

# The Political Dynamics of Caste Census in India: Its Impact on Electoral Strategies

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## Abstract

The implementation of a caste census in India brings about significant social effects and political results together with electoral consequences. India did not continue caste-based statistical enumeration following independence except for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, yet present-day calls for caste count surveys have sparked extensive discussions about its requirements and effects and practical value. The research presents an analysis of the political factors affecting the caste census together with its effects on electoral approaches. The research analyses past patterns together with political positions regarding caste enumeration together with the methods political parties use caste data for electoral mobilisation. The research examines how results from the caste census affect the formation of candidate alliances based on caste and the use of vote-bank strategies and selection of political candidates. The research analyses the socioeconomic effects of caste-based governance on policies designed for affirmative action as well as reservation allocation systems and welfare resource distribution. Analysis of electoral impacts derived from caste surveys exists through the study of Bihar (2023–24) and the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011. The analysis follows by proposing reforms to achieve equilibrium in caste-based policies focused on complete development rather than identity-based politics. At the same time, the caste census serves as a tool for tailored policy interventions; it strengthens caste-based divisions within electoral politics, according to research findings. The paper provides suggestions to establish a transparent scientific caste census while making its data usable for governance instead of political manipulation.

**Keywords:** Caste Census, Electoral Politics, Vote-Bank Strategies, Affirmative Action, Reservation Policies, Political Mobilization

## 1. Introduction

The caste system was an extremely deeply root social structure which extended from social interactions to the economic and political organisation of the country for many centuries in India. Caste is a marker of identity that determines how the resources are distributed and power controlled, hence the placing caste is in the domain of both government procedures and political electoral processes. While both the supporters and the opponents of the caste census view the census as useful for social justice or against furthering of inter caste divisions, there are those who are worried about the census. The study inquiries into political strategies and government decision making as well as the maintenance of societal unity in light of India's caste census politics, since the report focuses on the impact of caste statistics.

The first census was conducted in 1871 to document caste identities systematically as a means of British colonial administrative control through the divide and rule tactics. Caste classification was practised from 1941 until the same year when population classifications added further caste dominance but also fragmented society. During the 1951 census, Indian administration under Jawaharlal Nehru stopped full caste enumeration but kept records of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) to empower national unity and lessen caste difference. Creation of affirmative action programmes for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) were hindered by the lack of detailed data regarding the caste populations. In 1953, Kaka Kalelkar Committee set up to document caste data to identify communities in educationally and socially behind education. While the commission raised discussions on the reserve system based on caste but in 1955, only partially implemented it because of caste issues.

Caste and community data proved critical to addressing socio economic disparities, and it was in 2005, when the Rajendra Sachar Committee did this. A 2006 committee report on Muslim living conditions in India had observed considerable exclusion of Muslim people of educational opportunities and opportunity to participate in workforce; it had recommended interventions also in this regard similar to what is suggested for SC, ST, and OBC population. Whilst separate from a caste census, however, the Sachar Committee's findings were based on detailed population statistics that can be supported by evidence (for which) politics can not but take cognisance in devising an evidence-based policy system of inclusive governance.

The use of the caste identity to constitute strong voter bases helps political parties to attain electoral success. Bihar as well as Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu show this pattern through their political processes. As per the RJD backed census with JD(U) support, OBCs and Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs), in Bihar constitute more than 60 per cent of Bihar's population between 2023–24, which gave them demand of reservation reforms and creation of welfare programmes. During the 2020 Bihar Assembly election, the Grand Democratic Secular Front allotted role of a candidate to Kushwaha candidates to win over the voters. While it derives power base through Yadav and Muslim support, the Samajwadi Party (SP) still retains that power in Uttar Pradesh, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is victorious in elections because of support from non-Yadav OBC and upper caste voters. Caste based statistics is used by political parties to select potential candidates and design alliance as well as campaign promises to win the election.

Caste politics in Tamil Nadu shows that in today's society, caste identities are still a dominant force that shapes the political system of the state. Dravidian parties have a political power in Tamil Nadu, which gets their support from intermediate and backward castes who do not acquiesce to Brahmin dominance. The party of the DMK strives to create OBC and Dalit rights advocates and forms an alliance with the Dalit groups such as Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi supporting the caste-based reservations. Tau Nanda Education Foundation reports that Tamil Nadu's caste based governance for some decades, has led to such a strong reservation system where 69 percent of seats are reserved for SC's, ST's and OBBC's but these reservation policies continue to be contentious as they impact social unity, merit-based systems.

