



CENSUS 2011

Blinkered
VISION
Fragmented
IDEAS

INDIA POLICY FOUNDATION

Census 2011

Blinkered Vision Fragmented Ideas



India Policy Foundation

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Published by
India Policy Foundation
D-51, Hauz Khas
New Delhi-110 016 (INDIA)
Tele : 011-26524018
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Edition
First, 2010

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Price
Rupees Fifty only (Rs. 50.00)

Cover Design
Namita

Printed at
Bhanu Printers, Delhi

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Preface

The Census of 2011 is the 7th census after India's independence. It makes a qualitative advancement over the census policy and strategy adopted by the colonial administration in India. The latter conducted eight censuses of 'subjects' with a hidden agenda. The credit goes to the then deputy prime Minister Sardar Ballabhbhai Patel to reshape and reorient the decennial census as a progressive tool for generating data to be used by the State and its agencies for developmental purposes. Thus the first census of independent India in 1951 and successive censuses increasingly became an important indicator of human resources and their problems. It also helped the social science to further its research on various dimensions of the Indian populace. In fact, the census is the moment of reckoning of the balanced development for the nation and is essentially an apolitical act.

In this context, the Census of 2011 invites special attention as it has evoked sharp reaction on the issue of inclusion of caste in the census and preparation of National Population Register (NPR) along with it. Political pundits love to create controversy and they did so with the Census of 2011. The issue of caste acquires significance because something that was discarded long back as a colonial ploy of identity politics to divide the Indians, now suddenly receives unnecessary attention and respectability in certain political quarters. Moreover, the appalling aspect is the positive disposition to such demand of the present political dispensation. It has overlooked the historical dimension of the census policy on the one hand and the public attitude on the other. After a long debate and discussion soon after the independence 'the government of India had already accepted the policy of official discouragement of community distinctions based on caste.'^{*} The shift in the policy which

^{*} Census of India, paper No 4 of 1953 Special group s -1951 census, published by the Manager of Government of India press, New Delhi, 1953, p. 1

has the potential to impact the civil society can not be left exclusively on politicians' will and desire guided by their political ends.

Another sensitive issue which this paper highlights is the preparation of NPR for the purpose of proposed Unique Identification Number. The discussion on the issue has remained suppressed due to obvious reason that the space for debate has almost shrunk for the civil society.

The political project behind the NPR evokes serious controversy on the way it is being pushed through hurriedly without taking mandatory precaution. The issue of confidentiality tagged with census operation is conspicuously absent in case of NPR. It is also one of the most audacious attempts to breach the premises of an open and free society. Moreover, the bigger question which is involved in this project is the legitimisation of millions of infiltrators, illegal users of Indian soil as 'usual residents' which makes it highly challengeable. It will further reinforce their claim for citizenship. When the question of internal security has assumed quite a significant dimension before the state and society, the NPR has potential to jeopardise the sanctity of citizenship.

The democratic political process is indeed an inclusive process that progresses through debate and discussion. India Policy Foundation in this context has taken up both the issues for constructive discourse in the civil society. It has held a brain storming session and a wide range of consultation with scholars and demographers of different shades on the Census of 2011 in general and aforesaid issues in particular and concomitantly meaningful perspectives on both the issues have emerged. The intervention paper critically examines these issues and contests the blinkered vision of the present political dispensation. If the negation of this democratic process of consensus building is done by utterly divided and fragmented polity then conflicts over census are likely to continue. 'Census 2011 : Blinkered Vision, Fragmented Ideas' provides an opportunity to build a consensus on the census 2011.

IPF is grateful to scholars and researchers who showed keen interests in its interactive and participatory process. A competent team of scholars prepared the intervention paper. Shri Uday Sinha, a senior journalist and Senior Fellow of the IPF, deserves special gratitude for his dedicated contribution in preparing the intervention paper. Shri Ashish Bose, Prof

Mahendra Kumar Premi, Smt Asha Das and Prof Rajveer Sharma are among those whose cooperation was solicited by the IPF. Junior researchers, namely Vrindavan, Anil Kumar, Rajeev Kumar, Raju Ranjan, Jai Shankar, Subhsh Chand made tremendous contributions in this project. I also thank the chairman and members of the IPF Trust who provided exemplary support without which the project could not have been completed.

Prof. Rakesh Sinha
Hon. Director
India Policy Foundation

1

Caste Enumeration

Why does a country, that has so far not been able to keep proper records of the births and deaths of its citizens, of children attending primary schools, of the number of villages having access to road and basic amenities, etc., suddenly shows predisposition to enumerate caste while the Census exercise is on? will it not be a paradigm shift? Because caste census, a colonial strategy used for identity politics with a clear objective to weaken the nationalist movement, was abandoned by the Indian State after independence. The decision of the national leaders in this regard was based on consensus.

The Union government's decision to react favourably to the demand for the caste-based Census should be analysed threadbare, as it essentially goes against the vision of the founding fathers of the Indian Constitution and would definitely mean a paradigm shift after six decades of acceptance of Constitutional provisions. The argument that the knowledge of exact number of the castes in the OBC category will lead to effective policy formulation, and affirmative action aiming to uplift of the deprived castes from the quagmire of social ignorance is flimsy, untenable and incompatible with the idea of modernity and holistic development. So, what does the government aim to achieve by collecting data on caste? Should we still continue with the theory that links backwardness with castes? Is the purpose behind caste-based enumeration social or political? The use of data will largely depend on the purpose for which the data has been collected. The inclination of the government to collect data on caste lines suggests that it might be used for creation of 'political clients' for electoral harvesting and other such petty political purposes.

The decennial Census of India is the mother of all surveys that not only counts heads but also gives data on several related issues. Census 2011 will be the 15th uninterrupted edition of the Census of India and the seventh since India's independence.

COLONIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The first ever attempt to enumerate the population by the colonial rulers was made in 1861. The process, however, could not be completed because of the then ongoing first war of independence that continued for two long years. The second attempt at the census of India was taken up in 1871. It continued for over two years because of the prevailing political and financial constraints and was thus completed at the end of 1872.

The caste census was introduced by the British in 1871 itself with an intention to divide the country in order to neutralise threats to the British empire. But the grouping of various castes for administrative, political and social purposes reached its culmination in the Census of 1901 under the guidance of Sir Herbert Risley. The Census of 1911 is considered to be the first elaborate caste census which confronted various problems. The Census report says, 'Best known of all caste classification is Manu's five-fold division of the people into Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras and the Outcaste. Brahmin, we have with us and can more or less be recognised but whatever be a Kshatriya in Northern India, he in Madras, despite recent large accessions to his ranks, remains a singularly elusive personage. Of Vaishya, with recollections of sundry perfervid deputation still fresh in my mind, I fear to express an opinion; but their existence among us has been doubted by many, of whom at least one ingenious writer extends his skepticism to the case of the Shudras.'¹

The founding fathers of the Constitution conceived the Census as having value-neutral data for the benefit of micro level planning aiming at the welfare of the citizen. According to the renowned Indian demographer, Dr Ashish Bose, the Census exercise is essentially meant to be a head count generating value-neutral data. He unequivocally suggests that the Census is not an activity aimed at data collection for social science. On the inclusion of caste in the Census, he feels that 'the Census would be ruined if caste is included in the

1. J. Chartres Molony, Superintendent of Census Operations, Madras, Census of India, 1911, Vol. XII, p157

Census activities of 2011.²

Dr Bose suggests that when the British started the Census, it was with the intention of 'civilising' the subjects, as per a note submitted by the British bureaucracy to the queen. Thus, the collection of data was considered essential to know the actual facts about the people of India. Later it must have occurred to the colonial rulers that collection of data, especially related to religion, caste and language would help in serving the interests of the Raj. Professor M N Srinivas and G S Ghurye raise two very important questions: (1) Why did the British officials record the caste of individuals? (2) Was it curiosity or was it part of the design of the British, as some nationalists believed, to keep alive the numerous divisions already present in Indian society? The second order of questions relate to the effects of Census operations on the consciousness of caste and the use of the Census for validation of claims to new status within the caste system.³

Indians are no longer subjects of the British Empire. The people of India are now citizens of an independent country. The expectation from the Census exercise would be collection of data on unemployment, underemployment, and the available workforce, in addition to individual living conditions, level of education and economic activities. Dr Ashish Bose rejects the idea of caste-based census completely. He feels that unemployment and hunger are the two big issues of today and the government must have data to handle these problems effectively. He is also of the opinion that inclusion of a column on income will give us an idea of the economic status of Indian families, which would also give us the exact idea of the numbers of Below Poverty Line (BPL) families.⁴

Mis-reporting cannot be ruled out when caste is enumerated, especially during the Census exercise... This is because the information given by a respondent is not to be questioned or verified by the enumerator. The same problem existed even in Census of 1911 in the attempt to tabulate caste on the basis of social precedence. The then superintendent of Punjab, Khan Ahmad Hasan Khan, noted, '... this attempt (caste counting) could not be expected to succeed in view of the fact that nearly all castes consider themselves to be most exclusive and high-born. Nais urged to be counted as Brahmans or

2. See Appendix: Interaction with Dr Ashish Bose

3. As quoted by the Barnard Cohn in "The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia", pp 241, Oxford University Press, 1987

4. See Appendix: Interaction with Dr Ashish Bose.

Rajput; Mirasis claimed they were really Qureshis, the Lohars and Tarkhans claimed they were Dhiman Brahmin.⁵ Since the social reality has changed, the so-called high-born castes are no longer hegemonised. The social structure and system and their claim to superiority is a thing of past. Hence, unlike the colonial period, the trend is to get recognition as a backward caste in order to reap the benefits in education and jobs. Mis-reporting could be in the area of caste viz-a-viz occupation and living habits in the Census of 2011.

The Census of 1921 was full of apprehension on caste enumeration. The Census report said, 'Classification by caste is not, even now, very easy, but to evolve order out of the tangle of fancy names that are then likely to crop up would be a mighty task'. The Superintendent of Census operations, V R Thyarajaiyar, questioned the very basis of caste census. He even suggested, 'Why not abolish it...the recording of caste by government in the course of the Census has somewhat the look of government supporting the institution as it exists at present and of perpetuating inequality of social status among the people. But the fact is otherwise.'⁶

Prof. Rajvir Sharma questions the purpose of caste-based census. At a time when the society is fragmented into various layers, inclusive approach to development is the need of the hour. Mr. Sharma proposes that the poor should be the focus of all policies and not caste.⁷

SPIRIT OF THE CONSTITUTION

The founding fathers of the Constitution of independent India considered caste to be divisive. Dr B R Ambedkar even went to the extent of deriding it as 'anti-national'. He observed, 'How can people divided into several thousands of castes be a nation? The sooner we realise that we are not as yet a nation in the social and psychological sense of the word, the better for us. For then only we shall realise the necessity of becoming a nation and seriously think of ways and means of realising the goal. The realisation of this goal is going to be very difficult - far more difficult than it has been in the United States. The United States has no caste problem. In India there are castes. The castes are anti-national in the first place because they bring about separation in social life. They are anti-national also because they generate jealousy and antipathy between caste and caste. But we must

5. Census of India 1921, Vol. XXIII, V R Thyarajaiyar, Superintendent of Census Operation, Mysore State, P. 114.

6. Ibid.

7. See Appendix, Brain Storming Session.

overcome all these difficulties if we wish to become a nation in reality.’⁸ The fathers of the Indian Constitution were aware that a social institution that had existed for more than 3,000 years could not be abolished by mere legislation. Hence, they sought to ignore caste in public life in the hope of confining it to social life.

