

WEST BENGAL COMMISSION FOR BACKWARD CLASSES

REPORT – VI

Further to the 5th Report made by the Commission and submitted on the 12th February 1996, the Commission has since considered further requests from different classes of citizens for inclusion of the said classes in the list of 'Backward Classes' of the State. The Commission in this 6th Report is making its recommendation and tendering its advice to the State Government with regard to further matters considered and decided by the Commission.

In the 5th Report submitted by the Commission, the Commission has held after careful consideration of all aspects and for detailed reasons stated in the Report that any class of citizens must be socially and educationally backward to constitute a 'Backward Class' within the meaning of the West Bengal Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993. The Commission in the earlier Report has also laid down the criteria and tests for determining the social and educational backwardness of any particular class of citizens. It does not, therefore, become necessary to repeat the same in this Report.

Bearing in mind the principles enunciated and the criteria and tests laid down for deciding the social and educational backwardness of any particular class, the Commission has proceeded to consider the requests for inclusion in the list of Backward Classes of the State made on behalf of a number of classes of citizens.

The Commission now proceeds to examine the request of each class on its merits to come to its conclusion as to whether the said class constitutes

backward class within the meaning of the West Bengal Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993.

HAWARI

The Commission received requests from Md. Sohail Roomi, Secretary, Purulia Backward Muslim Community Federation, Dist. Purulia, for inclusion of Hawari (Muslim Dhobi) class of people in the list of Backward Classes in the State of West Bengal. The petition has been duly processed and came up for hearing before the Commission on the 14th February, 1996. At the hearing Md. Tahir Hawari, Member, Hawari Panchayat, Purulia and Md. Ishaque Hawari of Asansol, Dist. Burdwan, appeared to represent the case of the Hawari class of people. They took oath and submitted the necessary particulars. They made the submission that the Hawari class of people is one of the most socially and educationally backward classes in the State of West Bengal and deserves inclusion in the list of Backward Classes in the State.

The submission made before the Commission was that the Hawaris live in all the districts of the State of West Bengal. The stated population of the class in West Bengal as submitted by them is about 1, 77,000. Their concentration is mainly in the districts of Murshidabad (12,000), Howrah (11,000), Burdwan (15,000), Midnapore (13,000), Purulia (10,000), Malda (9,000), Hooghly (8,000) & 24 – Parganas (North & South – 14,000). The rest of the population are in other districts of West Bengal. In many places their residential areas are stated to be known as 'Hawari Mahallas'.

Their submission was that they are 'Dhobi' (Washer-men) class among the Muslims and are almost equal in social status as that of the Hindu 'Dhobi' who are already included in the list of Scheduled Castes in many State. Quoting from the 'Quoran' they made the submission that the 'Hawaris' have

been assigned the duty of washing clothes since the days of 'Quoran', thereby serving the society in maintaining cleanliness. The Muslims in West Bengal are stated to be segmented into various groups and sub – groups on the basis of their social honour. The Hawaris are stated to be occupying the position of persons in the lower rung of the social hierarchy. They are employed for rendering services to others and they help to keep the others clean by doing unclean jobs themselves. Though they get the treatment meted out to persons in the lower strata of society, no disrespect is voluntarily shown to them. On account of their unclean nature of work the 'Dhobis' are regarded as an inferior class in almost every part of India. The Hindu 'Dhobis' have been enlisted in the list of Scheduled Castes in the State of West Bengal.

It may be noted that the Mandal Commission suggested inclusion of 'Dhobi' (Muslims) in the list of other Backward Classes in Karnataka; in Madhya Pradesh and Delhi as 'Dhobi' (excluding those in Scheduled Castes list).

It was submitted in evidence that 90% of the working population are engaged in washing clothes, ironing and working in laundries. There is no Doctor, no Engineer, no Lawyer, not even one in Higher Services from amongst them. There are a few Primary School Teachers among them.

It was stated that majority of them are still illiterate. About 10% of them males and 5% of the females attained education upto Primary Level. A very few of them attained education beyond the school. The rate of drop-out is quite high at the School Level as the Children are required to assist their parents in earning their livelihood.

There is no MLA, no MP, no representative in statutory Panchayat. They have their own 'Hawari' Community Panchayat where they take decisions on various socio-religious and other affairs concerning themselves.

It was stated in evidence that the living condition of the 'Hawaris' is indeed very unsatisfactory. Almost all of them live in kutchha houses; they attend to the call of nature in open fields, and get water supply from small

ponds. They are guided by Islamic traditions in their socio-religious affairs. Adult marriage is prevalent among them.

The facts established by evidence – oral and documentary – go to indicate that the social position and educational standard of this class are extremely low and unsatisfactory. Due to lack of education among them, their representation in services is also negligible. The economic condition of this class of people is equally deplorable and pathetic.

The Mandal Commission has recommended the 'Hawari' class for inclusion in the list of Backward Classes in the State of West Bengal. The Kalelkar Commission also recommended for their inclusion in the list of Backward Classes in West Bengal.

The Commission on the basis of materials placed before it, is satisfied that the 'Hawari' class is an endogamous social group of people in the State of West Bengal.

Taking into consideration all the facts and circumstances, the materials on record and the submissions made, the Commission draws the conclusion that the 'Hawari' class constitutes socially and educationally a backward class in the State and the Commission recommends to the State government that the 'Hawari' class of people should be included in the list of Backward Classes in the State and the Commission, accordingly, advises the Government of West Bengal to do so.

No one appeared before the Commission on behalf of the State government although notice was issued to the Government of West Bengal.

No one has raised any objection to the inclusion of the 'hawari' class of people in the list of Backward Classes in the State of West Bengal.

TURHA

The Commission received requests from Dr. Ambika Prasad Shaw, President Turha Bikash Sangh (27/3A, OMDA Raja Lane, Calcutta – 15) and others for inclusion of the 'Turha' class in the list of backward Classes in the State of West Bengal. The petitioners appeared before the Commission for hearing on the 14th February, 1996. At the hearing Dr. Ambika Prasad, President, Turha – Bikahs Sang appeared to represent the case of their class assisted by Shri Rajendra Prasad Shaw, Advocate and Secretary of the Sang and Shri Lal Bahadur Shaw, working President of the said Turha Bikash Sang. As per their submission, the 'Turha' class of people is one of the most downtrodden, underprivileged and socially and educationally backward classes of people in West Bengal and they are looked down upon by their neighbouring people.

The Turhas are an immigrant class of people in West Bengal. They use Sah, Sahu, Sau, tura etc. as surnames. They sated that the population of Turha class in West Bengal is about 25,000 (Male 52% and Female 48%). They are mainly inhabitants of the districts of Howrah, Malda, Jalpaiguri, Siliguri Sub-division of Darjeeling district and Calcutta. A few of them are scattered in other districts also of the State. They are found in the States of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.

