

## WEST BENGAL COMMISSION FOR BACKWARD CLASSES

### REPORT ON 'KALWAR' CLASS ON REVIEW OF THEIR CASE FOR INCLUSION IN THE STATE LIST OF OTHER BACKWARD CLASSES

The West Bengal Commission for Backward Classes first received applications from the Secretary and Co-ordinator, Malda District Kalwar Samaj, Malda and the Senior Secretary, West Bengal Jaiswal (Sarvavargiya) Sabha, Calcutta for inclusion of 'Kalwar' class in the list of OBC for West Bengal. They furnished relevant information to support their claim for such inclusion. Being more or less convinced of the prima facie grounds as evident from the contents of their application which merit consideration of the prayer the Commission gave a hearing to the representatives of that Class. Shri Sankar Lal Jaiswal, Vice-President, West Bengal Jaiswal (Sarvavargiya) Saabha, Shri Sanjoy Kumar Jaiswal, Secretary, West Bengal Jaiswal (Sarvavargiya) Sabha and Shri Panna Lal Gupta had appeared before the said hearing on 24.03.1999. The Commission examined the papers submitted by them and also their oral evidence. It transpires from the records that at the time of that hearing the representatives could not explain clearly as to how the information furnished by them had been collected. The information furnished by them was not specific either. In course of the said hearing it was stated by the representatives that 'Kalwar' class had been included in the list of OBC in Bihar, U.P., Rajasthan and Maharashtra. It was also claimed by them that although the 'Kalwars' and 'Konwars' were one and identical, 'Kalwars' were left out of the list of Scheduled Castes in West Bengal. However, In reply to a reference made by the Commission seeking report in that regard, it was informed by the Cultural Research Institute on 11.02.1999 that 'Kalwars' and 'Konwars' were never considered to belong to the same class by the Govt. of West Bengal. It was also informed by CRI that only 'Konwar' class had been recognized as Scheduled Caste in West Bengal. Finally, considering the facts and figures furnished by the representatives and the evidence given by them and after discussion on all the parameters the Commission rejected the prayer of 'Kalwar' class for inclusion in the list of OBC in West Bengal in its 95<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 12.05.2002. Subsequently, apropos further prayers for inclusion of 'Kalwar' class in the list of OBC, the Commission in its 252<sup>nd</sup> meeting held on 22.10.2009 observed that there was not sufficient ground for reopening their case.

*Prologue*

The Commission received a few months back a fresh application in the prescribed proforma from Shri Bipin Bihari Gupta, President, Kalwar Sarwawargiya Samaj, Siliguri requesting further for reconsideration of the issue of 'Kalwar' class for its inclusion in the list of OBC for the State of West Bengal.

Being more or less convinced of the prima facie grounds as evident from the contents of the above-mentioned application in the prescribed proforma, which merit consideration of their prayer the Commission decided to give a further hearing to the representatives of the said class.

Accordingly, after giving due notice, the Commission heard the representatives of '**Kalwar**' class in its office at Salt Lake, Kolkata – 700064 on 31.10.2014 u/s 9 of West Bengal Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993. Some 75 representatives attended the hearing and pleaded in a body for inclusion of their class in the list of OBCs with a range of arguments and producing numerous documents. There was no voice in opposition in the hearing to their inclusion and the Commission did not receive any objection what so ever to such inclusion either. Besides taking into account the oral statements of the representatives, the documents, as produced, were also examined.

On examination of the oral as well as the documentary evidence, the following points are noted:

'**Kalwar**' class of people originally migrated from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar long ago to various parts of the Country including West Bengal. Their traditional occupation was distillation and trading of liquor. The languages spoken by the people of this class are Bengali/Hindi/Bhojpuri. Presently, '**Kalwar**' class of people live as a socially distinct unit having their social identity different from their neighbours. Though they do not have any impression of bad blood with the neighbours of other classes the people belonging to higher communities and well off families treat them with contempt due to their traditional occupation being distillation of liquor considered to be an inferior occupation by the general society. Though, socially they appear to be of similar status with many other backward classes already recognized in West Bengal as OBC, they do not get the facilities accorded to the people belonging to OBCs.