Curbing corruption and ensuring justice was what the likes of RJD, SP and DMK called for: a caste census to give accurate data on which positive actions such as affirmative action can be

hosted or directed. Not only are the BJP's internal critics, along with Congress party members and other groups, of the view that the census will perpetuate caste division and will help in vote-bank politics, the fallacy of this census has been questioned by them. As identified data inaccuracies were blown up, the 2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) been released by the government faced criticism for logistical issues. Using Mandal Commission's 1931 census data and recent survey of Bihar, this research investigates the political implications of caste enumeration for government policies and exigency between equal distribution of services and national unity in India.

## **2. Historical Perspective of Caste Census in India**

India's caste enumeration programme evolved because of British colonisation policies which merged with independent India's governmental decisions and present political discussions. The British administration maintained systemized caste data collection procedures up until India achieved independence. The post-independence government made the decision to include census records about Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes only but they took Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes out of the caste requirement category. The evaluation of present-day caste classification debates requires fundamental knowledge about Indian census policy through history.

- **Pre-Independence Era: Caste in British Census (1871–1941)**

It was when the British colonial administration, in the beginning of organised data collection through first all pervasive census conducted in 1871, caste became a critical factor of social categorization. Caste enumeration from 1871 to 1941 was carried out systemically, the aim that the data collected would be used to control Indian society. For British officials, caste was thought to be a fixed and determining Indian characteristic, which they used to perpetuate their 'divide and rule' technique. Herbert Risley, Census Commissioner, started off in 1901 with a complex caste classification approach based on social structure and physical science, to create caste characteristic and social position rankings. This system was used by the British to create such detailed statistical information to enable them to keep their political power while social division was getting stronger among the population.

Administrative organisation was not the only consequence of the collection of caste information, for it impacted far wider than the area of organisation itself. This tool was used by British officials to get to know about poverty ridden population which resulted in the creation of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) recognition policies. Finally positive differential programmes in the early 1900 could make available to these populations specific positions both in educational institutions and government with specific rights. It gave the lower caste groups, being collected of caste statistics, the power to form political organisations that aimed at addressing their needs in South India, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. It is through the analysis of data that data leaders were able to defend their rights against upper caste control in order to set up first social advancement networks.

- **Post-Independence Era: Discontinuation of Caste Enumeration**

Jawaharlal Nehru and other Indian government leaders decided to stop collecting caste-related data through the national census beginning in 1951 yet maintained Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes identification. Many national leaders recognised a future state India that needed to advance social unity together with economic growth by placing caste distinctions as separations between its people. Lack of detailed caste information created problems for creating fair social justice policies as a result they fell short in serving Other Backward Classes (OBCs). OBC reservations gained force in the 1970s and 1980s to reveal the insufficiency of trustworthy caste statistical data. The Mandal Commission (1980) used 1931 census data which led it to propose a 27% quota for OBCs in 1990 when V.P. Singh implemented the recommendations but this action led to heated political battles that remade Indian political dynamics.

Caste is a powerful resource used in state-level political competitions and elections. In Uttar Pradesh, SP and BSP have constructed a winning formula that they have followed throughout electoral cycles by propping themselves up on Yadavs and OBCs for SP, and the Dalits for BSP. These parties bring forward caste based programmes after elections to retain the voter base. Bipsuethan is caste based language used by The Rashtriya Janata Dal led by Lalu Prasad Yadav to fortify support amongst the OBC and EBC constituents in Bihar through the time of elections and thereafter. In this sense nationally political parties that do not take reservations to their advantage advocate for a caste based headcount to ensure social equality, but BJP and Congress dry and depend on election results.