It was stated in evidence that the 'Turha' class constitutes a homogeneous compact social group of people who are endogamous and are easily identifiable as a distinct social group in which infiltration from outside is not possible without their knowledge. Riskey (1891) stated that they are a sub-caste of Kahars who traditionally carry palanquins, sell fish and fresh fruits and cultivate land. Riskey has also stated that the Turhas are a sub-caste of Nunias. But the Turhas of present day do not consider themselves either a sub-caste of Kahars (Palanquin bearers) or Nunias (engaged in saltpeter making) who have

already been included in the list of Backward Classes in West Bengal. In this connection Jogendra Nath Bhattacharya's observations towards the end of the last century are worth noting. He states – "the Turhas who are boatmen, and fishermen, are to be found chiefly in Bihar and North Western Provinces. They have some colonies in Bengal, in the ancient town of Dacca and Nadiya and in the market town of Shahganj near Hooghly, founded by Azim Osban, the grandson of Aurangzebe, who was for some years the Governor of Bengal". It was stated in evidence that the Turhas of West Bengal have, however, formed themselves into a separate class and the fact that they are a branch of the Kahar class is not even known to them (This statement is corroborated by the "Hindu Caste & Sects, 1896").

The Turhas are now engaged in selling vegetables, fruits and fish. In Calcutta this class of people is mainly located in Lansdown market, Gariahat Fish Market, Dum Dum Fish Market, Titagarh, Shyamnagar, Jagaddal, Naihati (Gouripur Fish Market), Jan Bazar, Kidderpore, Rishra etc. the rural areas and sell them in the market.

The materials submitted before the Commission reveal that 5% of them have their own land, that too much below the ceiling; and out of them 3% work on others' fields. Ninety percent of them are self-employed with petty family business; about 95% of them carry on their petty family business with the help of borrowed capital, the remaining 5% with their own capital. Five per cent of them are small traders / businessmen; 90% of them use borrowed capital, and 10% carry on with their own capital. The percentage of medium and large sized business is 'nil'.

It was submitted before the Commission that 3% of the male population and 2% of the females attained education upto Primary level; 0.8% of the males and .2% of the females upto Secondary level; 0.2% of males and 0.05% of females upto Higher Secondary level. Thereafter, the percentage of male education in higher stages is quite negligible and amongst the females it is 'nil'.

The rate of drop-outs at different stages of education for assisting the parent in their work is about 15%. The materials on record thus go to indicate that their achievement in the field of education is extremely low, and this class is undoubtedly educationally very backward.

Due to lack of education among them, their representation in the services is also quite insignificant. This class has practically 'nil' employment in State Government Services / Public Sector Undertaking at higher levels. At lower levels. There are two Engineers, one Doctor, two lawyers, two primary school teachers, one secondary school teacher.

Ninety—two percent of them live below the poverty line; 5% are above the poverty line and only 3% earn a little surplus.

The facts established by evidence – oral and documentary – go to indicate that the economic condition of this class is extremely low and unsatisfactory.

According to their submission, this class of people maintain their own occupational habits, social customs, rituals etc and as such, they are generally looked down upon by the upper caste people. It has been submitted in writing that 95% of the population in the locality in which they live treat them as most ordinary persons like the Scheduled castes and tribes.

Their living condition and social environment are also not quite congenial for healthy growth and development. Their male members are too much addicted to liquor and gambling, whereas the females are the main bread earners and do most of the works and maintain the household affairs. Eighty percent of the males marry between the age of 15 years to 18 years and the females, between 14 years to 16 years. They are divided into a number of lineages (khandan). Lineages help to regulate marriages and indicate ancestry. Vermilion and bangles are used by the married women. Divorce is permissible among them with social approval. Incidences of divorces range between 20 to 25 percent. Post-delivery pollution is observed till the post delivery ritual 'Chhati' is held on the

sixth day. Tonsure (mundane) for male and female child is performed at the age of three or five years. They worship of God 'Shani'. Rituals connected with their 'Shani' puja is quite different from those of others. They worship 'shani' by offering country liquor. Previously, there was a custom to sacrifice animals on such occasions. Some magical rites are also connected with this puja. There is no recognized priest; one elderly person with sufficient religious attainments performs the puja.

They are non-vegetarians in their food habits. Rice is the staple cereal consumed by them which is supplemented by wheat and mize. Maithili is spoken by them. They are also conversant with Hindi language; they know Bengali to some extent. The materials on record go to indicate that 60% of them live in mud wall kutcha houses; 25% in thatched hutment 10% in brick wall semi-pucca houses and 5% only in pucca houses. One third of their population (30%) go to fields to attend the call of nature; 40% have attached sheds for the purpose; 25% have dug well system and only % have bathroom toilets. About three-fourth (70%) of the population depend on small pods and big tanks for water supply; 20% get the facility o tubewell; only 2% get pipe water supply.

The facts established by evidence – oral and documentary – go to establish that the 'Turha' class is socially and educationally backward and their economic condition is also not at all satisfactory. The Commission noted that the Mandal Commission has recommended inclusion of 'Turha' class of people in the list of Backward Classes in West Bengal. The Kalelkar Commission also recommended their inclusion in the list of Backward Classes in West Bengal. The Kalelkar Commission also recommended their inclusion in the list of Backward Classes in West Bengal. The 'Turha' has already been included in the list of Backward Classes by the Government of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.

Taking into consideration the facts stated, the materials on record and the submissions made, the Commission has no hesitation in coming to the conclusion that the 'Turha' class constitutes socially and educationally a

backward class in the State and the Commission recommends to the State Government that the 'Turha' class of people should be included in the list of Backward Classes in the State and the Commission, accordingly, advises the Government of West Bengal to do so.

No one appeared before the Commission on behalf of the State Government although notice was served on the Government of West Bengal.

No one has raised any objection to the inclusion of this class of people in the list of Backward Classes in the State of West Bengal.

GOALA—GOPE

The Commission received representations from the Secretary, "confederation of Other Backward Classes, SC, Stand Minorities of West Bengal" and also individual representations addressed to this Commission as also to the Hon'ble Minister, SC &TW Department, Government of West Bengal, stating that although 'Goala—Gope' class of people has been included in the list of Backward Classes in the State of West Bengal, the 'Pallav Gopes' are not getting the OBC certificates from the prescribed authorities in spite of the fact that they belong to 'Goala—Gope' class, inasmuch as, the 'Pallav Gopes' have mentioned their class name in their deeds and documents as "Pallav Gope", "Yadav Gope, Ballabh Gope" and also as only "Gope", "Yadav Gope., Ballabh Gope" and also as only "Gope". The Commission also received mass petitions from the All India Yadav Mahasabha in which they stated that the 'Ahirs' and 'Yadavs' are the different surnames of the 'Goala—Gope' caste and as such the 'Ahirs' and the "Yadavs" should also be included in the list of Backward Classes of the state of West Bengal.

The grievance that has been made is that in the districts of Hooghly and Howrah where the "Pallav Gopes" have been residing permanently for

centuries had recorded the local names of the 'Goala—Gope' class as "Pallav Gope, Yadav Gope, Goala-gope and Gope". They had produced their deeds and documents before the authorities concerned who are empowered to grant Backward Class Certificate, but were denied the issue of certificates on the ground that the 'Goala—Gope' class has been included in the list of Backward Classed in the State and not "Pallav Gope, Yadav Gope, Ballabh Gope or Gope". Similarly, the issue of Backward Class Certificate has also been denied by the concerned authorities to the "Ahirs" and "Yadavs". It has been stated by the All India Yadav Mahasabha that "Gope, Pallav Gope, Ballabh Gope. Ahir and Yadav" are the different surnames used by the 'Goala—Gope' class of people.

