

NCBC Advice No. A.P. 58/2002

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR BACKWARD CLASSES
ANDHRA PRADESH BENCH
FINDINGS

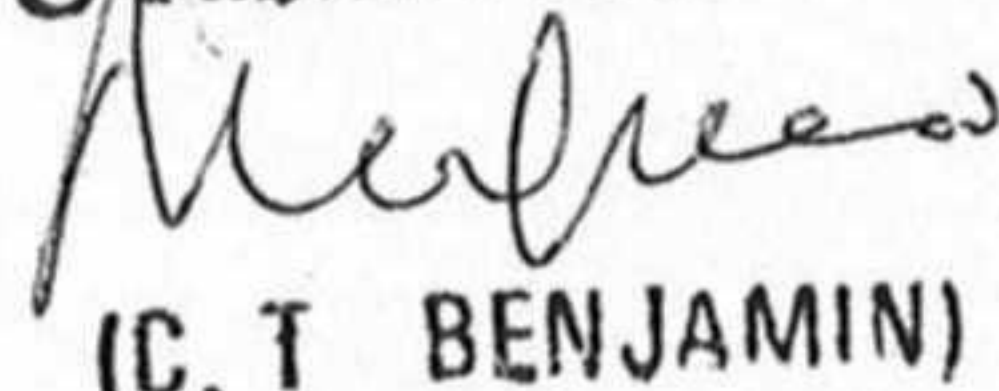
Case: Request for inclusion of "Varala, Thogra Baliya, Bholla" in the Central list of backward classes for Andhra Pradesh.

I. Request

This case arises from a request made to the Commission by Shri K.R. Dasharatha Rao, on behalf of Andhra Pradesh Varala, Thogra, Bholla, Baliya Sangham (H.No. 3-4-60/1, Rajendra Nagar, Ramanthapur, Hyderabad – 500013). In the letter of request dated 8-9-94 Shri K.R. Dasharatha Rao had requested to include **Varala, Thogara** (also spelt in the request as Togara), **Bholla** (also spelt in the request as Bolla) and **Baliya** (also spelt in the request as Balijala) in the Central list of backward classes for Andhra Pradesh. However, during a public hearing held by the Commission on 06.02.2002 at Hyderabad, the representatives of the same organisation pleaded to include "**Varala, Bholla and Thogra Baliya**". It is also seen from the letter-head in which they have made a written representation during the public hearing that they have also changed the name of the organisation from the earlier one mentioned above to "Andhra Pradesh Varala, Thogra Baliya, Bholla Sangham". In view of this their request is taken as a request to include "Varala, Bholla and Thogra Baliya" in the Central list of backward classes for Andhra Pradesh.

2. In the letter of request dated 8-9-1994, they have stated that their community is like "Munnor Kapu, Pathia Baliya and Baliya families". The community originated from Baratru Hari, who was the younger brother of Vikramaditya, the emperor of the Gupta dynasty. It is also stated that the community representatives and the All India Backward Classes Federation had in the past made several representations to the State Government to include the community in the list of backward classes and earlier the Kaka Kalelkar

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Commission appointed by the Government of India had in fact recommended the inclusion of the community in the list of backward classes, but, unfortunately, it has not been done till now. No further details have been given by the Sangham in the letter of request. They also did not furnish any data/information in the Commission's questionnaire, though they were asked to do so by the office of the Commission, until the time of the public hearing held by the Commission on 06-02-2002. They have stated in the questionnaire which was given at the time of the public hearing that the main occupations of the community are "agriculture, agricultural labour and other daily labour". It is stated that "most of the members of the caste are labourers" and others include "fruit and vegetable sellers", "rickshaw pullers" and those who run "panshops". It is also stated that only 20% of the members of the community are literate.