Post independence the rise of Dravidian parties brought caste politics in politics to top the side of the entire Tamil Nadu political landscape. Since their birth, the two DMK and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) have been trying to unite Tamil non-Brahmin castes to gain political power and rule Tamil Nadu government. Therefore, the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) works as a political party which actively advocates caste based reservation policies for the Vanniyar caste and it is specifically lobbying on their behalf. Dravidian political parties have stuck to the politics of caste because they advocate for caste based census to justify and redress inequality between the OBCs and disadvantaged caste groups to shape the political and policy environment in Tamil Nadu. The fact that India is a social and political complex determines the national dialogue over the age of caste enumeration, as it forces a social form and migration of previously hidden caste precipitates.

### **3. Political Arguments for and Against the Caste Census**

There has been a very intense and multifaceted argument to perform a caste census among the Indian nation. If we support the caste census, it will promote social fairness and its utility can produce fair administration of government. Accurate caste information would have given the government better allocation capabilities, stronger affirmative action stand for marginalised communities and better targeted welfare programmes. Historically successful social inclusion and equality management is supported by the idea that caste census 'data reveals the true level of economic disparity' because this makes the aspect of economic disparities visible.

- **Arguments in Favor of the Caste Census**

The caste census provides an essential chance to acquire precise demographic information about caste distributions to develop targeted social equity policies and resource allocation plans. The government's ability to develop targeted affirmative action programmes will increase because precise caste data would enhance their policy formulation process. According to the Mandal Commission reservations were proposed for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) using 1931 census data which demonstrates the need for actual and dependable demographic information in making strategic policy choices. The supporters of caste census maintain that comprehensive caste information would reveal economic gaps among caste groups which enhances our knowledge of Indian social inequalities. Rahul Gandhi stated, "No one knows the exact numbers of OBCs... It's the biggest question before the country." A census-based recording of caste identities would result in marginalised communities becoming part of the national dialogue which advances both recognition and inclusion according to those who support this measure. A society based in equity will develop from official recognition and remediation of caste-based inequality through a caste census.

- **Arguments Against the Caste Census**

For people who fear the caste census will strengthen caste affiliations and therefore social segregation and conflict between groups, implementing the caste census poses a worrying scenario. However, the data of caste categories established as institutions is a cause of concern as it goes against the basic decks of establishing a caste less society framed in the constitution. Misuse of caste data for vote bank purposes by political organisations may harm vital national interests through such policies that may specifically please a group. At the launch of BJP's Chhattisgarh manifesto in Raipur, Shah said, "The BJP has never opposed [a caste census], but decisions have to be taken after careful thought. We are a national political party and don't do politics of votes on this issue. We will take an appropriate decision after consulting everyone and tell you at the appropriate time."

The Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) was studied by the experts with 2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) data which had been widely criticised due to palpable data inconsistencies which made professionals doubt its credibility. Due to this experience, standardised surveys face major barriers for representing the intricate caste system. It also gives rise to a worry over the effect it can have on overlooked important socio economic indicators like education and income on the one hand, as well as on health parameters of an individual that are equally important for a comprehensive and holistic progress of policy.

#### **4. Electoral Strategies Shaped by Caste Census**

Increase in use of cast census data for electoral strategies by political parties in India has adopted the strategy to dominate elections by relying on caste census data that they have created their strategy based on. By collecting caste census data political parties are able to develop various and multiple strategies based on caste alliances, selecting some candidates and choosing others and making policies addressed to specific castes.

- **Formation of Caste-Based Alliances**

India's political parties have been known to form strategic alliances in order to get votes from each other to support specific caste groups because of their understanding of the casting of votes that can electorally shape votes. For instance, that which is demonstrated in the Madhavsinh Solanki's KHAM theory of Gujarat politics in the 1980s. KHAM theory was able to unite the Kshatriyas, Harijans, Adivasis, and Muslims together into forth right political activity and a strong base for Indian National Congress's support. But the theory was key to their winning major electoral victories, but they also ripped, other, ethnic groups, including the Patels, apart, with the latter feeling jilted since this political alignment neglected them.

A similar kind of coalition effort was also seen in Bihar where Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) was united with Janata Dal (United) to form the Mahagathbandhan (Grand alliance). It was an alliance that brought together different castelike factions against the dominance of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the state. The 2015 Bihar elections marked the Mahagathbandhan's electoral success in winning a victory through the use of caste allied power in elections. By demonstrating the importance of caste identities in drawing political strategies, electoral outcomes and the overall political fabric in India, these alliances provide a vivid illustration of sectional politics in the country.