The Commission gave a hearing to the applicants on the 13th May, 1996. Shri Prangobinda Ghose, Secretary, Bangiya Yadav Mahasabha, Shri Kartick Chandra Kapas of All India Yadav Mahasabha, Shri Suresh Chandra Ghose, Vice—President, All India Yadav Mahasabha and Shri Jyotish Chandra Ghose, Bar-at-Law, appeared before the Commission and made their submissions. The Commission is satisfied, on the basis of the materials placed and proved, that the people in the "Pallav Gope, Ballabh Gope, Yadav Gope and Gope" class belong to the 'Goala—Gope' class of people and that the persons in the Pallav Gope, Ballabh Gope, Yadav Gope and Gope" are socially and educationally backward. The Commission does not have any doubt that the 'Goala—Gope' and the 'Pallav Gope/Ballabh Gope/Yadav Gope/Gope' class form the same class and they are identical though they may be termed differently in different localities depending on local usage and other factors, The authorities concerned who are empowered to grant Backward Class Certificates should appreciate this position and should issue the certificates to the "Pallav Gope/Ballabh Gope/Yadav Gope/Gope", inasmuch as, the 'Pallav Gope/ Bhallabh Gope/Yadav Gope/Gope" and the 'Goala—Gope' form one and the same class and the inclusion of "Goala—Gope" class in the list of Backward Class in the State covers the "Pallav Gope/Ballabh Gope/Yadav Gope/ Gope" also.

The Commission holds that “Pallav Gope/Ballabh Gope/Yadav Gope/Gope” class in the State constitutes a Backward Class and comes clearly under the “Goala—Gope” class already included in the list of Backward Classes in the State.

It was submitted before the Commission by the All India Ydav Mahasabha that the “Goala—Gope” class of West Bengal uses the surnames like “Ahir” and “Yadav”, and as such, the ‘Ahirs and the ‘Yadavs’ should also be included in the list of Backward Classes in the State of West Bengal. The Commission considered the evidence – oral and documentary – and observed that the persons who use “Ahirs/Yadavs” as surnames are also eligible to be included in the list of Backward Classes of the State of West Bengal, if they really belong to the “Goala—Gope” class. The Commission observed further that the use of surname is a matter of individual choice, and as such if a person uses the surnames like “Ahir/Yadav”, he should also be entitled to the Backward Classes Certificate, if he can prove that he belongs to the “Goala—Gope” class which has already been included in the list of Backward Classes of the State of West Bengal. The Commission, accordingly, holds that the persons who use the surnames like ‘Ahir/Yadav’ should be granted Backward Classes Certificate by the prescribed authorities, provided the applicants for such certificate belong to the “Goala—Gope” class which has already been included in the list of Backward Classes in the State of West Bengal.

This is by way of clarification on the representations, on behalf of various organizations and also individuals, who have approached the Commission stating that although they belong to the “Goala—Gope” class already included in the list of Backward Classes by the State government, on the recommendations made by the West Bengal Commission for Backward Classes, they are being denied the issue of the OBC certificate; and this clarification is being made by the Commission to remove the difficulties in the matter of issue of OBC certificates with the recommendation that the authorities may be asked to

act on the basis of this clarification. In view of this clarification , the Commission holds that it does not become necessary to make any separate recommendation in regard to the inclusion of “Pallav Goipe, Ballabh Gope, Yadav Gope, Gope, Ahir and Yadav” as they are already covered under the “Goala—Gope” classes as clarified herein.

BHAR (RAJ BHAR)

The West Bengal Commission for Backward Classes received a representation signed by the President and the Vice-President of the Akhil Bharatiya Rajbhar (Bar) Mahasabha, and also by a large number of other signatories praying for inclusion of the Rajbhar (Bhar) class of people in the list of Backward Classes of the State of West Bengal. This prayer was recommended by Sri Jyoti Chowdhury, MLA, Sri Abdl Mannan, MLA and also by Smt. Savitri Sharma, Councillor of Champdany Municipality, Hooghly. The applicants stated in their application that they are socially and educationally backward and their economic condition is very bad.

The applicants were given a hearing by the Commission on the 13th May, 1996. Sri Chhakkanlal Rajbhar, General Secretary, Akhil Bharatiya Rajbhar (Bhar) Mahasabha, Sri Satyanarayan Prasad, General Secretary of the Akhil Bharatiya Rajbhar (Bhar) Mahasabha in the Howrah district, Sri Raj Kumar Rajbhar, General Secretary, Akhil Bharatiya Rajbhar (Bhar) Mahasabha in the Hooghly district and Sri Shew Bachan Rajbhar, Joint Secretary of this organization appeared before the Commission and gave evidence on the 13th May, 1996. They took oath and made the submission that the Rajbhar (Bhar) class of people are placed in the lowest rung in the Hindu Social hierarchy. Their attainment in the field of education is very negligible; and almost the entire people in this class live below the poverty line.

The applicants submitted written evidence before the Commission which indicate that the Bhars and the Rajbhars are scattered in the different districts of West Bengal and also in the City of Calcutta in the manner as detailed below:-

Hooghly District	-	18,000	
Howrah	-	16,000	
Burdwan	-	15,000	
North 24 Paraganas	-	25,000	
South 24 Parganas	-	16,000	and
Calcutta South Port Area	-	2,500.	

The applicants could not furnish the break-up of their population in the other districts of West Bengal.

The Rajbhars are stated to have been engaged as Gardeners and Cow-herds in Bengal from a very long time. The Rajbhars used to claim to be a distinct class separate from the Bhars having no social and religious connection between them. In fact, the Rajbhars registered themselves as a distinct class in the Census of 1911.

The Bhars are stated to be a Dravidian class of West Bengal and Chhotonagpur, most of whom are cultivators, while a few were engaged as hereditary persona servants to the Rajas of Pachete. The Bhars are stated to have been divided into two sub-classes, viz. Maghya and Bengali; and that they were under-going the process of gradual conversion to Hinduism and incorporation into the regular caste system. The Bhars are stated to have adoted the ancient Hindu practives like infant marriage; and completely banned the widow re-marriage and divorce. They are now stated to observe the usages of Orthodox Hindus by professing Hindu religion : they employ the Brahmans for burning

their deads, and perform their Sradh on the 30th day after death. The Bhars also registered themselves as a distinct class in the Census of 1911.

It was stated in evidence that with the passage of time, the distinction between the Rajbhars who were Gardeners, and the Bhars who were cultivators, gradually narrowed down to such an extent that socially they consider themselves to belong to one social group, although they had registered their names as distinct classes in the Census of 1911. In fact, it was well-nigh impossible for the Gardeners to carry on with their single profession, and it was also not possible for the cultivators to restrict themselves only to cultivation; and both these social groups had to fall back upon other professions just for the sake of earning their livelihood. The Gardeners engaged themselves in the occupation of cultivation and the cultivators also started some gardening in order to supplement their income by doing additional work. They engage themselves now-a-days in heterogenous professions like Rickshaw pullers, Hawkers, Food and Vegetable vendors and all other occupation involving the sale of human labour.

