

Gujarati Writing

P. J. MISTRY

The Gujarati script, used for writing Gujarati and Kacchi, is a variant of Devanagari (SECTION 31), differentiated by the loss of the head strokes and varying degrees of modifications in the remaining characters. The earliest available documents are, in handwriting, a 1592 manuscript and, in printing, a 1797 advertisement. Yet until the middle of the nineteenth century, the script was used primarily for correspondence and bookkeeping, while Devanagari was used for literary and scholarly works. Written from left to right, with symbols aligned at their heads, the script is organized in terms of the *akṣara* 'syllable'. It has been referred to as *śarāphi* 'banker's', *vāñiāsāi* 'merchant's', and *mahājani* 'trader's'. Its 45 basic symbols are divided into *svara* 'vowels' and *vyañjana* 'consonants' (see Parikh 1974 for a history; Lambert 1953: 134–70 and Cardona 1965: 53–60 for description).

The symbols

Vowels, listed in their conventional order in TABLE 32.1, are grouped into historical *hrasva* 'short' and *dīrgha* 'long' classes, according to the *laghu* 'light' and *guru*

TABLE 32.1: *Vowel Symbols*

	SHORT				LONG				
	Initial		Diacritic		Initial		Diacritic		
Central	અ	a [ə]	–		આ	ā [a]	–	કા	kā
High front	ઇ	i [i]	િ	કિ	ઈ	ī [i]	ી	કી	kī
High back	ઉ	u [u]	ુ	કુ	ઊ	ū [u]	ૂ	કૂ	kū
High back vibrant	૨	r [ru]	ર	ક્ર					
Mid front					એ	e [e, ε]	ે	કે	ke
Mid front diphthong					ઐ	ai [əy]	ૈ	કૈ	kai
Mid back					ઓ	o [o, ɔ]	ો	કો	kō
Mid back diphthong					ઔ	au [əʋ]	ૌ	કૌ	kau

TABLE 32.2: *Occlusives*

	VOICELESS PLOSIVES		VOICED PLOSIVES		NASALS	
	<i>Unaspirated</i>	<i>Aspirated</i>	<i>Unaspirated</i>	<i>Aspirated</i>		
Velar	क k [k]	ख kh [kʰ]	ग g [g]	घ gh [gʱ]		
Palatal	च c [tʃ]	छ ch [tʃʰ]	ज j [dʒ]	झ jh [dʒʱ]		
Retroflex	ट ṭ [ʈ]	ठ ṭh [ʈʰ]	ड ḍ [ɖ]	ढ ḍh [ɖʱ]	ण ṇ [ɳ]	
Dental	त t [t]	थ th [tʰ]	द d [d]	ध dh [dʱ]	न n [n]	
Labial	प p [p]	फ ph [f]	ब b [b]	भ bh [bʱ]	म m [m]	

'heavy' syllables they create in traditional verse. The historical long vowels *ī ū* are no longer distinctively long in pronunciation; only in verse do syllables containing *ṣ i*, *ṣ ī*, *ṣ u*, *ṣ ū*, and *ṣ r* assume the values required by a meter.

Consonant symbols are classified into *muḷākṣara* 'root letters' and *joḍākṣara* 'conjunct letters', with the first group additionally subgrouped in terms of articulation. The basic consonant symbols are shown in TABLE 32.2.

The conventional order (from left to right in the tables) has 23 plosives, 4 sonorants, and 3 sibilants (TABLE 32.3), and four additional characters: *ḥ ha*, a glottal fricative; *ṛ ṛa*, a retroflex lateral; and two conjuncts, *ṣkṣa* and *ṣjñā* [gn].

Other signs are: *anusvāra*, a dot above a character, representing a nasal element, as in *ḥ kū*; *visarga* :, a silent symbol in some Sanskrit words; and *ṣ ṇ* [ŋ], a velar nasal, also in Sanskrit. The symbols for numerals are shown in TABLE 32.4.

Specific features

A postconsonantal *ṣ a* has no overt mark; it is inherent in a consonantal symbol. Thus *क* is *ka* (a slanting stroke, *virāma*, makes it *khodo* 'lame' and marks it as just a consonant; thus *क* is *k*). Other vowel symbols have their full form in initial and post-

TABLE 32.3: *Sonorants and Fricatives*

	<i>Palatal</i>		<i>Alveolar</i>		<i>Dental</i>		<i>Labial</i>	
Sonorants	य y	[j]	र r	[r]	ल l	[l]	व v	[v]
Sibilants	श ṣ	[ʃ]	ष ṣ	[ʃ]	स s	[s]		

TABLE 32.4: *Numerals and Their Names*

1 १ ekado	3 ३ trgado	5 ५ pāṃcado	7 ७ sātado	9 ९ navado
2 २ bagado	4 ४ cogado	6 ६ chagado	8 ८ āṭhado	0 ० mīmḍum

vocalic positions (e.g. આશુ *āsā* ‘wish’, બાઈ *bhāi* ‘brother’). In postconsonantal position, they occur as diacritics juxtaposed on one or more sides of the consonant symbol (TABLE 32.1).

Many consonantal symbols contain a vertical line (e.g. પ *pa*, વ *ca*), but some do not (e.g. ક *ka*, જ *ja*). In clusters, the first letter(s) lose the vertical line, and only the last one retains it, e.g., the combinations of ત *ta*, ક્ષ *kṣa*, and જ *ja* with ય *ya* are ત્ય *tya*, ક્ષ્ય *kṣya*, and જ્ય *ja*.

Special conjunct forms exist for the following:

1. ર્સ(*a*) appears as ્ preceding લ *la*, વ *va*, ન *na* (સ્મા *śma* but સ્લા *śla*), as well as ર *ra* (શ્ર *śra*) and વ *ca* (સ્વ *śca*).

