

Monday, 15th Feb 2010 | Last update: 05:24:39 AM GMT | **Headlines:** Certain we'll bounce back: Peterseer **Search**

| | | | | | | | | | |
|------|---------|--------|----------------|-------------|--------|------------------|-------------------|-----------|--------|
| HOME | OPINION | METROS | ASIAN AGE PLUS | SUPPLEMENTS | OTHERS | DECCAN CHRONICLE | ARCHIVED ARTICLES | SUBSCRIBE | EPAPER |
|------|---------|--------|----------------|-------------|--------|------------------|-------------------|-----------|--------|

YOU ARE HERE: [EDITORIAL](#) ► [HAVE QUOTAS SERVED THEIR PURPOSE?](#)

Have quotas served their purpose?



Feb.10 : As we mull the recent judgment of the Andhra Pradesh high court throwing out the state law for four per cent reservation for Muslim groups deemed backward by the Congress government in the state, and the announcement by the CPI(M)-led West Bengal government that it will be reserving 10 per cent in education and jobs for poorer Muslims, we cannot lose sight of the basic rationale for quotas. It has become increasingly obvious that the spirit that animated the idea of reservations for our dalit and tribal people (the Scheduled Castes and Tribes) after Independence was quite different from that which feeds demands for quotas for various sections of Indians today. The SC-ST quotas were meant to undo a historical wrong — people who had remained politically, socially and economically subjugated within society for millennia on account of religious and cultural taboos were sought to be given their dignity and empowerment through education and jobs that would make them stand on their feet. The communities in question did not seek the extra attention, it must be noted; they were given it by a guilty society as it entered the age of democratic politics; it was an act of paternalism that would be subsumed within an understanding of entitlement in a democracy.

To this day, the ends sought through SC-ST quotas have not been met. The creamy layers within these categories have in a sense become permanent beneficiaries of reservations — almost a new class — even as some of them have become very rich, very educated, and politically very influential, while the general universe in these categories continues to languish. Although society's battle on this front was still not done, politically powerful sections representing hundreds of other communities in different parts of India began to press claims for quotas in education and jobs, generally citing economic and social backwardness. Accepting the recommendations of the Mandal Commission by the V.P. Singh government changed the discourse radically. It is far from clear, however, if we are anywhere near an "eureka" moment, if we can say as Indians that by adopting the reservation route we have found the solution to the problem of removing the social, educational or cultural infirmities of the needy sections of our people. Indeed, the danger today is that if all demands for reservations are met, they will add up to more than 100 per cent. That is obviously an absurd situation.

There is no denying, as the Sachar Committee informs us, that on some socio-economic counts the conditions of our minorities — especially Muslims — is comparable to that of dalits. That is not reason enough to provide quota benefits to those among the minorities who are in the same occupation categories as the dalits on a basis comparable to the dalits. The conversion of dalits, especially to Christianity and Islam, occurred as the latter offered a more just and equal life, one without social discrimination. These religious denominations also offered prospects of economic uplift through community action. If it is determined that quotas offer the principal way for the deprived minority groups to forge ahead in our system, then it might be best to debate the merits of a religion-based quota, possibly for a finite number of years. In Pakistan and Bangladesh, quotas for the so-called dalit-caste Muslims have not been contemplated. Quotas on the basis of religion have not yet entered the discussion in our country, though it is not exactly clear why. In the final analysis, there is no getting away from the proposition that quotas are unhelpful and politically volatile. Only a dynamic expansion of the economy, with redistributive safeguards, can help meet the real challenge. Parties and politicians who play the quota card do so for votes, not for the society's long-term gain.

[< Prev](#) [Next >](#)

The International Muslim Matrimonials Site!

Browse Photos Now!

JOIN FREE!

Muslima.com

Muslim Matrimonial

WEEKLY HOROSCOPE

Select your Sign

COLUMNISTS

Inder Malhotra

Farrukh Dhondy

Nihal Singh

P.C. Alexander

Balbir Punj

Arun Nehru

Jayati Ghosh

Dilip Cherian

Cyrus Broacha

Paranjoy Guha Thakurta

Jayanthi Natrajan

Govind Talwalkar

Pran Chopra

Nitish Sengupta

Shekhar Bhatia

Robin Sharma

Kishwar Desai

Shobhaa De

Antara Dev Sen

Ads by Google

[5 Kinds of Christians](#)

Read this article to understand the disparity of Christians in America.

www.christianitytoday.com

eSpot

THE RIGHT TARGET
THE RIGHT TIME

•••••

100's OF QUALITY WEBSITES

•••••

[ABOUT US](#)

[CONTACT US](#)

[ADVERTISE WITH US](#)

[CAREER](#)

[FEEDBACK](#)

[SITE MAP](#)

[RESET USER SETTING](#)

[TOP](#)