

WE ALSO SPEAK CHILDREN'S DIALECT

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Shri Changa M. Kaag joined Miyal Primary School, Tharad taluka in Banaskantha district, Gujarat, on 3 October, 2002. After working there for ten years, he joined the Khoda Pay Centre School as the main teacher and has been working there since. He has been part of the team which authored the Hindi and Environmental Science textbooks. He has written various training modules and served as an expert at the state level.

When school enrolment at Miyal School was 350, as many as 100 children would remain absent every day. To solve the problem of low attendance, he met the parents. Since he was from this region he could converse with them in their own dialect. He decided to teach his colleagues the dialect so that they too could build relationships with the parents.

Initially, when he visited the children's home, they would struggle to communicate in Gujarati language. However, when he responded in their dialect, they smiled and shared all the information about their children. The positive effect of this exercise was that the child would be present in the school on the next day. In this way, by visiting parents on all the Sundays, he helped to ensure that attendance improved.

After the children started attending school, it was important to consistently maintain their interest level. During the prayer meeting on one day, there was a reading activity session being conducted where the children had to read a unit in Gujarati language called "Saad Vartyo". In this reading, they came across a word called "Kharkharo". He asked the children if anyone knew the meaning of this word. All the children were confused and he did not get an answer. He then asked if anyone knew the meaning of the word in their dialect. Now at least a dozen children were eager to answer. They answered that "Kharkharo" means to visit a house for condolence in case

a member of the household has died. Now he was ready with the next question. What rituals are performed when a person dies? The rituals included last rites, third day rituals and condolence meets. The children instantly identified the word "Besana" for condolence meet. In this way, he decided to talk to the children in their own mother tongue and explain the different concepts in their own language.

The local dialect was a variant of Marwadi. The teachers in the school also came from different regions.

SR NO	TEACHER'S NAME	NATIVE	LANGUAGE OR DIALECT
1	Patel Trikambhai	Miyal, Tharad, Banaskantha	Marwadi
2	Bhagora Popatbhai	Panchal, Meghraj, Sabarkantha	Dungri - Bhili
3	Kharadi Babulal	Itwa, Meghraj, Sabarkantha	Dungri - Bhili
4	Chaudhary Mitaben	Brahmanwada, Chanasma, Mehsana	Talpadi of North Gujarat
5	Patel Bhavnaben	Godhamji, Bhiloda, Sabarkantha	Sabarkantha rural dialect
6	Patel Nareshkumar	Muwada of Veera, Lunawada, Panchmahal	Rural dialect of Central Gujarat
7	Gupta Gulabchand	Amraiwadi, Ahmedabad city	Hindi - Gujarati
8	Patel Sangeetaben	Chari, Chikhli, Navsari	Surti dialect- influenced by Parsis

None of these teachers could speak the pure form of Gujarati language and used words as per their understanding. He then discussed the issue with the school principal who could speak Marwadi. Shri Kaag did some reading on the importance of the mother tongue, Gandhiji's thoughts, and UNESCO's articles on education, among others. He began by exchanging

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Gujarati Marwari Vocabulary

information about certain rites, objects, actions in different dialects with the teachers. In this way, he would gather knowledge about different dialects while indulging in some pleasant conversation with them.

In May 2003, during summer vacation, the teachers noted down different words used in a normal conversation. These notes were made in such a way that the common word was written first in Marwari followed by what it was called in Gujarati. The list included the following commonly used conversational words:

- Welcome, applause
- Social customs
- Actions and location
- School items
- Food recipes and timing
- Kitchen equipment

- Names of birds and animals
- Seasons, directions, names of the months

This collection of words included those used in day-to-day conversation as well as commonly used in the curriculum of standards 1 and 2. He prepared photocopies of this list of words and distributed it among the other teachers in June 2003. This list of words was like a reference list for the teachers who could use it whenever they were stuck and could not find the right word while teaching in their respective classes as well as during any discussions or conversations held with parents. This exercise was successful.

Now the teachers would teach their subjects in the children's mother tongue, namely the Marwadi dialect. During the learning process and presentations held in classrooms, it was a matter

of great pride and happiness for the teachers when children were able to present their thoughts with confidence in their own dialect. All these activities resulted in improved attendance. As the same language was spoken at home as well as the school the children especially small children of lower primary classes, started showing motivation and enthusiasm in attending the school. The children started showing better participation in the school's academic work. The children's knowledge acquired prior to school could also be put to use in the educational process. In this way, student-centric education was encouraged and put into practice. The small children also started visiting farms, artisan workshops, dairy, etc along with their teachers. Parents started approaching the school to know about their child's progress. There was increased participation from parents in the school's cultural programs and parents' meetings. Some parents even started rewarding children with incentives or prizes. The school also received cooperation from parents in school work such as laying of pipelines, games/sports equipment as well as transport costs for children.

When Shri Kaag was transferred to the Khoda Pay Centre School which is in the same area, he encouraged his colleagues there to use the Marwadi dialect. Soon, all the 14 schools in the cluster were implementing the experiment.

With the support of the DIET Palanpur, local literature such as "Marwadi boli mara Malakh ni" and "Banas dhara no Marwadi Samaj" has been produced. A training workshop was also conducted at the DIET for Marwadi dialect and Miyal School was presented as an excellent example of this innovative experiment.

Shri Kaag has formed a team of eight teachers to prepare a dictionary of Marwadi language. He plans to upload it online so that it is available to any teacher or student at any time. This dictionary of Marwari dialect will have proverbs and quotes too besides words. Through this dictionary, any teacher will be able to study the mother tongue of the children very easily.

Shri Kaag has also picked up innovations reported on IIM Ahmedabad's website inshodh:

- **Children's Attendance Chart.** Every day, the children note the attendance and percentage of each class on a board put up at the school premises. Also, the class children and the teacher with the highest attendance percentage are honored during the prayer assembly on the next day.
- **My paper My exam.** In this experiment, a child is asked to prepare the exam test paper for anyone unit from his home and answers this test at the school.

Improving attendance was the first step towards quality. In 2002, only about 170 children of the 350 attended on average. In 2012, on average 500 out of the 547 children enrolled attended. With the increase in attendance level the school quality also improved by default. The participation at the state level in games/sports, as well as science fairs, improved. At the "Vanche Gujarat" event, a student of the school, Rameshbhai Bhikhabhai Nangu reached the state level by reading 500 books. Education profile has also reached "B" grade in the "Gunotsav" conducted this year.



QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

1. What should be done to increase the regularity of children in school?
2. What activities can be done to make the educational environment enjoyable?
3. What can be done to motivate children to read?

QUESTIONS FOR TRAINEES

1. What can be done to increase children's participation in prayer meetings?
2. How can children be involved in creating a dictionary of the pure local language?
3. What can be done to make parents aware of school activities?