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A census is not about counting sheep

Source: The Hindu

News: There are chances that India may skip its decadal Census as the Central government still has not started the process of a periodical general census.

History of Census in India

- India conducted its first Census in 1872 in a non-synchronous way in different parts of the country.
- Thereafter, India has held its decadal censuses regularly from 1881 to 2011.

Importance of regular census:

- **Regular census helped in abolition of slavery:** Anti-slavery campaigners employed data from 1850 and 1860 census to build support for the abolition of slavery.
- **Efficiency of census is more compared to sample survey:** As census carries the promise of counting each and every individual.
- Census also helps in fixing data deficiencies related to age, gender, economic status, religion and languages spoken.
- Census provides pathways for planning and resolving problems as it helps the state to connect with each and every individual.

Impact of regular censuses in India:

- Censuses in India alerted policy makers by providing reliable numbers over time. **Example:** Censuses of 1961 and 1971 alerted Indians about pre and post-natal factors contributing to a sharp decline in the gender ratio in India.
- Indian census even before the emergence of Big Data provided clean inter-temporal comparability of India's own performance.
- Census headcounts also slay bigotry and prejudices such as
- Differences in Total Fertility Rate (TFR) across India have to do with religion or caste instead of region and socio-economic indicators.
- The census 2011 also challenged the myth of divorce rate differentials (difference in rate of divorce in urban and rural India). The urban divorce rate (0.89%) is almost equal to the rural rate (0.82%).
- Census is key to the formation and affirmation of different identities such as caste, religion, ethnic etc.

Issues associated with census:

- **Linking of the Census with the National Register of Citizens (NRC)** made large sections of the citizens insecure about their ability to provide the right paperwork.
- Central government conducted socio-economic and caste census in 2011 after the last general census, but it did not finalize and publish the caste data.
- **Dysfunction and inability of State to hold latest general census:** Due to COVID-19 state postponed the general census of 2021 , but it still has not initiated the process.
- **Asymmetrical relationship between government and citizen:** Government is mining the data of citizens without census through various acts and regulations such as Criminal Procedure (Identification) Rules, 2022 , linking electoral rolls with Aadhaar etc.

Conclusion: Government is relentlessly collecting data through other means skipping the census, which may prove detrimental for the citizens

as well as the government. Census done through census enumerator creates a sense of comradeship between citizens.

Article: The Hindu: A census is not about counting sheep (Seema Chisti)

Sharad

Election Commission & Inner Party democracy

Source: The Hindu

News: On the one hand Congress is holding elections for the post of party president after a gap of more than 20 years, while on the other hand elected Andhra Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy was elected as Yuva Jana Shramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP) president for life.

Types of Indian Political Parties:

- **Cadre-based parties:** These parties have some organizational structure directed towards ideological goals or principles. **For Example:** Bharatiya Janata Party or the Communist parties.
- **Parties having core ideals but loose association of individuals with different opinions:** **For Example:** Indian National Congress party.
- **Parties with social or regional clout:** These political parties have influence among certain sections of the society and regions. **For Example:** Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party for Rajbhar community and Apna Dal for Kurmi community. Examples of regional parties are Trinamool Congress, Samajwadi Party etc.

Reasons for non-democratic/autocratic tendencies and lack of internal elections among political parties:

- **Multi-party system and federalised nature** of India's polity
- **Domination of "charismatic" individuals** or their families in party structure.
- **Opaque financing structures** of most political parties.

- **Dominance of the high command** leading to centralised control of parties by a single individual or a family.
- **Inadequate competition for internal polls:** Parties lack sufficient contestation for leadership posts.
- **Fear of disunity:** Political parties fear that internal contests may foster disunity due to the zero-sum nature of electoral politics.
- **Absence of statutory or legal basis to mandate internal elections:** Election commission issued guidelines to conduct periodical elections for party leadership, but it does not have powers to enforce inner party democracy or to mandate elections.
- **Prevalence of nomination and consensus-building** methods for selection of party leadership.
- **Political parties lack a constitutional foundation:** Phrase “political party” was nowhere mentioned in the Indian Constitution. For the first time, a political party is defined from Anti-defection law, 1985.
- **Paradoxical nature of legislations:** India is a party-led democracy. But in India, candidates are subject to rules and regulations more than political parties.
- Lenient nature of Election Commission to mandate its executive guidelines for periodical internal elections.
- **Court observed that Article 324 of the Constitution, or Section 29(A) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951** did not provide ECI the power to regulate internal structures, organisations or elections of the party.

Way forward:

- **Inception of party constitution for internal regulation of political parties:** Political parties should abide by their own constitution.
- **Model of state funding of political parties:** Former Chief Election Commissioner of India S.Y. Quraishi proposed that parties should receive money as per the number of votes polled for them. For example, the state can pay political parties Rs.100 for each vote polled in their favor.

- **Ensure electoral transparency:** EC should ensure that parties must submit documents of expenditure incurred during elections and in the non-election period.
- **Attaching cost to non-compliance of EC orders** such as regular organisational elections, in case parties conceal changes in office-bearers and addresses from EC. Election Commission of India should utilize its executive power to ensure organizational elections as happened during T.N.Seshan's tenure.
- Parties should establish a balance between divisiveness of election and high command culture so that in the long run it does not weaken the party.

Conclusion: Political parties are aggregations of heterogeneous interests, ideas and leaderships leading to internal differences. So, Internal elections pave the way for upward mobility through meetings and contests of ideas.

Article:

- 1.The Hindu: Internal Democracy.
- 2.The Hindu: Should the ECI insist on inner-party elections?

Sharad

YOJNA IAS