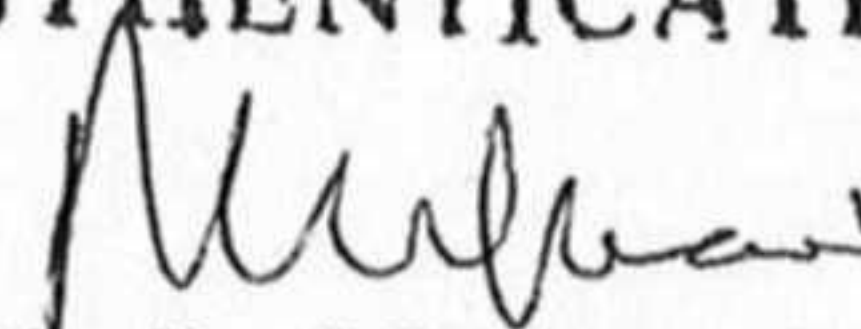
II. Facts

3. The caste/community under consideration is included in the list of backward classes recommended by the Mandal Commission at entry no. 279 as "Varala, Thogra, Bholla, Baliga". But, it was not included in the Andhra Pradesh State Government's list of backward classes at the time of the preparation of the first-phase Central list in 1993 on the basis of the principle of commonality and therefore, it was also not included in the Central list of backward classes prepared in 1993. The request for their inclusion in the State list is pending with the AP State Commission for Backward Classes.

II. Public Hearings

4. The Commission under our predecessor Members could not complete the enquiry in respect of this request as no representatives of this community appeared during the public hearing held by the then full bench of the Commission on 18-12-1999 at Hyderabad to examine the request. That public hearing was also marred by disturbances caused by noisy arguments and counter-arguments between the large number of supporters and objectors to the inclusion of certain castes/communities in the list of backward classes. Therefore, the then Commission could not tender any advice to the Government on this request before the 3-year term of the then Members of the

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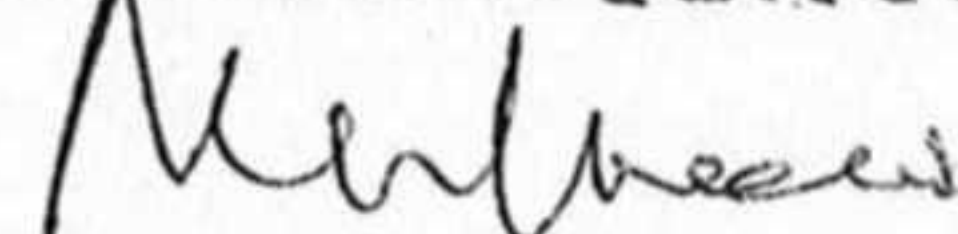
Commission came to an end at different dates between February to April, 2000. In view of this, the present Commission took up the enquiry in respect of this caste/community afresh and a public hearing was held by a bench of the Commission, consisting of Justice B.L. Yadav, Chairperson, Shri C.T.Benjamin, Member-Secretary, Shri M.S. Matharoo and Dr. B.M. Das, Members, on 06-02-2002 at Hyderabad. Smt. Neera Shastri, who is also member of the AP bench of the Commission, could not attend the public hearing.

5. At the public hearing, the Andhra Pradesh Varala, Thogra Baliya, Bholla Sangham was represented by Shri K. Ramulu, Shri Pavusetty Vaikuntam and others. The State Government was represented at the public hearing by Shri P. Sundar Kumar, Commissioner for Backward Classes Welfare and other officers in the office of the Commissioner for Backward Classes Welfare.

6. At the public hearing, Shri K. Ramulu stated that the community is very old and backward. It has got a very low literacy rate and it is also economically very backward. Cultivation, agricultural labour and petty business are the main occupations of the community. The community is called **Varala** in Telengana area and **Thogara Baliya** in the coastal districts. In the Rayalaseema districts the community is called **Bolla**. These different names are due to different occupations of the community in different districts, but the tradition, culture, marriage ceremonies etc. of all the three sections are one and the same. The community lives in small remote villages and because of this and due to its economic backwardness, they are unable to send their children for education. Nowadays, since agriculture is not economically viable, many of them have migrated to cities and there they are engaged as manual labour, auto drivers, rickshaw pullers, etc.

