

## The importance of Gujarati – our Mother Tongue

Our mother tongue Gujarati is certainly one of the most precious treasures in our lives. It's a duty and responsibility to preserve it and pass it down from generation to generation.

Any mother tongue has a very powerful impact in the formation of the individual. Jim Cummins also underscores the importance of preserving mother tongue: "Children who come to school with a strong foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in the language used at school.

When children continue to develop their abilities in two or more languages throughout their primary school years they gain a deeper understanding of language and gradually acquire knowledge about how it can be manipulated and applied in different ways. They explore the similarities and differences between languages.

However, unless parents and teachers actively encourage maintenance of the mother tongue, the child is in danger of losing it and with that loss, all the benefits of bilingualism like:

**Personal:** The child's mother tongue is critical to his or her identity. Maintaining this language helps the child value his or her culture and heritage, which contributes to a positive self-concept.

**Social:** When the mother tongue language is *not* maintained, important links to family and other community members may be lost. By encouraging mother tongue language use, parents can prepare the child to interact with their language community, both in the UK and overseas. In a world that has become global, it is important for our children to have a strong sense of who they are so they don't get lost in it.

**Educational:** Students who learn English and continue to develop their mother tongue language have higher academic achievement in later years than do students who learn English at the expense of their first language

**Economic:** Better employment opportunities in this country and overseas are available for individuals who are fluent in English and their mother tongue.

**Cultural:** Language also plays a key part in culture. Enabling children to be competent in their first language allows them to better understand their cultural heritage. When you are connected to your cultural heritage you have a sense of identity. Having this sense of identity is a key part of having a positive self-esteem.

Keeping mother tongue in a foreign country does not happen spontaneously. Instead, it is an achievement that requires commitment and determination, especially from the family. Parents must establish a strong home language policy and make consistent efforts to help their children develop good literacy skills in their first language which is Gujarati in our case.

# ગુજરાતી ભાષા લક્ષી કેટલાંક સૂત્રો

- આપણા વધુને વધુ બાળકો ગુજરાતી ભાષાની શાળાઓમાં દાખલ થાય અને ખૂબજ સારી રીતે ધગશપૂર્વક ગુજરાતીનો અભ્યાસ કરે તે આપણા સૌ માટે જરૂરી છે.
- ગુજરાતી ભાષાની જાળવણી માટે આપણે સૌએ જાગૃત થવું પડશે.
- ગુજરાતી ભાષાના વિદ્યાર્થીઓની સંખ્યામાં થતો સતત નોંધપાત્ર ઘટાડો આપણા સૌ માટે શરમજનક.
- ગુજરાતી ભાષા માટે જાગૃતી લાવો
- આપણી માતૃભાષા ગુજરાતી માટે આપણે અને આપણા સમાજે ગંભીરતાથી વિચારવું પડશે.
- આપણા બાળકો ગુજરાતી ભાષાની શાળાઓમાં જાય તે માટે પ્રોત્સાહન આપો.