

BRAVEHEART TAHIR FAZAL CHOUDHARY

Tahir Fazal Choudhary of village Madda-Kaka hill in Poonch has etched his name in the annals of history. The dedicated his life to ending the reign of terror in his area located close to the LoC. The 62-year-old Tahir Fazal was laid to rest in the soil from where he was born, but his story of courage and bravery will live on and inspire others. Choudhary was not always involved in campaign against terrorism. Like scores of others he also left for overseas to make money and give his family a decent life. However, terrorists interrupted his life by killing his brother in cold blood. This was common those days as terrorists wanted to instill the fears in the hearts of common people so that they can settle down without the villagers giving away their address to the forces. Tahir Fazal left a lucrative job in Saudi Arabia to seek revenge and not let terrorists go unchallenged.

Rest is history. His contribution to India's fight against Pakistan-sponsored terrorism is immense. He is among the civilians who picked the gun and actively participated in guiding the Army and para-Military forces to the terrorist hideouts. Known as Bahadur-e-Hill Kaka, Tahir Fazal led forces in dislodging terrorists from Hill Kaka. Remember this place was a safe haven for terrorists till that time. Thereafter he led the movement for arming civilians with guns to safeguard their villages and hamlets against terrorists. If today &K has almost brought the violence to nil, it's because of the contribution by people like Tahir Fazal. No wonder his passing away saw the Army and leaders pay tributes to him. War against terrorism cannot be won without the cooperation of people like Tahir Fazal. Indian Army has acknowledged his contribution to making the area free of terrorists. If peace has a name it should be Tahir Fazal Choudhary.

VK Bahuguna

The Constitutional (131 Amendment Bill), 2026, aimed at the implementation of 33 per cent women reservation in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies by 2029, fell through in the Lok Sabha on 17th April 2026 as the government could not muster the two-thirds majority required to pass the Bill. It has dashed the hopes of 50% of the population of the country at the altar of political rivalry and thus an historical opportunity for gender equity in running the country's legislatures was lost. One of the contentious issues was the delimitation being proposed by the government to increase the Lok Sabha seats to 850 from the present 543 seats. The opposition Congress and DMK opposed it on specious ground with no solid reasons that the seats of Southern States would be reduced. Rather, the seats are indeed increasing after adjusting the women reservation in each state.

In fact, Southern states, as stated by Andhra Chief Minister Mr Chandra Babu Naidu, have lost an historical opportunity for increased participation in the Parliament, as there was a simple formula to increase seats by 50 per cent in each State to accommodate 33 per cent reservations for women. It was a well-intentioned decision by the Narendra Modi government. The opposition parties have given a self-defeating blow to them and committed a political hara-kiri of the worst kind. While the principle of gender parity is widely celebrated in public discourse, the legislative journey of the Women's Reservation Bill reveals a complex landscape of federal friction, identity politics, and the strategic survival of the existing political class.

Though, since Independence India's journey in gender equity has been far better than the western democracies like the USA and Britain. It is actually quite a point of pride in Indian history that India adopted Universal Adult Suffrage immediately upon the commencement of the Constitution in 1950. Unlike Britain or the United States, which forced women to fight for decades or even centuries for the right, In-

Gender politics or political chicanery?



dia enfranchised all women and men equally from day one. In that sense, India's "starting line" was more progressive than the long, staggered journey the British had to endure. Britain though, allowed a sketchy women franchise in 1921 but one person, one vote came only after the 1948 Act.

In India, the historical breakthrough was reached in September 2023, the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act was passed by the Parliament. It promised 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. Yet, a crucial caveat was inserted: the reservation would only take effect after a new Census was conducted and a subsequent delimitation for redrawing of constituency boundaries was completed.

The government logic is simple by adding new seats, the state can carve out a 33 per cent quota for women without unseating current male representatives. It was a win-win situation, which the opposition's short-sightedness derailed it. The DMK and the Congress raised the spurious issue of demographic dominance of North, which is a frivolously diversionary politics, as the proposal has an equal share for each state in the ratio of 50%. The opposition parties merged the divisive politics of federalism with the women's reservation at a time when the women were about to get their share as agreed by all parties after the 2023 bill was passed.

