KASHMIRI CHEESE OF KALARI?

Jammu has lived under the shadow of Kashmir for a long time, often for the sake of peace and letting the more volatile people have a sense of superiority. However, there is a limit. From the shared social media posting, it comes out that people are angry at the "kalari" mozzarella cheese being sold as "Kashmiri cheese by commercial entities. Kalari is a GI product of Udhampur, and there are legal bindings for sellers to maintain its purity. The authorities are under an obligation to promote this product and not allow its originality to be falsely claimed by Kashmir. Similarly, the case is with Rajmah, another GI-tagged product from Jammu's Bahderwah region. In this era of branding and social media, the authorities and entrepreneurs need to move fast to claim their space for attention. Kaladi has gained prominence as street food with Jammu's famous Kalari-Kulcha, but the products need to be owned and propagated in fine dining by Chefs and businesses.

BRITISH PARLIAMENT VS. THE INDIAN SCENE

An MP, Zarah Sultana, was removed from the House of Commons after she called Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer a "bare-faced liar". It happened during a debate. The moment she added this adjective to the Prime Minister's name, the Speaker of the House was on his feet and asked her to move out of the House. Sir Lindsay Hoyle asked Sultana to withdraw her comment, using unparliamentary language, and to leave. As the MP refused to listen to the Chair, he suspended her for five days.

The scene in the British Parliament must become a lesson to the Legislators and parliamentarians in India, who, of late, have been indulging in scenes that show them in a poor light. The speaker in this case was so swift and decisive that the MP was left speechless.

Nari Shakti at the heart of new India's MSME revolution

Shobha Karandlaje

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi stood before Parliament and championed the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam in September 2023, reserving one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislatures for women, he articulated a conviction that India cannot rise unless its women rise with it. That same intent is visible every single day in the work done by the Government in the MSME sector.

The MSME sector is often called the backbone of India's economy. But if we look closely, at its heart stands the quiet force of women entrepreneurs. Today, that quiet force is finally receiving the national recognition, institutional support, and policy momentum it has always deserved.

The numbers tell the story

The scale of women's participation in India's MSME ecosystem is constantly expanding. As of early 2026, over 3.11 crore women-led enterprises are registered on the Udyam Registration Portal and the Udyam Assist Platform. As per these registrations, women-owned enterprises account for approximately 40 per cent of all registered MSMEs in the country and play a significant role in employment generation.

One of the most consequential reforms for women entrepreneurs has been the simplification of registration through the Udyam Registration Portal. Fully online, paperless, and based on self-declaration, it removed the bureaucratic gatekeeping that disproportionately disadvantaged women. The Udyam Assist Platform, launched in January 2023, went further in reaching women in the informal economy who lacked PAN or GSTN and brought them within the ambit of Priority Sector Lending and government scheme benefits.

This is the direct result of a government that chose to place women at the centre of its economic agenda as drivers of growth.

Nari Shakti as an economic force

Prime Minister Modi has consistently emphasised that empowering women is not merely a social obligation but a national strategy. In his words, when women

are empowered, families are empowered, and when families are empowered, the nation grows from strength to strength.

The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam is the most visible expression of this philosophy in the political sphere. In the economic sphere, especially in the MSME sector, the government's commitment to women has been translated into a comprehensive, multi-pronged policy framework that addresses credit, skill, market access, recognition, and dignity.

A policy architecture built for women

The Ministry of MSME has systematically woven women's empowerment into every major programme and scheme it runs. Together, they support entrepreneurs through key intervention categories on the supply side: access to technology, access to credit and finance, promotion of digitalisation, infrastructure support, formalisation and inclusion, access to markets, and industry-grade skilling.

Over 3.2 lakh women-owned enterprises have been supported under the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) over the past five years. As per recent data, 39 per cent of all PMEGP beneficiaries are women, a testament to both the scheme's design and women's determination to build.

The Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) offers women borrowers enhanced guarantee cover of up to 90 per cent, making banks more willing to extend credit without collateral requirements.

Further, the Public Procurement Policy mandates that Central Ministries, Departments, and Public Sector Enterprises procure at least 3 per cent of their annual procurement from women-owned micro and small enterprises. This creates a guaranteed and predictable market for women entrepreneurs, thereby converting government spending into business growth. It is encouraging to note that in the financial year 2025-26, 3.5 per cent of total procurement by Central Ministries, Departments, and Public Sector Enterprises was from women MSMEs.

Under the ZED (Zero Defect Zero Effect) Certification Scheme, women-owned MSMEs receive 100 per cent subsidy on certification costs. These details matter, as they demonstrate a Ministry that has carefully identified the barriers women face and placed targeted support at those precise pressure points.

The Mahila Coir Yojana offers exclusive skill development and financial support to women artisans in the coir sector. Special focus is being given to handholding women for market preparedness through MSME-TEAM (Trade Enablement and Marketing), under which 50 per cent of its 5 lakh beneficiaries are targeted to be women.

