

# CENSUS-2021

## NEED TO HAVE CASTE-WISE CENSUS

At the meeting held on 31st August 2018 with the Senior Officials of the office of RGI and Home Ministry to review the preparation of Census 2021, Hon'ble Shri. **Rajnath Singh**, (Union Defence Minister), **then Home Minister favoured to collect data of OBCs.**

### The PIB release of 31.8.2018 states:

'The Union Home Minister discussed the road map for undertaking the Census in 2021 and it was emphasised that improvements in design and technological interventions be made so as to ensure that the Census data is finalized within 3 years after conducting of Census. ... **It is also envisaged to collect data on OBC for the first time.** Use of maps/georeferencing at the time of house listing is also under consideration'.

Recently, responding to a question on the Karnataka government not releasing the caste census report, Hon'ble Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Shri. **Ramdas Athawale** said that "a caste census is required across the country and doing it in just one state won't help." (Economic Times 12.7.2021).

### Sudden volte-face:

In response to the question raised by Hon'ble Member of Parliament Thiru. **T.R. Baalu**, Leader of DMK Parliamentary Party (Unstarred Question No.356, dt: 20.7.2021), Union Minister of State for Home **Nityanand Rai** has given written reply as under:

"The state governments of Maharashtra and Odisha have requested to collect caste details in the forthcoming census. The **Government of India has decided as a matter of policy not to enumerate caste-wise population** other than SCs and STs in census".

The Statement of Hon'ble Minister is in line with the letter sent by Registrar General of India and Census Commissioner to Govt. of Maharashtra on their request to conduct caste-wise Census.

### Observations of RGI & CC:

In his reply letter dt. 17.2.2020 addressed to Maharashtra Government, the RGI & CC has stated that "in case a question on OBCs is canvassed, it will return names of hundreds and thousands of castes, sub-castes as the people use their clan/gotra, sub-caste and caste names interchangeably. The phonetic similarities in name of the castes often lead to misclassification".

Further, the letter said that "**collection of data of OBCs/SEBCs and other castes will adversely affect the integrity of Census exercise** and hence the enumeration of OBCs, SEBCs and other castes has not been taken up in 2021 Census".

It is to be remembered that Caste data had been successfully collected, processed and disseminated by the Census of India in all the past Censuses of 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921 and 1931.

Even in 1941 also, it was done but not tabulated for want of funds due to then-ongoing World War. At none of these Censuses, then Commissioners or officials put forth this argument. In fact, they conducted the exercise seriously as it was one of the important characteristics of Indian Society and any census of the population of India without its caste profile would be incomplete.

Even after eighty years now, in the absence of current caste data, the Governments and data users, again and again, have to go back to the 1931 Census report for caste data.

### 1. United Nations stipulated norms for conducting census.

While admitting regional variations, the United Nations has insisted on compulsory collection of details of about 17 items of which Item No.13 pertains to collection of comprehensive details about the communities and citizenship characters.

### 2. Census Questionnaire in USA:

The United States Census Bureau in its 2020 Census Questionnaire requires its citizens to **spell out their origin** (Hispanic, Latin, or Spanish) **and race** (Black, African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, etc) under Questions No. 6 & 7 of the Questionnaire. In the earlier Censuses also, the US adopts this method so as to effect affirmative action for these racial groups.

### 3. "We support a headcount for OBCs in the coming census," "What is wrong in having details of the OBC segment of our population?"

Hon'ble Thiru. **Venkaiah Naidu**, Chairman of Rajya Sabha, then told the reporters on **3<sup>rd</sup> May 2010** (Hindustan Times - 4.5.2010)

### 4. Five judges bench of Supreme Court of India vide their judgment dated 11<sup>th</sup> May 2010 ruled that "**In the absence of updated empirical data, it is well-nigh impossible for the Courts to decide whether the reservations in favour of OBC groups are proportionate or not**". (WP No.356 of 1994 and 245 of 1995 and 517 of 2005).