As of April 2026, this delimitation clause

has become the epicentre of Indian politics, highlighting the critical fault lines of Indian politics. Now, many critics are asking the opposition parties why they did not raise the issue of reservation based on existing seats in

2023 when the Bill was passed and why they supported the delimitation clause at that time and now finding fault with it. Many women's organizations claim that it is a case of gender bias to deliberately deny the women their rights by hook or crook.

Many family-based parties raised the issue of reservation within reservations, especially sub-quota for backward classes. The opposition fear is that the redrawing of boundaries could be used to strategically weaken opposition strongholds under the guise of gender empowerment. The politics of women's reservation is not just about seats; it is about the gatekeeping of political power.

Even without a formal quota, political parties have the power to field more women candidates. However, data from recent assembly elections show that women constitute only about 10% of total candidates. Parties often cite winning prospects as a reason for not nominating women, a logic that reservation aims to break. Furthermore, there is the well-known phenomenon of "Sarpanch Pati" (husbands of elected women exercising actual power) seen at the grassroots democracy. Critics argue that without systemic changes in the internal structures of parties and the elimination of muscle politics, a seat-based quota might only lead to "proxy" representation.

Let us also discuss about the tricky issue of delimitation, which is mandated under Article 82 for the Parliamentary Con-

stituencies and Article 170 for the State assemblies, based on census data. The 42nd Amendment Act (1976) froze the allocation of seats to states and the division of constituencies at the 1971 census level until the year 2000. Further, the 84th Amendment Act (2001) & 87th Amendment (2003) extended the freeze on seat allocation until 2026, though it permitted re-adjusting constituency boundaries within states based on the 2001 census. The current seat allocation is based on the 2001 Census, with the next delimitation exercise due after the first census conducted after 2026.

However, before the next step is taken, the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi must think of amending the constitution to lay out a broader framework for delimitation and abandon the sole criteria of census-based population for delimitation of constituencies, as the population control has become a prime national need of the present time.

Already, the Southern states who have controlled the population growth well have been demanding the change in approach. Similarly, Uttarakhand and Himachal were at a loss in the past as their difficult terrains were not taken into consideration while allocating seats.

A case in point is in 1950 Delhi, with an area of 1489 sq km with a population in 1950 of a little above four lakh, after partition of the country was allocated seven Lok Sabha seats as against five to Uttarakhand, with an area of 55,000 sq km and a population of around 29 lakh in 1950.

In case of Himachal, four seats of allocated as against a population of 23.86 lakhs in 1950. Such distortions need to be corrected but require a very bold vision.

A futuristic, pragmatic and innovative solution is the need of the hour but in any case, the 2026 delimitation should be the last delimitation exercise.

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WHEN BEHAVIOUR CROSSES THE LINE

Sanjay Chandra

We were in Berlin during the last leg of our vacation in Europe with friends, and boarded a train to Frankfurt for our return flight. A group of young men were already in the coach, and to describe them as merely boisterous would be an understatement. They carried enough bottles of beer to last the journey, and their voices travelled easily across the entire coach.

We requested the conductor for a change of seats. He empathised, but could do little beyond politely asking them to lower their volume. Fortunately for us, the group got down after a couple of hours, leaving behind spilled beer, tissues, and a collective sense of relief among the passengers. They were football players and their supporters, carried away by the euphoria of the moment, but indifferent to the discomfort they caused.

The previous evening, we had dined at an upscale restaurant in Germany, where another group of young men and women were celebrating a birthday with equal exuberance. The laughter was loud and the celebration unrestrained, and the rest of the diners watched with a mix of indulgence and annoyance. It was only when the waiter quietly intervened that the group moder-



ated itself.

These were, after all, Europeans—often perceived, and not infrequently by themselves, as more disciplined and better behaved than the rest of us from what is loosely termed the developing world. We, too, are quick to accept that hierarchy, and

even quicker to criticise our own people for similar behaviour.

And yet, the truth is less flattering and far more universal, for the line between restraint and excess is not defined by geography.