The efforts of the pioneers of the 'Rajbhar' and the 'Bhar' classes of people have been to bring these two social groups together for which they have established the Akhil Bharatiya Rajbhar (Bhar) Mahasabha which is a registered Institution. In the circumstances, the applicants made the submission before the Commission that if the Commission is satisfied about the social and educational backwardness of these people and consider them eligible for inclusion in the list of Backward Classes of the State of West Bengal, then the names of both 'Rajbhars' and 'Bhars' may be included together in the list of Backward Classes as Rajbhar (Bhar) or Bhar (Rajbhar).

It was stated in evidence that the 'Rajbhars' are one of the lowest classes in the Hindu Social hierarchy. From the olden days, they ranked equally with the Kurmis and Koris which statement finds support from 'Risley'. They

suffer from the same social disabilities which are experienced by the Kurmis and the Koiris in their day-to-day life.

The social position of the 'Bhars' is in no way different, inasmuch as, many of them were engaged as hereditary personal servants to the 'Rajas' of Pachete. The social stigma attached to a class of people who were hereditarily appointed as servants need hardly be over emphasized. It was stated in evidence that the 'Rajas' who appointed the 'Rajbhars' as their servants had deleted the portion 'Raj' from the name of the 'Rajbhar' class, just in order to humiliate them, and bring down their social status to the lowest level with the remark that the use of the word 'Raj' does not fit in well with the hereditary servants; and that the Rajbhas were re-named as Bhars. The action of the Rajas has changed the name of Rajbhars and they are colloquially known as Bhars. But the name 'Rajbhar' features in the deeds and documents. Therefore, it was submitted before the Commission that if the 'Bhar' class is considered eligible for inclusion in the list of Backward Classes then the name 'Rajbhar' may also be shown in bracket so that they may be able to establish their identity before the State authorities who are empowered to grant certificates to the Backward Classes.

It was submitted in writing before the Commission that the Bhar (Rajbhar) class is treated like the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes by about 100% of the people in the localities in which they live in the Hooghly, South 24-Parganas and Calcutta South Port areas; 90% in the Howrah district; 95% in the Burdwan district and about 84% in the North 24-Parganas district.

It was also submitted in writing before the Commission that the Bhar (Rajbhar) class of people celebrate the marriage ceremony by observing the rituals which are prevalent among the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. The birth of their children is celebrated with songs and sweets. After the death of anyone of their class, the dead body is burnt as in the case of the Hindus.

It was submitted before the Commission that the Bhar (Rajbhar) class is educationally very backward. They never go in for obtaining a Graduate

Degree – not to speak of going in for higher education or for Medicine, Engineering or Law education. It was submitted before the Commission that due to the special drive of the Government, the Primary and the Secondary education are being availed of by the Bhar (Rajbhar) class in the manner as detailed below:-

Name of district. (1)	Primary Education (2)		Secondary Education (3)		H. Secondary Education (4)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Hooghly	20%	2%	3%	Nil	1%	Nil
Howrah	-do-	-do-	-do-	-do-	-do-	-do-
Burdwan	46%	6%	4%	Nil	0.2%	Nil
North 24 Parganas	40%	10%	0.7%	0.1%	0.2%	Nil
South 24 Parganas	35%	0.5%	0.3%	Nil	0.2%	Nil

It was stated in evidence that the reason for the huge drop-out rate from the Primary to the Secondary level is that the Bhar (Rajbhar) class cannot take advantage of the system of free school education in West Bengal, because of their social backwardness and economic impoverishment. They consider it worthwhile to deploy their children for learning the techniques of performing different casual jobs involving the sale of physical labour for earning their livelihood and to supplement the income of their destitute parents. The necessity for female education is not recognised and appreciated by the Bhar (Rajbhar) class even to day. They do not like to send their daughters to the school to receive education. They prefer to arrange for the marriage of their daughters either as infants or at the earliest convenience.

There is no Doctor, no Engineer, and no Lawyer in the Bhar (Rajbhar) class. There are a few Primary School teachers; and a few others are doing some ordinary jobs. There is none in the Higher Services or even in the middle ranks. There is no MLA, no MP, no Member in the Zill Parishad, Block Panchayat or Gram Panchayat.

It was stated in evidence – oral and documentary – that more than 90% of the people in the 'Bar' (Rajbar) class live in thatched hutments and mud-wall kutchas houses. The percentage of their population living in brick-wall and semi pucca houses is insignificant and that the number living in pucca houses is almost 'nil'. They receive the supply of water mainly from the tanks and the tubewells. There are only a few living in the Municipal areas who receive pipe water supply. More than 85% of the people in the class go to the open fields to attend the call of nature.

The Bhar (Rajbhar) class of people have got no land of their own – there may be hardly 1% who have got some land. Some of them work on owners' land as labour. A few others run some petty family business. But there is no small trader or medium size businessman, not to speak of running large business. Some of them in the Howrah district are engaged in the Jute Mills. But most of them are rickshaw pullers, Fruit-sellers, vegetable vendors or hawkers. It has been submitted in writing before the Commission that about 85 to 99% of the Bhar (Rajbhar) class of people in the districts of Hooghly, Howrah, 24 Parganas and Calcutta live below the poverty line. There are a few above the poverty line; the affluent group, however, does not exceed even 1% of the total population.

The Mandal Commission has recommended the inclusion of the 'Bhar' class in the list of Backward Classes in the State of West Bengal. The Kalelkar Commission also recommended the inclusion of the 'Bhar' class in the list of Backward Classes in the State of West Bengal. They have been included in

the list of Backward Classes by the State Governments of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

On consideration of the materials – oral evidences and written submissions made – the Commission is satisfied that the Bhar (Rajbhar) class is socially and educationally backward and that their economic condition is also unsatisfactory, and as such, the Commission recommends to the State Government that the Bhar (Rajbhar) class of people should be included in the list of Backward Classes in the State and the Commission, accordingly, advises the Government of West Bengal to do so.

No one appeared before the Commission on behalf of the State Government although notice was issued to the Government of West Bengal.

No one has raised any objection to the inclusion of the Bhar (Rajbhar) class of people in the list of Backward Classes in the State of West Bengal.

DHUNIA (MONSOORI)

Written representations were submitted before the Commission for inclusion of the Dhunia (Monsoori) class of people of the Muslim Community in the list of Backward Classes in West Bengal on behalf of a number of organizations and individuals, the important amongst who included persons like Md. Abbas Ali, Hony. Secretary, West Bengal Jamiatul Monsoor, 9, Marquis Street, Calcutta – 700 016; R. Ansari and Md. Sohail Roomi, the President and the Secretary respectively of Purulia Backward Muslim Community Federation, Quorashi Mahalls, P.O.- Purulia, Dist. Purulia; Abul Quiytum of 131 S.P.Banerjee Road, Alambazar, Calcutta – 700 028 and two others; Shakul Ahmed Quadri of 3B/H/10 Gas Street, Calcutta – 700 009 and eleven others; and Md. Ainul Haque of Loot Bazar, P.O.- Kamarhati, Calcutta – 700 035. Oral evidence given by the

Dhunia (Monsoori) class of people was heard by the Commission on the 17th July, 1996.