2. ળ *ṣa* has a different shape when it is preceded by ્(*a*): ળ્ *ṣa*.

3. ર *r(a)*, as a first member, takes the form *repha* over the following letter (e.g. ર્ક *rka*). As a last member, *ra* is a subscript ્ with ળ્(*a*), ળ્(*a*), and ળ્(*a*) (e.g. ર્ત્ર *tra*). With other symbols, it is a diagonal stroke ્ attached at the lower left (ક્ર *kra*, પ્ર *pra*). The conjuncts *hra*, *dra*, and *tra* appear as હ્ર, ઢ્ર, and ળ respectively. Affixing ્ *u* and ્ *ū* to ર *ra* results in રુ ~ રુ *ru* and રૂ *rū*.

4. હ(*a*) combines with ય *ya*, મ *ma*, and જ્ *r* as હ્ય *hya*, હમ *hma*, and હ્ર *hr*.

5. ઢ(*a*) combines with ય *ya*, વ *va*, ઢ *dha*, and મ *ma* to result in ઢ્ય *dya*, ઢ્વ *dva*, ઢ્હ *ddha*, and ઢ્મ *dma*. It also combines with જ્ *r* as ઢ્ર *dr*.

6. જા, જી, જ્ય ~ જુ, and જ્ઞ ~ જ્ઞ are *jā*, *jī*, *ju*, and *jū*, respectively.

7. Geminate ળ્તા, ઢ્દા, ળ્ઠા, and ઢ્ઢા combine vertically: ળ્, ળ્, ળ્, and ળ્ (cf. ળ્ ળ્ *ṣṣa*). ત્તા and ઢ્દા are special forms.

Gujarati writing is essentially phonemic, with some exceptions. A word-final consonant which is written *Ca* is pronounced as *C*; thus મન *mana* is [mən] ‘mind’. Deletion of *a* in a base morpheme, under certain conditions (cf. *a*-deletion in Mistry 1995), is not indicated in the written form; thus ત *ta* is pronounced [tə] in કાતારાસે *kātaraśe* ‘he will carve’ but not in કાતારે *kātare* [katre] ‘he carves’. *Anusvāra* has two values: either nasalization of a vowel (હું *huṃ* [hū] ‘I’) or a nasal consonant homorganic with a following occlusive (રંગ *raṅg* [rəŋg] ‘color’).

The use of *visarga*, *virāma*, the nasal ળ *ṣ*, and જ્ *r* is restricted mainly to Sanskrit loans. Similarly, the distinction between ળ *śa* and ળ *śa* is only a writing convention.

The system is underdifferentiated for open/close and clear/murmur distinctions in vowels (cf. Pandit 1966: 156–77): thus homographic મોરિ *morī* for both [mori] ‘gutter’ and [mōri] ‘bland’, and તારો *tāro* for both [taro] ‘star’ and [tāro] ‘your’ with a murmured vowel.

The influx of English loans in recent years has made the representation of close and open mid vowels critical. To represent the open vowels, a practice of inverting the diacritics for *e* and *o* is gaining ground: બેટ [beʔ] ‘island’ vs. બેટ [bæʔ] ‘bat’, બોલ [bol] ‘speak!’ vs. બોલ [bɔl] ‘ball’. The shortcomings of the system have been the basis for ongoing proposals for reform made by two individuals: Mahendra Meghani from the 1950s, mainly for typographical reasons, and Dayashankar Joshi from the early 1980s, with concern for literacy.

SAMPLE OF GUJARATI

1. *Gujarati:* તાડપત્ર પર લખવાની બે પદ્ધતિઓ હતી
 2. *Transliteration:* tāḍapatra para lakhavānī be paddhatio haṭī
 3. *Transcription:* tadpətrə pər ləkʰvāni be pəddʰətiə hətī
 4. *Gloss:* palm.leaf on of.writing two systems were
1. (१) શાહીથી પત્રો પર લખવાની ઉત્તર ભારતની પદ્ધતિ
 2. (I) śāhīthī patro para lakhavānī utara bhāratānī paddhati
 3. ek fahitʰī pətro pər ləkʰvāni uttar bʰarətṇi pəddʰəti
 4. (I) with.ink leaves on of.writing north Indian system
1. અને (૨) પત્રમાં ઝીણી અણીવાળા સોયા વડે અક્ષરો કોતરને
 2. ane (2) patramām jhīṇī aṇīvāḷā soyā vaḍe akṣaro kotarīne
 3. əne be pətrəmā ḍʰiṇi aṇivaḷa soja vəḍe əkṣəro kotrine
 4. and (2) in.leaf small edged needle with letters having.carved
1. પછીથી તેમાં શાહી કે મેશ પુરવાની દક્ષિણ ભારતની પદ્ધતિ
 2. pachīthī temām śāhī ke meśa puravānī dakṣiṇa bhāratānī paddhati
 3. pəʃiʰitʰī temā fahi ke meṣ purvāni dəkṣiṇ bʰarətṇi pəddʰəti
 4. afterward in.it ink or soot of.filling south Indian system
1. ગુજરાતમાં પહેલી પદ્ધતિએ તાડપત્રો લખાયેલા નજરે પડે છે
 2. gujarātamām pahelī paddhatie tāḍapatro lakhāyelā najare paḍe che
 3. guḍḍratmā pəheli pəddʰətie tadpətro ləkʰajela nəḍḍəre paḍe ʃʰe
 4. in.Gujarat first by.system palm.leaves written sight fall is

‘There were two systems of writing on a palm leaf: (1) a north Indian system of writing on leaves with ink, and (2) a south Indian system of carving letters with a sharp needle and afterward filling the lines with ink or soot. In Gujarat one finds palm leaves written in the first system.’

— Parikh 1974: 61.

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