The caste imperative: On the subject of an updated caste census

Caste census, even if morally **flawed**, **can** help in targeting of quota benefits

With the Congress party **joining the chorus** for an updated caste census, there seems to be an **emerging consensus** among the political opposition on the need for this exercise. While **the parties committed** to reservations in the northern **belt** — the Samajwadi Party and the Rashtriya Janata Dal **in particular** — **have** made this demand as a reaction to the **expansion** of reservation benefits to economically weaker sections among "forward" castes using income criteria, the Congress's **pivot** towards supporting this **stems** from the party's new political emphasis on **expanding** its support base. With the Mandal Commission report of 1980, that was based on caste census data of 1931, still remaining the basis of identifying **backwardness** and **determining** the **extent** of reservation to the Other Backward Classes, the **need** for a **comprehensive** census that provides data to support, or **evaluate existing** reservation quotas, or to **assess** demands for them **remains** **pertinent**. Such a **diligent** exercise would also serve a legal imperative allowing the government to answer the Supreme Court's **call** for **quantifiable** data. But counting castes is not easy. An **inherent** weakness is **evident** in how the government described the Socio-Economic and Caste Census in 2011: as being **riddled** with **infirmities** that made the data collected unusable. Data here recorded 46 lakh different castes, sub-castes, caste/**clan** surnames, which required adequate **parsing** before being used for proper **enumeration**. The survey's **hurried** **conduct**, without **utilising** the Census Commissioners and the Office of the Registrar General properly, also **rendered** it **problematic**.

A more **thoroughgoing** exercise would **entail** an adequate **consolidation** of caste/sub-caste names into social groups based on **synonymity** and **equivalence** of the self-identified group names **revealed** by **respondents** in the census. **Marking** these groups against the OBC/Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes lists for each State **would** build a useful database, which can be utilised in the **decennial** Census. The data obtained this way can be used to parse **aggregated** socioeconomic information for these groups. But with the government having postponed the long-delayed 2021 Census and not **acquiescing** to the demand of including caste counts, questions remain whether an effective caste census is possible. There is of course the risk of **reification** of caste identities even as the constitutional order **seeks** to build a casteless society. But with caste-based identification still **predominant**, such a census seems politically imperative, even if morally flawed, for the purpose of **addressing** socioeconomic **inequities** through **facile** reservation quotas that **confer** income benefits and a **degree** of social justice without actually **advancing** the **cause** of a truly **casteless** society.

[Practice Exercise]

- **Clan** (noun) – group of families वंश, कुल
- Red/blue coloring of words in the sentence indicates subject verb relationship; where 'red' denotes 'subject' and 'blue' denotes 'verb'.

Vocabulary

1. **Imperative** (noun) – Necessity, requirement, obligation, essential अत्यावश्यक

2. **Census** (noun) – Population count, enumeration, survey, tally जनगणना

3. **Flawed** (adjective) – Faulty, defective, damaged, blemished, imperfect दोषपूर्ण, त्रुटिपूर्ण

4. **Join the chorus** (noun) – to become a member of: to come or bring together; connect शामिल होना

5. **Emerging** (adjective) – Developing, arising, unfolding, evolving उभरता हुआ

6. **Consensus** (noun) – Accord, harmony, consent, unanimity सहमति

7. **Commit** (to) (verb) – Dedicate, pledge, bind, engage प्रतिबद्ध होना

8. **Belt** (noun) – Region, area, zone, district क्षेत्र

9. **In particular** (phrase) – Specifically, especially, particularly, notably विशेष रूप से

10. **Expansion** (noun) – Growth, enlargement, extension, increase विस्तार

11. **Pivot** (noun) – Turning point, center, focus, axis केंद्र

12. **Stem** (from) (verb) – Originate, derive, arise, emanate उत्पन्न होना

13. **Expand** (verb) – Broaden, enlarge, extend, develop विस्तार करना

14. **Backwardness** (noun) – Underdevelopment, lack of progress, stagnation पिछड़ापन

15. **Determine** (verb) – Ascertain, establish, decide, figure out निर्धारित करना

16. **Extent** (noun) – Degree, magnitude, range, scope सीमा

17. **Comprehensive** (adjective) – Thorough, complete, all-inclusive, all-encompassing व्यापक

