

National Commission for Backward Classes

Orissa Bench

Findings

Case: Request for inclusion of the caste/community "**Chattada Srivaishnab**" in the Central List of Other Backward Classes for the State of Orissa.

I. Request

The case arises from the request received in this Commission from State Government of Orissa for inclusion Chattada Srivaishnab Caste in the Central List of Backward Classes for Orissa.

II. Public Hearing

The Bench of the Commission consisting of Hon'ble Chairman Justice S. Ratnavel Pandian, Hon'ble Member Dr. Subbha Somu and Member Secretary Shri S.K. Purkayastha held a public hearing on 17.04.2007 at Bhubaneshwar to examine the request for inclusion of Chattada Srivaishnab caste in the Central List of Backward Classes for Orissa.

The State Government was represented by Shri Taradatt, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, ST & SC Development Department, Shri Jyoti Prakash Das, and Director & Addt. Secretary OBC, Govt; of Orissa, Shri H. Behera, Member-Secretary, Orissa Backward Classes Commission, Shri G.N.Sethi, Deputy Secretary, ST/SC Development Department and other officials.

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III. Facts

The relevant entries in different lists relating to Chattada Srivaishnab are as below: -

Mandal List

Nil

State List

206. Chattada Srivaishnab

Central List

Nil

IV. Submission at the Public hearing.

Shri K. Laxmi Narayan (IPP), Berhampur, Ganjam submitted before the Bench that their caste Chattada Sri Vaishnav Desiri is residing in South Orissa, i.e., Ganjam, Gajapati and undivided Koraput districts. The number of population is around 10,000 in Orissa.

He further submitted that their forefathers sang devotional songs and took to begging for their livelihood. At present people are in some petty occupations, i.e. tailoring, making garlands and selling sindur etc. Graduate are negligible in their community. Government service holders are very few. He also stated that their caste is included as OBC in the neighbouring States of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. They are approaching the Bench for inclusion of their caste Chattada Sri Vaishnava/Chatada Vaishnav/Daseri as OBC in the Central list of OBCs for Orissa.

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V. During the public hearing the Orissa Backward Classes Commission furnished the following information:

- The traditional occupation of the caste / community is to supply flowers to temples and to sell vermilion, kumkum, garlands, etc. The literacy level is low which can be seen from the fact that only 15% of matriculates, 10% inter-mediate passed and 5% graduates.
- Employment in State Government offices mainly in Class-IV (20%) and in non-gazetted class 5%.
- 50% of the workforce works as casual labour, whilst 39% are unemployed. Only 2% of them are farmers owning land. Agriculture workers and industrial workers constitute mere 2% and 3% respectively of the workforce.
- Participation in politics is nil.
- The average annual income of a family is around Rs.12, 000/-.
- The people of the community live in small thatched house.

VI. The Commission's Bench took note of the following ethnographic accounts in respect of the caste/community "**Chattada Srivaishnab**".

People of India : Andhra Pradesh, Vol.X111, part-1 by K.S.Singh, Page 430-436 .

Chattada Srivaishnab. The Sathani call themselves Chattada Srivaishnab. The other community people refer to them satani, chatani, sathani, ayyawar, vira-vaishanave, viaghose and vishanu archakas. The ward sathni is a corrupt form of sattadavan which literally means one

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who does not Wear the sacred thread and tuft hair . These people are Vaishnavas, some of whom are engaged as temple servants while other administer to the spiritual needs of the lower Telegu classes. For temple services Ramanuja classed Vaishnavites into Sattinavan and Sattadavan. The former are invariably Brahman and the latter Sudras. Hence sattani is the professional name given to a group of people of the Vaishnavas creed. The sattani mendicants can be recognized by the peculiar flat gourd shaped brass pot and palm leaf, which he carries. Their women dress just like the vaishnavas Brahman women. However, they are prohibited from wearing glass bangles on their wrists, strings of black beads around their necks or rings of bell metal on their toes. The sathani men shave their head completely and tie their lower clothes like a brahman bachelor.

The Sathani believe that they have migrated from the south of Madras presidency, while some of them have reported that Sri Ramanuja first created this community by giving initiation to non-Brahman castes during the 11th Century A.D. At present, they are said to be distributed in all the districts of Andhra Pradesh, and also in Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Orissa

The Chattada Srivaishnab (Sathani) speak Telegu, the native language of the region, but at home they speak the corrupt form of old Tamil. In the Telangana region they also speak the Dakhani urdu. They are also conversant in Tamil, Kannada, and Oriya languages.

Originally, the Sathani Vaishnava were pure vegetarian. At present, most of them are non-vegetarian but avoid beef. Their staple food is rice, but they occasionally consume cereal, and millets. All varieties of pulses, vegetables and fruits are taken. They consume milk and milk products. Though the consumption of liquor and animal foods

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is strictly prohibited they include both as part of the feast on all festive occasions.

The principle occupations of the Sathani Vaishnava are making garlands, carrying torches during religious processions and sweeping the temple floor. Manufacturing of umbrellas, flower baskets and boxes of palmyra leaves and preparing the sacred balls of white clay and saffron powder supplement these. Some are employed in agriculture, some act as ministers to the spiritual needs of the Telegu lower classes and officiate as priests at their social, religious and funeral ceremonies. Most of the sathani Vaishnava are beggars and collect alms by singing songs in honour of Lord Vishnu. Some of them have entered Government services and are members of the learned professions. Some of them have taken up occupations like astrology, tailoring, artistry and sculpture. Nowadays, the people are literate and are holding varied jobs. They are gradually forgetting the old customs and hesitate to wear the namams.

