Chronicled Evidence for the Inclusion of Telugu Vadderas in ST List

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1. Introduction

Vadderas, known by different names in different regions of India, are a hard-working navvies tribe. This primitive tribe is known to have originated in Orissa and spread to all parts of the Indian Sub-Continent (including present day Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh). The names with which this tribe is called varies from region to region, amongst which the most often used names include *Od, Beldhar, Bhovi, Vadde, Vaddi, Vaddera, Vaddera, Oddar, Vadra, Shorkaband* etc.

Vadderas are a native indigenous tribe of the Indian Sub-Continent known to have existed in India since before the arrival of the central Asian Tribes like Aryans. Like many other Tribal Societies, Vadderas too have lost their primitive resources Post-Mughal period. With the coming of the Europeans, Primitive tribes like Vadderas were branded as criminals for resisting the exploitation of natural resources [forest] in the hands of the colonial powers (British).

Just before independence, when reservations and other added benefits were being implemented at both princely states and throughout the nation, criminal tribes including Vadderas were initially excluded from such social guarantees- perhaps due to the need of the hour to protect the living rights of the 'untouchables' and 'out castes' first.

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Luckily, in states like Mysore, Vadderas(*Bhovi*) got special status without the central government's intervention way before independence. Henceforth, with various adjustments and amendments, Vadderas and their associated castes in most of the states got either ST or SC status in the span of three decades post-independence.

At the same time, for various socio-political reasons, some of the states failed to include Vadderas and other associated tribes into ST or SC. The worst-case scenario took place in united AP, when all other CTs of the state were given ST status, except for Vadderas, who were left mis-placed in BC / OBC. [1976 SC/ST reorganisation]

It is owing to this reason that Telugu Vadderas have been demanding their deserved place in the ST list since 1976.

2. Documented Evidence

To support the same, we are enclosing the evidence by the constitution to include any caste in ST list. They are:

2.1 Primitive traits
2.2 Distinct culture
2.3 Geographical isolation
2.4 Shyness of contact with the community at large
2.5 Backwardness

Even though the government of India recently raised objections over two of the above said criteria-namely primitive traits (derogatory in current context) and Geographical Isolation (rampant migration for livelihood in modern times), we the Vadderas do possess the characteristics associated with the above said objective criteria too. Our case for ST list inclusion has support from the predominance of all the commissions and committees constituted to study and improve lives of criminal tribes in independent India.

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Given below is a list of documented proofs for including Vadderas into the ST list

2.1 Primitive Traits

2.1.1 According to FRENCH ETHNOGRAPHER *Abbe J.A Dubois* in "HINDU MANNERS CUSTOMS & CEREMONIES", Vadderas are defined as nomadic tribes, who wander in search of work. [page 70-71]

2.1.2 According to *Edgar Thurston* in "CATES AND TRIBES OF SOUTH INDIA", Vadderas are mentioned as nomadic tribes based on earlier census reports he had studied. [page 428, vol.5]

2.1.3 According to *Edgar Thurston* in "CATES AND TRIBES OF SOUTH INDIA" again, Vadderas had been known to practice primitive tribal(primary) food hunting practices which include: "The Oddes eating rats, porcupines, and scaly ant-eaters on pangolins (Manis Pentadactyla)" [vol. v, Page 422-436]

2.2 Distinct Culture

2.2.1 As a class they are described as being dirty, thriftless and immoderate drinkers; Eating every description of animal food including village pig and are especially fond of rats. They smoke ganja(marijuana) and tobacco. [desc. Of Vadderas in Notes on Criminal Classes in the Bombay Presidency]

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2.2.2 According to *"Notes on Criminal Classes in the Bombay Presidency" Govt. Central Press Bombay*, "Women dress in a *Sari* with the upper end passed over the head and across the bosom; they neither wear bodice, nor glass bangles on the right hand; they wear brass or *kasa* bracelets." Men are known to wear distinctly Vaddera labour attire consisting of *dhotar*(loin-cloth), *angi*(shirt), *rumal*(a piece of cloth for head), *kambal*(blanket) over the shoulder and wear no shoes. [Page 167]