18. **Evaluate** (verb) – Assess, appraise, review, examine मूल्यांकन करना

19. **Existing** (adjective) – Present, current, prevailing, ongoing मौजूदा

20. **Assess** (verb) – Evaluate, judge, gauge, estimate आकलन करना

21. **Pertinent** (adjective) – Relevant, applicable, germane, appropriate उचित, प्रासंगिक

22. **Diligent** (adjective) – Careful, conscientious, thorough, meticulous परिश्रमी

23. **Call** (noun) – Request, appeal, demand, plea अनुरोध

24. **Quantifiable** (adjective) – Measurable, calculable, assessable, countable मापनीय

25. **Inherent** (adjective) – Intrinsic, innate, built-in, essential अंतर्निहित

26. **Evident** (adjective) – Obvious, clear, apparent, manifest

27. (be) **Riddled** (with) (verb) – fill, infuse, permeate, pervade, infest, beset से भरा हुआ

28. **Infirmity** (noun) – weakness, frailty, feebleness, debility दुर्बलता

29. **Parse** (verb) – analyze, examine, interpret, break down; analyse (a string or text) into logical syntactic components विश्लेषण करना

30. **Enumeration** (noun) – counting, tallying, listing, cataloguing गणना

31. **Hurried** (adjective) – rushed, hasty, rapid, quick जल्दबाजी

32. **Conduct** (noun) – the manner in which an organization or activity is managed or directed. संचालन

33. **Utilise** (verb) – use, employ, make use of, take advantage of उपयोग करना

34. **Render** (verb) – make, cause to be, bring about, effect बनाना

35. **Problematic** (adjective) – difficult, troublesome, complicated, challenging समस्याग्रस्त

36. **Thoroughgoing** (adjective) – complete, thorough, exhaustive, comprehensive सम्पूर्ण

37. **Entail** (verb) – involve, require, necessitate, demand शामिल करना

38. **Consolidation** (noun) – unification, combination, merging, integration समेकन

39. **Synonymity** (noun) – equivalence, correspondence, similarity, comparability समानार्थकता

40. **Reveal** (verb) – disclose, unveil, expose, uncover प्रकट करना

41. **Respondent** (noun) – participant, answerer, test subject, replier प्रतिवादी

42. **Decennial** (adjective) – ten-year, occurring every ten years दशकीय

43. **Aggregated** (adjective) – combined, collected, accumulated, amassed संग्रहित

44. **Acquiesce** (to) (verb) – agree, consent, comply, accept सहमत होना

45. **Reification** (noun) – the act of changing something abstract (= existing as a thought or idea) into something real स्वरूप ग्रहण

46. **Seek** (verb) – try, attempt, effort, endeavour प्रयास करना

47. **Predominant** (adjective) – dominant, main, primary, leading प्रमुख

48. **Address** (verb) – tackle, deal with, confront, attend to निपटना, सुलझाना

49. **Inequity** (noun) – unfairness, injustice, imbalance, disparity असमानता

50. **Facile** (adjective) – simplistic, superficial, shallow, effortless सरल, सुगम

51. **Confer** (verb) – bestow, grant, award, present प्रदान करना

52. **Degree** (noun) – level, extent, measure, intensity स्तर, हद

53. **Advance** (verb) – promote, further, forward, develop बढ़ाना

54. **Cause** (noun) – reason, basis, motive, grounds कारण

55. **Casteless** (adjective) – without caste distinctions, classless, egalitarian, unprejudiced जातिहीन

Summary of the Editorial

1. Political opposition is pushing for an updated caste census.

2. Samajwadi Party and Rashtriya Janata Dal demand it in response to the expansion of reservation benefits.

3. Congress party supports the census to expand its support base.

4. Mandal Commission report from 1980 is still the basis for identifying backwardness and determining reservation quotas.

5. A comprehensive census is needed to support, evaluate, or assess reservation demands.

6. A diligent exercise would help the government answer the Supreme Court's call for quantifiable data.

7. The 2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census was problematic due to infirmities and unusable data.

