

National Commission for Backward Classes

Orissa Bench

Findings

Case: Request for inclusion of castes/communities "**Odia/ Odia Khandayat**" in the Central List of Other Backward Classes for the State of Orissa.

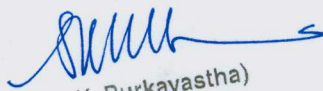
I. Request

The case arises from the request received in this Commission from State Government of Orissa for inclusion of castes/communities Odia/ Odia Khandayat 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 Bhubaneswar to examine the request for inclusion of Odia /Odia Khandayat 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, 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 pertaining to "Odia/ Odia Khandayat" is given below:-

Mandal List

State List

138. Paiko, Alia, Khandayat, Chasa-Paiko, Paikali-Khandayat, Kalingi Sudra Khandayat, Mahanayak Sudra, Baisya Karan, Odia/Odia Khandayat/Mahanayak/Mahalayak/Chasa Mahanty/Mahanty

Central List

133. Paiko

IV. Submission at the Public Hearing

Shri Raghav Parida, a former Minister of Govt. of Orissa, represented the Odia Khandayat community. He stated before the Commission Bench, that it is a very unfortunate and a sensitive issue that the cultivators and the agricultural labourers who are tilling the land and providing food, cloth and other agricultural products to the masses have been neglected since long. He stated that they are actually known as "Khandayat" in some parts of Orissa, whilst in Ganjam district they are known as "Odiya Khandayat". There are 48 to 50 sub-castes of Khandayat community.

He further stated that their caste is known as "Oriya Khandayat". The Orissa State in the past was known as "ODRA" and so the name "Odia" Khandayat was derived from Odra. The members of the Odiya

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Community in the State are not large. They are cultivators, daily labourers and agricultural labourers. They are illiterate. Their representation in Govt. Service is very poor.

II. During the Public Hearing the Orissa Backward Classes Commission furnished the following information:

- The community 'Odia' and 'Odia Khandayat' are synonyms of Khandayat and /or Chasa and find place at Sr. No. 138 of the SEBC list of the State.
- Estimated population of this caste/community as per 1991 census is 2.0 lakh (1.10 lakh males and 90,000 female). 21.0 percent of this caste/community own agriculture land whereas 65.0 percent are agricultural worker and others are engaged in various professions.
- The literacy rate of this caste/community is 19.55 percent approximately. Their representation under Government/Govt. undertaking is negligible.
- Only 30 persons from this caste/community have been elected to Panchayat samitis. The average annual income of a family of this community is around Rs. 4000/-. Most of the community people live in thatched houses and their villages are not connected with roads.

III. Shri.Bijoya Kumar Daluk, representative of caste Oriya submitted the following facts in writting before the NCBC.

- The caste Oriya is a very small caste with a population of 10500 people only, located in Ganjam district of Orissa. The total caste consists of 1292 families. These people are residing in 37 villages of Ganjam District. Being, a small caste, in year 1980, it was decided to rename this caste as Oriya Khandayat But till now as

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per Govt. record we belongs to Oriya caste. This caste is socially and educationally backward.

- 80.0 percent of total caste/ community population are daily wage earners in agriculture, 5.0 percent are doing vegetable business in villages and other 15.0 percent are working in Surat (Gujarat State) as casual labourer on daily wage basis.

The following datas about the caste/ community Oriya has been furnished by the Shri Daluk:

- The occupation of this caste/community is agriculture.
- The total population of the caste/ community is 10500. Which after its merger with Oriya Khandayat became 186712(Reference Year: 2007)
- The caste community is concentrated in 37 villages of Ganjam District.
- Total No. of matriculates of the caste /community of on 1.1.2007 is 42.
- Total number of Government employees of the caste/community is 16.
- Literacy rate of the caste/community in the State is 8.0 percent.

V. The Commission's Bench took note of the following ethnographic accounts in respect of the caste/community "Odia/ Odia Khandayat": -

"People of India- Communities, Segments, Synonyms, Surnames and Titles"(National Series Vol. V11) (Page 744)

Odiya- POI Equivalent: Oriya.

Reported as Tel^ggu caste name in 1881 census; present distributions:

Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal.

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Orissa: Balangir, Ganjam, Mayubhanj, Phulbani, Puri.

People of India series, Vol.V, India's Communities by K.S.Singh, (Page 2679-2680)

Oriya. A community of Orissa, the Oriya has two subgroups, Bendatiya and Kalandi. They claim to be one of the earliest settlers. Historical accounts suggest that they are a section of the Beldar community. The Oriya are immigrants from Chhattisgarh region of Madhya Pradesh to Orissa. The Oriya in Madhya Pradesh is divided into two subgroups, such as Mahanayak and Chasa Khandit. At present they are distributed in the districts of Puri, Ganjam, Bolangir and Phulbani. They speak the Oriya language and use the Oriya script for writing at all levels of communication.

The Oriya are divided into clans and lineages with surnames, like Swain, Oaloi, Sahoo, Jena, Pradhan and Praihara, etc.

"The Tribes and castes of the Cenrtal Provinces of India", Vol.II by R.V. Russell & Hira Lal (Page 217-218).