I was reminded of a lunch with old friends at a club in Delhi. We had begun our careers together over four decades ago and were meeting again after many years. Seated at the centre of the dining hall, we were no less animated and no less loud, despite having crossed the age of sixty. It took a gentle but firm message from older diners for us to recognise

that we, too, had crossed a line.

There is, therefore, a thin and often invisible boundary between celebration and disregard, between expression and imposition.

However, what we witnessed in the train coach was something more than mere exu-

berance. It was not just noise; it carried with it a certain assertion—the confidence that comes from being part of a group, the ease with which individual restraint dissolves into collective excess.

We have seen this more starkly across the globe, and in our own country. There have been instances where individuals, backed by political power or sheer numbers, have occupied spaces not meant for them and responded with aggression when questioned. The authority of position, or the anonymity of the crowd, often emboldens behaviour that would otherwise be unthinkable.

It is in such moments that the issue ceases to be one of manners and becomes one of responsibility. Perhaps the question, then, is not about where such behaviour occurs, or whether it belongs to the so-called developed or developing world, but about how easily we slip into it ourselves. The distinction we often draw between societies begins to blur in such moments, revealing that civility is not a function of geography or economic status, but of individual restraint. If there is to be any meaningful change, it will not come from comparing cultures, but from recognising that the discipline we expect in public spaces must first be practised within.

Why nuanced oversight of social media platforms matter

Asha Iyer Kumar

Even as the Gulf war slowly turns into a war of egos and a load of baloney from everyone involved, one reality stands out - the diminished relevance of the United Nations in the entire drama. The first time I heard about the UN was in school, where we had annual examinations that I took, not knowing for what reason. It, however, gave me an overview of the organisation, which I felt was very impressive even at that young age — a league of nations instituted to prevent future wars. Schools now conduct model UN simulations to help students learn more about its functions and principles, but it makes one wonder, to what end all the understanding if the organisation itself

stands powerless and peripheral in the face of mindless violence and aggression around the globe?

The UN Secretary General's latest words on the war as "a rising tide of human suffering, and a deeper global economic shock," sound like platitudes that do very little to bring any shift in the way the conflict is moving, and inconsistent with its original objective of playing an integral part in avoiding global conflagrations post-World War II. With each instance of clash between nations, the UN's original aims seem to get dismantled, one cog at a time.

A quick read-up of the UN's history reveals how, despite the bold ambitions, it was often paralysed in its initial years by the prolonged discord between the US and the



Can the UN be revived for the world's sake?

USSR.

In the 1990s, it had some role to play in limiting conflicts from escalating into global wars with its peacekeeping operations and interventions. But then came an era where the

UN began to lose its grip on member nations that rose in stature to such an extent that their belligerent voices stood above the peace-loving pleas of the UN. The rise of a multi-polar world and regional

powers made sure that it was heard lesser and lesser, and now, as we see, its voice has been reduced to a whimper appealing for peace with no one to heed.

The increasing geopolitical divisions have reduced

the role of the UN from being an enforcer to that of a mediator, and that too with limited impact. Donald Trump's stance towards the UN has been one of scepticism and open disregard. Given that his initiatives are tilted towards serving American interests and not in maintaining world order, his assessment of the UN as biased and inefficient sounds more like a death sentence on the institution. His withdrawals and reduced engagement with specialised agencies like the UNHRC, WHO and UNESCO makes one wonder — if the superpower itself doesn't stand in tandem with the values on which the UN was built, how then does the rest of the world honour it?

Of what value are UN resolutions when major

powers exercise vetoes based on national interest? Wars continue, and nations increasingly rely on bilateral or regional arrangements, reducing the UN to a forum for discussion rather than action. Yet, despite its limitations, the UN remains vital in humanitarian crises. It feeds millions, shelters refugees, vaccinates children, and supports populations affected by conflict and disaster. The prospect of it regaining its role as a deterrent force seems unlikely — a troubling reality. Its decline reflects a deeper failure of global commitment to peace and collective responsibility.

The writer is a Dubai-based author, columnist, independent journalist and children's writing coach; Views presented are personal.