Md. Abbas Ali, General Secretary, West Bengal Jamiatul Monsoor and Md. Ismail Monsoor took oath and gave evidence and furnished the requisite facts and figures on behalf of the Dhunia Class of people before the Commission on the date of their hearing.

The submission made by them was that the total population of the Dhunia (Monsoori) class of people in West Bengal is about 15 lakh, mainly concentrated in Calcutta, Howrah, Hooghly, Bardhaman,. North and South 24-Parganas with their significant presence in the other districts also. They claim to constitute an endogamous social group, identifiable and distinct from other social groups. They traditionally work as cotton-carders and engage themselves in making of mattresses and beddings – such as ‘quilt’, ‘mattresses’, ‘pillows’ and ‘Gaddi’ etc.

About 30% of the males and 60% of the females of this class marry before they are adults. It was stated in evidence that their social customs with regard to marriage, births and deaths, are guided by the Muslim Personal Laws of Shariat.

Their average living conditions are extremely poor; about 90% of them live in thatched hutments or mudwall kutcha house. About 20% of them have the facilities of bathroom/toilet and dug well system latrines and about 60% go to the open fields to attend the call of nature. About 10% have access to the pipe-water supply, about 25% use tubewells and the remaining 65% go to the ponds or tanks. The Dhunias are not a land-owning class; only about 2% of them possess some land and that too below the ceiling level. About 88% of them work on others’ land as labourers and bargadars; and about 10% work on own land and also on others’ land. The remaining 2% have some land of their own which is below the ceiling limit. Practically none of them possesses any family business and about 80% of them live below the poverty line.

The people of the Dhunia (Monsoori) class are also educationally very backward; only about 5% of them have primary, 3% secondary, 2% higher secondary and 1% graduate level of education and practically no one has any general post graduate degree or degrees in medicine, engineering and law. The Drop-out rates among the students of this class at the Primary/secondary level are about 50% on the average. Among the females, generally, about 3% get primary education, 2% secondary education and about 1% upto higher secondary level of education. The females generally do not reach the graduation level.

There are no doctors, engineers or Chartered Accountants among them. There are few lawyers (about 1%, primary/secondary school teachers (about 3%) and in other professions (about 2%) from amongst the Dhunia class of people. Their presence in the post-Secondary teaching and Government/non-Government administrative services is almost nil. There is one MLA from their class. But there is no one amongst them who is a Member of the Parliament. Zilla Parisad, Block Panchayat or Gram Panchayat.

About 80% of the people in their locality treat them more or less in the same way as persons in the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes are treated.

The Kaka Kalelkar Commission and the Mandal Commission have recommended the inclusion of the Dhunia (Monsoori) class of people in the list of Backward Class in the State of West Bengal. The Bihar Government have already included the Dhunia class in the list of Backward Classes in the State of Bihar.

Taking into consideration the facts stated materials furnished and submissions made, the Commission has arrived at the conclusion that the Dhunia (Monsoori) class constitutes socially and educationally a backward class in the State and the Commission recommends to the State Government for their

inclusion in the list of Backward Classes in the State and the Commission, accordingly, advises the Government of West Bengal to do so.

No one appeared on behalf of the State of West Bengal although notice was served on the Government of West Bengal. It may be noted that there is no objection from any quarter to the inclusion of Dhunia (Monsoori) class in the list of backward classes in the State.

KHANDAIT

The Commission received requests from Shri Ashoke Kumar Das, President, Paschim Banga Khandait Jati Sangha (Vill : Ganakkata, P.O.- Bandhgora, P.S.- Jhargram, Dist.- Midnapore), Shri Mukul Rout and many others for inclusion of the 'Khandait' class in the list of Backward Classes in the State of West Bengal. The petitioners appeared before the Commission for hearing on the 21st November, 1995 and again on the 17th July, 1996. Shri Ashoke Kumar Das, President, Paschim Banga Khandait Jati Sangha represented the case of their class, assisted by Shri Jogendra Nath Singha, Advocate, Shri Madhu Sudan Mudli, Vice-President, Shri Gobinda Maiti, Joint Secretary, an Shri Sudhangshu Sekhar Rout, Member, Shri Ramesh Chandra Bishal, Member, Shri Nani Kanta Das Member, Shri Chittaranjan Das, Member of the said Paschim Banga Khandait Jati Sangha. They took oath and submitted necessary particulars. As per their submission, the 'Khandait' class is at present one of the most down-trodden, under-privileged and socially and educationally backward classes of people in West Bengal. They are also not economically well-off.

The Khandaits are an immigrant class of people in West Bengal. They came and settled here long ago from Orissa. They speak the Bengali language and use Bengali script in writing. The state population of Khandait class in West Bengal is about 1,85,000. They are mainly the inhabitants of

Midnapore district, where about 1,50,000 of their total population reside, The rest of the Population is spread over the districts of Purulia (3000), Bankura (5000), Howrah (8000), Hooghly (1000), Burdwan (5000), Calcutta (2000), Nadia (1000), Malda (1500), Darjeeling (500), and Jalpaiguri (500). They are, however, found in large numbers in the neighbouring State of Orissa.

It was stated in evidence that the Khandaits at present live as a homogenous endogamous social group of people who are easily identifiable as a distinct class in which infiltration from outside is not possible without their knowledge.

As per their submission, 'Khandait' is the generic name of the feudal militia of Orissa. 'Khandai' means sword and their ancestors had, at one time, served as soldiers in Orissa. They entered Orissa from Northern India. The Khandaits are of mixed origin with considerable non-Aryan admixture. Risley (1891) quoting from the 'Statistical Account of Balasore District' stated that the ancient Rajas of Orissa kept large armies, and partitioned the land in strictly military tenures. These armies consisted of various castes and races, the upper ranks being made Officers by men of good descent, while the lower ones were recruited from the low castes. In Orissa, the Khandaits exhibit every variety of type from high Aryan of good social position (migrants from North India, claim as 'Kshatriya') to the recruits from a number of indigenous non-Aryan Tribes. The Khandaits of West Bengal claimed their descent from the low ranked Khandaits who were employed as 'Lathials', Chowkidars, ordinary Sepoys, Paik/Barkandaj etc. They took active part in 'Paik Bidroho' (Chuar rebellion) of Bengal. They have no matrimonial or any other social relation with the highly placed section of Khandaits of Orissa. The West Bengal Khandaits are stated to be Chasi Khandaits.

In West Bengal they were engaged as Paik Barkandaj, Tahashildars, cultivators etc. under different Zamindars in the past. Internally they are divided into several 'gotras' – Sandilya, Kashyap, Chandkura, Machh etc. They are a

'Jalchal' community. They maintain patron-client relationship with Brahmin, Napit and Dhopa. Utkal Brahmins serve them as priests and perform marriages. The most popular surnames in use among them are – Mahapatra, Mudli, Ray, Chowdhuri, Maiti, Bera, Mallick, Das, Rout, Bishal, etc. At present, they work in agriculture fields as small farmers, share-croppers and agricultural labourers and form a separate inferior group. Though many of them own land but the quantum is much below the ceiling. A study of the Anthropological Survey of India reveals that employment and self-employment schemes have made very little impact in their life.

