

Quota for Patels?

The neo-middle class syndrome and the return of caste politics in Gujarat

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Abstract: The Patels, a dominant caste of Gujarat, rallied around the Congress in the 1920s and remained behind the ruling party till the 1980s, when it shifted to BJP because of the pro-OBC reservation policy of the Congress Chief Minister Madhavsinh Solanki. As evident from the 2015 local elections, rural Patels are getting back to Congress. They resent the fact that the BJP, the ruling party for almost two decades, refuses to include Patels on the list of the OBCs. This demand, articulated by Hartik Patel, and other youth leaders, reflects the growing socio-economic inequalities within this caste-group, not only because of the gap between peasants and urban dwellers, but also because of the scarcity of good jobs in the private sectors, one of the outcomes of the "Gujarat model".

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