8. A thorough exercise requires consolidation of caste/sub-caste names into social groups.

9. Comparing these groups with OBC/SC/ST lists for each state would build a useful database.

10. This database can be utilized in the decennial Census to parse aggregated socioeconomic information.

11. The government postponed the 2021 Census and has not agreed to include caste counts.

12. The feasibility of an effective caste census is uncertain.

13. The census risks reinforcing caste identities despite the goal of building a casteless society.

14. Caste-based identification remains predominant, making the census politically imperative.

15. Although morally flawed, the census can help target quota benefits and address socioeconomic inequities.

SSC Pattern Based - Practice Exercise

1. **What is one potential benefit of conducting an updated caste census despite its moral flaws, according to the passage?**   **[Editorial Page]**
   A. It helps in targeting quota benefits more accurately.
   B. It improves the living conditions of economically weaker sections.
   C. It reduces the need for reservation in the education system.
   D. It eliminates caste-based discrimination in society.

2. **What is a potential risk of conducting a caste census, as mentioned in the passage?**
   A. It would lead to an inaccurate database of social groups.
   B. It would undermine the efforts to build a casteless society.
   C. It would not address socioeconomic inequities effectively.
   D. It would encourage increased political polarization.

3. **What is the tone of the passage regarding the updated caste census?**
   A. Supportive
   B. Critical
   C. Neutral
   D. Dismissive

4. **Which of the following best describes the main theme of the passage?**
   A. The moral implications of a caste census
   B. The political strategies behind the demand for an updated caste census
   C. The need for a comprehensive caste census to address socioeconomic inequities
   D. The challenges and potential risks associated with an updated caste census

5. **Which idiom best describes the political opposition's stance on conducting an updated caste census, even though it is morally flawed?**
   A. Bite the hand that feeds
   B. A necessary evil
   C. Out of the frying pan into the fire
   D. Barking up the wrong tree

6. Which of the following statements about the caste census is **INCORRECT**?
   A. The caste census can provide data to support or evaluate existing reservation quotas.
   B. The caste census is essential for identifying backwardness and determining the extent of reservation to the Other Backward Classes.
   C. The 2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census was considered successful and provided usable data.
   D. A more thoroughgoing exercise would involve consolidating caste/sub-caste names into social groups and marking them against the OBC/Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes lists

7. What is a synonym for "**pertinent**" as used in the passage?
   A. Irrelevant
   B. Insignificant
   C. Relevant
   D. Unimportant

8. What is a synonym for "**reification**" as used in the passage?
    A. Disintegration
    B. Neglect
    C. Materialization
    D. Disregard

9. What is an antonym for "**infirmities**" as used in the passage?
    A. Strengths
    B. Weaknesses
    C. Flaws
    D. Errors

10. What is an antonym for "**emerging**" as used in the passage?
    A. Vanishing
    B. Developing
    C. Growing
    D. Expanding

11. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph.**
    P. In 1948 there were seven thousand people in Grinnell, Iowa, including more than one who didn't dare take a drink in his own house without pulling the shades down first.
    Q. It was against the law to sell liquor in Grinnell, but it was perfectly legal to drink it at home.
    R. It wasn't even that someone might look in through the window and disapprove
    S. So it wasn't that.
         A. PQRS   B.PQSR   C.RPSQ   D.SPRQ

12. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph.**
    P. At first, I thought of focussing on the threat of nuclear annihilation, which Jonathan Schell wrote about so urgently for The New Yorker in the nineteen-eighties, and which now, thanks to Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un, seems nearer than ever before.
    Q. Bill's work, like Schell's, possesses a fierce moral energy and a remarkable prescience.
    R. Another possible topic was, of course, climate change, which my colleague Bill McKibben spoke about here last year.
    S. When I was asked to deliver this lecture, the prompt I was given was to address the fate of Earth.
         A. PQRS   B.PQSR   C.RPSQ   D.SPRQ

13. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph.**
    P. "All will be dry, and we must die, 'cause Essex calves want pasture".
    Q. In the 17th century, when the first large-scale attempts were being made to drain the Fens,
    R. "For they do mean all Fens to drain, and waters overmaster," laments a sea lamprey in Powte's Complaint.
    S. an anonymous protest ballad imagined the creaturely resentment coursing through the waters of the wetlands
         A. PQRS   B.QPSR   C.QSRP   D.SPRQ

14. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph.**
    P. "On April 19, Astro member Moon Bin unexpectedly left our world and

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Q. became a star in the sky," said a statement posted in Korean early Thursday on Fantagio's official Twitter page

R. Local media, citing the police, reported that Moonbin had been found unresponsive on Wednesday evening in his apartment in the upscale Gangnam neighbourhood of Seoul

S. K-pop star Moonbin, a member of the boy band Astro, has died at the age of 25, his music label Fantagio announced on Thursday

    A. SRPQ   B.QRSP   C.SRQP   D.SPRQ

15. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph.**

P. The planet was hurtling towards my sign, Libra, which, in astrology terms, meant that I would feel the influence of the "luckiest" planet in the sky for as long as it remained in that position (a year).