Their achievement in the field of education is extremely low. As per their submission, some of them read upto Primary stage (Male – 25%, female – 0.5%), thereafter leave the schools to assist their parents in the field. The rate of drop-out in school education is extremely high. Hardly 0.2% of males could proceed after the school level; and out of them 0.04% could reach upto post-graduate level.

Due to lack of education among them, their representation in the 'Services' in Government as well as Public Undertaking is practically 'Nil'. There is no doctor, no engineer, no lawyer, no MLA, no MP but there are a few representatives at the Panchayat level (Panchayat Pradhan – 5, Member Zilla Parishad – 1). A very few teachers are, however, found amongst them.

It was stated in evidence that the living condition of the Khandiats is very unsatisfactory. Majority of them live in rural areas. Almost all of them live in 'Kutchha' houses; they attend to the call of nature in the open fields, and get water supply from tubewells, wells and ponds. They are guided by Hind traditions in their socio-religious affairs. Marriage at an early age is prevalent among them. Bride price still exists to certain extent.

This class of people get more or less the kind of treatment which is meted out to the people in the Schedule Castes and Tribes. Most of them live below the poverty line.

The facts established by evidence – oral and documentary – go to establish that the 'Khandait' class is socially and educationally backward and their economic condition is also not at all satisfactory. The Commission noted that the Mandal Commission has recommended inclusion of 'Khandait' class of people in the list of Backward Classes in West Bengal. The Khandait class was earlier treated by the Government as educationally backward class for Government of India Scholarships.

Taking into consideration, the facts stated in evidence, the materials on record and the submissions made, the Commission has no hesitation in coming to the conclusion that the 'Khandait' class constitutes socially and educationally a backward class in the State and the Commission recommends to the State Government that the 'Khandait' class of people should be included in the list of Backward Classes in the State and the Commission, accordingly, advises the Government of West Bengal to do so.

No one appeared before the Commission on behalf of the State Government although Notice was served on the Government of West Bengal.

No one has raised any objection to the inclusion of this class of people in the list of Backward Classes in the State of West Bengal.

PATIDAR (PATUA)

The Commission received mass petition from Shri Niranjana Chitrakar, Vill : Habichak, P.O. Bandapur, Dist.- Midnapore, and others. The signatories to the mass petition included Bapi Patidar (Abul Kalam Patidar), Secretary, Patua Samiti, Vill : Habichak, Dist.- Midnapore, for inclusion of 'Muslim Chitrakar and Patidar' class of people in the list Backward Classes in the State of West Bengal.

Shri Abul Kalam Patidar (Bapi Patidar), Secretary, Patua Samiti, and Shri Piyari Chitrakar, President of the said Samity appeared before the Commission on the date of their hearing on 22.07.1996. They took oath and presented necessary particulars in respect of their class 'Patidar' before the Commission. They made the submission that their class deserves inclusion in the list of the Backward Classes of the State of West Bengal because of their backwardness in every aspect of their life and activities – particularly in the social, educational and economic spheres.

They submitted before the commission that the class 'Patidar' is also known as 'Patikar' or 'Patua' which is an endogamous class of Mohammedans. Generally, they paint pictures illustrating the Hindu mythological events. Now-a-days many modern themes are also incorporated in their pictures and they hawk them from door to door singing appropriate songs. Sir H.H.Risley observed that in the last decade of the Nineteenth century, though the 'Patikars' are supposed to be Mohammedans, they are very lax in their religious practices. They worship the rose as 'Pir', and have a great respect for black kite, which they believe to be a bird of good omen. Risley further observed that 'Patuas' were a class of people, both Hindu and Mohammedan, whose profession was painting of Hindu Deities.

The stated population of 'Patidar' in West Bengal is about 50,000. They are mostly concentrated in the district of Midnapore, Birbhum, Murshidabad. They are also found in the districts of North and South 24-Parganas, Nadia, Howrah and Calcutta in the manner as detailed below :-

Midnapore	—	15,000.
24-Parganas (S)	—	10,000
24-Parganas (N)	—	10,000
Nadia	—	5,000
Murshidabad	—	5,000
Birbhum	—	2,000

Howrah	—	2,000
Calcutta	—	2,000

This 'Patidar' class is quite well known in West Bengal, for their distinctive style and techniques in painting. As stated earlier, their traditional occupations are scroll painting and singing of songs pertaining to the themes described in the scrolls and the idols. As per their submission, in the literacy drive programme of the State, their services are being quite profitably utilized by the Government of West Bengal for eradication of illiteracy from the rural society. They also brought some pictures and gave demonstrations by singing some songs before the Commission. Their performance reflects modern innovations in their techniques for infusing new ideas and knowledge into the traditional media for bringing changes in the outlook of the rural people.

As per their submission, hardly 5% of them possess some land, another 5% have got some land and also work on others' land. About 50% of them work on others' land as labourers. There are, however, a few bragadars also amongst them. Many of them, now-a-days, eke out their existence as day labourer, rickshaw-puller, cart driver, hawker, vendor, porter, toymaker, etc. Majority of their class, however, are below the poverty line.

They are quite backward in the field of education. Usually after obtaining primary level of education, the children are compelled to leave the schools to assist their parents and augment the family income. It was stated in evidence that about 1% of the males and about 0.01% of the females got primary education. The rate of drop out is extremely high among them. Their environment in the house is also not congenial for carrying on with studies. A very few among them could reach upto college level.

Due to lack of education among them, they have got no representation in different walks of life. The materials on record go to indicate that there is no doctor, no engineer, no lawyer from their class. There is no MLA, no

MP, no representative in statutory bodies. There is none in higher services or even in the middle ranks. There is about 0.01% in the ordinary jobs in the Government services. .

The living condition of this class of people is also not at all satisfactory. About half of the population live in thatched hutments and the other half in mud wall kutcha houses; cent per cent of them go to open fields to attend the call of nature; for water 50% depend on tubewells and 50 percent on wells and small ponds.

They are a marginal class of people occupying a very low social position in the local social hierarchy. As per their submission majority of them are treated like the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. During Mohammedan rule in Bengal, many Chitrakars were converted to Islam. They forced them to draw, exhibit and sing Islamic theologies to the Hindu population of Bengal to attract them towards Islam. This led to the gradual decline in their social position. They are the descendants of those earlier convertees and follow Muslim customs in general. They generally retain two names, one Hindu and the other Muslim. They occupy an intermediary position between Hindus and Muslims. They are looked down upon by both the Hindu and the Muslim people who enjoy higher social status.

The Commission noted that the Mondal Commission as well as Kaka Kalelkar Commission recommended for the inclusion of 'patua' in the list of Backward Classes in the State of West Bengal.

