

My Lords, Honorary Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all thanks you to the Institute of Jainology for giving me the opportunity to speak to you this evening. I wanted to talk about the national census and its importance to Jains.

Thomas Robert Malthus who was a cleric and scholar, set out the need for a Census, led to debates in these very Houses of Parliament in 1800, that is 217 years ago. Shortly after, the Census act was passed, the first modern census taking place in 1801. The census act was based on 12 reasons. Two of these were:

1. "a census would indicate the Government's intention to promote the public good", and
2. "an industrious population is the basic power and resource of any nation, and therefore its size needs to be known"

In 1851 a specific box was inserted to ask the question on religion.

Fast forward to the last Census of England & Wales 2011 where the the religion questions is still asked but sadly limited to 6 choices. Many of you here who are Jain would have to tick a box called '**Other**' and write their religion down.

In 2011 20,288 Jains were counted, but the real number we know from our anecdotal information, is likely to be at least double this amount.

Even bearing this in mind, some work on the public data shows Jains grew by 30% between 2001 and 2011. It is also clear that Jains are moving outside of their traditional areas of London, Leicester and Manchester. As affluence grows Jains are relocating to the green pastures of Surrey and Hertfordshire. They are also moving up North! If you look at the data you will find one Jain in the shipbuilding town of Barrow in Furness and a few in the “toon” of Newcastle.

{Desire/Benefit}

So Why is it important that as Jains we are counted properly? Well they are 2 main reasons that chime with original Census Act:

1. **The first is public good.** Jains can play a massive role in British values of fairness, mutual tolerance, liberty and democracy. The Jain values of compassion; interdependency, environmental concern and tolerance are in tune with British values. However without organisations such as the IOJ or the Jain-APPG understanding what the true numbers and the capabilities are, we limit our ability to act in a more cohesive manner in playing a greater role in local and central government.

2. **The second is valuing ourselves and our resources.** As society changes we need to understand how the Jains are evolving and the Census plays a large part in this. For example information about the levels of education, Profession, Income, Geographical spread and even Health. If Jainism was officially recognised on the national Census it would also help disconnected Jains ‘re-discover’ their community and their affiliation.

In summary Jains can play an important part in Civic Society. But we need to be counted properly.

{Solution}

So what is the Solution? Well its not complicated. We should simply campaign for a specific tick box for Jains in the next census. We are probably likely to be the 7 or 8th largest religion in this country. With the census of 2021 likely to be conducted digitally, this in theory should not place a high burden on the Office for National Statistics - who carry out the census.

(A Joke?!)

A little story for you.....Wherever I go at the moment, I keep meeting Jain friends who tell me that their kids are very likely to do a medical degree. I do wonder if this is hope rather than reality. Anyhow my anecdotal evidence means at least 20% of the Jain population will be doctors by 2031. I look forward to testing my hypothesis in a future census result in due course!

{Summary}

Joking aside, I implore all of you to do 3 things

- 1) Gareth Thomas MP has set up a petition for Jains to have their own tick box - please sign and share this.
- 2) There will be a Letter shortly on IOJ website, download and send to your MP.
- 3) Please ask you MP to join the Jain APPG.

Lets make better recording of Jains at the next census a reality, so we can play a fuller part in society.