



UPSC &amp; STATE PCS CURRENT AFFAIRS · UJIYARI.COM

EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

# Gujarat's Local Body Elections and the Triple Test — OBC Reservation in Local Government Finally Gets an Empirical Foundation

THE HINDU

26 April 2026 · **GS2** **GS1**

CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator &amp; Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

ALSO FROM THE CREATOR

**BharatNotes**Free UPSC notes, MCQs, PYQ analysis. **100% Free.**[bharatnotes.com](http://bharatnotes.com) →

ADVERTISE

**Advertise with Ujiyari**

Reach thousands of UPSC aspirants daily.

[epicbharat@gmail.com](mailto:epicbharat@gmail.com)

# Gujarat's Local Body Elections and the Triple Test — OBC Reservation in Local Government Finally Gets an Empirical Foundation

 The Hindu

26 April 2026

GS2

GS1

 The Hindu

3 tags ▾

## THE EDITORIAL ARGUMENT

Gujarat went to polls on April 26, 2026 for elections to local bodies covering 393 bodies and 9,262 seats — and for the first time in the state's history, **7 of 34 District Panchayat President posts** were reserved for OBC candidates. The headline number is modest. The constitutional significance is not. Gujarat's compliance with the Supreme Court's triple test for OBC reservation in local bodies marks a gradual, grudging, but real normalisation of what the Court has held since 2021: that OBC reservation in local self-government must rest on empirical data, not political arithmetic.

## THE TRIPLE TEST — WHAT THE COURT REQUIRED

In the landmark *Vikram Singh v. State of Uttar Pradesh* (2021) judgment — and subsequent orders in related cases — the Supreme Court established that states cannot notify OBC reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions and urban local bodies without fulfilling three conditions:

- ❶ **Empirical inquiry** — a state-commissioned survey establishing the backwardness of OBCs at the local body level (not a general OBC backwardness determination, but specific to the tier of governance where reservation is being applied)
- ❷ **Proportionality** — reservation must be proportional to OBC population and their inadequate representation in local bodies, determined from the survey data
- ❸ **Aggregate cap** — total reservation (SC + ST + OBC combined) must not exceed 50% of seats

The Court struck down numerous state notifications — including in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Gujarat — that had simply notified OBC reservation without this data foundation. The political economy of OBC reservation had led states to over-reserve, under-survey, and treat the triple test as an obstacle rather than a constitutional requirement.

Gujarat's conduct of an empirical survey and its determination that **7 of 34 District Panchayat President posts** (approximately 20.6%) are proportionally reservable for OBCs represents, for the first time, a state meeting the triple test in practice before holding elections.

## WHY OBC RESERVATION IN LOCAL BODIES MATTERS

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (1992) — the landmark devolution legislation that created Panchayati Raj Institutions and urban local bodies as the “third tier” of Indian federalism — mandated reservation for SC and ST in local bodies. OBC reservation was left optional: Article 243D(6) allows but does not require states to provide for OBC reservation in Panchayats. Similarly for urban local bodies under Article 243T(6).

The practical consequence has been that OBC representation in local governance has been simultaneously the most politically contested and the most poorly evidenced domain of Indian reservation policy. States have used OBC reservation as electoral mobilisation currency — reserving seats generously before elections and then facing Court-ordered cancellations that invalidate entire election cycles, leaving local bodies without elected representatives for years.

The triple test, cumbersome as it is, exists to prevent this cycle. Its logic is sound: if OBC reservation in local bodies is constitutional only when it rests on empirical evidence of backwardness and inadequate representation, then the evidence must come first.

## THE POLITICAL CONTEXT IN GUJARAT

Gujarat's local body elections — involving approximately 25,537 candidates across 393 bodies — are the BJP's home turf. The party has dominated Gujarat local governance for over two decades. The introduction of OBC-reserved District Panchayat President posts has added a new dimension to electoral calculation: both the BJP and opposition parties must now strategically identify and promote OBC candidates for these seats, not merely rely on upper-caste and Patel community mobilisation.

More significantly, the 2026 elections included voting for **6 municipal corporations** (Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, Rajkot, Bhavnagar, Jamnagar) — constituencies where urban OBC voters have been historically underrepresented in elected positions. Whether the triple test mechanism begins to shift urban local governance demographics will be worth watching beyond the immediate results.

## THE NATIONAL PRECEDENT

Gujarat’s experience will be watched by Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and other states where OBC reservation in local bodies has been caught in the Court-mandated triple test *impasse*. The Court’s position is clear: conduct the survey, determine proportionality, stay within the 50% cap. States that resist the framework on political grounds — arguing that any empirical survey “risks reducing” OBC reservation — are misreading the constitutional requirement.

The triple test does not set a ceiling on OBC reservation at some arbitrarily low level. It requires that whatever reservation is implemented be defensible on data. States with large OBC populations — and the empirical surveys to prove it — will be able to implement significant OBC reservation in local bodies. The framework rewards data, not political calculations.

## UPSC RELEVANCE

PAPER	ANGLE
GS2 — Polity	Panchayati Raj; 73rd/74th Amendments; OBC reservation; triple test; SC jurisprudence
GS1 — Indian Society	OBC backwardness; social justice; local self-government and caste
GS2 — Governance	Local body elections; ECI/SEC jurisdiction; devolution of power

**Mains Keywords:** Triple test, OBC reservation, local bodies, 73rd Amendment, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Gujarat elections, Article 243D(6), empirical inquiry, proportionality, 50% cap, Vikram Singh case

### Prelims Facts Corner

ITEM	FACT
Gujarat election date	April 26, 2026
Bodies going to polls	393 local bodies
Total seats	9,262
Candidates	~25,537
OBC-reserved DP President posts	7 of 34 (first time in Gujarat)
Municipal corporations voting	6 (Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, Rajkot, Bhavnagar, Jamnagar)
Triple test case	Vikram Singh v. State of Uttar Pradesh (2021)
OBC reservation basis	Articles 243D(6) and 243T(6) — optional, not mandatory
SC/ST reservation	Mandatory under 73rd/74th Amendments
Aggregate cap	SC + ST + OBC reservation must not exceed 50%

**PRACTICE TODAY'S QUIZ**

[Take the 26 April 2026 Quiz →](#)
**← NEWER EDITORIAL**

Seven Boundaries Breached — SOE 2026 and the Accountability...

**OLDER EDITORIAL →**

Counting the Cost — India's Triple Pressure of Oil, Rupee,...



CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

## Bharat Choudhary

UPSC Educator &amp; Content Creator

[linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)[Read Full Article on Ujyari →](#)<https://ujyari.com/editorials/2026/04/hindu-gujarat-local-body-elections-obc-triple-test/>

### ALSO FROM THE CREATOR

## BharatNotes

Free UPSC study platform — subject-wise notes across all 4 GS papers, Prelims MCQs, Mains answer frameworks, PYQ analysis & progress tracking. **100% Free • No Login Required.**

[Start Preparing → bharatnotes.com](http://bharatnotes.com)

### 📌 OPPORTUNITY

## Advertise with Ujyari

Reach **thousands of serious UPSC & State PCS aspirants** daily through our PDFs, website, and social channels.

**Ideal for:** Coaching institutes • EdTech platforms • Book publishers • Exam prep apps

[✉ epicbharat@gmail.com](mailto:epicbharat@gmail.com)

Write to us for rates & media kit

Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs · [ujyari.com](http://ujyari.com) · [bharatnotes.com](http://bharatnotes.com)