Taking into consideration the facts stated, materials furnished and submissions made, the Commission has arrived at the conclusion that the 'Patidar' (Patua) class constitutes a socially and educationally backward class in the State and the Commission recommends to the State Government for their inclusion in the list of Backward Classes in the State and the Commission, accordingly, advises the Government of West Bengal to do so.

It may be noted that there is no objection to the inclusion of this Class 'Patidar' (Patua) in the list of backward classes and no one has raised any objection to that effect before the Commission. No one appeared on behalf of the State Government although 'notice' was served on the Government of West Bengal.

In this connection it is to be noted here that 'Patidar' is also called 'Patel' and 'Kunbi Patel', they are section of 'Kunbi' who address themselves as 'patidar' signifying a title of distinction. The term 'Kunbu' indicates the occupation of a cultivator, but the majority of the Gujrati 'Kunbis' are probably 'Gujars' in origin.

To avoid unnecessary complications in future, it is felt desirable to mention the name of 'Patidar' in the list as 'Patidar' (Patua).

The 'Chitrakar' as a class has already been included in the list of backward Classes in West Bengal.

GANGOT

The Commission received requests from Shri Dulal Mandal, Secretary, Gangot Unnayan Samity, Vill : Madanpur, P.O.- amriti, dist.- Malda for inclusion of 'Gangot' class of people in the list of Backward Classes in the State of West Bengal. The petitioner appeared before the Commission for hearing on 20.09.1996. At the hearing, Shri Dulal Mandal, Secretary, Gangot Unnayan Samity appeared to represent the cas of their class assisted by Shri Prabir Kumar Jha, Advocate and Shri Sahadat Hossain, Vice-President of the Confederaio for Schedule Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. Their submission was that the 'Gangot' class is one of the most down-trodden, under-privileged and socially and educationally backward classes of people in West Bengal and they are looked down upon by the neighbours of their localities.

As per their submission, the 'Gangots' are a small class of people who live mainly in the villages on the banks of the river Ganges and other rivers mainly in the district of Malda. Their settlements are generally clustered around the villages inhabited by the backward class people.

They migrated from Bihar and most of them settled in the district of Malda of West Bengal where they number about 8000; the proportion of males and females being almost equal. Their main concentration is, however, in the districts Monghyr, Bhangalpur and Purneah of Bihar.

In the district of Malda, they are mostly found in the Police Stations of English Bazar, Ratua, Kaliachak, Harishchandrapur and old Malda. Amongst these areas, Gangot villages are thickly populated in English Bazar and Kaliachak Police Stations. They speak in 'Khotta' dialect. 'Mandal' is their common surname and they are known to others as 'Gangot Mondal'.

Though the Gangots have undergone some socio-cultural changes deviating to a certain extent from their congeners in Bihar, they still constitute a compact homogenous and endogamous social group, entry wherein from outside is not possible. Risley (1891) found them as a cultivating, landholding and labouring caste of Bihar.

As per their submission, most of them in the Malda district are agricultural labourers and day labourers. Majority of them do not have their own land, they work on others' land (Sshas, Benias, Muslims) as share-croppers. Some of them received 'Patta' of Government Khas land recently. About 5% of them own some land which is much below the ceiling and they do not work on others' land; and about 3% of them have got some land and also work on others' land; 2% of them are share-croppers and the remaining 90% work on others' land as agricultural labourers. The children also assist their parents in agricultural activities. They also work as domestic servants in the houses of rich men of other classes in lieu of food, lodging and a very small remuneration. The children below the age of twelve are engaged in grazing and other sundry jobs. As the

quantum of their cultivable land is small, the Gangot males also work as domestic servants in others' houses. Now a days, some of them work as labourers in construction work and stay outside for a pretty long time. The females assist the masons in construction work. About 95% of the Gangots exist below the poverty line; very few persons earn a little surplus. A very few of them started grocery and tea shops.

Their level of achievement in the field of education is also extremely low due to their poor economic condition. About 10% of the male and 5% of the females received education upto Primary level; about 0.88% of the males and 0.01% of the females upto Secondary level; and .25% of the male and 0.02% of the females upto Higher Secondary level and 0.15% of the males upto Graduate level.

Drop-out rate is extremely high; it is 70% at the Primary level and 29% at the Secondary level. The children are compelled to leave schools for assisting their parents in augmenting the family income.

The educational condition of this class is as deplorable and pathetic as that of their economic condition.

Due to lack of education among them, their representation in the services is also very insignificant.

As stated b them in evidence, there are only two High School teachers and about six Primary School teachers from their class. A very few persons are employed in Police Department as Constable or N.V.F. and Home guards. There is no officer froma amongst the Gangots anywhere throughout the State of West Bengal. Only one person is engage in the middle rank of Government Service. About 1% amongst them is engage in ordinary jobs nder Government. The percentage with regard to Doctors, Engineers, Lawyers is totally 'Nil'.

There is no MP, no MLA from amongst the Gangot class. There are only two Gram Panchayat members and one member in the Panchayat Samity. It

has been submitted in writing that 25% of them live in thatched hutments and 70% live in mud-wall kutchha houses; and about 5% live in semi-pucca or pucca houses. About 50% of them go to the open field to attend the call of nature 45% use dug-wells and the remaining 5% get the facility of bath room/toilet. They depend upon rivers, ponds and a very few upon tube wells for the supply of water; and their living condition is not at all satisfactory.

The Gangot classes profess Hinduism and are followers of Siva and Manasa. They also worship small-pox Goddess Jagadamba and Bhagabati. The Gangots engage Brahmin priests for performing marriage, Shradh and other ceremonies. In lieu, they work in the house and in the field of the Brahmins. Both adult and infant marriages are permissible. The males marry at the age of 18/19 and the females at the age of 15/16 years. Widow re-marriage is allowed in which case preference is given to the deceased husband's younger brother (Junior Levirate). Divorce is allowed with the consent of 'Majlis' (class panch). The 'Majlish' also implement the judgment of the class panch. Their marriage customs are akin to those classes of people who are looked down upon by the society. 'Sindurdan' is considered as the essential and binding portion of marriage. Marriage ceremony starts and ends before the 'Jungle Devata'. Slang songs (geet) are sung by the females on that occasion.

The Gangots rank with the Kurmis and the Koiris. As per their submission, they rank just above the 'Dosadh' (declared as Scheduled Caste), with whom they smoke using the same 'Hukkah' (Hubble-bubble). They are still looked down upon by the upper caste people who hesitate to give water to the Gangots from their tubewell or well. They cannot get entry into the kitchen and place of worship of upper class and in social gatherings. Even the children of the Gangots do not get tuition from them. Dhuti and napkin are the common dress of the males; and the females do not know the use of blouse or petty coat. They never use shoes or chappals, but the males, now-a-days use chappals made of tyres. They drink 'Tody' Juice in their ceremonies and become intoxicated.

The Mandal Commission recommended for inclusion of 'Gangota'/'Gangoth' class in the list of Backward Classes in the neighbouring State of Bihar.

Taking into consideration the facts stated, the materials furnished and the submission made, the Commission has arrived at the conclusion that the 'Gangot' class constitutes a socially and educationally backward class in the state and the Commission recommends to the State Government that the 'Gangot' class of people should be included in the list of Backward Classes in the State of West Bengal, and the Commission, accordingly, advises the Government of West Bengal to do so.

