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भारत सरकार
नई दिल्ली-110 066
MEMBER-SECRETARY
NATIONAL COMMISSION
FOR BACKWARD CLASSES
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
NEW DELHI-110 066

D.O. Case. NCBC/WB/6/95/
November 3, 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 "Dhanuk" 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,

Encl: As Stated

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

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

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR BACKWARD CLASSES

WEST BENGAL BENCH

Request for inclusion "Dhanuk" 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)

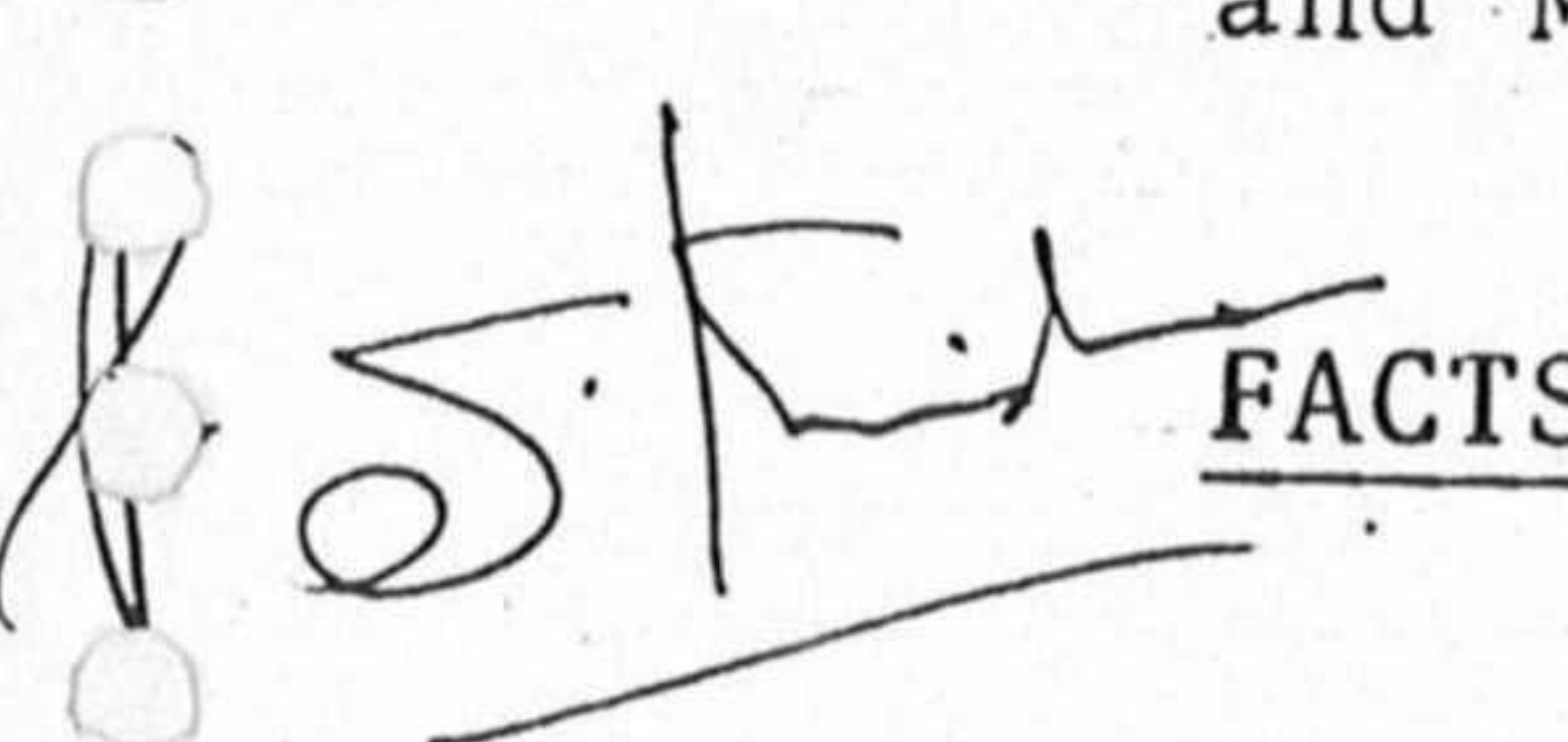
Commission has, inter-alia, requested that "Dhanuk" be included in the Central List of Backward Classes for West Bengal.

