

Gist of EPW August Week 2, 2021

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Context

- The article discusses the caste census, which is primarily driven by the need to gain distributive benefits from the government and its various aspects.

Introduction

- The census undertaken in the colonial times had both a constraining as well as an enabling feature.
- The enabling sight of the colonial census operation was discernible in particular respect to the Untouchable castes.
- It was constraining in terms of bringing certain sections, such as sex workers, prisoners and patients suffering from contagious diseases, under the surveillance of the colonial administration.
- It also helped Untouchable leaders to approximate the social reality of untouchability at the national level.

Caste and Development

- India accounts for a disproportionate distribution of opportunities favouring one caste rather than another.
- It is often said that for caste based discrimination, the case more often than not is attributed to competitive merit. This warrants another question, that whether merit can be devoid of the favourable conditions that allowed some castes to retain privileged positions with respect to the distribution of opportunities.
- For a developing index that is sensitive to human development, we need to accurately know which castes, apart from SC and ST, are forced to do inferior and degrading jobs.
- In order to draw the exact account of the deprivation index, we need a totality of caste figures.
- The demand for caste census is primarily driven by the need to gain distributive benefits from the government and eventually make caste an essential source of progress.

Also read: [Socio-Economic Caste Census](#)

Internal Differentiation

- Caste census is the single parameter of distribution of reservation.
- Through internal differentiation, the caste census is accountable for inducing intra-group inequality which is the result of a skewed implementation of reservation policy.

- The demand for caste census by the Other Backward Class leaders actually promises this internal differentiation.

Caste Scepticism

- The government does not want to confront the fact of caste as it causes moral embarrassment both within and outside the country.
- Castes, however, are concrete facts that play out through social practices.
- The analysis and interpretation of such facts play an important role in producing the truth of discrimination and domination both across and within castes.
- Those in power have been frequently using caste numbers as the source for gaining legitimacy as a political need.

Overview

- The caste-based census promises to ground the truth of internal inequality.
- Ideally, a government which is committed to producing a healthy and robust society would not shy away from acknowledging the Caste Realities of India.

Read previous [EPW](#) articles in the link.