KASAI

The Commission received requests from Md. Sohail Roomi, Secretary Purulia Backward Muslim Community Federation, Shri Ghulam Mohammad Quraishi, General Secretary, West Bengal Jamait-ul-Quraish Youth Wing and others for inclusion of the 'Quraish' (Kasai) class in the list of Backward Classes in the State of West Bengal. The petitions have been duly processed and came up for hearing before the Commission on the 19th July 1996.

Shri Ghulam Haider, President, Quraish Social Welfare Organisation, Shri Ghulam Mohammad Quraishi, General Secretary, West Bengal Jamait-ul-Quraish Youth Wing, Shri Indu Bhusan Roy, Vice-President, Cofderation of SC, ST and OBC of West Bengal, Md. Sohail Roomim Secretary, Purulia Backward Muslim Community Federation and Shri Sakhil Ahmed appeared before the Commission on the date of hearing on 19th July, 1996. They took oath and made the submission that the 'Kasais' are butchers. There are two classes of 'Kasais', viz. the 'Jat Kasai' and the 'Hat Kasai'. The 'Jat Kasais' are the real 'Kasais', who slaughter cows and buffaloes for selling meat to the customers;

and the 'Hat Kasais' slaughter the lesser animals like goat and sheep for supply of meat to the customers. Although the 'Jat Kasais' and the 'Hat Kasais' are two groups of people, there is inter-changeability in their professional occupation both these groups together form the endogamous social group called 'Kasai'.

Risley has stated that most of the butchers are Mohammedans. In Eastern Bengal the Mohammedan butchers are classed as 'Bokhri Kasai' or goat killers and 'Goru Kasai' or cow killers. The latter were formerly looked down upon as degraded, but of late, the two groups have united and inter-marry freely. All are followers of Moulavi Karamat Ali and are very bigoted, eating with 'Kuti' but declining to have anything to do with the sweepers and Bediyas. It was submitted in evidence that the 'Kasais' occupy a low position in the Muslim social hierarchy.

Shri Gholam Haidar and Shri Golam Mohammed Quraishi made submissions before the Commission that the 'Quraishis' of the 'Quraish' class in the list of Backward Classes along with 'Kasais'. The Commission, however, pointed out to them that Hazrat Mahammed was a Quraish and the Quraishis were in charge of the shrine at Kaaba in Mecca. His wife, Khadija also belonged to the Quraishi class. The Quraishi was the top class people at that time in the Arab Peninsula. Later on, Mahammed founded the Islam religion. Shri Gholam Haidar and Shri Gholam Mohammed Quraishi could not explain before the Commission as to how the Quraishi class became 'Kasai' in modern days and when the people belonging to the 'Quraishi' class came to India to perform the occupation of the butcher. In the circumstances, their original application praying for inclusion of the 'Quraish' class along with the 'Kasai' class in the list of Backward Classes of the State of West Bengal was not pressed; and accordingly, the Commission refused to entertain the prayer for inclusion of the 'Quraish' class in the list of Backward Classes.

The 'Kasais' follow the laws of Islam in births, marriages and funerals, But although the laws of Islam preach equality amongst the

individuals, the 'Kasais' suffer from many social disabilities in arranging the marriages of their children with the upper class Muslim; and also in their day to day social transactions with upper class Muslims like, Sheikhs, Saiyyads, etc.

It was submitted in evidence that 50% of the Kasai males and 20% of the Kasai females receive Primary education; 2% of the males and 1% of the females receive Secondary education; and beyond that level the percentage is practically 'Nil'. There is huge drop-out in the Primary level – almost about 90% and at the Secondary level the percentage is about 100%, inasmuch as, the 'Kasais' are not mentally inclined to receive education beyond the Primary standard. There is no Doctor, no Engineer, no Chartered Accountant or anyone in the professional services. There is no officer in the higher services or even in the Middle ranks. The number of ordinary job-holders in the Government and non-Government organizations is also practically 'Nil'. There is no MP, no MLA and not even a member in the Zilla Parishad.

The 'Kasais' do not own any land of their own nor do they work on others' land either as share croppers or as labourers. There is no large or medium size business run by them; and hardly 5% of them are engaged in small trades or petty family business, particularly, in the beef and mutton trades.

The living condition of the 'Kasais' is not at all satisfactory. About 90% of the 'Kasais' live in mud-wall kutchha and thatched hutments; about 5% live in brick-wall semi-pucca houses; and 5% in pucca houses. About 90% of the 'Kasais' go to the open field to attend the call of nature; and 5% make use of thatched sheds; and 5% of them use dug-well system. About 95% of them use water from the small ponds and about 5% of them get the facility of tubewell water.

The economic condition of the 'Kasais' indicates that about 5% of them live below the poverty line; 90% above the poverty line and 5% of them earn a little surplus.

It was stated in evidence that 100% of the general population treat them as persons of inferior social status, but no disrespect is voluntarily sown to them.

It was submitted in evidence that the 'Kasai' class though an endogamous social group is not always comprised of the big business men like, the owners of slaughter houses or meat shops. Many holders of licences of slaughter houses and meat shops are the persons who do not actually belong to the 'Kasai' class. Therefore, the occupation is not the criterion, inasmuch as, anyone engaged in the meat trade may claim to be a 'Kasai' in the sense that he also performs the functions of a butcher, although he may not actually belong to the 'Kasai' class. It was, therefore, submitted that all the people in the 'Kasai' class are not, now a days, the owners of the slaughter houses or meat shops and not all of them are engaged in the profession of actually slaughtering and selling the meat. Therefore, a person not belonging to the 'Kasai' class may be engaged in the slaughter or meat trade for his competence in the job; and at the same time a person actually belonging to the 'Kasai' class may not be doing his hereditary slaughter or meat business. In the circumstances, it was submitted that the people in the 'Kasai' class who are not actually engaged in the meat trade business may be identified with reference to their status in the Muslim social hierarchy and not to establish their identity on the basis of their occupation which may not be slaughtering of animals or selling of meat.

The Klelkar Commission and the Mandal Commission have recommended the inclusion of the 'Kasai' class in the list of Backward Classes in the State of West Bengal.

Taking into consideration the facts stated, the materials furnished and the submissions made, the Commission has arrived at the conclusion that the 'Kasai' class constitutes a socially and educationally Backward Class in the State and the Commission recommends to the State Government that the 'Kasai' class should be included in the list of Backward Classes in the State of West

Bengal and the Commission, Accordingly, advises the Government of West Bengal to do so.

It may be noted that there is no objection to the inclusion of the 'Kasai' class in the list of Backward Classes in West Bengal and no one has raised any objection to the effect.

No one appeared on behalf of the State Government, although 'Notice' was served on the Government of West Bengal.

Sd/-

(A.K.Das)

Member

Sd/-

(Bela Bhgattacharya)

Member

Sd/-

(Ramen Poddar)

Member

Sd/-

(J. Misra.)

Member-Secretary

Sd/-

(A.N.Sen)

Chairman