- **Targeted Candidate Selection and Ticket Distribution**

Political parties utilise comprehensive caste information to nominate electoral candidates from the population group that holds power in specific constituencies. Ticket distribution functions as a political practise for nominating candidates through assessment of each region's caste population composition. During the 2020 Bihar Assembly elections the Grand Democratic Secular Front gave most of its political tickets to Kushwaha candidates as part of their strategy for winning Kushwaha voters. Candidates implement these approaches to boost their electoral performance through the connexion of personal identities to voter demographics.

- **Policy Formulation and Electoral Promises**

Caste statistics enable the creation of policy solutions and electoral campaign promises for particular community needs. Political organisations create electoral platforms that support distinct requirements of different caste groups to win their backing. During the 2024 general elections the Indian National Congress dedicated to perform an extensive caste enumeration along with establishing policies to remove the current 50% restriction for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Class reservations. Through this promise the parties intended to attract specific communities by meeting their requirements for enhanced representation together with additional resources.

## **5. Challenges and Criticisms**

Though, many major problems occur for using caste data in Indian political parties that achieve a greater electoral victory. Caste identity continues to be a burden that negative political processes continue to place in front of social processes and therefore, divides that are more often than not woven into the fibre of the social group, making it difficult for people to connect with each other. Government chooses who to vote for instead of advancing the nation as it transitions from traditional caste systems to political systems. Tensions arise from discussions

about taking a caste census which would help achieve social equality, though the debate creates national unity.

According to Indian parties, the same benefits and the same problems obtain from using identity based statistics for their strategic planning of their activities as political parties in France have. During Indian elections, an emphasis on caste becomes a prominent one, which only perpetuates the social gaps and impedes the process of national unity establishment in the country. The use of this identity to demand for political gains at the polls helps derive political benefits, however this can lead to policy choices that address political needs before any genuine social development. Due to which existing social inequalities get worse, there is priority for electoral strategies over social development initiatives.

It is to discuss caste census because there are politicians and they must work out the right steps for social care, rather than moving toward the future. Caste data analysis can resolve the social inequality problems but it is not clear whether it will create a united society or deepen the segregation. Caste statistics are used by political parties for multilateral development and selecting candidates as well as policy bargains, that target different community interests. Caste based strategies being the basis of the strategy of minorities, it creates big problems for national cohesion and the ultimate aim of comprehensive social advancement. The main obstacle to the caste census is in how to do it while it would be useful information at the same time as it makes caste distinctions more intense.

## **6. Socio-Economic Implications of Caste Census on Governance**

An India-wide caste census will impact governance and resource distribution and also influence policymaking and the creation of targeted programmes which strive to achieve fair treatment of all communities. A detailed census maintaining population data and socio-economic indicators among different caste groups enables authorities to create specialised programmes which resolve discrimination issues from the past and construct social equality.

Contemporary data regarding caste-based inequality in resource distribution as well as healthcare access and education attainment would empower the government to develop targeted intervention solutions for marginalised communities. The collected data would allow officials to direct affirmative action programmes toward the correct population who genuinely require these benefits.

A caste census would provide the government with a useful tool for evaluating social equality programmes because it allows officials to monitor social equality progress and make needed changes. A complete caste census has the capability to generate inclusive and equitable governance structures which direct public benefits to historically marginalised communities throughout society.

- **Informed Policy Formulation and Resource Allocation**

The formulation of precise policies for marginalised community uplift requires complete data about castes. Lack of comprehensive numerical information prevented the government from understanding the full degree of equality challenges experienced by these communities. The Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) of 2011 completed a mission to fill data gaps by

gathering thorough information about castes across households' socioeconomic status divisions. The gathered data establishes the basis for welfare scheme beneficiary selection so resources connect with those needing help. A successful example of using SECC data shows its assessment to enable the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana housing programme through precise selection of eligible households. These specific welfare programme strategies improve benefit distribution by delivering needed resources to appropriate beneficiaries who will help decrease socioeconomic disparities.

