

NCBC Advice No. A.P. 63/2002

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR BACKWARD CLASSES

ANDHRA PRADESH BENCH

FINDINGS

Case: Request for inclusion of "Patra" caste/community in the Central list of backward classes for Andhra Pradesh.

I. Request

This case arises from the request made to the Commission by Andhra Pradesh Patra Samkshema Sangham, Kadiri, Anantapur district, Andhra Pradesh, vide its memorandum dated 7/8-12-1999, for inclusion of Patra caste/community in the Central list of backward classes for Andhra Pradesh. A similar request has also been made by Patra Sanchama Sangam, Ammavarisala Street, Pulivendla, Cuddapah district, Andhra Pradesh, at the time of a public hearing held by a bench of the Commission on 06-02-2002 at Hyderabad.

2. In its memorandum, the Andhra Pradesh Patra Samkshema Sangham has stated that the people of the Patra caste came to Andhra Pradesh from Orissa and settled mainly in the hilly areas stretching from Srikakulam to Chittoor districts. The total population of the community in Andhra Pradesh does not exceed 4 lakhs. Weaving was the occupation of the caste in Orissa. The same occupation is continued by about 5000 people in Itchapuram mandal of Srikakulam district. But in other districts, they are earning their livelihood by different occupations such as farm-labour, hunting, selling forest produce, milk, curd etc. Those who are engaged in cultivation own dry land, not exceeding a hectare (2.5 acres). The caste is completely cut off from the civilized life. Due to lack of social awareness the caste people do not get themselves educated. Their literacy rate is very low. The number of graduates or government employees among the community can

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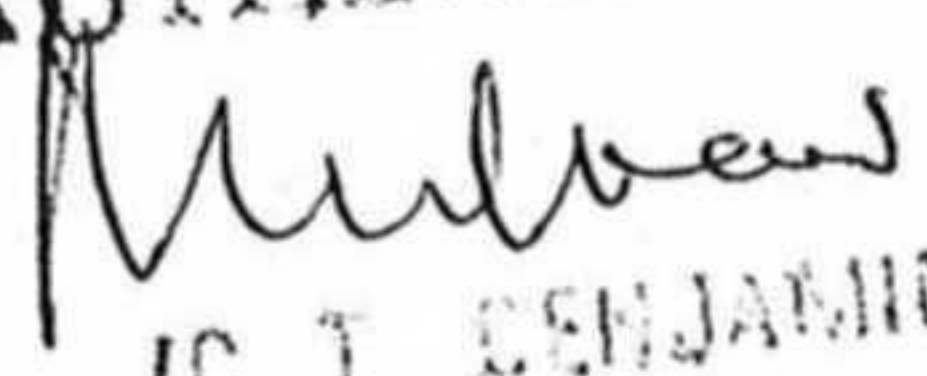
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be counted on one's fingers. The female literacy is insignificant. The majority of the caste people live below the poverty line. Added to their poor economic conditions, they have rigid social customs and conventions. They frown upon widow marriages and majority marriages are child marriages. They are addicted to bad habits such as preparing and drinking alcohol.

3. The Sangham has also stated in their memorandum that their community was included in the State Government's list upto 1968, but after the report of the Anantharaman Commission, appointed by the State Government in 1968, "the caste was deleted from the list without verifying the facts or without any notice or intimation". The caste people also "failed to represent the case before the (Anantharaman) Commission due to the reason that the caste was out of mainstream of life and away from civilized society." However, the Muralidhara Rao Commission of 1982 tried to do justice to the community by recommending its inclusion in the State list. The State Government also included the caste by a Government Order of 1986, but this Government Order was set aside by a court of law as a result of the agitation against the Order. In this connection, the Sangham has submitted that "the agitation was against the enhancement of reservation quota but not against the inclusion of any caste into the list". It is also stated in the questionnaire that the community was earlier categorized as "Denotified Criminals" vide G.O. Ms. No. 1644 dated 11.6.63.