Q. In early 2017, I became completely fixated on the movements of Jupiter.

R. I found friends and lovers easily.

S. And I really did feel lucky that year.

    A. RSPQ   B.QPSR   C.QSRP   D.SPRQ

Comprehension

If budget making is a complex task, interpreting the Union Budget can be _____1_____ given the amount of fine print that one has to pore over. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's fifth Budget, and the current Bharatiya Janata Party-led government's final _____2_____ one before next year's general election, ticks all the right boxes on the face of it. Inclusive development that ensures _____3_____for all, especially the youth, women, farmers, Other Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, a focus on infrastructure and investment that serves as a multiplier for growth and employment, policies to enable green or environmentally sustainable growth, the rationalisation of direct taxes, including a raft of concessions to the middle and salaried classes, and pensioners, and, most importantly, doing all this while staying the course on fiscal consolidation. Terming it the "first Budget in Amrit Kaal", Ms. Sitharaman sounded the poll bugle by _____4_____ the ruling dispensation's achievements since 2014, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi first assumed office. Per capita income, she said, had more than doubled to ₹1.97 lakh as a result of the economy's growth to being the world's fifth-largest and the government's efforts to ensure a better quality of living for all. She also cited an increase in formalisation of the economy and the widespread _____5_____ of digital technologies, especially in the payments sphere, as other significant achievements.

Fill in the blanks with the most appropriate combinations of words

16. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 1**.
   A. Foregone
   B. Evident
   C. Laudable
   D. Hazardous

17. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 2**.
   A. Unprecedented

   B. Full-fledged
   C. Marginal
   D. Uneven

18. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 3**.
   A. Hinterland
   B. Resolve
   C. Prosperity
   D. Contraction

19. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 4**.
   A. Emphasizing
   B. Woo
   C. Allocating
   D. Pegging

20. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 5**.
   A. Front
   B. Leeway
   C. Adoption
   D. Fallout

21. **Idiom & Phrase**

   Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's fifth Budget, and the current Bharatiya Janata Party-led government's final full-fledged one before next year's general election, **ticks all the right boxes** on the face of it
   A. To satisfy or fulfill everything that is necessary or desired
   B. to reach or come to a place, condition, or situation that was not planned or expected
   C. to fail to include something or someone
   D. To refuse to change your plans or ideas, especially when someone is trying to persuade you to do so

   Directions: select the most appropriate option to substitute the underlined segment in the given sentence. If no substitution is required, select 'No substitution'

22. _**It being a hot**_ and busy day, I felt tired and decided to retire early.
   A. It was being a hot
   B. As it be a hot
   C. Being a hot
   D. No substitution

   Directions: Find out the error, if any –

23. The stranded passengers (A)/ have been demanding (B)/ a huge compensation from the airline company. (C)/ no error (D)

24. You can spare me (A)/ ten minutes of your valuable time, (B)/ isn't it? (C)/ no error (D)

25. Daniel was (A)/ one of the greatest judges (B)/ that has ever lived. (C)/no error (D)

Answers

1. A   2. B   3. C   4. D   5. B   6. C   7. C   8. C   9. A   10. A   11. B
12. D   13. C   14. A   15. B   16. D   17. B   18. C   19. A   20. C   21. A   22. D
23. D   24. C   25. C   **[Practice Exercise]**

Explanations

1. **Correct Answer: A) It helps in targeting quota benefits more accurately.**

   Explanation: The passage states that even though the caste census might be morally flawed, it can help in the targeting of quota benefits. By updating the caste census, the government can gather data to support or evaluate existing reservation quotas and assess demands for them. This data would provide a basis for determining the extent of reservation for the Other Backward Classes and help the government better target these quota benefits.

2. **Answer: B) It would undermine the efforts to build a casteless society.**

   Explanation: The passage highlights that there is a risk of reification of caste identities when conducting a caste census, even though the constitutional order aims to build a casteless society. This risk is seen as a potential drawback of a caste census, as it might inadvertently reinforce and perpetuate caste divisions instead of working towards dismantling them.