2.2.3 According to *"Notes on Criminal Classes in the Bombay Presidency" by Govt. Central Press Bombay*, All categories of Vadderas wander about the country, encamp outside the villages in distinct dwellings characterised by mat huts, grass huts, pāls, bamboo huts accompanied by their pack of asses, goats and their distinct solid-wheeled carts. [Page 167]

2.2.4 According to *"Notes on Criminal Classes in the Bombay Presidency" by Govt. Central Press Bombay*, Vadderas have unique tribal skills to snare and kill pigs; such skill is often employed by village farmers to get rid of pests in their crops. [Page 167]

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2.2.5 According to Author *Edgar Thurston* in "Castes and Tribes of South India", Vadderas have been known to participate in distinct ceremonies and showcase distinct habits both individually and in family occasions such as: [Vol. V, Page 422-436]

i. Tattooing on the forehead (*Pachche Botlu*), marks as a proof of their life on Earth (*bhulokam*) before they die.
ii. Distinct Puberty ceremony with defined herbal leaves, sticks, plants and medicines [These are placed, to ward off evil spirits].
iii. *Oli* which means bride-price is a distinctive practice particular to Vadderas of Nizam region, for pre booking a bride.

2.3 Geographical Isolation

2.3.1 As a class, Vadderas are migratory, making temporary encampments at places where they obtain work. [Description of Vadderas in the book, Notes on Criminal Classes in the Bombay Presidency]

2.3.2 According to "A Historical Survey of Ex-Criminal Tribes Settlements in Andhra: A case study of Stuartpuram and Sidhapuram settlements", Vadderas' reformatory settlements were established in and around the Nallamala forest region in united Andhra Pradesh. They are:

a. In Sidhapuram, Kurnool district- a Voluntary settlement was established in the year 1913(by the government of India).
b. Lingala is located at Mahaboobnagar district in 1917(by the Nizam government). *The location of these settlements reiterates the fact that Vadderas are not only tribes but are geographically isolated tribes living in forests.*

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2.4 Shyness of Contact with the Community at Large

2.4.1 According to *"Notes on Criminal Classes in the Bombay Presidency" by Govt. Central Press Bombay*, all types of Vadderas including *Bandi, Ghatti, Kall* are living detatched from villages and human settlements inhabited by other communities. [Page 167]

2.4.2 According to *"Notes on Criminal Classes in the Bombay Presidency" by Govt. Central Press Bombay*, all types of Vadderas speak a corrupt form of Telugu and they have a distinct slang of expressions used and understood only by Vadderas. [Page 168]

2.4.3 All committees including the latest *"Balakrishna Renuke Commission"* have highlighted the plight of criminal tribes and lists Vadderas as the Prime tribe in every C.T list published so far. Such C.T inclusions stemming from the *Notified Criminal Tribes* act of the British rule, have had adverse effects on the socio-economic status of the Vadderas. After Independence, when other criminal tribes in united A.P were given ST status, all that was left to Vadderas was only humiliation resulting from including them in BC, where they simply don't belong. This has led to their social exclusion and shying away from the rest of society, which has gone to such an extent that they feel abashed and repulsive about telling the name of their caste.

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2.5 Backwardness

2.5.1 According to Description of odde in Castes and Tribes of South India by Edgar Thurston Vol.5, "They are very ignorant, not even being able to calculate how much work they have done because of their ignorant fidelity to their employer, who may or may not be honest to them." [Description of odde in Castes and Tribes of South India by Edgar Thurston Vol.5]

2.5.2 According to *"Notes on Criminal Classes in the Bombay Presidency" by Govt. Central Press Bombay*, "Like other depressed classes they wear scanty clothing." [Page 167]

2.5.3 According to *"Notes on Criminal Classes in the Bombay Presidency" by Govt. Central Press Bombay*, who gave an explicit explanation about the criminal modus operandi of Vadderas such that any reader who happens to cast an eye over is likely to conclude that all Vadderas are criminals; this stigma further adds to the social backwardness of Vadderas to this very day.[Page 169 to 172]

