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EXPLAINED

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What do the Patidars really want?

On the surface, this might seem like a demand for reservation, but dig deeper and what the Patidars really want is scrapping of caste based reservation.

Written by [Leena Misra](#) |

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Hardik Patel, Convenor of Patidar Anamat Andolan Samiti speaks in front of the statue of Indian freedom fighter and first Home Minister of Independent India Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel during a mega rally in Ahmadabad, India, Tuesday, Aug. 25, 2015. (AP Photo)

Hardik Patel's leadership of the Patel Anamat Andolan Samiti (PAAS) and his 'twist' in Tuesday's rally speech when he declared a protest fast until Chief Minister Anandiben Patel came to the venue and accepted their demands, seemed Kejriwalesque.

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In the 2014 Lok Sabha election campaign, [Aam Aadmi Party](#) convener Kejriwal was on his first road show in Gujarat when he suddenly decided to head for Gandhinagar to meet then chief minister and BJP's prime ministerial candidate [Narendra Modi](#). Of course, he did not meet him.

Similarly, some of the sudden decisions taken by Hardik on the dais, appeared to surprise the crowd. To begin with he decided to speak in Hindi, a language that has little connect with the

community. In fact, the Gujarati dialects spoken in north Gujarat and Saurashtra — regions where Patidars dominate — are also far apart.

The Patels are angry which is why they decided to brave the sultry morning and listen to Hardik. Most of the college-going youngsters present at the rally who were interviewed spoke about how an OBC with 70 per cent marks got into medical college while a Patidar with 90 per cent marks did not. On the surface, this might seem like a demand for reservation, but dig deeper and what the Patidars really want is scrapping of caste based reservation.

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Which is why the PAAS has not formally petitioned the OBC Commission and instead decided to come out onto the streets. Hardik's exhortation to the crowd to follow him to Jantar Mantar and "shake up the Delhi government" suggested a larger political design but lacked clarity.

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Why Are We Talking About Hardik Patel: Beyond The News



There were threats from the crowd to use the NOTA option in the upcoming local body elections. Seen as loyal BJP supporters, neither the Anandiben Patel government nor the Modi government at the Centre, can afford to ignore the Patidars.

The Patel vote can swing nearly 70 of the 182 assembly seats in Gujarat. This is less than the OBC vote bank going by sheer numbers but the Patel vote is more unified – also they have the power of the pelf.

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The Congress, which has survived longest in power in Gujarat by the regrouping of the Kshatriya-Harijan-Adivasi-Muslim (KHAM) vote which had isolated the Patels, is now trying hard to get the community on its side.

However, the Patels in Gujarat have traditionally sided with the potential power centre, as the election verdicts have shown over the years, so they will not waste their votes.

Although the PAAS leaders' emotional pitch may have drawn them to Ahmedabad, and to spend a night at the GMDC ground in order to be on time for the 'August Kranti' rally, it will not be long before they ask, "maaru shun?" ('what's in it for me?').

Here was a congregation of angry Patels, desperate for a leader, a life-like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Will Hardik grow into a viable leader is the million dollar question.

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