- **Enhancing Social Justice and Affirmative Action**

A complete caste census enables better formulation of affirmative action policies through statistical grounds used to reserve educational and employment positions. The Mandal Commission introduced its 1980 reservation proposal for Other Backward Classes at 27% of public positions by referencing 1931 census data. A new caste census would present modern data on community economic status to help reform policies according to contemporary social circumstances. The observation would enable quota re-evaluations to strengthen both equity and efficiency of affirmative action policies in developing social upward mobility for disadvantaged communities. The collected information enables the identification of the OBC 'creamy layer' who attained social economic status so that support can be directed to seriously disadvantaged groups.

- **Addressing Economic Inequalities and Promoting Inclusive Growth**

Throughout historic times the Indian caste system maintained a proven connexion to economic inequality because the lower-ranked caste members confront institutional discrimination which blocks their ability to access financial resources and do business. The systematic obstacles related to economic progress prevent most lower-caste members from moving forward financially. The patterns of land ownership and resource distribution as well as employment opportunities between different Indian caste communities can be comprehensively observed through a caste census system.

The Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 shows that unequal pattern of land ownership exists in India as lower caste groups are having less land. Inequitable distribution of land leads to power to buy goods less use of essential services such as nutrition supply, healthcare delivery and educational access. The deprivation continues, which is poverty cycles, because the existing inequities between groups impede the overall development of deprived social communities.

A caste census would be the only requisite means for the government to acquire required data and would consequently allow the government to formulate specific economic policies that would address the economic inequalities. Subsidised credit resources along with skill development programmes and incentives for entrepreneurship have potential to be utilised by the government so that growth is inclusive and inequalities are reduced. For the formation of the strategic initiatives in order to help underprivileged groups to reach at the point of economic equality and social membership, the government requires accurate caste based data.

- **Challenges and Considerations in Implementation**

Even if the benefits of caste census are undeniable, it still would not fit into the logical implementation of it due to the fact that one of the biggest obstacles that need to be crossed over is a legal one. There are multiple challenges in data collection as the caste diversity is very extensive and with many sub groups and the regional conditions are not varying. A detailed planning is required to arrive to accurate result and skilled enumerators with systematic verification steps during operations process at various points. Caste data should be reliable so that such misinterpretations do not broaden social fissures in country. These risks, however, should pose great problems since improper use or misuse of caste data would only worsen existing social breaches rather than foster unity.

The use of collected data should only be for the social equity purposes only and must be further prevented from being misused by creating a comprehensive system of data protection and privacy. Through transparent data management practise as well as strict compliance towards the use of data, public confidence is increased. Participation in the whole census process will, if done by community leaders and stakeholders, improve trust and create better cooperation towards achieving the social inclusion and equity goals.

A well-executed caste census will bring big effecting on the way India governs socially and economically. The census data will allow legislators to account for the historical discrimination and design policies that equalise economic development opportunities. Such socioeconomic data about different caste groups, which the census data will reveal, will assist in achieving inclusive development by providing a platform for proper planning of targeted intervention. To have a caste census successfully come through, there needs to be an evaluation and planning of its complex nature to write an efficient plan and this will spur on long term social development and therefore increase on the social fabric.

## **7. Future Prospects and Policy Recommendations**

The issue of conducting a caste census in India is a point of prolonged debate, because it will affect the way of governance, social justice system and the policy development in the country. This important census that concerns socioeconomic disparities in the society should be executed and the nation should be strategically developed in the development of critical policy recommendations.

- **Future Prospects**

Caste populations at their basic composition should be recognised, as India can build a new social-economic system by statistical information of distribution of caste population and economic status. But this important data set also allows authorities to make policies that fight past discriminatory practises while also providing for equal resource allocation. The Bihar socio-economic study based on caste reveals that the Other Backward Classes and the Extremely Backward Castes constituted 63 per cent of the population of the state. Such information triggered debates over the revision of reservation systems as well as the ways of distributing benefits to the beneficiary groups.

A caste census makes it possible for political leaders to implement accurate affirmative action programmes because it provides ranking data with which to determine the kind of educational

and employment reservations. The social-economic information at the present time could help the government authorities to readjust quotas to fit with the actual condition better. Using this method can lead to the social justice through affirmative action programmes, who hit on targets of fairness and effectiveness in terms of increasing social mobility for disadvantaged communities.