2.5.4 According to *"The Criminal Classes in India"* by *M. Kennedy*, Vadderas are clearly mentioned as being amongst criminal classes belonging to the Bombay Presidency. This adds credence to the criminal social stigma that has been haunting the Deccan Vadderas till this moment. [Page 166]

2.5.5 According to the *Census Report of 1871*, Vadderas are described as having *"... the reputation of assisting professional thieves in committing dacoities and robberies."* Such reports and census data have paved way for Vadderas being branded criminals from birth by the British, resulting in social backwardness extending to the current days. [Contd...]

2.5.6 According to the author of *"The Making of Criminal Tribes: Patterns and Transitions"*, Vadderas along with other criminal tribes were made and sustained as criminals not only by society but also by law enforcing agencies. Author's case study narrates the plight of Vadderas in Sidhapuram and Kapparallatippa (Nellore district) reformatory settlements. This stigma continues to haunt Vadderas socially even to this day. [in case study section]

3. Further Evidence Pertaining to the Current Socio-Economic Conditions of Vadderas

Apart from documented evidence listed above, the stark-naked reality of the destitute and deprived living standards of Vaddera/Vaddera people in Telugu states form the core basis of reasons to include Telugu Vaddera/Vaddera into the ST list.

The current place of Telugu Vadderas, socially can be summarised as follows:

3.1 One cannot miss the Pathetic living standards and poor hygiene in Vaddera labour living spaces in *bastis* / *palles* / *camps* / *Palems* / *hallis* / *wadas* .

3.2 Highest percentage of morbid and mortal accidents in any construction-based profession is reported in Vaddera community and its related stone/ Earth related navvies occupation.

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3.3 In most of the Family/Marital Counselling Centres in the vicinity of Vaddera settlements, Vadderas have recorded maximum number of cases and have participated in most of the related counselling sessions; this is a solid evidence pertaining to their treacherous occupation, which deprives them of a balanced social life after work.

3.4 Imbalance resulting from being excluded from the ST list, despite having irrevocable criminal stigma, has resulted Vadderas ending up in jails and reformatories by inevitably adopting socially condemned criminal activities such as becoming criminal henchmen, faction feud fuels, burglars and thieves to name a few. Predominance of Vadderas in past crime records and jail inmates' lists are enough evidence to showcase the backwardness of Vadderas in both the telugu speaking states combined.

3.5 Lack of awareness even in leaders of this undeveloped community, which has no representation in state and central legislatures, has led to both the Telugu State Governments ignoring this community in every aspect. One glaring neglect is the requirement of, difficult to procure labour card, to get accidental insurance, even for Vaddera labour, whose occupation is a death game on daily basis. It is to be noted that some of the BCs in these states, who have their representatives in state legislatures have the advantage of getting the occupation related accidental insurance benefits even with just caste certificate, unlike Vadderas who require a labour card to receive any compensation after a fatality in treacherous work.

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3.6 Vadderas have not only lost their past glory but have become soft targets for being excluded from history in its documentary or other depictions. *Wadde Obanna* a gallant warrior and the chieftain of *Uyyalawada Narasimha Reddy's* troops who partook in every battle waged against the British and shared great friendship and camaraderie with Narasimha Reddy, was reduced to a measly sidekick, in the recent Narasimha Reddy biopic titled *Syeraa Narasimha Reddy*(2019). The sub-plot involving the humiliation of Obanna getting his head tonsured in the hands of the East India company goes nowhere and serves no purpose other than to infuriate and taunt Vaddera people. According to the ode, *Renati Suryachandrulu*, based on which this biopic is made, narrates Obanna as the deuteragonist of this ballad, and yet the makers had the audacity to reduce him to a yes-man.

4. Closure

Innumerable proof of the above said facts can be read, heard and seen in all forms of media. A more detailed report of any point related to Vadderas' ST status claim, can be produced and presented on demand from the following persons and references.

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