

Taking a Census

Census of India 2011

(For Class VI)



A census means the complete count of a population. Most countries of the world follow the practice of conducting a census at regular intervals. As you can guess, a census is a big task, and a costly one, and that is why it is usually done only once every ten years.

In India too, the Census is conducted by the Government of India once every decade, in years ending with a "1". The first time, it was done in 1872 – which doesn't end with a "1". But it was not really a complete count because it did not cover the whole of India. It was in 1881 that the first complete Census took place. The chain has been unbroken since then. The last Census took place in 2001 and the next one is to be taken in 2011.

The population of India has increased greatly over this time. In 1901, the total population was 238 million. In 2001, it was 1029 million – an increase of over four times. Thus the magnitude of the task of counting people has also multiplied by four times at least! The Census of India has often been called the "biggest peace-time exercise in the world".

Furthermore, the Census of India is not merely about counting heads. The Government of India also takes this opportunity to gather a lot of other important information about the people, such as what kind of house they live in, how well educated they are, what they do for a living, and many more things. It is essential for a Government to know these things so as to serve the people better. But this makes the task of the Census even bigger.

The counting of people during the Census is also known as the Population Enumeration. "To enumerate" is another way of saying "to count". The person who does the work of counting is called an Enumerator. Enumerators do their work by visiting each and every house, asking the prescribed questions to the people living there, and filling up the replies in a special form. About 2.5 million enumerators are likely to be appointed for the Population Enumeration for Census 2011.

The work needs a good deal of forward planning. To get a complete count, no house anywhere within the country can get left out. Therefore, it is essential to first find out how many houses are there in all, and exactly where they are located. To find this out, another kind of census is done, several months before the actual one! This is a census of all buildings in the country, and is called the Housing Census. It has already taken place all over the country in April-September, 2010. In this census, too, enumerators go from house to house, indeed from building to building. They ask questions related to the use of the building and what material it is built of. Buildings such as shops, schools and offices are also covered apart from homes.

After collecting the information, the enumerator makes a map of the area assigned to him or her, as well as a list of the houses in the area. This makes the work of Population Enumeration much easier when it starts a few months later, because now the Enumerator knows how many houses he or she has to cover and where they are.

The work of an Enumerator is as challenging as it is interesting. People react in many ways when the Enumerator visits their home. Most people would have already heard about the taking of the Census through radio, TV or newspapers, and are aware of its importance. Yet, some people behave rudely when the enumerator visits. They think it is an unnecessary disturbance! They don't realize that without the census data, the benefits we all get from our Government would not be distributed fairly.

Some people feel shy in replying to personal questions about their family members, such as how many children they have, or how they earn their living. It is then up to the Enumerator to explain that the information collected from any particular person is never shared with anyone by the Government, and there is no need to be afraid to give correct and complete replies.

The work of going house to house to collect information is to be done over three weeks in February 2011. The information is to be collected for a particular date, which is fixed as the First of March 2011. To make sure that the information is complete, the





enumerator then visits each house all over again in the first week of March, just to ask if any change in the number of people has taken place since he or she last visited. And what is more, to count the people who may not have any home at all and sleep out of doors, the enumerators will tour the entire area given to them on the night of 28th February to cover the homeless people sleeping in their area!

As you can see, the work of the Enumerator is the most important part of the Census. Everything depends on it. That is why, when the First Census of India after Independence was to be taken in 1951, the Home Minister of India, Shri C.Rajagopalachari, sent a message to every enumerator:

“Dear colleagues in the Census work! This is the first census held under the orders of the Republic of free India. I am addressing the enumerators in particular. You have the privilege and honor of taking a hand in the first census of free India. Ten years hence the next census will be held. Yours is the earliest privilege. You are an enumerator and therefore you build the base of the whole big structure. The base is, as you know, the most important part of any structure. The record of your work will remain carefully kept for use throughout the next ten years.

Yours is not an isolated local inquiry. You are one of about six hundred thousand patriots, all of whom will be engaged on an identical task at the same time. All of you are jointly responsible for enumerating all the people. Collectively you will prepare a record of basic facts relating to the life and livelihood of all the citizens and families in our Republic.

I do hope you will take pride over the quality of your contribution to this nation-wide enterprise and do your best. GOD BLESS YOU!”

EXERCISES

(A) Word meanings and Usage

Exercise 1

Vocabulary : Census, Practice, Conducting, Decade, Magnitude, Exercise, Merely, Enumeration, Data, Challenging, Colleague, Addressing, Privilege, Republic, Collectively, Contribution, Enterprise, Inquiry

Exercise 2

The words: Practice, Conducting, Exercise, Challenging, Addressing, Engaged, Enterprise can have different shades of meaning in different contexts. What do they mean in the present context? What other possible meanings are there? Explain by making sentences with these words.

Exercise 3

We all know that India is a Democratic Republic. How is a Republic defined? How is it different from a Democracy? Can you name a country which is a Democracy but not a Republic?

Exercise 4

Is there a difference between the words “enquiry” and “inquiry”?

(B) Comprehension

Exercise 4

Briefly explain the various tasks to be done by an Enumerator during the Housing Census and the Population Enumeration. How many times in all is any one home visited by an Enumerator?

Exercise 5

How many enumerators were employed for census work in 1951? How many are likely to be employed in 2011?

Exercise 6

Why do you think enumerators must cover the homeless population within one night on 28th February, instead of over the three weeks given to them for covering their area?

(C) Writing/Speaking

Exercise 7

“The work of an enumerator is as challenging as it is interesting.” If you were an enumerator, would you find the work interesting? Why?