4. In the NCBC's Questionnaire, filled up by the A.P. Patra Samkshema Sangham, the occupation on which the members of the community mainly depend for their livelihood is given as "mainly on agricultural labour, selling of forest wealth and selling of milk and its products." The other occupations on which substantial number of members of the caste/community depend for their livelihood are given as "cattle breeding, sheep grazing, forest wealth selling, selling of milk and curd and selling of firewood." The women and children of the community are, as a general practice, engaged in agricultural and other manual labour.

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5. The Patra Sanchama Sangham in their letter of request has stated that in some places the Patra people are also called as "Patra Golla" as in these places they co-reside with the "Yadava (Golla)" caste/community, which is already included in the State and Central list of backward classes for Andhra Pradesh. Other grounds mentioned by the Patra Sanchama Sangham, Cuddapah district, in support of their claim for inclusion of the Patra community in list of backward class are more or less similar to those made by the AP Patra Samkshema Sangham.

II. Facts

6. The 'Patra' caste/community was included in the list of backward classes for Andhra Pradesh recommended by the Mandal Commission. But, since it was not included in the State list of Andhra Pradesh, it was also not included in the Central list of backward classes prepared in 1993 on the basis of the principle of "commonality" (i.e., by including castes/communities in the Central list which were commonly found included in the both Mandal Commission's list and the State list).

III. Public Hearing

7. 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, held a public hearing to examine this request on 06-02-2002 at Hyderabad. Smt. Neera Shastri who is also a member of the AP bench of the Commission could not attend the public hearing. At the public hearing, the A.P. Patra Samkshema Sangham was represented by Shri Dr. A. Sree Ramulu, President, Shri A. Krishnamurthy, Shri T. Aravinda Babu, Shri P. Reddeppa, Shri B. Venkatanarayan and others. The Patra Sanchama Sangam was represented by Shri K. Kullayappa, President, Shri G. Narasimhalu, Vice-President and others. The State Government was represented by Shri P. Sundar Kumar, Commissioner for Backward Classes Welfare and other officers in the office of the Commissioner for Backward Classes Welfare.

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8. At the public hearing, the representatives of the community reiterated that Patra is a socially, educationally and economically backward caste/community and therefore it should be included in the Central list of backward classes for Andhra Pradesh. They said that they are originally migrants from Orissa and mainly live in hilly tracts. Though weaving was their original occupation in Orissa, at present they have not adopted any particular occupation and are doing different occupations such as farm labour, hunting, selling of forest produce, milk and curd, etc. They also reiterated other points mentioned in their written representations quoted in paras 2 to 5 above. They further stated that the community is already included in the list of backward classes in Orissa and Karnataka, and that their request for inclusion in the AP State list is pending before the State Backward Classes Commission.

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

9. After the formation of the present Andhra Pradesh State in 1956, the State Government appointed a Backward Classes Commission in 1968 to, among other things, identify the backward classes in the State. This Commission, popularly known as the Anantharaman Commission, gave its report to the State Government in 1970, based on which the State Government notified a list of backward classes in 1970. Patra caste/community was not included in the list recommended by this Commission and therefore it was not included in the State list notified in 1970, which is still being continued with some modifications. The report of the Anantharaman Commission does not contain any discussion about "Patra" caste/community. The reason for this may be because the community did not approach that Commission to get themselves included in the State list.

10. The State Government appointed another Commission, viz., Muralidhara Rao Commission in 1982 to, among other things, review the existing State list of backward classes. This Commission recommended the inclusion of "Patra" in the State List. The Commission in its report made the following observations about the caste/community:-

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"Patra community is mostly resident in Cuddapah and other Rayalaseema districts. Their main profession is collection and sale of forest produce. They are away from modern civilization and are not yet assimilated into the civilized society. They are almost on par with Boyas in social status. Most of them are illiterate. They are economically poor and socially and educationally very backward. The population of this community is very limited (about 1 lakh). The Commission after enquiry found that there are valid reasons for inclusion of Patra caste in the list of Backward Classes."