Odia. Odia is the name of a low Madras caste of masons, but whether it is a corruption of Uriya is not clear. The Odias pretend to be fallen Rajputs. The Odias say that they are the descendants of the Raja's sons. These Odias have their tutelary deity in Rewah State, and at his shrine is a flag which none but an Odia of genuine descent from Raja Sagar's sons can touch without some injury befalling him.

'The Tribes and Castes of Bengal' (Vol. I) by H.H. Risley(Pages 461-464).

Khandayat. "Khandait, Khandayat, a swordsman, from Uriya Khanda, 'a sword', The generic title of the feudal militia of Orissa, the leading

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members of which claim to be descended from a band of pure Kshatriyas who came in as conquerors from Northern India. A good observer writes of them as follows: - "Although a numerous and well-defined body, the Khandaits do not appear to be really a distinct caste. The ancient Rajas of Orissa kept up large armies and portioned the lands on strictly military tenures. These armies consisted of various castes and races, the upper ranks being officered by men of good Aryan descent, while the lower ones were recruited from the low castes alike of the hills and the plains. On the establishment of a well-defined caste system such troops took their caste from their occupation and correspond to the military class in the fourfold division in Northern India: but with this difference, that in Northern India the Military class consists of an ethnical entity, whereas in Orissa the Khandaits exhibit every variety of type from the high Aryan of good social position to the semi-aboriginal mongrel taken from the dregs of the people." In this passage, taken from the Statistical Account of Balasore District, Mr. Beames appears to regard Khandaits as a heterogeneous group, made up at the one end of Aryan immigrants from Upper India and at the other of recruits from a number indigenous non-Aryan tribes." The Orissa sub-castes seem to be based on the social difference between the Mahanaik or Sresta Khandaits holding large Jagir tenures, who represent the officers of the ancient feudal militia, and the rank and file of that body who now bear the name of Chasa-Khandait, Orh-Khandait, or Khandait-Paik, and occupy the lower position of village chaukidars and ordinary cultivators. Inter-marriage between the two groups, though not absolutely forbidden, occurs very rarely, and they may properly be regarded sub-castes. The latter class still retain totemistic sections of the same type as are found among the Khandaits of Chota Nagpur, while the former have borrowed the Brahmanical gotras. In all cases the rule of exogamy extends only to man's own section, and is supplemented by a table of prohibited degrees closely corresponding to that given in the article on the Rautias. The Chasa or Orh-Khandait

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sub-caste admit into their own ranks members of the Chasa caste, but this appears to be effected simply by intermarriage, and not to form the occasion of any special ceremony.

V. Findings

From the evidence and documents presented at the time of the Public Hearing and also on perusal of ethnographic literatures by eminent authors and other available information, it is the finding of the Bench that the Khandaits is a heterogeneous group in Orissa made up at the one end of Aryan immigrants from Upper India and at the other of recruits from a number of indigenous non-Aryan tribes. The majority of them practise settled cultivation and animal husbandry. They utilize facilities of education, modern medicine, etc. Due to high social position they do not face social ostracism.

One of the representatives, viz., Shri Raghav Parida, a former Minister of Govt. of Orissa had admitted they are actually known as "Khandayat" in some parts of Orissa, whilst in Ganjam district they are known as "Odiya Khandayat". There are 48 to 50 sub-castes of Khandayat community. He further stated that their caste is known as "Oriya Khandayat". The Orissa State in the past was known as "ODRA" and so the name "Odia" Khandayat was derived from Odra.

Though it is true that they were mainly recruited from the cultivating community, it does not necessarily mean that they continued to be the same. By virtue of their adoption of military service under different rulers and the consequent benefits they enjoyed like jagirs etc. they have risen in social status and prestige and have emerged as a "military-feudal caste".

In fact this Commission in its Advice No. Orissa 76-77/2000 dated 22.02.2000 has examined Khandayat, the main caste/sub-caste and their status and rejected the main Khandayat and their sub-caste as not eligible to be under OBC List.

As stated by the representative, 'Odia' and 'Odia Khandayat' are synonyms of Khandayat. R.V. Russell & Hira Lal in his book "The Tribes and castes of the Central Provinces of India" has also stated that The

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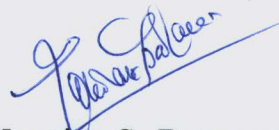


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Odias pretend to be fallen Rajputs. They are the descendants of the Raja's sons.

It means that 'Odia' and 'Odia Khandayat' is represented by the officers of the ancient militia and held large jagir lands, do not constitute a socially backward class and therefore do not deserve inclusion in the list of backward classes.

In view of the above facts and position, it is the conclusion of the Bench that the caste/community "Odia/Odia Khandayat" is not socially backward but on the contrary is socially advanced and prestigious castes/sub-castes/communities and therefore the Bench recommend that the request for inclusion of the caste/community "Odia/Odia Khandayat" in the Central List of Other Backward Classes for Orissa should be rejected.


(Justice S. Ratnavel Pandian)
Chairperson


(S.K. Purkayastha)
Member-Secretary


(Dr. Subbha Somu)
Member

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VI. 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 castes/communities/sub-castes/synonyms Odia/ Odia Khandayat are socially and educationally advanced. Therefore the request for inclusion in the Central list of backward classes for Orissa be rejected.


(Justice S. Ratnavel Pandian)
Chairperson


(S.K. Purkayastha)
Member-Secretary


(Dr. Subbha Somu)
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