Orissa.

II. Public Hearing

2. A Three-Member Bench of the Commission consisting of Hon'ble Justice R.S. Singh, Chairman, Smt. Neera Shastri and Dr. B. Baburao Verma, Hon'ble Members held a Public Hearing in respect of this request at Bhubaneshwar on 23rd September, 2004. At the Public Hearing, the State Government was represented by Sh. Loknath Mishra, Director, OBC, Sh. M.K. Mallick, Under secretary ST&SC/OBCs and other officers in the Department of ST & SC/OBCs, Govt. of Orissa. The State OBCs Commission was represented by Sh. R.K. Behera, Member Secretary, Sh. B.V. Ekka, A.O. and other officers from the OBCs Commission. The Caste/community Koppala Velama was represented by M.Satyanarayana, President, Koppala Velama Welfare Society, Rayagada (Orissa) and others.

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III. Facts

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

Mandal List	:	Nil
State List (Orissa)	:	196. Koppala Velama (List of backward Classes, Annexure-I)
Central List	:	186. Koppula Vellama

4. Sh. M. Satyanarayana, President, Koppala Velama Welfare Society stated in his request letter that the Central List (Koppula Vellama) completely differ from the State List (Koppala Velama) and due to variation in the State and Central List, this caste has been deprived from getting the educational concession and employment benefits in the Government services.

5. At the Public Hearing, Sh. M. Satyanarayana submitted that the caste/community 'Koppala Velama' has migrated from Andhra Pradesh long back and settled in the border districts of Orissa. The culture and customs are similar to the Telugu people. Previously members of this caste wore ear-rings, which in Telugu is known as "Kopula" and thus they derived their caste name from it, but at present this custom is rare among its members. In Orissa, their total population is 10,000. He wanted that "Koppala velama" be included in the Central List alongwith eight other variations of this caste/community, i.e. (1) Koppala Velama, (2) Kapala Velama, (3) Kapulu Elama, (4) Koppala Elama, (5) Kappula Elama, (6) Kupala Velama (7) Kapala Elama and (8) Kapala Elaga as has been done in the State list. They are socially and educationally backward. The main occupation of this caste is agriculture but now-a-days due to fragmentation of land holdings many persons from this caste works as agricultural labourers.

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6. The caste/community Koppala Velama has been described in the ethnographic accounts as follows:

(i) K.S. Singh's in his book "India's Communities", Vol. VI, p-3618-3619 has described this caste/community as follows:

(a) In Orissa, the Velama or Ellema, concentrated mainly in Ganjam district, claim that they migrated from Andhra Pradesh long ago. Their mother tongue is Telugu and they speak Oriya too. Both the Telugu and Oriya scripts are used. They are non-vegetarian. Rice is their staple cereal. Men consume alcoholic drinks occasionally and smoke indigenous cheroot. The community has only one gotra, namely Nagasa, but has number of lineages or surnames. Previously, their lineage names were used as surnames but now-a-days Rao is added after the lineage name. They have two social subdivisions, Palnati and Kapulu which were based on the differentiation at the economic level. They follow the community and gotra endogamy and lineage exogamy. They practice cross-cousin and uncle-niece marriages. Junior levirate and sorority are allowed in the community. Marriage symbols of women are mangalsutra (Thali), vermilion and glass bangles. Dowry is prevalent both in cash and kind. Divorce and remarriage are permitted. Both husband and wife can seek divorce. The property is equally shared by all sons but the eldest son gets a little bigger share than the others. Succession right also goes to the eldest son. The Velama observe prenatal rituals and restrictions followed by post-natal restrictions. Birth pollution lasts for twelve days and naming ceremony is performed on the twenty-first day. Tonsure ceremony is observed only for male children. Puberty rites for girls are observed for seven days. Marriage takes place at the groom's residence or at a mandap. The important rituals connected with marriage are the joining of hands together by the Brahman priest, tying of thali round the bride's neck and showing of the pole star (Arundhati). The dead are usually cremated but burial is practiced in case of children. Death pollution is observed for eleven days and ancestor worship is conducted on the twelfth day and a feast is also arranged on the same

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day. They are Hindu and festivals like Makara, Dussehra and Santosh Mata are celebrated. Sacred specialists from the Brahman, Satani, etc. officiate at worship and life-cycle rituals.

(b) The Velama are a landowning community. Besides cultivation, they are also engaged in business and in private or government service. Their products are sold in the daily and weekly markets. Both barter and cash system exists in the village. Due to landlessness, some of them work as casual or agricultural labourers. Their women take part in agricultural operations, animal husbandry, collection of firewood, bringing or potable water and in religious activities. They have a traditional community council for setting disputes. Traditionally they exchange water and pucca food with the Brahman, Gouda and Gudia. They maintain patron-client, landlord-tenant and cultivator-labour relationships with the other communities of the village. They avail themselves of self-employment programmes connected to merchandise and animal husbandry through IRDP. They also make use of the facilities pertaining to education, media and communication, modern medicare system, electricity, nutritional programmes, ICDS and fair-price shop.

- (ii) K.S. Singh's in his book "Communities, Segments, Synonyms, Surnames and Titles", p-1006 has categorized this caste in the following way:

Valama – POI Equivalent: VELAMA/ELLEMA/YELMAR
census years 1881, 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931; earlier
distribution:..... Orissa, Ganjam, Koraput.

7. 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 '**Koppala Velama**' alongwith seven other variations of this caste/community i.e. (1) Kapala Velama, (2) Kapulu Elama, (3) Koppala Elama, (4) Kappula Elama, (5) Kupala Velama, (6) Kapala Elama and (7) Kapala Elaga, in the Central List of Backward Classes for Orissa.

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IV. Findings

8. From the materials and evidence adverted hereinbefore, the Bench finds that the caste/community Koppala Velama is already in the State list at entry No. 196 with its other variations, but in the Central List at entry No. 186 only 'Koppula Vellama' exist. The problem is that the authorities do not issue certificate to the members of the "Koppala Velama" as it does not appear in the Central List whereas in the State List the same appears alongwith its spelling variants. Therefore the Bench recommends that 'Koppala Velama' along with its other spelling variants as mentioned in the State List be included in the Central List of Backward Classes for Orissa at entry No. 186, so that the amended entry reads as below:-

"186. Koppula Vellama, Kapala Velama, Kapulu Elama, Koppala Elama, Kappula Elama, Kupala Velama, Kapala Elama, Kapala Elaga, Koppala Velama"



(Justice Ram Surat Singh)



(Smt. Neera Shastri)



(Dr. B.R. Verma)

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V. Advice of the Commission

9. 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:-

Koppala Velama be included in the Central List of Backward Classes for Orissa at Sl. No. 186 so as the amended entry reads as :-

“186. Koppula Vellama, Kapala Velama, Kapulu Elama, Koppala Elama, Kappula Elama, Kupala Velama, Kapala Elama, Kapala Elaga, Koppala Velama”

(Justice Ram Surat Singh)

(M.S. Matharoo)

(Smt. Neera Shastri)

(Dr. B.R. Verma)

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