The dream of a casteless society meant abolition of caste-based classification and activities which hamper the evolution of democracy and nationalism. The decision to abolish caste enumeration in the Census as a national policy was an important step in that direction. It is with this vision that the Constitution of India never mentions ‘backward castes’: it always mentions ‘backward classes’. When it uses caste, it is to recognise the Scheduled Castes. If there is a mention of caste in the Constitution in places where the prefix ‘Scheduled’ is not attached, it is mentioned for non-discrimination on the ground of caste.

Secularism was one of the guiding principles of our forefathers. They were eager to convert a society, fragmented on the lines of caste, religion, etc., into a homogeneous society where identification of a person was not on the basis of his ascribed status but on the basis of what he has achieved. Secularism, hence, had wider implications and was not understood in terms of religion only. It also meant the creation of a casteless egalitarian society. Jawaharlal Nehru said, ‘... After all, the whole purpose of the Constitution as proclaimed in the Directive Principles is to move towards what I may say a casteless and classless society.’⁹ We should stop a bit and ponder: Indian society may be caste-ridden but the Indian State is not. Hence, if the Census of 2011 collects data on caste, wouldn’t it be a major policy shift? It would mark a dilution of the values inherited from the freedom movement and enshrined in the Constitution. Indian leaders of every shade, socialist Dr Ram Manohar Lohia, Bharatiya Jana Sangh ideologue and leader Deendayal Upadhyay, Gandhian Jayprakash Narayan and others categorically rejected the use of caste in political and economic domains in independent India.

The Constitution of India allows the census of Schedule Castes and Scheduled Tribes categories to provide them political representation under Article 330 and uplift them from socio-economic bondage. In the states and union territories of India, Article 332 (1) makes

8. B.R. Ambedkar, debate, Constituent Assembly of India, Vol. XI, Friday Nov. 25, 1949.

9. Jawaharlal Nehru, Lok Sabha Debate, Vol. XII-XIII (Part-II), the Lok Sabha on June 13, 1951, pp. 9830-31.

similar provisions for the Legislative Assembly. The enumeration of Backward Classes is based on certain specific criteria which are not applicable to the whole country. They are guided by local factors, local social structure, economic development, feudal social order, etc. The National Commission for Backwards Classes (NCBC) was constituted by the Government of India and Backward Commissions have been formed by the state governments for similar purposes. It is their job to produce information on the number of OBCs in the country. The question naturally, thus arises: why make Census a tool for collecting caste data?

CHANGING STRUCTURES

The caste structure is no longer static. Social mobility, impact of modernity and reform movements, democratization of society etc. have changed the traditional pattern of divisions, relationships and perspectives. Caste census will revive, resurrect the old and drag the rural and urban populace under artificial divisions.

Interestingly, the number of castes falling in the OBC category is increasing with every effort to count them. The first Backward Commission, popularly known as the Kaka Kalekar Commission, listed 2,399 castes as backward. The second Backward Commission known as Mandal Commission listed 3,743 such castes. The National Commission for Backwards Classes listed more than 5,700. The chances are fair that after the listing of castes in the Census data of 2011, the number would increase. The failure of the political system to distribute the growth with justice brought us to a situation where claims for backwardness essentially became a sensitive political issue, as witnessed recently in Rajasthan and other parts of the country – a process that is endless. A dire consequence to this would be that politics would start revolving around the increased number of OBCs and their patrons, creating cleavages in society.

The question is: how can the country achieve its ultimate goal of establishing an egalitarian society? Even the chairman of the first Backward Class Commission, Kaka Kelkar, had commented that reservations on the basis of caste would not be in the interest of society and the country. At the time of tabling the Memorandum of Action on the report of the first Backward Class Commission in the Parliament, it was pointed out that the caste system is the biggest hindrance in the way of our progress towards an egalitarian society

and in such a situation, recognition of certain specified castes as 'backward' may serve to maintain and perpetuate the existing caste distinctions. The then Home Minister, Govind Ballabh Pant, stated: 'The emphasis on caste has further been highlighted by some of the minutes of dissent. The tone and temper displayed therein bring into prominence the dangers

of separatism inherent in this kind of approach. It cannot be denied that the caste system is the greatest hindrance in the way of our progress towards an egalitarian society, and the recognition of specified castes as backward may serve to maintain and even perpetuate the existing distinctions of caste. There may be, besides castes, a large number of whose members may be classified as backward educationally and emotionally, but still there may be others among them who cannot be so classified. Similarly, among the so-called upper and advanced classes there may be, and in fact there are, large numbers of those who are not less backward educationally and economically and even among the backward classes some castes are more backward than the others.'

Participating in the debate on the Mandal Commission Report, Rajiv Gandhi, the then leader of opposition, in his speech in the Parliament stated, '...Is the government looking at one particular vested interest or is the government really looking at the socially and educationally backward classes?...the second point which must be part of the national goal is a casteless society. The Constitution very clearly differentiated between Scheduled Castes and backward classes. Why did our Constitution makers make this distinction? They had something in their minds. Why have we lost that distinction today?...Sir, do we still have that goal of a casteless society?...if you believe in a casteless society, every major step you take, must be such that you move towards casteless society and you must avoid taking any step which takes you towards a caste ridden society...'10 The context may be different today but the spirit of the thought is still applicable. The present leadership in the government, which swears by the late leader, is ready to compromise with a politics of convenience without understanding its far-reaching impact on society and politics.

Venkat Narayan, former civil servant, raises a fundamental question: 'How can the government take such decision in a hurry?' He says that non-inclusion of caste in the Census has been state policy for the last 60 years. How can the policy be changed suddenly, ignoring established practices?11 Asha Das, former Secretary of the Department of Social

10. Rajiv Gandhi, Parliament of India Debate, September 6, 1990 pp. 481-532

11. See Appendix: Brainstorming Session

Justice, Government of India, endorses her views. 'I do not know what led the government to take this decision (to include caste in the Census). Even the concerned ministry...was not consulted...they have not sent any proposal to this effect...' ¹²

The government's overture led a limited debate confined to editorial pages of newspapers on such a vital issue. Civil society has been apathetic to the debate and think-tanks by and large did not take the initiative to generate a discourse on it. When India Policy Foundation scholars interacted with demographer Ashish Bose, he said emphatically that the policy of affirmative action should include in its ambit all the poor and backward sections of society irrespective of caste. A poor and hungry citizen should be benefited without a declaration of caste. Policies of affirmative action must be pro-poor and must not differentiate between a poor member of the OBC and a poor member of the high caste. 'If this is the intention of the Census then collecting data on poverty and hunger should be of utmost important. Knowledge of caste should automatically be relegated to the background,' ¹³ says Bose.

MEDIA DEBATES

TV anchor Barkha Dutt, while accepting that caste is a reality everywhere, has taken the position that 'to include caste in the Census is to accept that modern India will frame policy based on caste in perpetuity.' ¹⁴ She adds, 'The problem arises when caste-based politics becomes a short cut for quota propaganda. . . and reservations, as we all know by now, are the perfect way for a state to abdicate its responsibility to its poorer citizens – substituting real deliverables with ineffective largesse.' She further raises the question: how will the government react in the event of a majority of the population registering itself as OBC? She writes, 'If the enumeration is based on "caste as declared", how do you handle a possible scenario where—for argument's sake—70 per cent of India declares itself to be OBC? How do you then tackle the Supreme Court cap on quota?' ¹⁵

11. See Appendix: Brainstorming Session.

12. Ibid.

13. Ashish Bose, interaction with scholars of IPF, May 8, 2010.

14. Barkha Dutt, "In Reverse gear", The Hindustan Times, May 15, 2010.

Also see Ashutosh, "Dunia KeJatiwadi Ek Hon", Dainik Hindustan May 17, 2010

15. Ibid.

Yogendra Yadav supports a caste-based census. He writes, 'What do we get from such an enumeration? ...Quite a lot, if we care about putting policy of affirmative action on a sound, empirical footing and putting at rest endless dispute about the size and backwardness of various communities. An enumeration of the OBC will not only settle disputes about their numbers but also yield vital information about the socio-educational and economic condition of the communities.'¹⁶ However, TV anchor, Sagarika Ghose, supporting caste-based census feels, 'A caste census should not be seen as simply a political instrument designed to secure quotas. The fight against caste is best fought when we know the enemy. Caste is an immutable, invisible and overwhelming reality in our daily lives. If we continued to act as if caste does not exist, or deny its existence, we would be failing to battle with one of the most urgent social inequality of our time.'¹⁷

Raising doubts about the intentions behind caste census, K Subrahmanyam writes, 'Politicians, who are interested in the caste census data, are not as interested in advancing the living standards and the status of the traditionally disadvantaged as they are in organising them into vote-banks. The Census data will be a powerful tool in their hands. This step will help consolidate the first-past-the-post system of elections and enable a significant section of our parliamentarians to be elected with a minority of votes polled in their favour and the majority of the constituency voting against them. Consequently, they are not likely to have the democratic culture to respect majority in the House and are likely to indulge in gimmickry designed to attract the attention of their core constituencies.'¹⁸ He appears to be in agreement with Prof. Ashish Bose in a sense that the latter suggested a policy of affirmative action keeping the poor at the centre and Subrahmanyam suggests social and economic criteria-based affirmative action programmes. He writes, 'Ultimately, India will have to promote social and economic criteria-based programs which will drown caste-linked educational and job reservations.'¹⁹

Media debates also unravel the pitfalls of identity-based politics. Justice (retd) Rajinder Sachar and Sharad Yadav took two different perspectives on 'caste' and 'religion'. While Yadav argues vehemently for inclusion of caste in Census schedules, for Justice Sachar,

16. Yogendra Yadav, "Why Caste Should be Counted", The Hindu, May 15, 2010.

17. Sagarika Ghose, "A Blinkered Vision", The Hindustan Times, May 12, 2010.

18. K Subrahmanyam, "Interrogating the Caste Census", The Indian Express, May 13, 2010.

19. Ibid.

caste is divisive. Yadav feels that discontinuation of caste census in 1951 was a wrong decision on part of the then Government of India. Rejecting the argument that caste is divisive, he feels that while religion is the culprit, caste was punished. Sachar, however, argues, 'Sex and religion are measures of identity and are not divisive in themselves. No doubt vested interests create religious divides but that does not justify equating caste on the same plane.'²⁰

Sharad Yadav further argues, 'It is said that the caste census was discontinued because it was divisive. It is a funny argument. India was divided because of religion, not because of caste, but the religion continued.'²¹ He favours caste census in order to understand caste properly and annihilate it finally. He writes, 'Caste is a reality of Indian society, though it is a bitter reality. We should get rid of it, but we can not do it by ignoring it. To annihilate we have to understand it in its entirety.'²²

The Hindu in its editorial observes, '...it (Census) cannot be the vehicle for capturing caste data'.²³ Noted journalist, Kuldip Nayar, took the position that caste-based census is against the principles of the freedom struggle. He feels that the socialist leader Dr Ram Manohar Lohia and Jayaprakash Narayan were in favour of establishing an egalitarian society. Nayar writes, '... any effort to establish the caste identity is unconstitutional.'²⁴

Forcefully criticising the efforts to include caste in the Census, Pratap Bhanu Mehta feels that enumerating caste in the Census is a monumental travesty that will trivialise all that modern India has stood for. He writes, 'The call to enumerate caste in the Census is nothing but a raw assertion of power bearing the garb of social justice, an ideological projection of Indian society masquerading under the colour of social science, and a politics of bad faith being projected as a concern for the poor.'²⁵ Rejecting the arguments of the protagonists of caste-based census, Mehta says, '...But we have too many purveyors for whom social justice is endless stratagem to assert the power of compulsory group identity, rather than finding the means to escape it. In the name of breaking open prisons, they imprison us even more.'²⁶

20. Justice Rajinder Sachar (Retd.), Caste in Census 2011?, The Tribune, May 26, 2010

21. Sharad Yadav, "Confronting Caste, Demanding A Census", The Indian Express, May 14, 2010.

22.. Ibid.