The Yashasvini Campaign runs nationwide awareness drives to inform women about MSME schemes and registration benefits. Under the MSME Idea Hackathon 3.0, organised exclusively for women entrepreneurs, over 18,888 ideas were received, clearly reflecting a surge of creative and entrepreneurial energy.

Additionally, the Ministry has a dedicated Women Entrepreneurship Cell (WEC), which serves as the nodal point for advancing women's entrepreneurship by coordinating across schemes, monitoring outcomes, and engaging with ecosystem stakeholders.

All these initiatives reflect a transition from viewing women's inclusion as a subsidy component within individual schemes to building a comprehensive, gender-responsive entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Skill, confidence, and community

Beyond credit and markets, the government recognises that entrepreneurship is also about skill and confidence. In the North-East, where women have traditionally been the backbone of local economies, targeted Entrepreneurship Development Programmes have ensured that women form the majority of trained participants.

Self-Help Groups have been integrated with MSME support systems, creating communities of women entrepreneurs who support one another-building not just businesses but networks of collective strength. This is a government in forward motion. Each budget, each scheme, and each portal simplification is a building block in an edifice that Prime Minister Modi began constructing with a simple yet transformative premise-that India's women are a potential to be unleashed.

The spirit of Nari Shakti in every enterprise

The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam told the world that India's women belong in its Parliament. The MSME policies of this government are telling the world that India's women belong in its marketplaces, factories, export chains, innovation hubs, and boardrooms.

These are two expressions of the same truth that Prime Minister Modi has made the cornerstone of his vision for a Viksit Bharat by 2047. A developed India is one where more than 3 crore women entrepreneurs-and counting-form the very engine of development.

We are not there yet. But under this government's watch, and with this Prime Minister's commitment, we are unmistakably on our way.

WOMEN, YOUTH AND INDIA'S DEMOCRATIC PROMISE

Malika Pandey

There are moments in a republic's life when a reform is less about policy and more about self-recognition. The passage of women's reservation in Parliament belongs to that category. It does not arrive as a sudden innovation, but as the culmination of a long, uneasy democratic hesitation that dates back to the early years of the Republic.

In 1951-52, when the first elections to the Lok Sabha were held, 489 elected representatives spoke for a population of roughly 36 crore. The architecture of representation was modest, but it carried an implicit promise that political voice would evolve alongside the nation's demographic and social transformation. Seven decades later, that promise has been only partially fulfilled. India today has 543 elected MPs representing over 140 crore citizens. Each MP now represents, on average, nearly 25 lakh people, compared to about 7 lakh in the 1950s. The expansion of citizenship has far outpaced the expansion of representation.

This imbalance was not accidental. In 1976, through the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, India froze the redistribution of parliamentary seats to protect federal balance, ensuring that states which controlled population growth were not penalised politically. That logic had its own wisdom. But over time, what was meant to

preserve equity has also produced a certain rigidity-one that sits uneasily with a young, expanding electorate.

It is in this context that the women's reservation amendment must be understood. Too often, it is reduced to a symbolic gesture or, worse, a delayed promise. But in truth, it is a structural intervention. By linking reservation to delimitation, the law recognises a deeper constitutional reality: that representation cannot be meaningfully altered without first recalibrating the units through which it operates. This is not procrastination masquerading as reform; it is sequencing.

Globally, democracies have grappled with similar questions, though with different instruments. France, for instance, chose to compel political parties to field equal numbers of men and women candidates through its parity laws. The result was gradual but incomplete progress, with women's representation rising steadily but unevenly. Rwanda, by contrast, embedded quotas directly into its Constitution, producing one of the most dramatic transformations in gender representation, with women now constituting over 60 per cent of its legislature. India's approach sits somewhere between these models-constitutional in its ambition, but cautious in its execution.

What distinguishes the Indian case, however, is not merely the method, but the moment. This reform arrives at a time when India is both demographically young and politically aspirational. Nearly two-thirds of its population is under the age of 35. Yet the structures through which this generation is represented have remained largely unchanged since the 1970s. The reservation of one-third of seats for women, when implemented, will not only correct a long-standing gender imbalance, it will also reshape the composition of political leadership in ways that reflect the energies of a younger India.

Critics are right to raise concerns about timing, federal balance, and inclusion. These are not trivial questions. But they are questions born of a deeper truth-that India has deferred the recalibration of representation for too long. The present moment, therefore, is less about the politics of a single Bill and more about the inevitability of adjustment.

In the end, the measure of this reform will not lie in legislative arithmetic alone. It will lie in whether India can align its democratic institutions with the scale, diversity, and youthfulness of its society. On that count, the women's reservation amendment is not just timely; it is necessary.

The writer is a public policy expert with years of experience working across key ministries of the Government of India, including the Ministry of Women & Child Development; Views presented are personal.

