

Topic of the week for discussion: 3rd to 9th Sept. 2015

Topic: Patel Rap

Only 15 months have rolled by, since Prime Minister Narendra Modi left Gujarat. In his reign of a decade, there was no visible successor, leader - second-in-command. The emergence of Anandiben Patel as the new leader of Gujarat raised many eyebrows, but she was Modi's choice. No one had the courage to raise a murmur of dissent against her and she was ruling smoothly since then. But comes the bolt from the blue, when in the beginning of July, youths belonging to **Gujarat's economically and politically influential Patidar or Patel community** began to agitate for **OBC status** that would give them quotas in college admissions and government jobs.

History of Patel Community:

Patels make up 15% to 20% of the 63-million people in Gujarat, a vast coastal state and centuries-old trading hub. Traditionally farmers, they have gained huge shares of the state's diamond and textile industries, and hundreds of thousands have emigrated to the United States and Britain, where they are regarded as among the most **economically successful** immigrant groups. Politically, the dominance of the Patedar community over Gujarat has been near complete. Till the late 1970s, they were Congress supporters, but when the growing ambitions of the backward castes could no longer be ignored, the Congress turned its back on the Patels and forged an alliance of Kshatriyas, Harijans, Adivasis and Muslims, popularly known as **KHAM**, which ruled the state through the 1980s. This was a period of great social unrest in Gujarat. Deprived of power, the Patels hit back by launching the violent anti-reservation movements of 1981 and 1985 which targeted both Dalits and OBCs. Forsaken by the Congress, they switched sides to the BJP, and emerged as its most trusted vote bank by the 90s. In exchange, the community continues to be handsomely rewarded. Presently, 40 of the 120 BJP law-makers in the state are Patels, including Chief Minister Anandiben and seven of her senior cabinet colleagues.

About Reservation System in India:

Reservation in India is the process of setting aside a certain percentage of seats (vacancies) in government institutions for members of backward and under-represented communities (defined primarily by caste and tribe). Reservation is a form of quota-based affirmative action. Reservation is governed by constitutional laws, statutory laws, and local rules and regulations. Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) (and in some states Backward Classes among Muslims under a category called BC(M))are the primary beneficiaries of the reservation policies under the Constitution – with the object of ensuring a level playing field.

Topic
Introduction

Category as per Government of India	Reservation Percentage as per Government of India
Scheduled Castes (SC)	7%
Scheduled Tribes (ST)	15%
Other Backward Classes (OBC)	27%
Total constitutional reservation percentage	49%
General (Open to all including SC/ST and OBC)	51%

Patel 'RAP':

Thirty years after the Patedars or Patels of Gujarat took to the streets protesting against reservation for Dalits, Adivasis and Other Backward Castes in government jobs and educational institutions, they are agitating once again. This time, the Patels want to be counted as one of the socially and economically weaker communities in the State. **Led by Hardik Patel, a 21-year-old young businessman** who has become the face of the movement, the **Patidar Anamat Andolan Samiti (PAAS)** has been holding massive rallies in small towns and large cities for the past two months with the warning that they can "make and break governments in Gujarat."

Causes of Patel's Agitation:

- **India's Supreme Court has ruled that reservations in any state cannot exceed 50% of slots, a threshold that Gujarat has already reached.** That's why the demand by the Patels for a piece of the **27 per cent OBC reservation** pie (part of the overall 50 per cent quota) has opposed against the 146 groups which are already on the backward list and includes Prime Minister Narendra Modi's community, the Ghanchis, who acquired OBC status as late as 1999 and monopolize the oil and grain trade in Gujarat.
- For years, a large section of middle and lower middle class Patels in rural areas had invested their surplus cash from agriculture in **micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)**. The Vibrant Gujarat model - which seeks big investment in the state for infrastructure and other projects - **largely overlooked these** to focus on big business and industry.
- Of the **2.61 lakh MSMEs registered with the Gujarat government, over 48,000 are sick**. The MSMEs employ more than **21 lakh people** and are located mainly in the districts of Ahmadabad, Surat, Rajkot, Vadodara, Bharuch, Jamnagar, Bhavnagar and Valsad which have a large population of Patels, many of whom are **now out of work**.

- To make matters worse, **the diamond industry of Surat**, controlled by the Patels of Saurashtra, is facing a sharp slump. In the past six months, more than **10,000 workers have been laid off while nearly 150 units have shut down**. That's why the pro-reservation rally held in the city attracted a crowd of nearly **4 lakh people**.
- This show of strength has brought together the two major sub-castes of the **Patels, the Kadvas and Leuvas**. A third, much smaller group, **the Anjanas**, practiced the **barter system** and was therefore considered socially backward and eligible for OBC status right from the beginning. So last year while they benefited from the State's recruitment drive for **permanent teaching posts in schools, the police force and other government departments**, the growing army of unemployed **Kadva and Leuva Patels were left out** of the selection process, **triggering the first protests across North Gujarat** where the Anjanas are concentrated and share neighborhoods with the other Patels.

Read further:

<http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-india-patels-angry-20150824-story.html>

<http://indianexpress.com/article/blogs/what-is-this-phenomenon-called-hardik-patel/>

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/indifferent-to-facts-but-hardik-patel-knows-how-to-play-reservation-victim-role-like-no-other/articleshow/48751456.cms>

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/hardik-patel-calls-for-gujarat-bandh/article7581607.ece>