PUBLIC HEARING

2. The Two-Member Bench for West Bengal held a Public Hearing at Calcutta on 29th August 1995 to examine this Request.

3. At the Public Hearing, the State Government was represented by the Special Secretary and Joint Commissioner of the SCs and Tribes Welfare Department and Director, Cultural Research Institute of West Bengal. Two organisations of the community appeared before the Bench, viz The Harijan Jagriti Dhanuk Sangh and Matiaburz Dhanuk Samaj Panchayat, both of Calcutta.

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FACTS

4. The State Government of West Bengal had no list of

Backward Classes till after the Supreme Court's Judgement in the Mandal Case, delivered on 16th November 1992. For this reason, the Expert Committee on Backward Classes could not, on the basis of the principle of commonality, 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, 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.

5. 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, M-6/82(I)

published in the Calcutta Gazette of the same date. "Dhanuk" 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.

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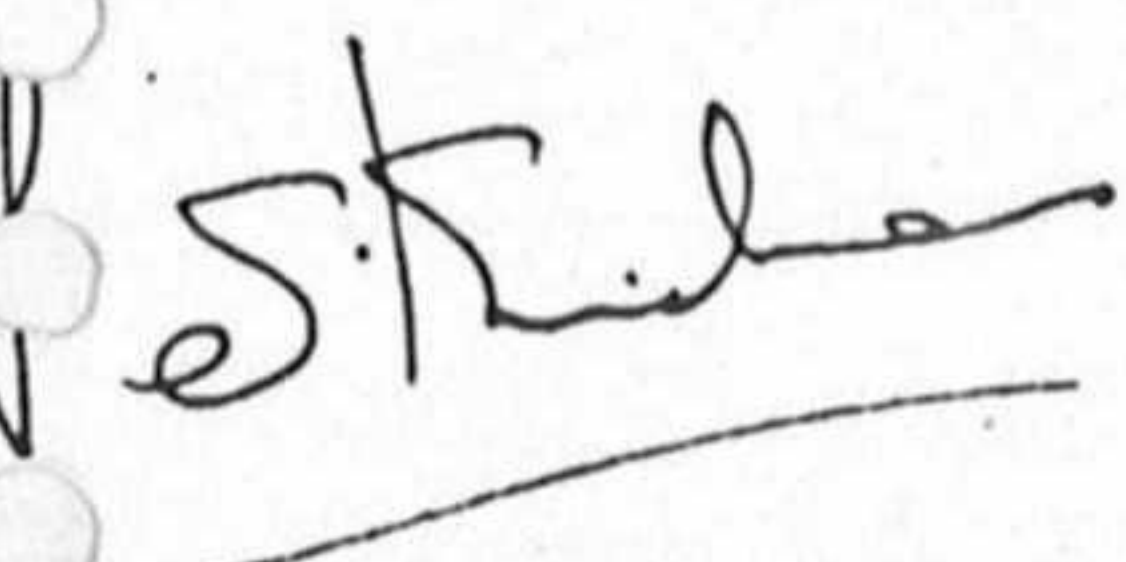
6. The Mandal Commission's list does not include this

community.

7. According to the data furnished by the State Government in the Questionnaire communicated by the NCBC, the main occupation of the community is manual labour in agriculture rendered for wage and on own land. The other occupations of the community are mentioned to be personal services including palanquin bearing and fishing. In this community, women as a general practice are, for livelihood engaged in agricultural labour for wage and in addition also in personal service including palanquin-bearing and fishing. The children of the community also as a general practice, are, for their family's livelihood or for supplementing their family's low income, engaged in the personal service of sweeping. 97 per cent of the population of the community, taking men, women and children together, are landless manual labourers, both agricultural as well as non-agricultural. 56 per cent of the adult members of the community are engaged in agricultural labour for wage and 9% on other manual labour for wage like sweeping etc. and 15% are engaged in the cultivation of their own land. The rest i.e. 20% are engaged in other occupations including small shops. 97% of the families live in Kucha houses.