The Sathani Vaishnava has to officiate in many social and funeral ceremonies of the other communities. They traditionally accept cooked food and water from the higher communities but do not accept from the lowewer castes like the Mala, Madiga, Paidi and Yanadi. They do accept liquor, raw fruits and some cash for their services. On the whole, the intercommunal relations are cordial and harmonious. They also officiate as pujari in some of the Vishnu temples of the lower castes and perform the marriager functions etc; in the absence of a Brahman purohit. Now a days, the Sathani are called to attend only the death rites of certain lower castes.

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Castes And Tribes of Southern India, Vol. 1V, by E. Thurston & K. Rangachari (Page 297-304)

Satani. The Satanis are described in the Madras Census Report, 1891, as "a class of temple servants very much like the malis of Bengal. The word Satani is a corrupt form of sattadavan, which literally means one who does not wear (the sacred thread and tuft of hair). For temple services Ramanuja classed Vaishnavites into Sattinavan and Sattadavan. The former are invariably Brahmans, and the latter Sudras. Hence Satani is the professional name given to a group the Vaishnava creed. In their ceremonies they more or less follow the Brahamans, but they do not wear the sacred thread. Though the consumption of alcoholic liquor and animal food is strictly prohibited, they practice both to a considerable extent on all festive occasions, and at sradhs. Drinking and other excesses are common. Some Satanis bury the dead, and others burn them. The principal occupations of Satanis are making garlands, carrying the torches during the god's procession, and sweeping the temple floor. They also make umbrellas, flower baskets and boxes of palmyra leaves, and prepare the sacred balls of white clay (for making the Vaishnavite sectarian mark, and saffron powder.

In the Census Report, 1871, the Satanis are described as being "frequently religious mendicants, priests of inferior temples, minstrels, sellers of flowers used as offerings, etc., and have probably recruited their numbers by the admission into their ranks of individuals who have been excommunicated from higher castes. As a matter of fact, many prostitutes join this sect, which has a recognized position among the Hindus. This can easily be done by the payment of certain fees, and by eating in company with their co-religionists. And they thus secure for themselves decent burial with the ceremonial observances necessary to ensure rest to the soul."

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The Satanis are also called Dasa Nambis. They are flesh-eaters, but some have now become pure vegetarians. In addition to other occupations already noted, Satanis sell turmeric, coloured powders, and sacred balls of white clay used by Vaishnavites. Some act as priests to Balijas and Komatis, at whose death ceremonies the presence of a Satani is essential. The Satani learns by heart various songs in eulogy of Srirangam and its deity, by means of which he earns his living. When begging, they sing the songs referred to above, and collect the rice, which is given to them in their vessels. At the end of their round they return home, and their wives clean the rice, bow down before it, and cook it.

VII. Findings

From the evidence and documents presented at the time of the Public Hearing and also on perusal of ethnographic literature by eminent authors and other available information, it is the finding of the Bench that the Satanis are a class of temple servants very much like the malis of Bengal. The principle occupations of the Sathani Vaishnava are making garlands, carrying torches during religious processions and sweeping the temple floor. These are supplemented by manufacturing of umbrellas, flower baskets and boxes of palmyra leaves and prepare the sacred balls of white clay and saffron powder. Some of them are employed in agriculture, others act as minister to the spiritual needs of lower classes and officiate as priests at their social, religious and funeral ceremonies. Now a day, the Sathani are called to attend only the death rites of certain lower castes. Most of the Sathani Vaishnava are beggars and collect alms by singing songs in honour of Lord Vishnu. Some of them have entered government services while others have taken up occupations like astrology, tailoring, artistry and sculpture. Generally, Girls abstain from going to school after attaining puberty. They are flesh-eaters. As per information submitted by the Orissa Backward Classes

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Commission the representation of this caste/community in politics is negligible. They are mostly employed in the State Government offices in Class-IV (20%) posts.

This caste/community is also included as OBC in the Central list of neighbouring States of Andhra Pradesh at Entry No.88: Satani (Chattadasrivaishnava, Chatadi), Tamil Nadu at Entry No.133: Sathatha Srivaishnava (including Sathanai, Chattadi and Chattada Srivaishnava) and in Karnataka at Entry No. 166: Satani, Chattada-Shri Vaishnava, Vaishnava. . Therefore the Bench recommend for inclusion of Chattada Srivaishnab in the Central List of Backward Classes for Orissa at Sl.No.197.

Keeping in view the above fact and evidence, the Bench is of the considered view that 'Chattada Srivaishnab' community is a socially and educationally backward community and therefore the Bench recommend for inclusion of Chattada Srivaishnab' in the Central List of Backward Classes for Orissa at Sl.No.197.

The entry after inclusion will be as under:

197. Chattada Srivaishnab


(Justice S. Ratnavel Pandian)
Chairperson


(S.K. Purkayastha)
Member-Secretary


(Dr. Subbha Somu)
Member

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VIII. Advice of the Commission

The Commission considered and agreed in full with the above Finding of the Orissa Bench and decided to tender the following Advice to the Central Government under Section 9(1) of the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993, for necessary action by the Central Government under Section 9(2) of the Act:-

"The caste/community "**Chattada Srivaishnab**" is socially and educationally backward and should be included in the Central List of Other Backward Classes for the State of Orissa at entry No. 197.

The entry after inclusion will read as under: -

197. **Chattada Srivaishnab**


(Justice S. Ratnavel Pandian)
Chairperson


(S.K. Purkayastha)
Member-Secretary


(Dr. Subbha Somu)
Member

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