3. **Answer: C) Neutral**

   Explanation: The passage presents the various aspects of an updated caste census, including the political imperatives, the need for a comprehensive census, and the challenges of conducting one. It also highlights the potential risks of reifying caste identities. The author does not take a clear stance in favor or against the caste census, maintaining a neutral tone throughout the passage

4. **Answer: D) The challenges and potential risks associated with an updated caste census**

   Explanation: The passage primarily discusses the various aspects of an updated caste census, including the need for a comprehensive census, the challenges associated with collecting and parsing data, and the potential risks of reifying caste identities. Although it also touches upon the political imperatives and the moral implications, the main theme revolves around the challenges and potential risks of conducting an updated caste census.

5. **B. A necessary evil**

   A necessary evil (phrase) – something that is unpleasant or morally wrong but is considered necessary to achieve a desired result. कुछ ऐसा जो अवांछनीय है लेकिन जिसे स्वीकार किया जाना चाहिए। क्योंकि यह एक बेहतर परिणाम प्राप्त करने के लिए आवश्यक है

   Explanation: In the editorial, it is mentioned that the political opposition is supporting an updated caste census to address socioeconomic inequities and help in targeting reservation quotas. Although the census may be morally flawed, it is seen as a necessary step to achieve these goals. This situation can be best described by the idiom "A necessary evil," which means something that is unpleasant or morally wrong but is considered necessary to achieve a desired result.

6. **Answer: C. The 2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census was considered successful and provided usable data.**

    Explanation: The 2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census was described by the government as being riddled with infirmities that made the data collected unusable. The survey recorded 46 lakh different castes, sub-castes, caste/clan surnames, which required adequate parsing before being used for proper enumeration. The hurried conduct of the survey, without utilizing the Census Commissioners and the Office of the Registrar General properly, also rendered it problematic.

7. **Answer: C. Relevant**

    Pertinent (adjective) – relevant, appropriate, germane, applicable, apposite प्रासंगिक

    Explanation: In the passage, "**pertinent**" is used to describe the need for a comprehensive caste census that provides data to support, evaluate existing reservation quotas, or assess demands for them.

8. **Answer: C. Materialization**

    Explanation: In the passage, "reification" is used to describe the risk of solidifying caste identities through a caste census. "Reification" means making something abstract more concrete or real, so the synonym is "materialization."

9. Answer: A. Strengths

    Infirmity (noun) – frailty, weakness, feebleness, enfeeblement, delicacy

    दुर्बलता

    Explanation: In the passage, "infirmities" is used to describe the problems with the Socio-Economic and Caste Census in 2011 that made the data collected unusable. The word "infirmities" means weaknesses or defects, so the antonym is "strengths."

10. Answer: A. Vanishing

    Emerging (adjective) – developing, evolving, emergent उभरते हुए

    Explanation: In the passage, "emerging" is used to describe the growing consensus among the political opposition on the need for an updated caste census. The word "emerging" means coming into existence or becoming more prominent, so the antonym is "vanishing."

11. **PQSR**

    In 1948 there were seven thousand people in Grinnell, Iowa, including more than one who didn't dare take a drink in his own house without pulling the shades down first. It was against the law to sell liquor in Grinnell, but it was perfectly legal to drink it at home. So it wasn't that. It wasn't even that someone might look in through the window and disapprove.

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16. **Hazardous** (adjective) – risky; dangerous, perilous, harmful खतरनाक

   - **Foregone** (adjective) – sacrificed, waived, relinquished, declined, give up छोड़ दिया गया

   - **Evident** (adjective) – obvious, apparent, noticeable, conspicuous, perceptible स्पष्ट

   - **Laudable** (adjective) –Creditable, praiseworthy, worthy, admirable, commendable, impressive प्रशंसनीय

17. **Full-fledged** (adjective) – Complete, developed, mature, full-size पूर्ण

   - **Unprecedented** (adjective) – Never having happened or existed in the past अभूतपूर्व

   - **Marginal** (adjective) – slight, small, minimal, negligible, insignificant मामूली