*Social Status*

To portray the social and other status of **'Kalwar' class** It was depicted by H. H. Risley in his Ethnographic Glossary that " 'Kalwar' is a liquor-selling, distilling and trading caste of Behar, probably a degraded offshoot of one of the numerous branches of the Baniyas. The social rank of Kalwars is low. Brahmans and members of the higher castes will on no account take water from their hands and they are ordinarily classed with Telis, Tatwas and Chains. **Kalwars** employ Brahmans for religious and ceremonial purposes, but they are deemed to be of inferior rank." He added therein that " Mr. Nesfield remarks :- The Kalwar ranks a little higher than the Teli, because there is more skill and less dirt in the practice of his art. His trade as private occupation has been destroyed by the British Government, which has taken the distilling and sale of liquors entirely into its own hands."

In view of their overall social state of affairs as evident from the submissions made in the instant hearing and documents consulted, the **'Kalwar' class** of people can be safely defined as a socially much backward class. A very insignificant number of people of this class possess marginal agricultural land. The people of this class use various surnames viz., Jaiswal, Bhagat, Gupta, Shawn, Prasad, Sha, Alluwalia etc. with a view to conceal their actual class to avoid being looked down upon in the society.

#### *Dwelling Status*

The **'Kalwar' class** of people are spread over almost all the districts of West Bengal mostly in rural areas being particularly concentrated in Darjeeling, Coochbehar, Maldah, Dinajpur, Murshidabad, Nadia, Hooghly, Howrah, North 24 Parganas, Sough 24 Parganas, Bankura etc. A very few of them, however, reside in Kolkata as well. There are about 200000 house-holds of this class of people in the State.

#### *Population*

The total population of **'Kalwar' class** is roughly estimated at 10, 00,000, with 5,25,000 male and 4, 75,000 female persons.

#### *Educational Status*

The educational status of **'Kalwar' class** of people is very poor and the literacy rate among them is significantly low. It is however, ascertained that though with the spread of education some of the children of this class, both boys and girls, are of late sent to schools most of them cannot continue and dropout at school level mainly due to financial stringency, ignorance, economic engagements, early marriage of girls and engagement of girls in household activities. Precisely, struggle for earning livelihood prevents most of the parents of **'Kalwar' Class** to continue education of their offspring beyond Class V-VI. Number of matriculates and graduates among the 'Kalwar' class of people is stated to be significantly lower than the State average.

*Matrimonial  
Status*

Matrimonial alliances of '**Kalwar**' class are made mainly within the same class. However, now days matrimonial negotiations are being made with other classes also with identical economic and social standing. The marriageable age of the males is 25-28 years and the females is 16-20 years. There is reportedly no instance of polygamy among the people of this class at present.

*Occupational &  
Economic Status*

The ancestral occupation of '**Kalwar**' class was distillation and trading of liquor but with the passage of time most of them particularly in rural areas have shifted to vending fruits, vegetables, scrap collection, agriculture labour, cultivation on other's land, daily wage labour etc. Almost all the females are engaged in house-hold works leaving a very few in agricultural labour to help their families. A portion of children of this class do agricultural and manual work. A few persons of this class particularly living in urban areas are, however, still engaged in distillation and trading of liquor leaving some others in different other business. A very insignificant number of people of this class are engaged in employment in private sectors. Number of persons engaged in jobs in the Government sector is negligible. There are a minuscule number of representations of this class in the Local Self Government and Panchayat Bodies including one Councillor in Kolkata Municipal Corporation.

The economic condition of '**Kalwar**' class of people is low. Though there are a few wealthy persons among them, their average monthly income varies from Rs. 2500 to 5000.

*Dwelling Status*

The living condition of '**Kalwar**' class of people as evident from the contents of the application in the prescribed proforma and the submissions in the hearing is very unsatisfactory. Some 1 and 2 percent of people of this class live semi-pucca and pucca houses respectively and 42 and 55 percent live in mud wall houses and thatched hutments respectively. About 15% of people of this class are privileged with the availability of pucca bathroom/toilet, 20% use dug-well system, 30% use thatched shed and about 25% of people resort to open-air defecation. The people of '**Kalwar**' class have supply of drinking water from tube wells and taps from nearby places constructed by Local Self Govt. Bodies.