It will only be a lame excuse that multiplicity of caste and sub-caste names would make a scientific collection of data impossible when the Government is fully equipped and moving forward towards a '**digital India**'.

Post-independence, the census has been collecting SC-ST data, though not all caste data, and there have been no reported experience of their numbers being inflated or their population count being distorted. This further proves the apprehension of the ORGI to be unfounded.

Hon'ble Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah, after laying the foundation stone of a new building of the Registrar General of India and Census Commissioner in New Delhi said that "Census data will be collected through a mobile app. This is for the first time that the mobile app will be used for the census exercise. India will be moving from the pen and paper census to digital data, which will be a big revolution in the country's census exercise,".

In the absence of reliable data with the Governments at present, the legality of the legislation passed by the Government both at the Centre and States on the reservation policies for the OBCs, SCs, STs are repeatedly questioned by the Hon'ble Courts. This has become more relevant now when petitions are made for identifying the creamy layer among all the reserved categories including SC/ST and to remove them from the purview of reservation, sub-categorisation within reserved groups and reservation for the economically weaker sections among upper castes.

All these arguments can be well answered only through a valid database that can be done only through the enumeration of a caste-wise census.

In addition to the Maharashtra State Assembly, both Bihar and Odisha governments had also adopted similar resolutions urging the Central Government to undertake caste-wise Census of OBCs.

#### **Census Questionnaire in USA:**

**The United States of America Census Bureau in its 2020 Census Questionnaire** requires its citizens to **spell out their origin** (Hispanic, Latin, or Spanish) **and race** (Black, African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, etc) under Questions No. 6 & 7 of the Questionnaire. In the earlier Censuses also, the USA adopted this method so as to effect affirmative action for these racial groups.

The Backward Classes Commissions constituted by the Central Government, the First BC Commission headed by Kaka Kalelkar and the Second Commission headed by B.P.Mandal, recommended a caste-wise census.

Hon'ble Members of Parliament have repeatedly raised this matter in the Parliament Session on the need to have a caste-wise Census.

#### **Commission on Sub-categorisation of OBCs needs data:**

The Government appointed **Commission on Sub-categorisation of OBCs headed by Justice G Rohini** (Retd.), has said that the Commission needs to have some estimate of the caste-wise population figures and as there is no available official caste-wise population data post-Independence, decides to get an all-India survey.

Thus, the Commission that has been entrusted with the important task of sub-categorisation of OBCs, in the absence of caste-wise data, has been pushed to request for an all-India survey. This, if done, will not be a full-fledged exercise and will end up like SECC-2011 incurring an additional cost with no fruitful results.

In this task, it is very much necessary that the entire exercise of caste-wise census, be undertaken only by the Census Department, as Census comes under the Union List (Entry 69 under the Seventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution); Inquiries,

5. "When it is the position that after 1931, there had never been any caste wise enumeration or tabulation and when there cannot be any dispute that there is increase in the population of SC/ST/OBC manifold after 1931, the percentage of reservation fixed on the basis of population in the year 1931 has to be proportionately increased, by conducting caste-wise census in the year 1931 has to be proportionately increased, by conducting caste-wise census by the government. In the interest of the weaker sections of the society, **we direct the Census Department of the Government of India to take all such measures towards conducting the caste wise census in the country at the earliest** and in a time bound manner, so as to achieve the goal of social justice in its true sense, which is the need of the hour". (**Madras High Court Judgement WP 25785 of 2005, dt: 24.10.2008**).

6. **Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-12) report** published in June 2008,

#### **Para 6.111:**

"State-wise, OBC-wise data on population as well as vital and demographic variables are not available, which is the main hurdle in the formulation of policies and programmes for the development of the Other Backward Classes."