23. The Hindu, May 7, 2010

24. Kuldip Nayar, "Jativadi Rajniti Ko Badhawa", Dainik Jagaran, May 19,2010.

25. Pratap Bhanu Mehta, "My Caste and I", The Indian Express, May 12, 2010.

26. Ibid.

Mehta goes on to question the requirements of caste-based census. He is of the opinion that to empower the disempowered, education, resources, food security and political participation are the major requirements that the government should ensure. Not a single requirement of people's empowerment ropes in a caste census. Mehta writes, 'The focus of justice should be on universalising basic provisions, as is now possible.' A caste census will ultimately prove to be self-destructive as it invites mis-recognition. Caste politics in India has basically made our sense of 'self' weaker. We have created a situation where we suspect each other and to come out of this suspicion we suggest enumeration. Mehta writes, 'The project of enumerating caste in the Census is fundamentally inspired by a cast of mind that measures the legitimacy of everything largely through caste. What more pinched up conception of citizenship can we imagine?'²⁷ Reposing faith in the founding fathers of the Indian constitution, he writes further, 'A well considered decision, taken by nationalist leaders whose understanding of both moral values and our infirmities as a nation far surpassed ours, was overturned in a matter of minutes at the altar of political expediency. It sends the message of crass political instrumentalism...and what does it say about its (Congress') character that its young MPs, exemplars of India's modernity, have no will to resist? It is already a sign of how small caste makes it and now we will count it at every step.'²⁸

CASTE COMPLEXITIES

How can such decisions having far-reaching consequences be taken on flimsiest of grounds?', questions Asha Das. We need to ponder over the primary objective of the Census. If the primary objective is to count heads and to know about their 'achieved' status in society then why are we insisting on something which will take us backwards? If the aim is to progress towards the establishment of an egalitarian society then should we say 'yes' to something which is essentially divisive and generates antipathy in society? Why are we making the Census a tool to gather information on castes when we already have State Commissions (See Annexure) which make their own assessment of OBC communities? Besides, a practical problem is that the OBC communities differ from one state to another and every state has different OBC lists. As senior journalist Ashok Malik writes, 'An OBC in state X may be a non-OBC in state Y. The Union Government, when

27. Pratap Bhanu Mehta, "My Caste and I", The Indian Express, May 12, 2010.

28. Ibid.

it comes to its reservation matrix, has a still separate classification of OBC.’²⁹ Malik feels, ‘The Census is a collection of voluntarily offered information, which is not contested.’

The fundamental question is how caste data will help the government formulate policy for affirmative action. For argument’s sake, suppose that after caste enumeration the percentage of OBC comes to some percentage above 60 per cent. Is the government in that case willing to tackle the fallout in an era of caste-based identity politics? It is prudent here to mention that even Muslim intellectuals are opposing the caste-based census, maybe for fear of the Muslim community losing heavily in the resurrected era of identity politics. How will the Muslim community raise the grievance of being ignored and neglected on the basis of religion? For, if various caste groups born in the Hindu religion lose their group identity and are reduced to a minuscule minority, they (Muslims) will have enough competitors from within the Hindu communities who may complain about caste bias and their subsequent negligible representation in jobs, politics and education.

This scenario is best understood by citing an example:

Suppose caste X is enumerated and tabulated to be 3 per cent from within the backward class community and its representation in government, politics and educational institutions is less than 0.5 per cent. Now, that particular caste group has every right to complain about being neglected and ignored by the Government of India in particular and society in general. The chances are fair that because of this caste identity, society would be further divided. Is the government willing to tackle such huge divisions in society?

Those who favour caste census argue a point vehemently: that without knowing the actual number, policies of affirmative action cannot be drawn up properly. They also argue that if religion is already included in the Census and the society doesn’t feel divided, how the consequences of caste-based census would be otherwise. Countering this point emphatically, Asha Das feels that backwardness has been made into a state for receiving privileges. That is why even people who are well-off, like to declare themselves as backwards.³⁷

29. Ashok Malik, “Caste in Dreams”, The Asian Age, May 20, 2010

30. See Appendix: Brainstorming Session

Thus, while we see that the votaries of a caste census want it to happen for the benefit of affirmative action policies, the arguments that go against enumeration of caste in the Census fall into three major categories.

Morality: It derives its genesis from the vision of the founding fathers, who cherished the dream of making India casteless, creedless and truly egalitarian in nature. The moral argument against the collection of caste data is that such activity would justify and legitimise castes and casteism.

Pragmatism: Keeping our nature and practice in mind, there may be a tendency to misreport to get the largesse and privileges offered by the powers-that-be. Truly, mere recording or misreporting one's caste does not give the person the right to claim benefit; the person has to have a caste certificate to claim the privilege. But there may be a sinister design on the part of a section of population to misreport the caste in order to ignite tension and hatred in society. The enumerator cannot question, he or she has to go by the voluntarily declared caste of an individual. A practical problem may arise in the countryside where the enumerator is largely seen sitting with the village elders and taking information on the household and particulars about the village. In such a case, if the elder decides to inflate or deflate the numbers, he would give details accordingly.

Technicalities: Newspapers have reported that teachers who were given the responsibility of enumeration, hired their students (schoolboys) and asked them to collect data on their behalf.³¹ In a different case, an enumerator in Hyderabad left all the sheets of Census schedule with an apartment's watchman and asked him to get them filled.³² With caste being a sensitive issue, will the enumeration be authentic with proxies taking the lead role? Enumeration of caste will be technically difficult because of migration and its fluid nature. 'The castes of people during the beginning of the twentieth century were so fluid and unstable that the name of the caste changed almost every ten years.'³³ The respective Census has reflected this tendency in a number of castes who became Kshatriya in 1921 and Brahmin in 1931. Similarly, the sonar registered itself as Kshatriya Rajput in 1921 and Brahmin

31. High school boys hired as Census officer, Times of India, Ahmedabad, May 16, 2010.

32. Proxies play census enumerators, Times of India, Hyderabad, May 19, 2010

33. Arun Shourie, Falling Over Backward, p. 40, New Delhi (2006),

and Vaishya in 1931. The fear is that this tendency may get reversed in the Census of 2011. There is every possibility of this happening because ever since a group of castes has become politically important, there is a tendency to occupy more political space in society. Besides, there is a practice of changing caste names because of migration and caste mobility. Thus, enumeration of castes is technically difficult because of fragmentation, localisation, fluidity and ambiguity of castes and sub-castes. The structure of castes is getting further complicated because of constant migration to the metropolitan cities and other industrial townships.

Dr Ashish Bose feels that the Census should collect neutral data on issues related to development like construction of roads, availability of clean drinking water, sanitation and educational opportunities on priority basis. 'Should not we be more citizen-centric than caste-centric?' Dr Satish Jha, a professor at the University of Delhi, during his interaction with scholars of the India Policy Foundation, strongly felt that the perspective would change while dealing with citizens instead of subjects. Agreeing to a caste-based census would ultimately mean a deviation from the spirit of the Constitution. Prof. Amitabh Kundu, opposing the enumeration of caste in the Census, suggested that some other method needs to be adopted in order to record the caste affiliations of a citizen. He felt that the Census must not be made a vehicle for obtaining data on caste.

Prof. Dipankar Gupta adds another perspective to the whole debate. He strongly advocates the need to have development, growth, employment and clean air as priorities for citizens instead of caste. He writes, 'We need to think as one so that the basis of our existence is rooted in common factors and not in divisive ones...'³⁴ Prof. Gupta feels that '...in a democracy of people, there is always caste against caste, language against language, religion against religion. As citizenship is blind to these considerations, our politicians consider it a handicap.'³⁵ Considering that the Census reflects the need of the citizens, Prof. Gupta feels that the Census is the document in service of the future and not to serve past prejudices or sectional interests. If the Census today is pressured to include caste numbers, then the game is clear. Caste will, henceforth, be the basis of social policy and not citizenship...'³⁶

34. Dipankar Gupta, Caste against Citizens, India Today, May 24, 2010.

35. Ibid

36. Ibid

There is a strong demand for the inclusion of caste in the enumeration exercise of the Census of 2011, a practice that was abandoned way back in 1951. The founding fathers of the Constitution thought it to be an impediment in the development of equal citizenship rights. Why then, at the end of the first decade of the 21st century, is there a fresh demand by a certain section of society to include caste in the Census? The central government first categorically rejected it and now seems to be contemplating on accepting the demand. The seed of politicisation of castes sown by the British rulers is yielding a rich harvest for certain Indian politicians.

The caste system leading to caste prejudices is as old as Indian society itself. The oppressive hierarchy led to exploitation and injustice. Social justice demanded freeing the oppressed castes from caste exploitation, establishing a sense of pride and equality with other. This vision was given practical shape by the Indian State in the form of reservation and affirmative action.

Caste is essentially fragmentary in nature and therefore works as a deterrent in achieving the goal of social change. During colonial rule, the British patronised some castes, pitting one against the other in order to suppress dissenting voices. Barrington Moore, a leading sociologist, aptly commented that the multitude of caste is a major stumbling block against any unified transformatory struggle of the poor. Therefore, the normative concerns of the nationalist leaders were to create a casteless society in order to realise the goal of social equality. Despite differing perspectives on the issue of caste, both Gandhi and Ambedkar emphasised the need for freeing Indian society from its clutches.

The vision of the founding fathers was to democratise inter- and intra-community relationships. There are explicit provisions of the Constitution which must be adhered to. But all these noble human concerns must not be twisted to suit the blinkered vision of petty, short-sighted politicians. This clamour for caste census for the first time in independent India is nothing but the failure of transformatory politics and paucity of vision. The perpetuation of caste-driven politics serves the interests of these power-seekers rather than ensuring social justice to the millions of poor in this country.

