

Tribal body opposes resolution to include Boyas, Valmikis in ST list

Vijayawada-based federation submits representation to National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, argues that inclusion of these communities would compromise benefits for existing STs

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Within days of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly passing a unanimous resolution to recommend the inclusion of the Boya/Valmiki community of the State in the Scheduled Tribes list, the National Tribal Federation (NTF), a Vijayawada-based group of STs, has opposed the move in a representation to the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST).

The Andhra Pradesh Assembly last week passed a unanimous resolution to send a formal proposal for the inclusion of the Boya/Valmiki community in the State's ST list.

As per the process, the decision on inclusion depends on the concurrence of both the NCST and the

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KUMBA UDAY KUMAR
NTF general secretary

Office of the Registrar General of India.

Days after the resolution was passed, a delegation from the NTF, which works for the welfare of ST persons, visited the office of the NCST in New Delhi and submitted a representation, arguing that including this community in the ST list would seriously compromise the benefits for existing STs.

Currently, Andhra Pradesh has 6% reservation

for STs, which applies to 34 communities in the State that have been notified as such.

Kumba Uday Kumar, NTF general secretary, told *The Hindu*, "There are over 40 lakh Boya/Valmiki people in the State. As per the 2011 Census, the entire ST population of the State stands at around 27 lakh. Boyas are developed, educated, and have political influence, they are well-equipped in all aspects."

In their representation to the NCST, the NTF said that the Boya/Valmiki community in no way qualifies as a tribe as per the Lokur Committee criteria set out in 1965.

The Boya community is listed under the Central OBC list currently and if the proposal for their inclusion in the ST list is approved, they will be removed from this list and

added to the ST list. In the resolution passed by the A.P. Assembly, it was held that several Commissions had studied the conditions of the community and recommended it for inclusion in the ST list. The resolution also cited findings from a recent report of a "One Man Commission" appointed by the government.

As per the findings, the One-Man Commission led by retired IAS officer I. Samuel Anand Kumar had found that 47% of Boyas in the State were landless and that 45% of them were small and marginal farmers.

It also noted that the Commission had found that 77% of the heads of households in the community were illiterate and that illiteracy among adults aged 25 and above stood at 54%.