8. The members of the two organisations of the community who were present said that their ancestors migrated from Bihar to Bengal long back, and in Bengal itself they are cent percent sweepers. They denied that they are doing agricultural labour in the villages of Bengal. They said that in this State their position is similar to that of Scheduled Castes engaged in sweeping and scavenging and they have represented to the Government to include them in the list of SCs for West Bengal. However, until such time as they are included in the SC list, they requested to be included

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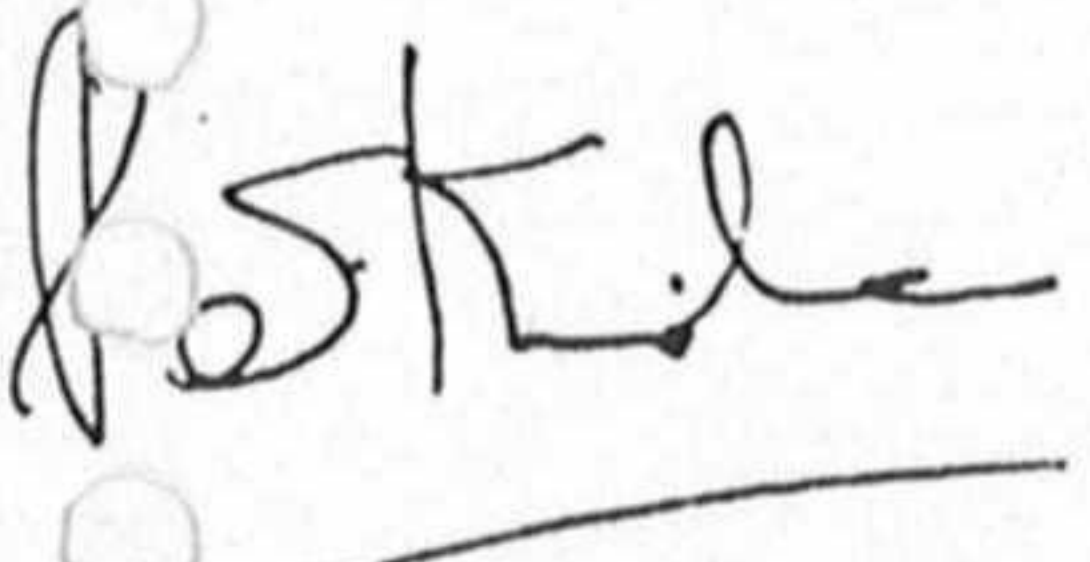
Member Secretary
National Commission

in the list of Backward Classes for West Bengal.

9. H.H. Risley, in his ethnographic glossary entitled "Tribes and Castes of Bengal" published by Firma Mukhopadhyay, 1st Edition 1891, Reprint: Calcutta 1981 (Vol. I, PP. 220-222) under the Head "Dhanuk" describes it as "a cultivating caste of Behar, many of whom are employed as personal servants in the households of members of the higher castes." He cites Buchanan's view that all the Dhanuks at one time were probably slaves, and many had been purchased to fill up the military ranks. Risley records that even at the time of Buchanan's writing, a great number of Dhanuks were still slaves, but some annually procured their liberty, facilitated by certain circumstances. He also records their chief occupation to be "personal service including palanquin bearing and agriculture". In the latter field, "most of them are occupancy or non-occupancy raiyats, and the poorer members of the caste earn their living as agricultural day-labourers."

10. Dhanuk has also been described similarly by Crooke in the Tribes and Castes of the North Western Province and Oudh, (Calcutta 1896 reprinted as the Tribes and Castes of the North Western India, Cosmo Publications 1974 Vol. II, pp. 271-276). Their occupational profile in Uttar Pradesh, which is the territory covered by Crooke, brings them out to be a community rendering agricultural as well as all sorts of general labour. According to Crooke, they act as servants; day-labourers, village watchmen and their women do midwifery. Some hold land as tenants and work as field labourers. Crooke also lists out Dhanuk and their sub-castes on the basis of the Census of 1891. In the Punjab, "Dhanuk" is among the various communities which make up scavenger castes (Denzil Ibbetson in his Panjab Castes, Part-VI, pp. 290-296,