The Census is forward looking. Data is collected keeping in mind the future of citizens. The Census must, therefore, be linked to development. All data must be collected which reveal details of the economic condition of a citizen. In fact, data on income should also be collected to get the exact figure of BPL families.

Caste census is a thing of the past; the ghost of the Census of 1931 should not be given a new life to hamper the growth of an egalitarian social order. The religion-based Census conducted in 2001 gave rise to communal demands and the Indian states knowingly or unknowingly got trapped in it. A caste-based census will establish caste identity beyond the social realm. Consequently, many smaller caste groups would be encouraged to claim their own place in the bureaucratic, political and social hierarchy in keeping with their actual numerical strength. The fallout of demand for reservation in proportion to population will be extended to caste groups. The Rangnath Mishra Commission had set the ball rolling and now caste-based census would mean societal Balkanisation. Healthy democratic decentralisation at the ground level will thus be severely affected.

2

National Population Register (NPR)

The Census of India has taken upon itself a rigorous exercise in addition to the regular enumeration, i.e., collecting data for the preparation of the National Population Register (NPR). The NPR is designed to contain information on each and every individual residing in the country. The data collected during the Census exercise would eventually be used to create a comprehensive identity database in the country. This task is as large as the regular Census itself. But, the peculiarity of the task is that it has the potential of dragging the entire Census into unnecessary controversy, vitiating the sanctity attached to the Census operation. If not put to proper use, the NPR also has the hidden potential of granting Indian nationality to illegal immigrants, especially Bangladeshis.

To understand the potential dangers in perspective it is important to understand the process of collection of data for the Census of 2011 and the method of data collection for the NPR. The Census is carried out in two phases. The first phase of the Census is known as House Listing and the second phase is known as Housing Schedule. However, this time around the NPR Schedule is being canvassed along with the first phase of the Census exercise. This exercise is normally carried out in the year that precedes the Census year. In this phase, the Census organisation makes a list of Census houses and the households. It involves collection of data about the kind and condition of the houses, availability of facilities like drinking water, sanitation and sewerage, availability of energy for light and cooking, transport facilities available like automobile, bicycle and the communication facilities like telephone, radio, etc. During the current Census, information is also being collected on availability of mobile phones and internet in the Census houses. The Census of 2011 is

collecting this data in 35 columns.

The second phase of the Census is the population enumeration phase. This schedule, although not published as yet, is also supposed to be very extensive. In addition to the number of persons in each household, it seeks to collect information on gender, place of residence, age, religion, SC or ST status, educational, occupational and marital status, language, migration, etc. The Household Schedule of the last Census included 39 columns and the chances are, that this year the number of columns will be the same. The second phase of the Census is likely to be carried out between February 9 and 28, 2011.

NPR Schedule

During the ongoing Census process, a new schedule has been added called the National Population Register (NPR). This schedule, being canvassed simultaneously with the House Listing and Housing Schedule, seeks information under 15 columns. The NPR questionnaire is to be filled for every member of the Census household. This task is almost as voluminous as the main phase (second phase) of the regular Census. In a way, the main Census exercise is being carried out twice, first for the NPR along with the first phase (April–December 2010) and again for the population enumeration phase (February 2011).

AREAS OF CONCERN

The main problem is the issue of confidentiality. Both the exercises, that is, the Census and the NPR, are entirely different in nature, character and aim. Both the exercises are governed by entirely different statutes with different purpose and objectives. The entire exercise of data collection for the NPR may prove to be detrimental if the government's perspective is not clear. The clause of confidentiality of the information is the guiding principle that ensures the accuracy and sanctity of the information given during the Census. The Census guarantees the respondents that information collected from them shall be used only for providing statistical inputs into public policy formulation at the macro level. The Census guarantees that the particulars of an individual or households shall never be disclosed. This promise of confidentiality is the key that generates faith in the Census activity.

However, the NPR schedule which is being carried out along with the House Listing

and Housing Schedule does not promise confidentiality. In fact, the purpose of the NPR Schedule is to associate the collected information with the names of the concerned individuals

and households. After filling the NPR Schedule, the Census enumerator gives an acknowledgement slip to the head respondent of the household. This slip contains the names of the individuals in the household and other information. Biometric measurement of the individual and related photographs will be collected on the basis of these slips. Finally, the NPR seeks to contain the names of individuals, relevant data about the individual, biometric data and a unique identification number. The issue at stake is the identification of the individual or a household through a unique identification number which is given on the basis of the data collected during the Census. This reverses the promise of confidentiality that the Census exercise gives to the respondent.

To evade legal hassles, the NPR schedule is kept under the Citizenship Act 1955 and the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and the Issue of National Identification Cards Rule 2003). The Census, however, is carried out under the Census Act of 1948 which guarantees confidentiality of the information. Even though the NPR schedule does not promise such confidentiality, the purpose of the NPR is to associate the collected information with the names of the concerned individual and households. The irony is that the two exercises governed by two different sets of rules are being simultaneously carried out. The NPR may have been put under different set of rules that does not ensure confidentiality but as it is linked to the Census exercise, the confidentiality clause of the Census goes haywire. There may not be any legal consequences related to the data collection for the NPR but the consequent loss of sanctity of the Census operations cannot be ruled out. How can a Census enumerator gain the confidence of the respondents when he simultaneously fills in two forms, one of which is supposed to be confidential and the other is not? Ambiguity appears to be inherent in the exercise as the enumerators hardly explain about the NPR and the masses normally believe that the NPR schedule is part of the Census exercise.

The NPR schedule has 15 columns to seek information such as name of the person, relationship to head, father's name, mother's name, spouse's name, sex, date of birth, marital status, place of birth, nationality as declared, present address of usual residence, duration of stay at present address, permanent residence address, occupation/activity and educational qualification. All the information is to be collected on the basis of what the

respondent declares. The NPR is thus created on the basis of the information provided by the respondents and the UID number and identity cards will be issued on the basis of the information provided by respondents. The problem is that the procedure does not have any clause that ensures verification of the information provided by the respondents. In a way, there is nothing in the procedure that stops an illegal foreign migrant from claiming usual residence of long duration as well as Indian nationality. Question numbers 10 and 11 of the NPR schedule relate to nationality as declared and usual residence. There is every chance that an illegal migrant will declare his nationality as Indian and will give a long period of stay at the present address. In a way, such illegal migrants will be treated at par with the legitimate Indian citizens for all practical purposes. Thus, the NPR opens the possibility for any illegal immigrant to legitimise his status as resident and national of India.

The nationality question is an important issue and it should not be left to the respondent to answer. It must be determined and verified by the authorities on the basis of documentary and other proofs. The NPR must not record answers to such questions merely on the basis of what is claimed by the respondents. Those living in India illegitimately will claim Indian birth, long duration of stay in India and Indian nationality. Recording answers regarding nationality 'as declared' by the respondents is almost like opening the borders of India and legitimizing illegitimate foreign migrants.

The confusion arises because of bypassing the issue of stringent scrutiny and verification by changing the nomenclature of the final register from the national register of the Indian citizen to the National Population Register.

The Citizenship (Registration of Citizen and issue of National Identification Cards) Rules, 2003, did not foresee this information to be registered in the citizenship register as it is assumed that the register contains the names of only Indian nationals.

Interestingly, the Home Committee Report 144 presented to the Rajya Sabha on April 27, 2010 and tabled in Lok Sabha on April 27, 2010 apprehended that it will be difficult and improper to carry out both exercises together. The argument was on the following lines:

1. The issue of confidentiality to the purpose, objectives and process of the two

exercises (Census and NPR) are different. Hence, it is important to keep them separate in order to maintain the sanctity of both the exercises.

2. With regard to the confidentiality of Census data, the committee apprehended that it would be difficult to hold back information contained in the Census schedule in view of the RTI Act, 2005.
3. The committee was of the considered opinion that the 'nationality as declared' clause in the NPR Household Schedule has the potential to confer de-facto Indian citizenship to illegal migrants. The committee strongly recommended that the nationality clause be removed as it has portents which in the long run may pose a threat to the security and integrity of the country. The committee therefore suggested that it would be worthwhile considering suspension of the NPR exercise for the time being. It also recommended that the work relating to NPR preparations should be de-linked from the Census operations.

Taking the Standing Committee (on Home Affairs) report very seriously, 'nationality' is a sensitive and serious issue. The government of the day appears to be treating it casually. Linking the NPR activities with that of the Census and question number 10 and 11 of the NPR Schedule has every potential to aggravate the illegal so that they may procure the national identity cards. This situation could have been avoided had the government initiated the dialogue with the civil society. Ideally, before taking up the activities of NPR preparations, it was expected from the government to put the issue to debate and discussion. A major policy like this requires the involvement of the political leaders, members of the academia and thinktanks. Linking the NPR with the Census exercise was a major policy decision that involved not only the safety and security of society but also confidentiality of an individual. Even this debate on inclusion of caste in the Census schedule and collection of data for the NPR along with the Census is a self-generated debate by the concerned citizens, activists and scholars. Instead of sensitising the citizen on such a major policy decision, the government is maintaining a 'studied silence'.

The government should investigate the role of an 'invisible think tank' that might have mooted the idea of linking the NPR with the Census and not bringing it into public domain for extensive deliberations and discussion? The government accepts that it does not have

the mechanism (read political will) to identify and deport infiltrators who have disturbed the demographic pattern of Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Tripura, Manipur and other bordering states including Jammu & Kashmir. Why should there be Question No. 10 wherein nationality is left to self-declaration? Any infiltrator will obviously claim to be an Indian in response to this question. The data collected for the NPR in a separate exercise could have been useful had the government been clear about the instant verification of the data and, in the long run, its use by the various law enforcing agencies tackling internal and external aggression against the Indian state. However, there is no indication that such data would be used for internal security purposes instead of creating vote-banks. In the absence of such clarity of intention the government has to face criticism and confrontation at the eleventh hour, at a time when the government is committed to a war against terrorism. India faces maximum threat from cross-border terrorism and its Indian collaborators. In such an alarming situation, the Indian state should refrain from exercises that would legitimise the claims of so-called 'usual residents'.

If the confidentiality clause is assured and the government takes the guarantee that the data will not be reaching the Chinese, Pakistani or Americans or for that matter the corporate houses selling consumer goods, the NPR will be immensely useful to curb terrorism. But given the fact that the government does not have the required will power to take a tough stand against infiltrators, the data may not be put to affirmative use. The 'soft state' appears to be degenerating into a 'weak state' which appeases even terrorists and their conscience-keepers.

The government has not spelt out a strategy that could ensure Census and NPR data collection in the Naxalite-infested areas of Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and parts of Maharashtra. Can the government give a guarantee that every tribal and non-tribal of Dantewada, Lalgah, Telangana, etc., would find place in the use of National Population Register? Do we understand that at least one-fifth of the Indian population will either go unreported or misreported?