7. Shri Pavusetty Vaikuntam explained the origins of the names Varala, Thogra and Bolla as follows:- About 100 years back as there were no schools in the Telengana areas inhabited by the community, they had to go to towns for education. Because they did not have enough money for education, those who wanted to study used to beg for money. Each person used to stay with a wealthy person for whom he will do manual work for a week (*varam*), and then with another wealthy person for another *varam*. Hence the name Varala. 'Thogara' is the name of a tree. Our community people in the

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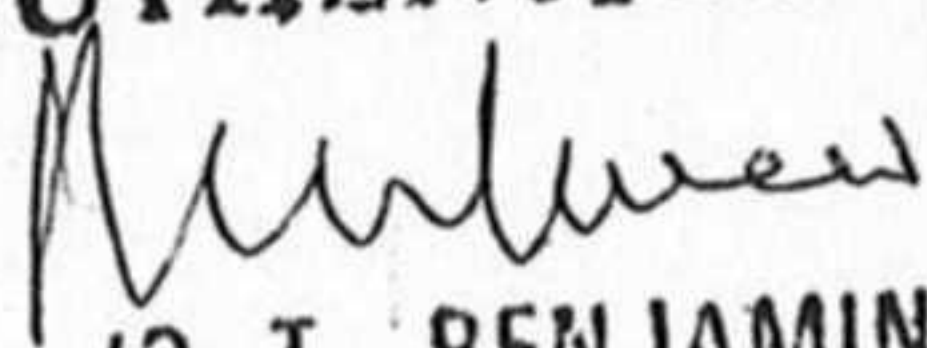
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coastal districts used to make a colour out of the leaves of this tree for colouring threads and clothes and sell them. Therefore, they were called as Thogara Baliyas. Bolla means vessel and, therefore, our community people who used to make vessels and sell them, by carrying them on their heads, were called as Bollas. In spite of these different names and different occupations, all the three sections are one and the same community because they all follow the 72 'vams names' and 24 'gotras'. He also said that the community is socially and economically backward as they live in villages and do mazdoori. In the olden day, the community members were not invited to marriages by other community people. They were called only for doing labour. If at all they were called by others to their marriages, they were served food in leaf-plates outside the house. He further stated that the community is socially and economically very backward. The community does not have food to eat, no clothes to wear and no house to live in. He cited one instance of his going to one of his relatives, where his *babi* was reluctant to appear before him because she had no *sari* to wear and the sari she was wearing was badly torn.

8. At the public hearing, there were differences of opinion among those who were present representing different other castes/communities and their organisations on the issue of the eligibility of the community for inclusion in the list of backward classes. While Shri R. Krishnaiah, President, AP Backward Classes Welfare Association and some others from that Association and Shri A.L. Mallaiah, Vice-President, Andhra Pradesh Backward Classes Sangham supported the claim of the representatives of the community for inclusion in the list of backward classes, Shri Kondala Rao, Vice-President, BC Affairs, Gowda Officials and Professionals Association, opposed the inclusion of Varala, Thogra Baliya and Bholla. Shri Kondala Rao quoting from the report of the Muralidhara Rao Commission stated that the community is not socially and educationally backward. He also said that the community people were aware of the value of education even hundred years back as was evident from what Shri Pavusetty Vaikuntam said about the origin of the name 'Varala', and, therefore, they were socially enlightened.

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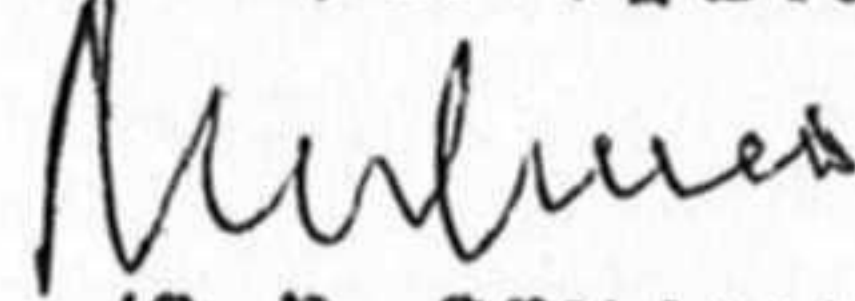
IV. Position in different Backward Classes Commission reports of Andhra Pradesh

9. The Anantharaman Commission (1968-70), based on whose recommendations the existing State list of backward classes was originally notified in 1970, did not recommend the inclusion of "Varala" or "Thogara Baliya" or "Bholla" in the State list of backward classes. The Commission's report does not contain any discussion about this community. Perhaps, the community at that time did not approach the Commission for inclusion in the State List.