The Commission in fact recommended inclusion of 9 new castes/communities, including "Patra" in the existing State list. One of the recommendations of the Commission was to raise the quantum of reservation from the then existing 25% to 40%. The State Govt. vide GO Ms No. 166, S.W.(P) Department, dated 15th July, 1986 included in the State list all the new 9 communities recommended by the Muralidhara Rao Commission, including "Patra", and also raised the reservation for backward classes from the then existing 25% to 40%. The GO was challenged in the High Court and the High Court struck down the clauses 13, 14, 15 of the GO relating to the raising of reservation from 25% to 40%. **The High Court did not strike down Clause 5 of the GO relating to the inclusion of 9 new communities including "Patra" recommended by the Commission.** The State Government however discontinued the entire GO and restored the status quo ante in all respects.

11. Patra caste/community is included in the State and Central lists of backward classes in the neighbouring States of Orissa and Karnataka. The relevant Central list entries are as follows:-

Orissa

"177. Patara/Patra,
Goudia Patra"

Karnataka

"130. Patra"

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V. References in ethnographic accounts and other literature

12. Thurston and Rangachari in "Castes and Tribes of Southern India" give an account of Patra community as follows:-

"**Patra.**— The Patras are an Oriya caste, which is divided into two sects, one of which is engaged in the manufacture of silk (pata), waist-threads, tassels, etc., and the other in weaving silk clothes. The members of the two sections do not interdine. ...

..... The Telugu Patras are summed up, in the Madras Census Report, 1901, as 'a Telugu caste of hunters and cultivators, found chiefly in the districts of Cuddapah and Kurnool. It has two divisions, the Doras (chiefs), and Gurikalas (marksmen), the former of which is supposed to be descended from the old Poligars (feudal chiefs), and the latter from their followers and servants. Widows may not remarry, nor is divorce recognised. They usually employ Brahmans at marriages, and Satanis at funerals. Their title is Naidu."

13. The Anthropological Survey of India's 'People of India' national series volume titled "India's Communities" writes about "Patra" of Andhra Pradesh, as follows:—

"In Andhra Pradesh, the **Patra** is composed of two main divisions — **Patsalia** who are involved only in silk-weaving, and **Patratanti** who make silk-waist threads, tassels, towels, lungis and sarees. Intercommunity marriages and interdining do not take place between these two divisions. The Patsalia claim a status higher than the Patratantis. ...

The main occupation of the Patra community is silk-weaving. They are dependent on cotton and silk yarn for making saris. ... The women are employed in making thread and rolling the chakra (wheel). Some of them depend on subsidiary occupations like petty trade, agricultural labour, and some are employed in government or private service. A few are employed as annual agricultural labourers. ... They claim that some of their community members participated in political movements during India's struggle for freedom. Formal education is favoured for boys but only partially for

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girls. They use both modern and traditional medicare and adopt modern methods of family planning."

VI. Findings

14. From the facts and evidence available, it is seen that originally the "Patra" is an Oriya caste/community of weavers. The claim of the request-makers that after their migration to Andhra Pradesh, most of their members appear have taken up other manual occupations such as agricultural labour, collection and selling of forest produce, etc., has support from Thurston and Rangachari's account when they write that the Telugu Patras are hunters and cultivators, found chiefly in the districts of Cuddapah and Kurnool. Generally, castes/communities who are traditionally associated with the occupation of weaving are included in the list of backward classes. Patra caste/community has also been included in the State and Central list of backward classes in Orissa and Karnataka. On the basis of evidence available, the bench finds the Patra caste/community of Andhra Pradesh to be a socially and educationally backward community. It is the considered view of the bench that "Patra" should be included in the Central list of backward classes for Andhra Pradesh at a new entry No. 105, as follows:-

"105. Patra"

[Signatures and dates]

18/4/02

19/4/02

26-4-02

23/04/2002

P.S: The bench met on 14-03-2002 and unanimously took the decision in favour of inclusion of "Patra" 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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(C. J. L. J. J. J.)

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VII. Advice of the Commission

15. 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:-

"Patra" caste/community be included in the Central list of backward classes for Andhra Pradesh at a new entry no. 105, as follows:-

"105. Patra"

Manohar
2/7/02

(Don)
3/7/02

Shree
3/7/02

Dr. J. K. Rao

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