The preparation of NPR should not be done in haste. The government should ideally involve the civil society before preparing the NPR. as Kundu says, "critical issues linked with this have not been debated adequately in the country."¹ He further argues that

1. See Appendix, Prof Amitabh Kundu, Indian Census 2011 Challenges and Perspectives.

understanding social dynamics is missing from the NPR project. the issue is very pertinent and the government must take note of it. Further his apprehension regarding the UID revolves round the question of urbanisation and internal migration of populace within the country. He describes the UID as a tool of exclusion and says that “ the exclusionary forces would now have a powerful instrument to stall the inflow from rural areas, particularly from outside the state.”² The data collected for the NPR should be verified through police and civil officials before being entered in the NPR, which entitles a person to an identity card.

The inviolability of the nation-state must be ensured in the era of global terrorism. We are witness to the emergence of several new groups which perpetrate terror as a matter of routine. This invites serious attention to any exercise which is meant for identification of citizens and non-citizens of the country. Even 2,000 years ago, Greek philosopher Aristotle laid down stringent provisions for becoming citizens of the Greek city states. How can we, in the 21st century, be so casual about such a sensitive issue as identification of citizens? We are already facing infiltration in the north-east and in Jammu & Kashmir region.

The NPR can be an effective counter-mechanism if it promises to help trace the suspected or real culprits hiding in ghettos that provide secured and protected environment for anti-social elements, especially terrorists.

It is therefore required to rethink on the NPR exercise and only after a democratic debate with the larger participation of the civil society such an exercise be taken up. The government must ensure the participation of various political and ideological think tanks to evolve a consensus on it. Identification of infiltrators should be made the prerequisite for the preparation of any such legal sensitive document.

2. See Appendix, Prof Amitabh Kundu, Indian Census 2011 Challenges and Perspectives.

APPENDIX - I

Brain Storming Session

Date: May 10, 2010
Time: 12 Noon to 3.30 pm
Venue: IPF Seminar Hall
D-51, Hauz Khas, New Delhi -16

Organised by: India Policy Foundation

Participants in the Brain Storming Session

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1. Prof. Rakesh Sinha | Hony. Director, India Policy Foundation. |
| 2. Shri. Uday Sinha | Sr. Journalist |
| 3. Smt. Asha Das | Former Secretary, Govt. of India. |
| 4. Sh. R. Venkat Narayanan | Former Secretary, Govt. of India. |
| 5. Prof. Rajvir Sharma | Associate Professor, Political Science, Delhi University. |
| 6. Dr. Anil Thakur | Associate Professor, Political Science, Delhi University. |
| 7. Prof. Devraj | Associate Professor, Political Science, Delhi University. |
| 8. Prof. Amarjeev Lochan | Associate Professor, History, Delhi University. |
| 9. Sh. Qamar Agha | Visiting Professor, Jamia Millia Islamia, and Sr. Journalist. |
| 10. Sh. Bhupendra Yadav | Sr. Advocate, Supreme Court of India |

11. Sh. Gopal Agarwal	Chartered Accountant.
12. Dr. Saroj Rath	Ph.D, Jawaharlal Nehru University.
13. Prof. Netram Thagela	Editor of 'Samajik Uthan' Magazine, General Secretary, All India Confederation SC/ST Organisations
14. Sh. Satish Pednekar	Sr. Journalist, Jansatta.
15. Sh. Sushil Pandit	Social Activist.
16. Sh. Awadhesh Mishra	Journalist.
17. Sh. Vinod Shukla	Journalist, Sahara Time.
18. Sh. Vrindavan Mishra	Research Scholar, Jawaharlal Nehru University.
19. Sh. Anil Kumar	Research Scholar, Jawaharlal Nehru University.
20. Sh. Rajeev Kumar	Researcher.
21. Sh. Raju Ranjan	Researcher.
22. Sh. Jai Shankar	Researcher.
23. Sh. Subhash Chand	Researcher.

Abridged Summary of the Brain Storming Session

Prof. Rakesh Sinha: The Census during the British rule was the Census of the 'subject'. The Census of 'citizens' began only when India achieved independence. Hence, there should be a positive difference now; the exercise should yield neutral data and be linked to development process. It should conform to the pledge taken by the Constituent Assembly to establish an egalitarian society. What should be the working methodology of the Census? Is the present methodology foolproof? What can be done to improve the process of Census? Can it be done by introducing trained students and research scholars in the process or by opening Census departments in universities?

While an academic and constructive debate on this issue was already going on in the Foundation, a political debate began in Parliament on the issue of inclusion of caste in the Census. The demand of mere collection of caste-based data, otherwise, would have been a non-issue. But this entire debate has begun with a political motive and in a political context. This necessitates serious deliberation to expose the real motive behind the origin of this debate and about its repercussions. Also, what should be the alternatives to address

the fallouts?

Uday Sinha: When we began contemplating on the issue, an important question that confronted us was whether Census is a data collection process for the benefit of social science or it is mere head count of the individuals. Two more questions came up subsequently. One, whether Census should be a vehicle for collection of data on caste and the other, whether the data for the National Population Register (NPR) should be collected along with the Census schedule?

Asha Das: During 2001 Census, inclusion of the caste was not accepted by the government. And the reason given was that the inclusion of caste will affect the legitimacy of the Census.

Satish Pednekar: "States like Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh (AP) had already collected data on backward classes separately in 2001 when the last Census was carried out". He pointed out a practical problem with the caste-based Census. He said, 'But...States and the centre have different lists of castes. In many states there are some castes that are not included in the list. In west Bengal there supposed to be 7 percent OBCs but many doubt that the number could be so small.

Asha Das : It is ironic that in the post-independence years the numbers of SCs, STs, OBCs and all other categories have proliferated. Even though...the decision of counting SCs and STs in the Census was taken with the acknowledgement of their deprived status. And for last 60 years their counting has been done.

Dr. Saroj Rath: The practical problem of the caste-based Census is that the central and state lists of castes differ. Hence the caste- Census needs to be done separately...The reason why caste Census was not allowed post independence lay in the varying claims made by people belonging to different castes over a period of time.

Asha Das: There has been misreporting of caste by the people.

Dr. Saroj Rath: In pre-independence times, there was a race to attain upper caste status. But with the change in context, the race has reverted towards attaining lower caste status. The Kelkar Commission reported 2200castes in 1956, while Madal commission

recorded 3300 castes. Recently, the National Commission of Backward Classes has registered 5700 castes.

Sushil Pandit: The Census is a huge data collection exercise and the collection of all types of data should be allowed...The entire process of Census is aimed at individual collection of data; however, this data is not used for personal purposes. That is why (suppose) even if I declare myself belonging to an OBC category, that doesn't automatically becomes my license for getting government jobs. However, we should try that caste doesn't gain more attention than the Census itself.

How the data is going to be used is an altogether different issue. Hence, let us not pre-judge and vitiate the process by dwelling on various fallouts. Because of such pre-judgments, there was huge vitiation of language data in the Censuses of 1961 and 1971 in Punjab. All data is subject to political manipulation; that is something we cannot avoid. Yet there should be every attempt at collecting the data minutely and honestly. My point is: what you do with the 'cold objective clinical data' is left to you. Hence, let us treat the data with utmost respect.

Prof. Rajvir Sharma: In the last 60 years of our independence, the issues of caste reservation, justice, equality, freedom etc., have been in the public discourse. But today, our society needs an inclusive approach aimed, primarily, at development. There was a time in India, when we used to have some kind of similarity between the caste and class. In the last two decades, a debate ensued in the country whether social justice should be linked with caste or with socio-economic criteria. But, there has been no attempt to define the criteria of backwardness or the OBCs. It is true that even if I wrongly declare myself as an OBC, I cannot personally attain the benefits that come with it personally. But when the overall figures are available, that will be manipulated by the so-called leaders of the caste. They would lobby for change in policy accordingly for their own benefit, ultimately making the Indian politics 'client based'. It would lead us nowhere.

Be it the issue of OBC reservation or implementation of NREGA, politicians are largely creating their vulnerable and dependent clients. He said, "The Mandalisation of politics has contributed much to the disintegration process of the Indian Society...I think the Census shouldn't become a tool in the hands of politicians. It shouldn't be politicized and if it is not to be politicized then the caste should be kept aside". Also, he felt, "the

Census must generate data on education, on unemployment, on living conditions of people, on slums, health, water, rural and urban areas etc. This would enable the Census in moving from a macro-policy making tool to an instrument of affecting socio-economic transformation in the country”.

Netram Thagela: In a country where colonies are subjected to arson on the pretext of barking dogs, it wouldn't be appropriate to think that castes can be set aside. One shouldn't worry about how the data would be used as only after knowing the exact condition of a particular caste, proper policies can be made. However, this shouldn't be politicized... Some more items should be added in the questionnaire; such as sources of income, distance between the place of residence and primary health centre and the facilities available there, distance between the residence and the source of drinking water, whether one is getting access to education or not and what is the environment in which education is being imparted. Only after knowing all these, we can decide about the conditions of different social sectors.

Qamar Agha: First, the sole reason of non-inclusion of caste in the Census post independence was the vision of a casteless society. Second, as there has already been a growth in caste-based politics, the Census shouldn't be politicized by including caste enumeration in the Census exercise...If it really happens, the biggest victims of this will be the national and territorial identities as the caste identity of a person will become more stronger.

R. Venkat Narayanan: We are discussing something very fundamental and if the decision of caste Census has already been taken then I doubt it can be retracted. But, I do not agree with Mr. Pandit when he says 'Well all that is required is only a clinical collection of data, policy will follow later. So let us respect the data as it is'. The problem is, micro policy in the country depends on the macro data and if the macro data has the stamp of the Census, then it becomes easier to form skewed micro policies. Political parties will find it very difficult to go against such policies in the Parliament.

...We are an entitlement based society and entitlement is supposed to be based on backwardness, but in the absence of a clear-cut definition, there has been a proliferation of categories like BC, SC, OBC even MBC (in Tamilnadu) etc. Hence, it wouldn't be a sound policy to think: let the data be collected, we will think later. Census should not be used as tool as Census is something neutral. It should contain minimal information but authentic information and at the same time give clues for policy making. Collecting more

detailed data will only cause the defilement of Census which has so far been held sacrosanct... The inclusion of caste in the Census will only cause several small fractures to the country.

Bhupendra Yadav: It is surprising that despite the recommendation of the Standing Committee(Home) that joining NPR to Census will cause the formulation of biased population register in the bordering areas of the country, the data for NPR is to be collected along with the Census. Yet, no one has paid any attention to this serious issue. As the country is already reeling under the problem of infiltrators, it is necessary to demand the separation of NPR from the Census. The reason for this is that the making up of National Population Register is subject to the policing activity of the state, whereas, Census is concerned only with policy formulation and research.

When Jyotiba Phule established the Satyasodhak Samaj, he had said 'Gyan bina mati gayi, mati bina gati gayi, gati bina vitt gaya, vitt bina anarth hua, anarth hua to shudra hua' (Without knowledge I lost my mind, without mind I lost my status, without status I lost my finances, without finances a disaster happened and when disaster happened I became a shudra). In this country, even today people are deprived of basic necessities. Caste realities have changed in the present times. While on the one hand, 'social assimilation and acceptance of all' has increased in the societal relations, on the other, new problems have propped up. For example, some eight crores people have been displaced in the country in the last three decades. ... Today, if the government decides to find out the caste of these displaced people, then suddenly many a new caste-names will emerge.

