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# "Good, if data used for effective policy making," Acharya Prashant calls for using caste census for affirmative action

*Acharya Prashant said it is a good step if the caste census is used to identify marginalised communities for more accurate and efficient policy making.*

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New Delhi [India], May 2 (ANI): Acharya Prashant, spiritual teacher and founder of PrashantAdvait Foundation, said on Friday that data collection is "neither forward nor backwards," adding that the intention behind the caste census matters most. Acharya Prashant said it is a good step if the caste census is used to identify marginalised communities for more accurate and efficient policy making.

Speaking with ANI, he said, "Like any action, it depends on intention here. Caste census simply means collecting more data,

and data is neither forward nor backwards, nor good nor bad. It depends on what you intend to do with the data. If you want to identify the marginalised group in a better way so that more accurate and efficient policy making can happen, then it is a good step."

"If you want to know, let us say how even within the OBCs the different sub-groups are fearing economically way as a result of several decades of reservation, and you want to use the data in a constructive step, then it is a good step. If you want to implement other kind of affirmative welfare measures, it is obviously a good thing," he added.

Acharya Prashant said that caste census can be used in a negative way if the intention is to "further cement caste identification" or use the "data for electoral gains."

"On the other hand, if you use the data to cement caste identification further, then it's a step backwards. If you use the data for electoral gains by targeting particular caste groups concentrated in particular electorates and geographies, then obviously it's a backward thing. If you say that this kind of data has emerged and therefore this kind of emotional mobilisation can happen, then it's a backward thing," he said.

He added that the fears regarding the caste census are justified, as it could be used in both ways.

"The last caste census happened in 1931, almost 100 years back. It is good to obtain data, but the fears are justified. This data might not be put to positive or constructive use. We want to know how the marginalised group have done in terms of education, prosperity, ownership, and gender equality. This data should go in that direction, but there are apprehensions that it might be used, so we have to be careful," Acharya Prashant said.

The Union government has decided to include caste in the forthcoming census. Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced the decision on April 30 following the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs meeting. (ANI)  
(The story has come from a syndicated feed and has not been edited by the Tribune Staff.)