*Special Feature*

All of the males and a portion of the females and children of this class are engaged in labour intensive work for earning their livelihood. People of this class are spread over almost all the districts of the State. It is reported that in some places girls are ahead in the pursuit of education. Since '**Kalwar**' class of people are still looked down upon in the general society due to their ancestral occupation of distillation of liquor treated to be an inferior one, most of the people of this class use dissimilar surnames viz., Jaiswal, Bhagat, Gupta, Shawn, Prasad, Sha, Alluwalia etc with a view to conceal their actual class to avoid being despised in the general society. As submitted by the representatives present in the instant hearing, '**Kalwar**' class is enlisted as OBC in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Rajasthan and Maharashtra also.

Shri K. S. Singh, in his book 'People of India' stated that "KALWAR ..... are a community of distillers and traders of country liquor in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal." It is also added therein that "They have three subgroups, namely Jaiswal, Bihaut and Khairdaha. They have migrated from Uttar Pradesh and are distributed all over the state. Gupta, Saha and Chowdhury are some of their common surnames and Bhagat is used as the title. They speak Hindi at home and use the Devanagari script; they also speak Bengali and use the Bengali script. ....The Kalwar have a single clan of Kashya. "

It may be noted here that Mandal Commission had identified the '**Kalwar**' class as a prospective OBC in West Bengal.

It is worth-mentioning here that '**Kalwar**' class was included in the Central List of OBCs for the State of West Bengal vide Resolution No. 12011/36/99-BCC dated 4<sup>th</sup> April, 2000 on being recommended by the National Commission for Backward Classes after giving a hearing to its representatives by the two-Member West Bengal Bench of the National Commission consisting of Hon'ble Member, Shri U.P.Singh and Hon'ble Member, Shri Sahu Akshaya Bhai in Calcutta on 09.09.1998 wherein the West Bengal Government was represented by Shri K. N. Behra, the then Managing Director, West Bengal SC & ST Development & Finance Corporation, Shri J. Mishra, the then Member Secretary of this Commission and Dr. M.Chaudhari, the then Director, Cultural Research Institute, Calcutta. In the said hearing there was no objection from the State Government to the inclusion of the '**Kalwar**' class in the Central List of OBCs for the State of West Bengal.

*Recommendation*

The Commission considered all the factors and parameters for determination of social and educational backwardness in the State of West Bengal. On consideration of the contents in the fresh application in the prescribed proforma from Shri Bipin Bihari Gupta, President, Kalwar Sarwawargiya Samaj, Siliguri requesting further for reconsideration of the issue of 'Kalwar' class for its inclusion in the list of OBC of the State of West Bengal, the materials made available to the Commission, the oral and documentary evidences adduced and submissions made in the hearing being represented by as many as 75 persons and over and above the observation of the Mandal Commission identifying the 'Kalwar' class as a prospective OBC in West Bengal, findings of the National Commission for Backward Classes on inclusion of 'Kalwar' class in the Central List of OBCs for West Bengal, the Ethnographic Report of H.H.Risley on 'Kalwar' class as also in view of the fact that the 'Kalwar' class is already recognized as OBC for the State of West Bengal in the Central List and carefully reconsidering the issue the Commission is of the opinion that 'Kalwar' class of people constitutes a Backward Class in the State and accordingly the Commission recommends to the Government to include the 'Kalwar' class in the list of Other Backward Classes for the State of West Bengal u/s 9 of the West Bengal Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993.



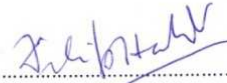
Manatosh Pandit  
Member Secretary



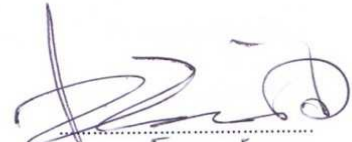
Justice Malay Sengupta  
Chairman



Shri Abani Joarder  
Member



Dr. Dilip Kumar Halder  
Member



Dr. Md. Moazzem Hossain  
Member