Uday Sinha: Instead of harping on the issue of caste, shouldn't we decide the parameters of development in 2010 and collect data accordingly. It will link the Census with development.

Prof. Devraj: I believe that the basis of Census 2011 should be occupation and not caste.

Anil Thakur: Caste Census should be done as caste is a reality of our society. But now that all the political parties have geared up to politically exploit this issue, it should not be debated. He felt that the political parties want some people to oppose the caste Census so that they can take this issue among the people and politicise it. We should, instead of

debating on the caste Census, pressurize the government to look after other basic demands. If you want to end the caste then don't pay it any attention: that was the theory propounded by Ambedkar and Lohiya.

Uday Sinha intervened with an assessment that all the participants agree with the collection of data on different castes. But the point of non-agreement rests on the choice of Census as a vehicle for collecting data on castes? Another issue is about the BPL families. Also, an important point was put forth as to what should be the parameters of development in 2010 and how can we connect it with the Census? This necessitates a serious discussion on whether counting of castes in the Census is more important or the counting of socio-economic indicators. Another debatable issue was the linking of NPR with Census. Doubting the intentions of the government, he asked, "is the government trying to give valid citizenship status to the eight crore infiltrators by joining the NPR with the Census?"

Rajvir Sharma, on a precautionary note, said that the process of NPR has already begun. Hence, considering the role of civil society in generating public opinion, he said, India Policy Foundation should also chart out a future course of action. "Home Minister P. Chidambaram has said that the data on castes will not be analysed. But the civil society can always analyse these data to build public opinion and to highlight the possible impacts it will have on the society".

Gopal Aggrawal: I believe that we should emphasise only the economic issues in the Census and we should stop the government from carrying out caste based Census...As far as the NPR is considered, I think, whenever the government will begin something new, the problems will automatically occur. That's why we shouldn't stop it. At least eight crore more infiltrators will not enter the country in future.

Prof. Amarjeev Lochan: I think that along with emphasising economic issues, we should also think about the issues that compromises our national identity...Secondly, to say that eight crores (infiltrators) have come, and eight crores more shouldn't come is like saying accept the present problem and prepare to prevent the next...but how can we ignore that those eight crores have the capacity to create eight lakh crores more. ...I would like to mention the theory of population counting as propounded by Kautilya. He talked of making the health related issues, sources of income of the citizens, origin, social mobility etc., the parameters of population enumeration .I agree that a person starts compromising

with his national identity with the growth of prosperity...we saw this in the recently concluded Indian Premier League(IPL). Hence the policy should take into consideration the ill-effects of the economic pursuits.

Uday Sinha: The home ministry said in October 2009 that there wouldn't be any caste Census. That is why we shouldn't say that the Government wants to conduct caste Census...It is a sad story of our country that the political action takes precedence over the action of civil society and policy decisions, thus, are taken without the involvement of civil society...it is clear that the government has succumbed to the demands of a few while seemingly agreeing to conduct a caste Census. Hence, very likely, the data will be used for political purposes. In client based politics, the relationship between the citizen and political parties will become like that of the consumer goods of a multinational company and us (consumer)...we should understand that when it (caste) is used politically then those ready to be used as clients will prove the contention of the political party true. That is why it is necessary to decide whether Census should be the vehicle for collecting caste related data or not?

Asha Das: Sources in the Ministry told me that even they were not consulted before the decision was taken. The conjecture, therefore, is that the hurried decision of conducting caste Census is a political decision. With the type of investments we have made, we should have reached to our 'Golden Age' by now. Unfortunately that didn't happen because we have fragmented our society into so many parts on different criteria. Backwardness has been made into a state of receiving privileges. That is why even people who are well off like to declare themselves as backward. Is this the change we want to perpetuate? Including caste in the Census will only do that. How can the decisions with such far reaching consequences be taken on the flimsiest of grounds?

R. Venkat Narayanan: We should raise this issue of decision-making process regarding caste and Census. Not including caste in the Census was a state policy for last 60 years. In a democratic country like ours, any change in policy has to go through a particular process. This is the first time that the government has changed a policy ignoring established practices. Another point is about the creamy layer. State governments have so far failed to implement the creamy layer decision of the Supreme Court.

Saroj Rath: The point of discussion is not how and where the data will be used. In

fact, the data collected by the Census are always used, clinically and dispassionately. It does not face social scrutiny. For instance, Mandal commission used the data provided by the Census of 1931.

Satish Pednekar: The last commissioner was removed because he gave wrong data. He had said that the population of Muslims was 36 percent though the Census was not done in Kashmir that year. Later, he himself revised the data and declared the Muslim population to be 29 percent. He did this with the growth rate of Hindus as well, which was considered potentially harmful.

Sushil Pandit said that he was misunderstood in the beginning. He didn't mean to say that data will not be used for policy making. Rather, "I had categorically stated that the data will not be used for decision making at the individual level", he said. Regarding NPR, he informed that the infiltrators who are staying here are already part of two critical data bases: Electoral rolls and Public distribution System. They are, thus, already playing a pernicious role...

Bhupendra Yadav: Here, I would like to read out the two paragraphs recommended by the Standing committee on Home Affairs on the NPR. (In the 144th Report on Demands for Grants (2010-2011) Ministry of Home Affairs)

(6.9.3) With regard to the confidentiality of the Census Data, the Committee apprehends that it would be difficult to hold back information contained in the Census Schedule in view of the RTI Act, 2005. It is quite likely that even if exemption clause is invoked under RTI Act, 2005, the CIC, the Supreme Court or the High Courts may pass orders for disclosure of information. The Committee therefore recommends to Government to keep this aspect in mind.

(6.9.4) The Committee also took note of the statement made by the Ministry of Home Affairs that the creation of National Population Register would be a comprehensive identity database in the country for better targeting of the benefits and services under the Government schemes / programmes, improving planning and strengthening security of the country. However, the Committee is of the considered view that the 'Nationality as declared' clause in the NPR Household Schedule has the potential to confer de facto Indian Citizenship to illegal migrants,

despite the disclaimer attached to the clause. The Committee is of the opinion that the Government should not act in haste. There is a need to have a rethinking on the NPR exercise. The Committee, therefore, strongly recommends that the 'Nationality' clause should be removed as it has the portents in the long run which may pose a threat to the security and integrity of the country. Therefore, it may be worthwhile considering suspension of the NPR exercise for the time being. The Committee further recommends that the work relating to NPR preparation should be delinked from the Census operations.

Prof. Rakesh Sinha concluded the brainstorming session by noting that the impact of our efforts, success of this session and our intervention on caste Census will be known only in the future. However, as Uday Sinha said, the political intervention takes precedence over the intervention of the civil society in our country. I think there are two reasons for this. First is the poverty of popular leadership with a wide appeal and support base in the country. Ever since the decades of 1980s and 1990s, the central leadership was overshadowed with the rise of regional leadership. Now this is impacting the neutral exercises like the Census. Political parties are demanding caste-based Census with a well considered plan: they want this issue to be confronted to strengthen their political agenda. Second reason is the degeneration of social sciences. Social Sciences played the role of flag bearer in the society by seventies. But now it is concerned only with the postmortem of the social events... The loss of autonomy of social science is clearly seen in the ascendance of parochial issues like caste, communalism etc. in political discourse.

Prof. Sinha said that the India Policy foundation is trying to reduce such effects and to regain the lost status of Social Sciences. In any secular and democratic country, if debate and discussion is stifled then it would not yield any new idea... He felt that the civil society of our country rejects identity based politics. It aspires for a casteless social order. Prof. Sinha concluded with the hope that this brain storming session will yield fruitful results and motivate the Govt. to take up the issue in the larger interests of the country.

APPENDIX - II

Interaction with Prof. Ashish Bose

India's famous demographer Prof. Ashish Bose interacted with the IPF on various issues at his residence on May08, 2011. Following is an abridged version of the long interaction with him:

IPF: What was the objective of the British administration behind initiating census in India?

Ashish Bose: The genesis of census in India lies in a memorandum sent to the Queen Victoria by the, then, British rulers of India. It said 'We must civilize these people. Therefore, we must have data on them ' The motto of British rulers was to 'divide and rule' on the one hand and also they had a feeling that census was necessary for 'civilizing their Indian subjects'..

IPF: kindly elaborate it?

Ashish Bose: The first census in England was done in 1801. In India, it happened in 1872. At that time they were interested in knowing the kind of people they were ruling. They felt that it was necessary to know their subjects in order to strengthen the grip of the British Empire on India. They also had a hidden agenda of 'Divide and Rule'. They wanted the Indians to fight on the basis of caste, religion and language. They wanted to impose identity politics of the western world in their colony. They were confident that the infighting will weaken anti-imperialist struggle in India.

IPF: Coming back to the ongoing debate on census 2011, do you think that caste

should be included in the census?

Ashish Bose: If the caste is included, the census will be completely ruined. The caste based census has been rejected in our first Census (1951) and since then this remained as a settled fact. However, the government is changing the policy on the demand of some political leaders. I think it is wrong on part of the government. If tomorrow someone says that a scientific theory or a principle of political science is wrong, then would the UPA government change it as well? I don't believe in this kind of argument.

IPF: In a democracy nothing is a settled fact. Any demand can crop up at any juncture. Therefore, we want to know what is wrong in the caste based Census?

Ashish Bose: I put a counter question; ultimately, what is the use of caste based census? There are so many castes and so many sub-castes. Some people within the same caste claim that they are superior than others. It hampers the growth of single citizenship. After all what is the need to enter into such an unnecessary identity based controversies. We have to solve more pertinent problems like water, housing, and unemployment. Why shouldn't we pay attention to these basic things?

IPF: Kindly tell us about the pitfalls of the caste based census?

Ashish Bose: See, 500 years ago, we used to travel in a bullock cart. Now we board an airplane. We should move with the change. The biggest problem of present times is the lack of adequate job opportunities. Everyone prefers a government job. The reason is very simple. There is a sense of certainty and flexibility in the government Job. Besides, it ensures post-retirement pension whereas the private sector believes in the policy of hire and fire. In such a situation, it is natural that people want to ensure their entry into government jobs and find reservation as an easiest means for their success. And it impels them to be engaged into identity based politics.

Since independence caste has never been enumerated in the census. If it is being done now, then the government must come up with a valid reason. But the government, it seems, has succumbed to the demands of couple of leaders.

IPF: Can the Census be linked to futuristic developmental issue?

Ashish Bose: Yes, it was done in the first two censuses after the independence. The data for five years plans are taken from the census itself even now.

IPF: Please give some concrete example of success of the census in resolving major issues that the country might be facing at a particular point of time.

R Gopalswamy was the census commissioner in 1951. Considering the partition of India, he had asserted the need to have data on refugees and the displaced. He thought that there would be scarcity of food items in the country hence the census must have data on food items along with counting the entire population.

In 1961, Ashok Mitra was the census commissioner. He also considered that data on caste were not needed. Economy was the main issue then. That is why, his questionnaire included items like availability of toilet, vehicles, and Bank accounts etc. Both the censuses can be described as the intelligent censuses.

IPF: Do you think that the questionnaire prepared for the census is adequate or is there a need to add something more?