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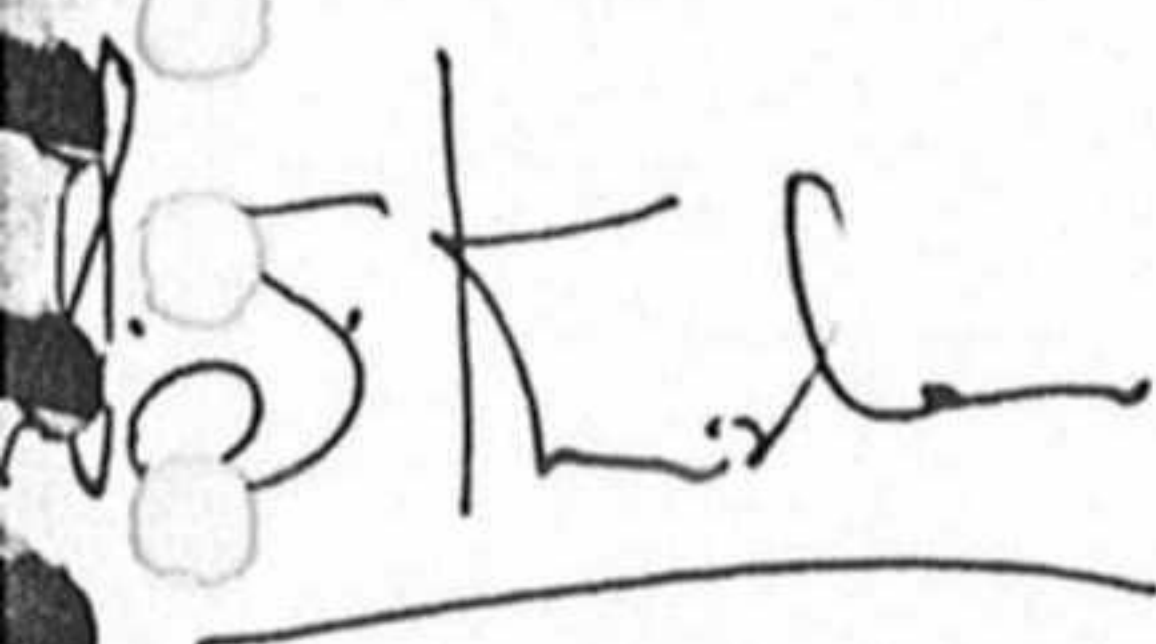


first published-1916, reproduced,1993 DK Publishers). He includes the Dhanak in the category of Vagrant, Menial and Artisan Castes. He identifies them as 'essentially a caste of Hindustan and not of the Panjab proper'. He cites Sir H.Elliott to say that they are most numerous in Bihar, and that they are fowlers, archers and watchmen, besides performing other menial service. They do 'general scavengering' and also do weaving in the villages. They are included in the Scheduled Castes' list in Punjab. In the case of Madhya Pradesh also, R.V.Russell & Hira Lal in the 'Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India' (first published 1961, reprinted 1993, Asian Educational Services), attested to the existence of this community in a small number in that province, now Madhya Pradesh (Vol.II, pp.484-487). The description of the community is similar to Crooke's in the case of Uttar Pradesh and in fact Russell and Hira Lal mention that the headquarters of the caste found in Madhya Pradesh is in the United Provinces.

FINDINGS OF THE BENCH

11. This community is essentially north Indian, with its concentration in Bihar, extending also into Delhi, Haryana and Punjab on the west and West Bengal on the east and Madhya Pradesh towards the south. They are essentially a community of labourers, rendering labour and services of various types including agricultural labour and sweeping. In Punjab, Dhanak finds place in the list of Scheduled Castes. In Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi, they are included in the respective lists of Scheduled Castes, as 'Dhanak' or 'Dhanuk' - in Punjab 'Dhanak'; in UP and Madhya Pradesh 'Dhanuk'; and "Dhanak or Dhanuk" in Delhi. Their occupational pattern falls within the ambit of para-7 of the Procedural Clarifications on Guidelines and covered by "A, Social, Item No. 2(e) & (f)".

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12. The finding of the Bench is that "Dhanuk" is a socially backward caste in West Bengal and undoubtedly qualifies to be included in the Central List of Backward Classes just as it is rightly included in the State List of Backward Classes. It should, therefore, be included in the Central List of Backward Classes for the State of West Bengal.

[Signature]

P. S. Kishan

Advice of the Commission

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

"Dhanuk" be included in the Central List of Backward Classes for West Bengal.

[Signature]

P. S. Kishan

[Signature]
(D. L. Saha)

[Signature]
(DR. R. PRASANNAN)

[Signature]
10.11.95
Justice R. N. Prasad
Chairman
National Commission for
Backward Classes
New Delhi.

AUTHENTICATED

P. S. Kishan