

PRESS RELEASE

Text of the letter addressed to Dr. Manmohan Singh,
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India by Selvi J Jayalalithaa,
Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu on 28.7.2011

I would like to draw your kind attention to the long pending request of the Badaga Community in the Nilgiris District in Tamil Nadu to include them in the list of Scheduled Tribes. This issue has been pending for a long time.

During my earlier tenure, I wrote a letter to the Hon'ble Union Minister of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, on 5.9.2003 with a detailed analysis of various attributes of the Badaga Community such as primitive traits, a distinctive culture, shyness of contact with the public at large, geographical isolation and social and economic backwardness to declare them as a Scheduled Tribe (copies enclosed). In the Census of 1931, the Badagas were classified as a Tribe.

The Badagas of Nilgiris District made a representation to me recently to take up the issue again with the Government of India. The evidence produced by the Badagas reveals that they have been living in the Nilgiris hills for several centuries along with other Tribes, such as Todas. The Badagas are an ethnic and Linguistic Minority Tribal Group with a distinct culture and heritage of their own. Their oral literature, belief and faith reveal their attachment to Nakkubetta and Nilgiris through DEVVA and HETHE HABBAS, which are animistic in nature.

The criterion of Primitive Tribe, one of the characteristics indicated for Scheduled Tribes, can no longer be applicable to many of the Scheduled Tribes in the country due to their upliftment through various developmental programmes of the Government since Independence, whereas it is very much relevant and applicable in the case of the Badagas of Nilgiris. In view of the above, it is clear that the broad characteristics indicated for classification of a community as a Scheduled Tribe have been satisfied, thus making them eligible for qualification as a Scheduled Tribe.

I request that immediate action may kindly be taken to consider the request of the "Badaga" Community to include them in the list of Scheduled Tribes, at the earliest.

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