#### **Para 6.128:**

Like SCs, STs, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities, **there is an imperative need to carry out a census of OBCs now or in the next census in 2011**. In the absence of exact assessment of their population size; literacy rate; employment status in government, private and unorganized sectors; basic civic amenities; health status; poverty status; and human development and HPIs; it is very difficult to formulate realistic policies and programmes for the development of OBCs.

surveys and statistics for the purpose of any of the matters in the Union List are also the responsibility of the government of India as per entry 94 of the Union List.

For the purpose of any of the matters in the Union List, it is the exclusive responsibility of the Government of India like Elections to Parliament and State Legislatures. The matter need not be entrusted to the State Governments who do not possess the task force for this exercise.

Further Sections 5 (1) of the Census Act 1948 lays down the function of Census Commissioner who shall "compile and publish the census statistics" and hence it is the statutory duty of the Census Commissioner and the Central Government to ensure that the Caste Census data collected is compiled, tabulated and published by them.

The need to have a caste count of OBCs assumes importance and significance in the wake of Constitutional powers entrusted to **NCBC** by the Government of India.

This objective can easily be achieved without any extra effort or expense if a caste column is included in the census schedule while doing the house-to-house enumeration. For each individual in the household schedule, **there should be a column for 'Religion' followed by a column 'Caste & sub-caste, if any'** and then the various columns for socio-economic, educational and demographic parameters. **Or else, after the Column of 'SC/ST', an additional column as 'Others' with 'Caste & Sub-Caste, if any' may be created.**

The caste data so collected can easily be captured, collated, tabulated and published in a time-bound program within two years along with all the other socio-economic data like literacy, education, occupation, work characteristics, and other demographic indices collected through the census. This will be ideal and will serve the purpose without any additional expenditure for the Government.

The Kalelkar Commission report had recommended that "as long as social welfare and social relief have to be administered through castes, classes or groups, full information about these groups should be obtained and tabulated". It was also suggested that "census slips should consist amongst others 'caste' in a separate column".

The National Commission for Backward Classes Act considers OBC as a dynamic category, which means that some castes will be included and some will be excluded in 10 years' time. In that case, the government definitely has to provide data. So the data on census is required.

#### **Post-Mandal report:**

The Mandal Commission had said that its recommendations should be reviewed 20 years after their implementation. Since reservation for OBCs in public employment was introduced in 1993 and then in higher educational institutions in 2008, at least reservation in public employment is up for review. Against this backdrop, though a Commission for Sub-Categorization of OBCs (CSO) was appointed in October 2017 (to propose measures to ensure equitable distribution of benefits of reservation), and the NCBC was granted a constitutional status in August 2018, the review proposed by the Mandal Commission has to get the government nod. Though the need to continue OBC reservation is beyond doubt, the new list of eligible classes, the percentage of OBCs in the population can only be reliably ascertained through a census that gathers data on socio-economic and educational conditions with respect to castes.

#### **7. DR. PRITAM GOPINATHRAO MUNDE:**

Census of OBC people may be held so that a decision could be taken about providing reservation to them in proportion to their total population. **There is no column for OBC in the online census form. This column may be included therein. (LS debates 13.3.2020)**

#### **8. P.S.Krishnan, IAS (Retd.) former Secretary, Welfare Dept., GoI.**

"What this exercise would do, if the government carries it out properly and diligently, would be to provide all official agencies with authentic figures on different social strata in the country. Moreover, **census only provides base figures** and it does not preclude legitimate information and certification required for inclusion of castes in an OBC list. So, there is no basis for fearing a caste-based census and the data it would throw up,"

#### **9. Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, PG and Pensions, Law & Justice 8<sup>th</sup> Report on SC,ST and OBC Reservation Bill presented to Rajya Sabha on 26<sup>th</sup> July 2005**

The Committee is of the view that Government should carry out a survey to assess the size of different communities i.e., SCs, STs and OBCs in the total population of the country, make an appraisal of their representation according to their population, and if need be, explore the feasibility of enhancing the limit of fifty percent by way of amending the Constitution suitably.