The Wound That Equality Cannot Heal

Acharya Prashant

Feminism, in its original impulse, was a refusal. A refusal to accept that a woman's worth could be settled by her body, her compliance, her usefulness to the purposes of others. That refusal was not merely political; it was, in its best moments, a refusal to accept that a human being could be exhausted by her roles, that the woman standing inside all those assigned functions was not also something more. Whatever one thinks of the movement's later directions, that original impulse deserves recognition. It named something real.

And yet something has not followed from that naming. In the century since the refusal was first articulated, laws have changed, doors have opened, and the vocabulary of equality has entered every political conversation. What has not changed at the same pace is something harder to legislate and harder to measure: the way a woman sees herself when no one else is watching, what she finds at the centre of her self-esteem, what happens to her sense of worth when her body changes or a particular kind of attention is withdrawn. The wound that produced the movement turns out to be deeper than the movement has so far been willing to go.

India's Women's Reservation Act, passed near-unanimously by Parliament in September 2023 as the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023, has in recent days returned to the centre of parliamentary attention. The 131st Amendment Bill and the accompanying Delimitation Bill, introduced in the Lok Sabha this week, seek to accelerate the 2023 Act's implementation by anchoring the next delimitation to the 2011 census rather than the census still underway. When the Act takes effect, a third of all seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies will be reserved for women. The debate has returned to newspaper pages and television studios, and across party lines the argument proceeds with familiar certainty: more women in legislatures will mean better governance, greater representation, a more just republic. The logic is clean and the intention is sound. Yet something in this certainty deserves examination rather than applause.

Representation matters, and so does legislation. India's performance on the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index, where it ranks 131st out of 148 countries in the 2025 edition, is not a number that recommends complacency. The country's female labour force participation, which at around 35 percent remains the lowest in South Asia, is a serious structural problem that legal instruments can certainly address. These facts matter, and none of them are being disputed here.

What is being asked is a different question, one that runs beneath the question of seats: whether the woman who occupies those seats has changed her relationship with herself, or only changed her position in a transaction that was always conducted on someone else's terms. Whether she has left the building, or simply moved to a better floor of it.

The Wound Is Real

Patriarchy is not a myth, and it is not, as some prefer to believe, merely a Western import dressed in activist vocabulary. Its logic is ancient, its reach global, its consequences documented in the lives of women across every culture and century. India's own classical literature includes women poets whose verses survive in the Rigveda, composed three thousand years ago; the same civilisation produced the Manu Smriti, which prescribed a woman's permanent subjection, first to her father, then to her husband, then to her son. A tradition capable of both heights and depths is not being honest with itself if it remembers only the heights.

What patriarchy does to a woman is particular, and worth stating precisely. It assigns her a value anchored entirely in her body: her body's labour, her body's reproductive capacity, her body's availability for male pleasure and male display. Open any major Indian newspaper's matrimonial section. The entry for a prospective bride will specify her complexion, height, weight, and domestic accomplishments, in roughly that order. The entry for a prospective groom will specify his income, profession, and property. The exchange being negotiated is not between two people; it is between a body's display value and a household's economic position. This advertisement runs today, placed with complete sincerity by educated, modern families. The patriarchal pricing of a woman has not disappeared; it has simply been standardised.

Think of what often happens when a woman enters a room. She knows, in a way she did not consciously learn and cannot consciously unlearn, whose eyes are on her and what those eyes are measuring. The knowledge is not external; it has been installed so deeply that it runs as a continuous interior assessment, preceding any external one. She did not choose this voice. It arrived before she had the vocabulary to question it, and it will keep running, offering its verdicts on her body and her desirability, long after she has read every book on patriarchy and agreed with every word. The gaze she protests in the world is the gaze she has already absorbed into herself. The oppression she can name in a seminar is the oppression she conducts privately, against herself, before the seminar begins.

A young woman spoke about this in one of our recent sessions. She was a media studies graduate who had been, in her own words, a loud feminist. She knew the theory of the male gaze; she had written papers on it and argued it in seminars and debates.

Still, privately, she was comparing her body to every woman who entered a room, tracking her weight fluctuations against her self-worth, and calculating whether the man she cared for was sufficiently absorbed by her physical appearance. The awareness, she said, had done nothing. She had the vocabulary of liberation and the experience of a cage.

This is the real depth of the wound: that it can be installed so deep that the woman who diagnoses it in the world carries it intact within herself, where no awareness of the concept, no legislation, and no seat in any assembly can reach it. And crucially, the movement built to oppose patriarchy has, for the most part, never looked here, because looking here would require the kind of inward examination that ideological movements are constitutionally unable to perform. It is easier to count the empty seats in the legislature than to examine the occupied seat behind the mirror.

Misogyny, in this light, is not only what a man does to a woman. It is equally the attitude a woman can hold toward herself, toward her own body, toward her own worth. A woman who measures her confidence against her weight, derives her sense of adequacy from male attention, and treats another woman as a competitor in the marketplace of physical appeal is a misogynist in the fullest functional sense, whatever banner she marches under. She is not an exception. She is the predictable product of a system that taught her, from her earliest self-assessments, to see herself as the world sees women.