10. The community approached the Muralidhara Rao Commission, which was appointed by the State Government in 1982 to review, among other things, the recommendations of the Anantharaman Commission and the implementation thereof. The Commission, however, found the community socially and educationally not backward and, therefore, rejected their request for inclusion in the list of backward classes. The Commission in its report has made the following observations on this community:-

"The people of this Community are residing mostly in Warangal, Karimnagar and Mahboobnagar districts. They are also spread over in East and West Godavari, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam and Krishna districts. Their main profession is agriculture and petty business. In Telengana area, they are known as 'Varala Vallu' and in Andhra area, they are known as 'Thogara Baliya'. Even though they live in villages, they do not suffer from stigma of social backwardness nor are they educationally backward. For recognizing a class of people as backward, a community should suffer from the twin disabilities of social and educational backwardness. Varala and Thogara Baliyas being socially forward, they cannot be included in the list of BCs."

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V. References in ethnographic accounts

11. This community is described in Anthropological Survey of India's 'People of India' national series volume titled "India's Communities" under the head "Bolla", as follows:-

"Bolla" Also referred to as Toraga Balija, Kapu or Telaga, the Bolla are distributed through Andhra Pradesh. Some of them use Naidu as their title. They recognise Varna system and consider themselves as Sudra. Widowers and divorcees can remarry. Women play a role in agricultural operations, animal husbandry, collection of fuel, fishing, etc. as well as in social functions, rituals and religious matters.

The Bolla are mainly cultivators and businessmen. Formerly, they were soldiers in the army of the Hindu ruler of Telangana. They have small landholdings. The majority are landless labourers. ... Their sacred specialists are from the Brahmin community. The Bolla accept food and water from the Brahman, Raju, Reddi and Kapu communities; the Mala and Madiga accept water and food from them. There are scholars, artists, clerks, teachers, administrators, etc. in the community. The Bolla are enthusiastic about formal education for both boys and girls. They make full use of modern medicine and have a positive attitude towards family planning. They have benefited from the various employment programmes."

VI. Findings

12. From the evidence available before the bench, it appears that the community under consideration has never suffered from social backwardness arising from association with lowly or stigmatized occupations as it is considered to be a community of cultivators. Presently, apart from cultivation, many of its members are also businessmen as is attested to in the report of the Muralidhara Rao Commission as well as in the

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ethnographic accounts referred to above. Their supposed residence in the remote rural areas and the resultant economic backwardness of certain sections of the community cannot be a criterion to decide the social backwardness of the whole community. There are various poverty alleviation and rural development programmes implemented by the Central and State Governments from which such sections can benefit, and as mentioned in the Anthropological Survey of India's volume quoted above, they in fact are taking benefit of various employment programmes. Besides, the same volume also attests to the fact that there are scholars, artists, clerks, teachers, administrators, etc. in the community. In view of these facts, the bench is of the view that the community known by the names "Varala, Thogara Baliya, Bholla" does not constitute a socially backward class and, therefore, the request for their inclusion in the Central list of backward classes for Andhra Pradesh should be rejected.

Member
18/4/02

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26-4-02

P.S: The bench met on 14-03-2002 and unanimously took the decision to reject the request for inclusion of "Varala, Thogara Baliya, Bholla" caste/community in the Central list of backward classes for Andhra Pradesh. However, on account of the unfortunate demise of Chairperson Justice B.L. Yadav on 24-03-2002 the findings of the bench do not bear the signature of the Chairperson.

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VII. Advice of the Commission

13. Based on the above findings, the Commission tenders the following advice to the Central Government under Section 9(1) of the NCBC Act, 1999, for necessary action by the Central Government under Section 9(2) of the Act:-

The request for inclusion of "Varala, Thogara Baliya, Bholla" caste/community for inclusion in the Central list of backward classes for Andhra Pradesh be rejected as it is not a socially backward class.

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