**Summation:**

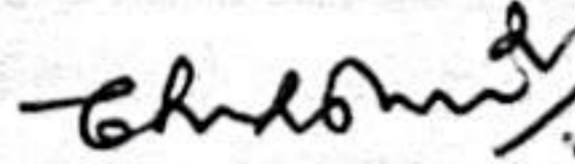
1. Caste is a very important variable in contemporary Indian society, hence there are social and scientific reasons why data on it are valuable for their own sake.
2. Caste data will help track long-term shifts in the morphology of the system and of individual castes.
3. Recent legislations mandating various types of reservation for the OBCs make caste data essential (for drawing up fresh lists of OBCs, addition/deletion of OBCs, identification/revision of creamy-layer criteria, fixing quotas within quotas, etc).
4. There is a belief that including caste data in census enumeration will perpetuate the caste system and deepen social divisions. In fact, not including caste data would perpetuate the injustice of the caste system because lack of data will render inefficient policy measures meant to help the weak.
5. In a society where caste is at the root of discrimination and inequality — in healthcare, education, and even access to justice — it's important to monitor how it affects people in order to devise ways to address its impact. Excluding caste-wise data will not erase casteism, but including it has the "potential to be the beginning of the end of caste".
6. This information can go a long way in evolving and fine-tuning evidence-based social policies. This could also bring down avoidable street fights over which caste should or should not get reservations, provide the credible evidence demanded by our judiciary.

These arguments have become more relevant given today's context: an empowered NCBC, a committee looking into sub-categorization of OBCs, and the reservation for the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) in society which has recently come into effect.

**Digital India and Technology advancement:**

- "Blockchain" technology – involving a decentralized digital ledger which can be used to make entries across many computers – though still in an evolving stage, should be put to use in the development of a master table of castes in India, and also in the collection, classification and aggregation of caste data.
- The lame excuse given recently that multiplicity of caste and sub-caste names would make scientific collection of data impossible is not befitting a government that boasts of using world-class information and communications technology in governance and delivery of public services.

As the Census enumeration has not been conducted this year due to outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, as stated by Hon'ble Minister of State for Home Affairs, We appeal to **Hon'ble Union Home Minister** to consider conducting a caste-wise Census-2021 including OBCs that will guide the Government to take concrete decisions on matters of reservation policy and welfare measures for the disadvantaged sections of the society and thus will help to achieve 'sab ka vikas' or inclusive development for all the sections of our country.

  
(G. Karunanidhy)  
General Secretary  
22.07.2021

**Press Information Bureau  
Government of India  
Ministry of Home Affairs  
31-August-2018 16:07 IST**

**Union Home Minister reviews  
the Preparation for  
Census 2021**

Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh reviewed the functioning of the Office of Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India here today. Minister of State (Home) Shri Kiren Rijiju, Union Home Secretary Shri Rajiv Gauba, RGI Shri Sailesh and Senior officers of the Office of RGI and Home Ministry were present in the meeting.

The Union Home Minister discussed the road map for undertaking the Census in 2021 and it was emphasised that improvements in design and technological interventions be made so as to ensure that the Census data is finalized within 3 years after conducting of Census. At present it takes around 7 to 8 years to release the complete data. It was also informed that nearly 25 lakh enumerators are trained and engaged for the gigantic exercise and accurate collection of data will be ensured in Census 2021. **It is also envisaged to collect data on OBC for the first time. Use of maps/georeferencing at the time of house listing is also under consideration.**

Union Home Minister also emphasised the need of improvement in Civil Registration System especially on registration of birth and death in remote areas and strengthening Sample Registration System for estimating the data namely, Infant Mortality Rate, Maternal Mortality Ratio and Fertility Rates.

**AIOBC**

**ALL INDIA FEDERATION OF OTHER BACKWARD CLASSES  
EMPLOYEES' WELFARE ASSOCIATIONS**

139, Broadway, Chennai - 600 108

Cell: 938 100 7998 E-Mail: aiobcfederation@gmail.com www.aiobcfederation.org