- **Policy Recommendations**

- a. Comprehensive Data Collection and Privacy Measures**

There are the need of reliable data collection methods and hence precise and dependable results in the caste census. The key factor for successful outcome is the proper issuance of training for enumerators, and also systems to decrease errors through its technological system. New regulations on data privacy are required to protect the identities of individuals and prevent creators of unauthorised misuse of highly sensitive caste related information. If public trust is to be built in the system then when legislation implements security protocols and procedures for holding and handling data become transparent.

- b. Integration with Socio-Economic Indicators**

For this purpose a caste based enumeration is required where socio-economic information has to incorporate educational levels and occupational data along with income information. The holistic approach provides enriched understanding regarding the caste economic status relations, which facilitates the socio-strategy development against diversities in social levels of disadvantage. Caste coupled with educational statistics enables developers to identify the OBE students and to design the under graduate education scholarship programmes for the disadvantaged groups.

- c. Regular Updates and Monitoring**

Systematic updating of a caste census has to follow population shifts, which are related to the efficiency of implemented policies during certain periods of time. Keeping data accurate is helped along if data is updated periodically; it also facilitates immediate corrective actions. Support for ongoing policy monitoring and development efforts will be given by an ongoing policy development coverage of the whole thing through a dedicated special oversight body for implementing recommendations of the census.

- d. Public Awareness and Stakeholder Engagement**

Communal leaders can only succeed in a caste census with the help of civil society organisations and their engagement of the community. Public awareness educational programmes first educate the public regarding the census operation with its benefits and then try to convince them to participate through public awareness that they should take part even if they doubt with the involvement. Multiple takeaways are combined in a manner whereby stakeholders are united in the development of policies that are reflective of all the communities that are demarcated.

- e. Policy Reforms Based on Data Insights**

A caste census provides insights which the policymakers can use to make policies that fight for the social and economic equality distribution. Caste census data will lead to two drastic changes in the policy direction: reserved positions will vary, and resources will re-distribute to provide social mobility services and additional support to the disadvantaged communities. Data from the caste census surveys can be used to deliver the specialised interventions aimed at specific underprivileged segments of OBCs. Data driven policies can help organisations to maximise social justice programme success by providing assistance to the priority areas.

## **8. Conclusion**

A discussion regarding caste census in India can hold a significant potential to transform the country's socio political and economic framework. In India, Caste has always mattered when it comes to organising social hierarchies and the politics. Since then, there has been a lack of comprehensive and recent caste data and policy decisions have been made on the basis of outdated or estimated figures that may defeat the objectives of affirmative action and welfare programmes aimed at addressing the gaps caused by caste disparities.

Advocates of a caste census claim that it is important to have accurate data in order to determine the equitable distribution of resources and to remedy historical injustices that have been suffered by the underprivileged communities. A caste census could also give a cleaner picture of the socio economic conditions of different groups of the caste and might enhance the ability of the policymakers in building focused interventions for targeted welfare programmes so that the intended groups do get the benefits of these programmes. For instance, such a caste based socio economic survey organised in Bihar has indicated that a considerable number of the state population is comprised of Other Backward Classes (OBC) and Extremely Backward Castes (EBC) and therefore a relook at the reservation policies is currently being done to reflect the changed demographic reality of the country.

Yet it is difficult to implement a caste census. They argue it could undermine the very spirit of the Constitution by unwittingly or inadvertently repackaging caste identities that are already tightly bound, and use them to further the politics of social fragmentation, just as one or two people who are wealthy enough do unto others. Caste data politicisation may lead to policies whose prime interest is electoral benefit at the cost of development in the real sense which in turn would perpetuate inequalities. Logistical difficulties in accurately documenting the great and complicated caste structure of India also present obstacles.

Historically, caste data has been used by parties as a basis for their party strategies, candidate choices and alliance formations in the field of electoral politics. Political parties have often crafted how they will march towards the people to appeal to a particular caste group, in order to consolidate vote banks and capture electoral victories. This does ensure political representation for certain communities but at the same time it is of concern regarding the long term impact that caste based politics will have on national unity and social cohesion.

Lastly, while a caste census could provide gain for policymaking and for social justice, it should be approached warily. To ensure the accuracy of the data and prevent misuse of it, and to build

a larger national identity beyond caste divisions, the caste census must help in contributing to a more positive India for its social fabric and development for all its citizens.

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