Ashish Bose: One item is missing in our census questionnaire. We don't ask about the income. We think that people will feel offended if asked about the income. Moreover, people think that they would have to pay taxes if they reveal their income. My point is we don't need data on real income. Rather, there should be different classes of income such as from 0-5000, 5000- 10000 and so on. This will also help in getting the exact data on BPL families. Only when we have the data on income, we can decide how much more time will it take to remove poverty.

IPF: Can census take care of the 'migrating population'?

Ashish Bose: Very good question. The census commissioner in 1961 was Ashok Mitra. I informed him about a missing item in the census questionnaire. I had said, 'you have asked about the district of birth and the district of residence in the census questionnaire.

But if you add a sub-question Urban and Rural areas then it will give four types of data on migration from rural to urban area, from rural to rural area, from urban to rural area and from urban to urban area. He felt elated with my point and incorporated it in the census questionnaire.

IPF: How the Census operate in the case of students living in hostels?

Ashish Bose: They, are called 'institutional population' and are enumerated properly.

IPF: The data for the preparation of National Population Register is also being collected along with the census 2011. Common people hardly know anything about it. How do you find its utility?

Ashish Bose: I will never agree with the idea of preparing a 'National Population Register'. I believe that no thief will ever honestly admit his guilt. It is a foolish idea to prepare a National Population Register for the population of 100 crore people. If the government sincerely wants to stop infiltration then it should put proper check post on the Borders.

IPF: Can the infiltration be checked if the respondents are asked to give the records of two generation?

Ashish Bose: Then the census will become a kind of police investigation. Many people would say that they don't possess any such records. During my time, very few people used to have birth certificates and our census enumerators don't have the right to counter. They are supposed to record only the available data. Why do you want to ask everything in the census itself? Better, think of a different methodology.

IPF: Does census help in tackling the refugee problem?

Ashish Bose: No it only helps in the settlement of displaced person.

IPF: Does the government of India possess all the data about the displaced?

Ashish Bose: I would only say that it is necessary for the government to know who is located in which state.... whether in Tripura or in Manipur.

IPF: What is the biggest challenge that the Census 2011 should address ?

Ashish Bose: I believe that the biggest challenge before the Census 2010-11 is of unemployment. We should collect data related to unemployment and the Youth of the country but there is no consensus on the age group that can be called to fall under youth category. I think it should be between 35-40 years as the life expectancy of people has increased now.

IPF: The market forces have caused inequality in society in this age of liberalization. The negative impact of it could be seen in the rise of problems like Naxalism and the country doesn't seem to be prepared to tackle this problem. How can the census be used to tackle this crisis?

Ashish Bose: Manmohan Singh must know the solution right now! Naxalism has spread in 160 districts of the country. But, as far as the Census is considered, I think in the census 2011 we can collect two types of data.

a) youth and their problem

b) unemployment and underemployment

My economics teacher used to say that there is no such thing as unemployment. For example; if someone is teaching in the University of Delhi and he suddenly loses his job. He starts giving private tuitions in order to survive. In that case the person will be underemployed not unemployed. The Census would put such person in the category of self-employed but this is also wrong as the person doesn't have a job according to his ability.

IPF: What do you suggest for the training of the enumerators?

Ashish Bose: There are training programmes for the enumerators but that too needs to be improved in order to get better results.

IPF: Why the university students, research scholars and university teachers are not engaged as enumerators ?

Ashish Bose: Yes, they would prove to be better but if start performing this duty for money then it won't work. For example, it won't be right for the students of JNU to work as census enumerators in lieu of money.

Also, do you know that the age of inclusion in the NPR is above 15 years, while the age of getting registered in the Voters list is 18 years and above. But the age of getting included in the census is 0 and above. That means even if someone is one day old his name would be included in the population list.

IPF: What is the difference between Indian census and the census process in other countries?

Ashish Bose: I would give the example of USA. The American census presupposes a hundred percent educated citizen. The census questionnaire is sent via mail, where it is written that 'Dear friend, please fill this and send back. If there is any problem then contact us'. They don't visit every house to record the population. They also record the 'race' of their citizen. But their population is too small as compared to ours.

IPF What are the basic properties of the Census. ?

Ashish Bose: The Census has primarily two properties:

- a) Ensuring 100 percent head count and
- b) The reference period has to be short. That means it has to be conducted during a short period of time.. Technically it would be 'Non synchronous' if a census exercise is conducted for a whole year. For the Census 2011 the reference period is between February 09, 2011 and February 28, 2011.

Indian Census 2011: Challenges and Perspective

— Prof. Amitabh Kundu
(CSRD, JNU)

Indian Census of 2011 will be the largest in the world, collecting information on socio-economic characteristics including personal information linked with identity. Despite speculations before about a decade that the Census operations will possibly be replaced by massive surveys, as the task would be unmanageable in 2011, the House listing operation for the Census has begun from the April 1, 2010. The actual Census operation will begin in the middle of February next year but preparations are on for this massive operation.

Reliability of Census data

Census in India is conducted at regular intervals, having a large canvass with the goal of generating information on relatively permanent socio-economic characteristics of population in a comprehensive manner. It has never been designed for assessing the impact of certain kind of national policy or programme as that can result in a systematic bias in the responses. Even National Sample Surveys try to meet this objective and are conducted at regular intervals within a well defined framework. In China such regularity in conducting the Census has not been maintained and also it has sometimes been conducted immediately after a major policy shift. Population is also estimated through sample survey, which is not the case in India. Also, China had adopted the policy of not counting the floating population in urban areas without a Hukou (legal permit), resulting in gross under-enumeration of urban population until recently. These are the reasons why Indian Census data are considered much more reliable than that in China.

Houselisting, National Population Register and Unique Identity Card

The information on select items for National Population Register (NPR) are being collected along with house listing and housing Census. This will be passed on to the concerned agency for the Unique ID. The population count of the Census will be done during February – March 2011 and it is a matter of some satisfaction that NPR has not been piggybacked on the actual Census operation but only on House listing.

The basic objective of this UID, as being talked about in public domain, is that it will help in better targeting the anti poverty programmes and reduce the leakages. The other objective is to tackle of safety and security problem in the country.

UID is meant to exclude the ineligible population from the beneficiary list. However, this can help any agency in following a policy to exclude the “others”, the term being defined as someone coming from outside the state or a district, or after a cut off date. Many of the large cities are experiencing exclusionary urbanization through their land and slum related policies. By excluding the recent migrants from accessing certain civic amenities, and tenure etc., the UID can be effective in slowing down the rate of urbanisation, which already has become very low. Even the Eleventh Plan document expresses concern about this deceleration.

Various state governments may have different designs with regard to inclusion and exclusion. Indeed the UID can not be blamed for their actions but it would certainly provide them a powerful tool - an important data base - for achieving their goal of exclusion. Similarly, political parties or civil society organizations can make use of the data base for their limited agenda. Professor Amartya Sen in his book “Identity and Violence” argues that certain type of identity has often been used in perpetrating discrimination and violence against communities. Given such trends in our society, how would the government ensure that the identity will be used for limited purpose of monitoring government programmes and better targeting and not pursuing discriminatory and unjust policies?

Undoubtedly, the UID would have a dampening impact on migration, especially across the states. The analysis of the 2001 Census data reveals that over 50 per cent of those, who came to urban areas during nineties, reported their duration of stay at the place

of enumeration as over 10 years. The social hostilities and administrative requirements for accessing certain facilities are forcing the recent migrants claim longer period of residence at the pace of enumeration. This would not be easy due to UID and the exclusionary forces would now have a powerful instrument to stall the inflow from rural areas, particularly from outside the state.

The 2011 Census is likely to bring down underestimation, as reported through Post enumeration checks. This is because people will have additional reason for getting themselves counted as that would give them a formal identity. However, this factor can also lead to misrepresentation of facts and make the data non-comparable with that from previous Censuses. While collecting information for Population Register as also the finger prints of the adults, the state must assure that these will not be used by vested interests. I believe that the critical issues linked with this have not been debated adequately in the country. Preparing UID is only 10 per cent a technological exercise. Ninety percent, it involves understanding the social dynamics and political interests of possible users and mis-users.

Why Not a Caste-based Census?

It is important to note that Census questionnaire pertain to permanent social and economic characteristics. Information on employment, expenditure, inputs and output of industries etc. can not be collected through Census as that would require more detailed questionnaire and longer enquiry time. Further, part time enumerators (largely school teachers) are not trained for collecting that detailed information. The information on consumption expenditure is collected through National Sample Survey.

Collecting caste based data will be a major challenge as such data have not been collected after 1931, except for people in SC/ST categories. No one can argue that the government does not need this information, if it wants to implement its development programmes in a targeted manner. The proposition that collection of this information must be avoided as the data collection process itself would strengthen the caste differences and increase hostilities, is less important on the face of the emergent need for the data, to root out the problem. However, collecting information on caste characteristics through Census schedule would inevitably encourage respondents to deliberately misrepresent facts. This

is because people would know that the data are likely to be used for designing or monitoring policies and programmes for affirmative action. It is well known that in the sixties, people in Punjab region reported their mother tongue wrongly as the data were to be used for reorganization of the states. Again, due to the expectation of the data going immediately into policy, Census information on slums has not been reliable, even in 2001. Unfortunately, Planning Commission could not use that data for policy purposes as many of the state officials, when they knew that the number of slum households, could be the basis for resource allocation, inflated the figures.

There is no doubt that the Census data are extremely important for programmatic interventions, even in India. Besides, the government needs reliable socio-economic information to evaluate the impact of major policy shifts or the flagship programmes, like NREGA and JNNURM. Specific policy linked data may, therefore, be collected but by not adding questions in the Census schedule as that would distort the response in the entire schedule. Any other national level research agency can be entrusted to collect such information, independent of the Census. It may be noted that International Institute of Population Sciences and National Council of Applied Economic Research are collecting very useful data on health, family welfare, and human development etc., de-linked from other national level data base.

Information on caste etc. must, therefore, be collected by a national level organisation, having the necessary credibility and capability, under a dispassionate supervisory arrangement, without linking with the Census or NSS data collection system.

(Prof. Amitabh Kundu is a famous demographer and he is known for his specialisation in the field of Urbanisation & Census, presently he is a Professor in CSRD/SSS/JNU. This paper is sent by him for the Brain Storming Session held on May 10, 2010, India Policy Foundation, New Delhi.)

APPENDIX - IV

LIST OF OTHER BACKWARD CLASS COMMISSION

Sl. N.	State	Year	Committee/ Commissions	Recommendations	Status
1.	Andhra Pradesh	1968	Manohar Prasad Commission	30% reservation in Govt. Service among various categories of OBCs— i) Aboriginal tribes, Vimukta Jatis, Nomadic and Semi nomadic tribes (7%), ii) Vocational groups (13%), iii) Harijan Converts (1%) and other classes (9%). Govt. reduced it to 25%.	
		1975	Veerapa Committee	25% reservation	
		1970	K.M. Anantharaman		State's G.O. based on the report of the Anantharam an Commission was upheld by the Supreme Court in Balram case. The Modified list of OBCs based on the report of Murlidhara Rao Commission was upheld by the A.P. High Court but the increased quantum of reservation from 25% to 44% was struck down (judgment of 5.9.1986)
		1982	Murlidhar Rao Commission	44% reservation.	
2..	Bihar	1951	Govt. of Bihar	A List of 109 castes prepared to give them benefit of scholarships.	

