The Editor

Economic Times

New Delhi.

Subject: report dated 10-04-16 regarding job quotas in private sector.

**Quota Conundrum**

            The demand raised by Shri Nitish Kumar and other politicians (report dated 10th April) for introducing fresh quotas for dalits and other backward castes in country’s private sector is ill conceived and potentially dangerous. The fact is that employment in the organized private sector has grown from about 2 to just 2.3 per cent of the nation’s workforce in the quarter century since the partial liberalization of the economy even as public sector employment has shrunk marginally from about 5 to 4 per cent of the workforce. The coveted corporate jobs thus remain about half of public sector jobs and cannot make much dent in the poverty faced by millions of families even with job quotas.

On the other hand, there is a grave risk that such a move in the corporate economy may stifle a sector that needs to compete on the international plain and drain energies (including those of dalit businessmen) in spiraling litigation and bureaucratic interference. In principle too, it seems unfair to force employers to hire in accordance with a prescribed caste and gender chart, in each work category, in a highly competitive environment. Extending the bloated reservation regime of India further is also likely to spur tensions between castes further. This may wreck the social compact necessary for development and unleash a vicious cycle of similar demands from Patidars, Jats and others too.

Despite these concerns, if some politicians wish to promote their brand of social justice, it is advisable that they first implement the agenda in their own state as a pilot and create a just society which beckons millions instead of driving them to other states year after year. Their refusal to reject repeated benefits from job quotas (reaped by ‘creamy layers’) to help the more marginalized within their castes does not inspire much faith in their intentions presently.

Dr. Devesh Vijay

Associate Professor

Dept. of History

Zakir Husain Delhi College

University of Delhi.

Res: D-14/A/2, Model Town

Delhi-110009.

Ph: 9811664877.

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Despite a plethora of laws, organizations and concern for children in our discourses, a critical need of this highly vulnerable segment remains unaddressed. This pertains to the care of those minors whose parent(s)are sent to prison by a court of law and broader family support also seems absent. Particularly, in cases where a person may be booked for the death of the spouse or where single parent faces imprisonment this becomes most ironic as the tragedy visits the affected children from the door of justice. In such cases, a mandatory check on the fall back available to affected children needs to be ascertained and a minimum pension for required years fixed for those lacking any reliable support during vulnerable years. Since the state is already providing monthly pensions to elders, widows and other needy groups, the inclusion for the wards of those imprisoned by the state in the same list may not be too much to consider.