

Book Review

Review of District Profiles 1991 Prepared for Union Territories and States

THE Registrar General of India has recently brought out a series of "District Profile 1991", 25 volumes altogether, one for each of the 24 states, where the census was conducted in 1991 and one for Union Territories. In his own characteristic and poetic introduction to this volume, beginning with a quote by William Blake, DrMVijayanunni, Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, has said these volumes attempt to provide all essential information collected in the 1991 census aggregated at the district level without the necessity of searching for such information from numerous census publications.

The data in each volume comprise of 41 Tables, arranged in 12 Sections and preceded by a map of the state with the constituent districts. The 12 Sections are : General Data for the State and District; Population Structure; Nuptiality; Fertility and Child Mortality; Literacy and Education; Work Participation; Migration; Religion; Language; Housing and Household Amenities; Urban Agglomerations, cities and towns and an overall presentation of Population Scenario—Past and Present.

The publication for each state also provides the concepts and definitions of different terms used in the census. This district profile series comprising 25 volumes for 24 states and one for Union Territories, is a valuable and extremely useful source of information for administrators, planners, students and researchers. As a ready source, data on most of the important variables available from the census at the district level have been provided. Considering the large volume of census information that has gone into the series, it is remarkable that there are very few errors of omission and commission. However, such a volume should have been brought out at an earlier date and coming as they are. 8 years after the census, when preparations are on for the next census in 2001. they may serve as only ready reference volumes and for scholars interested in cross-tabulations are still to go through the primary census abstracts, socio-economic tables or to the census data files themselves. I hope that. similar series will be brought out from the 2001 census, at a much earlier date.

One of the continuing criticism of Indian Census data at national and international fora is the deteriorating quality of census data overtime, especially on greater omission of females in the census count, under count of children, age reporting and work participation of women.

The data from Post Enumeration Survey (PES) provide some indications on the quality of data. errors of omission and commission. It would have been useful if valuable data from PES have also been provided in the series, especially when the volumes are coming out after 8 years of the census and would have been useful in strengthening the needed preparations for quality in the 2001 census.

While most of the data given are based on direct census responses, the information on fertility, infant and child mortality indicators are based on indirect estimation. The extent of reliability of these data should also have been given, as compared to SRS. A column giving the reliability of data in different tables, by codes, such as in "Demographic Year Books" published by the United Nations would have been useful for scholars and administrators, using these series of data.

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