   - **Uneven** (adjective) – irregular, unequal, rough, jagged, lopsided असमान
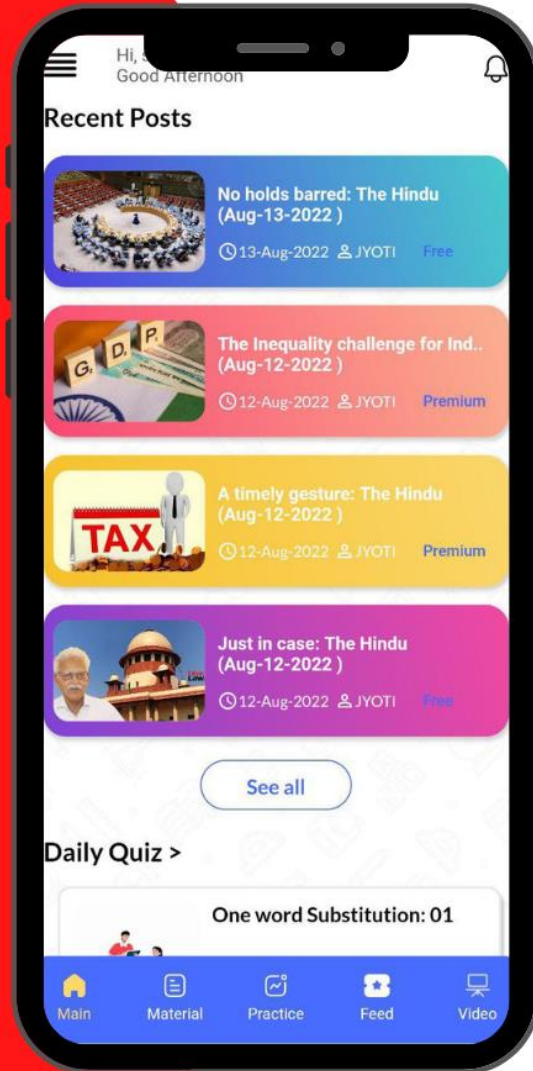
18. **Prosperity** (noun) – The condition of prospering; having good fortune समृद्धि

   - **Hinterland** (noun) – A remote and undeveloped area आंतरिक इलाके

   - **Resolve** (noun) – Determination, resolution, purpose, दृढ़ निश्चय, संकल्प

   - **Contraction** (noun) – Reduction, Shrinkage, Tightening संकुचन

19. **Emphasize** (verb) – highlight, underline, accentuate, underscore ज़ोर देना

   - **Woo** (verb) – Persuade, encourage, entice, pursue लुभाना

- **Allocate** (verb) – Assign, allot, distribute, earmark, hand out आबंटन करना
- **Peg** (verb) – to fix or keep something at a certain level एक विशेष स्तर पर स्थिर बनाए रखना

20. **Adoption** (noun) – Acceptance, implementation, espousal, acquiring अपनाना
   - **Front** (noun) – a particular area of activity मोर्चा
   - **Leeway** (noun) – freedom, scope, room to manoeuvre, latitude, elbow room, छूट, स्वतंत्रता
   - **Fallout** (noun) – the unpleasant results or effects of an action or event प्रभाव

21. **Tick all the right boxes** (phrase) – To satisfy or fulfill everything that is necessary or desired
22. No substitution
23. (D) No error.
24. (C) 'isn't it' के बदले 'can't you' का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि वाक्य का subject 'you' तथा verb 'can' है, और यदि वाक्य का subject कोई personal pronoun हो तो Question tag का subject भी वही personal pronoun होता है और जो सहायक क्रिया वाक्य के subject के साथ प्रयुक्त होती है वही सहायक क्रिया question tag में subject के साथ भी प्रयुक्त होती है;

   i. I was late, wasn't I?
   ii. You can do it, can't you?

   - 'can't you' will be used instead of 'isn't it' because the subject of the sentence is 'you' and the verb 'can', and if the subject of the sentence is a personal Pronoun then the subject of the question tag It is also the same personal pronoun and the auxiliary verb that is used with the subject of the sentence, the same auxiliary verb is also used with the subject in the question tag; like-
       i. I was late, wasn't I?
       ii. You can do it, can't you?

25. (C) 'has' के बदले 'have' का प्रयोग होगा क्योंकि relative pronoun 'that' का Antecedent 'judges' plural है और relative pronouns 'who, which, that' के बाद आने वाले verbs उनके antecedents के numbers तथा person पर निर्भर करते हैं।

   - 'have' will be used instead of 'has' because the antecedent 'judges' is the plural of the relative pronoun 'that' and the verbs following the relative pronouns 'who, which, that' have numbers and person of their antecedents depend on.

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