

Ethnographic Study on Rai Sikh for inclusion in SC in Haryana by Prof Kinarpreet Kaur, Punjabi University Chandigarh 2010-13

Subject: Ethnographic Study of four castes, namely, 1.Naik, Aheria, Aheri, Heri, Thori or Turi 2. Rai Sikh 3. Banjara 4. Dhobi

As per study conducted by Punjab University, Chandigarh, regarding castes, namely, 1.Naik, Aheria, Aheri, Heri, Thori or Turi 2. Rai Sikh 3. Banjara 4. Dhobi. The following information has been collected by the Department of sociology, Punjab University Chandigarh. As per Govt of India format the details of the castes is as under:-

1.Name the Community (with their identity with reference to social status/rank in social hierarchy):

In Anthropological and Sociological studies, Rai Sikhs are identified as tribes and their rank in social structure is higher.

2. Name of sub-castes and clans (within the caste):

Mahatams and Sirkibands

3. Proposal in brief:

The Govt of India published a list of Scheduled Castes under the GOI (SC) Order 1936 and reservation policy known as 'protective discrimination' was adopted through constitutional measures to safeguard their interests. The Article 15 of the Constitution stands for prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, caste and race, Article 16 (4) for employment and Article 17 for abolishing untouchability. Similarly, Article 330, 332 and 334 provides for the reservation of the seats and also for prevention of

atrocities – The SC and ST Act 1989. It is widely debated whether or not the caste has been benefited from reservation policy as it is already included in BC list of State and OBC list of Centre. For the purpose of inclusion of this caste in the list of Scheduled Castes the State Government has conducted a study through Punjab University, Chandigarh to know the status of the caste in society. The social, educational, economic and employment status has been the main outcome of the study.

4. Inclusion as synonym (please indicate the following details:

A) Etymological meaning of the community name proposed for inclusion:

a) Rai Sikhs are known as Mahatam and Sirkiband which means those who make mats (sirkis) from grass reeds (Sarr). The name Mahatam is said to be derived from ‘Mahta’.

B) Nature of social relationship with the notified Scheduled Caste:

b) Rai Sikhs being nomadic, criminal tribes, de-notified tribes their relationship with other castes particularly with the Scheduled Castes was not noticed in the past. However, at present their interaction with the other castes is noticeable.

5. Inclusion as a sub-caste. Please give a brief account of the sub-caste, traditional as well as present occupation, socio-economic interaction between sub-caste and main caste (which is notified):

Refer point 2 and 4

Caste: Rai Sikhs

Traditional occupations: Making mats from grass reeds, agricultural labour, cattle rearing, hunting wildboars, liquor distillation, wage labour.

Present occupation: Rope making or sirki making, agricultural labour and cultivation of land.

6. Deletion or deletion of a notified caste/sub-caste, etc. please give details of reason, the present socio-economic conditions of the community:

Not applicable

7. Transfer from SC to ST or vice-versa:. Please give detailed justification:

No applicable

8. Please indicate name of District, Sub-division, Block in which the community is concentrated:

Community is concentrated in Ambala, Faridabad, Fatehabad (Dhabwali, Ellanabad), Gurgaon, Hissar, Jhajjar, Jind, Kaithal, Karnal (Jundia, Nilokheri), Kurukshetra, Mewat, Narnaul, Palwal, Panipat, Rohtak, Sirsa, Sonipat and Yamuna Nagar Districts of Haryana and scattered in sub-divisions of these districts.

9. Population (Please indicate the source of data and population district, block-wise) :

Population of Rai Sikhs in Haryana State is 1,32,049.

The information has been collected from field functionaries as well as representative of Rai Sikh community because govt does not publish data regarding BCs/OBCs separately.

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10. Social handicaps , Untouchability and other aspects:

Untouchables were placed on the most degraded bottom layer considered as outcasts. Untouchables had been subject to a variety of disabilities, deprivation and oppressions under traditional system. They were made to stay the outside village settlements and were treated as untouchables as the concept of pollution was attached to them. But with passage of the Government of India Act of 1935 they were referred to as 'Scheduled Castes'. These castes listed in the 1931 census were officially defined as Depressed Castes in 1932. Subsequently, the then Government of India published a list of Scheduled Castes under the Govt of India (SC) Order 1936. The reservation policy known as 'protective discrimination' was adopted through constitutional measures to safeguard their interests. The Article 15 stands for prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, caste and race. Article 16 (4) for employment and Article 17 for abolishing untouchability.

They were victims of untouchability in the past. They perceived and projected that, untouchability is being practised against them in the present time also.

11. Please indicate if there are any reported incidents of inter-caste marriage between the community and other castes:

No case of inter-caste marriage was reported in the State.

12. Occupation (Please indicate details on economic backwardness of the community)

(i) Traditional occupation:

(ii) Present occupation:

Refer point 5

Details of economic backwardness of community:

Economic Disability	Rai Sikh
Low	25.40%
Medium	55.20%
High	19.40%

The above table shows that about 19% of Rai Sikhs are facing high degree of economic disability.

People having income ranging from Rs.500/- p.m. to Rs.5000/- p.m. perceive high or low economic disability. However, rise in income show declining trend in the perception of disability. Lifestyle relating to ownership of land such as cultivation and irrigation of land are found to be redundant in terms of their impact on economic disability. Rai Sikhs being involved in labour jobs still prefer joint families as economic hardship is unaffordable for them. Economic insecurity is high in nuclear families in urban areas where it is difficult to make both ends meet.

13. Impact of urbanisation (% of population living in urban areas):

Urbanization results in social mobility and migration from rural to urban areas in providing more economic opportunities. Urban people get more economic opportunities than their counter parts in rural areas. 33.30% of Rai Sikhs from urban areas experience high degree of disability. People belonging to rural areas face a lot of problems in adjustment after migration to urban areas and as a result experience alienation and disability. Perhaps those who belong to rural areas also stay at peripheral away from main village.

14. Level of education-literacy within the community:

Education Level	Rai Sikh
Illiterates	58.80%
Primary	12.10%
Under Middle/Middle	5.50%
Matric	20.00%
Intermediate	1.80%
Graduate/Post Graduation/	1.80%
Professional Courses	

15. Is the community listed as backward Class in State List/Central List?

Yes, community is listed as Backward Classes 'A' in Haryana State and as Other Backward Classes in Central List

Haryana State List of Backward Classes: 50. Rai Sikh

Central List of Other Backward Classes: 49. Rai Sikh

16. Special features (if any):

17. Findings of Study done by any reputed research Institute/Scholar on extent of social backwardness faced by the community. (Please enclose a copy):

Rai Sikhs are identified as Tribes. About 77% of Rai Sikhs are engaged in labour work in general and agricultural labour in particular.

Only very few Rai Sikhs have very small ownership of land and majority of them are working as agricultural

labourers and cultivators of land. 51.60% of Rai Sikhs are still living in joint families. Rai Sikhs rank low in terms of kitchen gadgets, electronic gadgets and vehicles. Their marriages are performed according to Sikh rituals. They adopted the custom of marriage with widows according to the form of 'Chadar Dalna'.

18. Views on extreme form of social, educational and economic backwardness faced by the community:

These communities were found to be victim of deprivation and discrimination. Keeping in view, the low literacy rate, economic disability, social disadvantage and occupying marginal share in Public Sector jobs, it is recommended that backward community Rai Sikh may be included in the list of Scheduled Castes.