		1971	Mungeri Lal Commission	24% seats in medical and other professional institutions, 26% in Govt and Semi-Govt. jobs. 20% reservation in Govt. Service.	Not Challenged
		1978	Karpoori Thakur Commission		
		1994	U.N. Sinha	Not accepted.	
3. Gujarat		1972	A.R. Bakshi	82 Castes identified, 10% reservation in medical/ engineering and other professional institutions/Trg. Cum production centres. 10% reservation in Class III and IV posts and 5% in Class I and II posts.	
		1981	C.V. Rane	28% reservation in posts and seats.	
		1987	R.C. Mankad	Report not Submitted	
4. Haryana		1991	Gurnam Singh	27% reservation in Govt. service	Not Challenged
5. Himachal Pradesh		1951	Govt. of H.P	Followed the list of OBC declared by erstwhile state Punjab Economic Criteria	
		1970	Govt. of H.P	20% for OBCs	
		1993	Govt. of H.P	Recommended for high powered Committee	
6. Jammu & Kashmir		1967	P.B. Gajendragadkar Commission	to identify castes and communities. 42% reservation for OBCs.	
		1969	J.N. Wazir Committee		
		1976	A.S. Anand Committee	42% of Govt. jobs and seats in technical institutions and other institutions.	
7. Karnataka		1918	Sir L.C. Miller	Special facilities to backward communities with regard to education and recruitment in State services. Reservation in professional and Technical institutions	
		1961	Nagan Gowda Committee		

				(BC-28%, MBC-22%). In Govt. service (BC21% and MBC-24%)	
		1975	Havanur Commission	Reservation for OBCs 16% in education and Govt. service	The Karnataka High Court struck down the inclusion of certain communities in the list of SEBCs. The matter was then taken to the Supreme Court in Vasanth Kumar case. (High Court judgment was prior to Mandal Report)
		1985	Venkataswamy Commission	27% reservation for OBCs	
		1990	Chinnappa Reddy Commission Vishwanathan		
8. Kerala		1961	Committee	40% of seats in technical and professional colleges and direct recruitment of service Govt. of Kerala restricted to 25%. 40% reservation for OBCs	
		1965	G. Kumara Pillai	in Govt. Jobs.	The Kerala Govt. vide communication dt. 8.2.1991 has initiated that the list of OBCs has not been challenged.
		1970	M.P. Damodaran	40% reservation in Govt. services for OBCs and further distributed among different communities. Recommended for 35% List stayed by M.P. reservation for OBCs in High Court.	
9. Madhya Pradesh		1980	Ramjee Mahajan	reservation for OBCs in educational Institutions & in Government service. 25% reservation for OBCs. 10% reservation for OBCs. Not challenged.	
		1984	Govt. of M.P.		
10. Maha- rashtra		1961	B.D. Deshmukh		
11. Punjab		1951	Committee	2% reservation for OBCs.	

		1965	Brish Bhan Committee	5% reservation for OBCs in educational institutions and Govt. service.	Not challenged.
		1975	Harcharan Singh Commission	15% reservation for OBCs in educational institutions and Govt. service.	
12.	Tamil-nadu	1885	Provincial Govt.	Grant-in-aid Code 1885 to regulate financial aid to educational institutions. Communal Government	
		1927	Madras Presidency	order 25% of OBCs. 17% reservation for	
		1969	A.N. Sattnathan Commission	backward classes and 16% reservation for most backward classes.	The revised list prepared by the Ambasankar Commission has been challenged in the Supreme Court vide W.P. No. 1 of 1987 which is pending. Status report not received from State Government.
		1982	J.A. Ambashankar Commission	5% for OBC in Government Service. 15%	
13.	Uttar Pradesh	1975	Chhedi Lal Sathi Commission	reservation for OBCs in government services, technical and professional seats.	
14.	Goa		No Commission/ Committee State Government have notified 4 communities as OBC on their own.		The list was challenged in the High Court in 1986 for quashing the G.O. and instead declare all the 19 communities recommended by the Mandal Commission as OBCs. The High Court rejected the petitioner's claim in March 1998. The matter is now before the Supreme Court through SLP No 9813 of 1988.

The States and Union Territories which have never prepared a list of OBCs or taken any separate action for their upliftment are: Andaman and Nicobar Island, Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh; Dadra and Nagar Haveli; Goa, Daman and Diu, Lakshadweep, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura and West Bengal (First Backward Class Commission Report, Part First, pp – 11, 2.65.)

The Government of West Bengal set up a Committee on August 1st, 1980, to study whether it was necessary to invoke the powers vested in the State Government under Articles 15(4), 16(4), and 29(2) read with Article 15(4) of the Constitution. In its report submitted on August 30th, 1980, the Committee recommended that “Poverty and low levels of living standards rather than caste should, in our opinion, be the most important criteria for identifying backwardness.” It also recommended the identification of occupational groups as backward and formulation of comprehensive programmes “for the economic development and educational advancement of these groups who are below the poverty line.....” The Committee was against reservation of quotas in Government services for backward classes. (First Backward Class Commission Report, Part First, pp – 11, 2.66.)

A Brief History of Indian Census

Census is not a mere demographic exercise. It affects society, politics, the process of development and above all policy formulation and evaluation. Census in India systematically began in the late nineteenth century however, population counting as a state activity dates back to ancient time. There were various methods to keep records of the people in ancient republics. A Census report states, “In several provinces the custom of making periodic estimate of the population is of very old standing.”¹

In the pre-independent India, Census was heavily guided by the political events even though it was meant to collect value free data. The British administration mooted the idea to conduct the head count of their ‘subjects’ with their defined objectives, to know the castes, class, cultural, lingual and social variations in order to practice their pet strategy “divide and rule”. Moreover, their self-assigned mission to “civilise” the colonial people also guided it. Their attempt to conduct the first Census in 1861 could not be completed due to the dislocations caused by the First War of Independence in 1857-59. The second Census was conducted from 1871 to 1872. However, it was only a half success. The reason was its longer reference point as it was spread out over two years due to both political reasons as well as financial constraints.”² This Census was utilised by the colonial administration to give a death knell to any possibility of the resurrection of the spirit of 1857 in future. India witnessed political use of Census in these years.

The 1871-72 Census identified the large Muslim population in the state and they formed Hunter Committee (under William Wilson Hunter, editor of Bengal Gazette and

1. Census of India 1911, vol I Part I Report, p v, Calcutta, government printing 1913

2. Census of India 1911, vol I Part I Report, p v, Calcutta, government printing 1913

ICS to study the problem of Muslims 'deprivation' and their reasons). Hunter report was later used by the communalists for communal polarisation, which eventually culminated in the creation of Pakistan. This Census result was also made the basis of the partition of Bengal in 1905. Although this Census was not a complete story in itself, "the experience gained, however, was valuable and paved the way for the first regular Census on the modern system which was carried out on 17th February 1881."³ The second general Census of India began on 26th February 1891. It followed the same procedure (of 1881).⁴ The third Census was conducted on March 1, 1901. Fourth Census began on March 10, 1911. It was disturbed by "a serious recrudescence of plague, which interfered considerably with the enumeration in some parts of the country, for instances Gaya, Nagpur, Indore etc."⁵

Nationalist movement in India had gained ground at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century and its impact was reflected on the Census exercises as well. The non-cooperation movement and Civil Disobedience Movement affected the 1921 and 1931 Censuses respectively.

The political unrest during the period curtailed data collection to some extent. As a report explicitly stated, "For this Census like that of 1921 had the misfortune to coincide with a wave of non-cooperation, and the march of Mr. Gandhi and his followers ." and it further regrets that during 1931 Census Mahatma Gandhi ignored the British appeal to give his wishes to the Census exercise. It stated, " The blessing he gave to the Census at the last minute in 1921 was this time wanting, and, though, he himself is not known to have issued any advice to boycott the Census, it seemed good to some other Congress leaders to do so, as, although they do not seem to have regarded Census as objectionable in itself, the opportunity for harassing government seemed too good to be missed, and January 11, 1931, was notified by the congress committee to be observed as Census Boycott Sunday."⁶

In 1931 and earlier Census, a table classifying the population by the religion professed was published. Another table was also published showing the population analysed by

3. Census of India 1911, vol I Part I Report, p v, Calcutta, government printing 1913

4. Ibid.

5. Census of India 1911, vol I Part I Report, p vi.

6. Census of India 1931, vol I Part I report, P x, Delhi: Manager of Publications 1933

“Race, Caste and Tribe”. This system was changed in 1941. In place of two separate sets of tables, a single set was prepared in which population groups were differentiated into communities on a composite basis with reference to the answer to the Census question on ‘Religion’ as well as ‘race, Caste and Tribe’.⁷

Unlike 1931, in the 1941 Census there was no tabulation for individual caste or tribes.⁸ Group totals were tabulated for “Scheduled Castes”, “Tribes” and “Anglo Indians”. Separate totals were furnished only for a few selected tribes. The distinction between “Primitive tribes” and other tribes maintained at 1931 Census was dropped.”⁹

1941 Census was affected by the World War II, anti-Colonial struggle and the communal politics in the country. Both 1872 and 1941 Census data were used for the partition of the country.

The first Census in independent India was successfully completed in 1951. The government successfully gave it a sound basis and logic. Patel categorically stated, “Hitherto the Census used to be looked upon as a decennial operation for which haphazard temporary arrangements used to be made. I have already stated that there is now a permanent Census act on the statute Book and government have already a permanent office of registrar general and Census commissioner. It is our intention through this unified organisation to effect continuous improvement over the whole field population data including the Census and vital statistics and to conduct experiments in sampling which would reduce not only the elaboration of these operations but also the cost.”¹⁰ 1951 Census was undertaken with exception of three states of Assam, West Bengal and Punjab. These states were excepted as they are effected by Partition.¹¹

7. Series2 Census of India,P2

8. The communities in 1941 Census were as follow:

Hindus –SC, Hindus –Others,,Muslims, Indian Christians, Anglo Indians,,Other Christians,Sikhs, Jain, Parsees, Buddhists, Jews,, Tribes, Others.

9. Census of India, paper No 4 of 1953 Special group s -1951 Census, published by the Manage of Government of India press, New Delhi, 1953

10. Census of India 1951, voll part I A report, pp iv-v

11. ibid

APPENDIX - VI

List of Caste Mobility

Caste Mobility in the early decades of 20th century:*

Old Name	1921 Claims	1931 Claims
Kamar	Kshattriya	Brahman
Sonar	Kshattriya	Brahman
	Rajput	Vaisya
Sutradar	Vaisya	Brahman
Nai	Thakur	Brahman
Napit	Baidya	Brahman
Rawani (Kahar)	Vaisya	Kshattriya
Muchi	Baidya Rishi	
Chamar	—	Gahlot Rajput

*See Census Reports of 1921 & 1931