

CHARACTER VOICE GUIDELINES

चार गावे - Distinct Speech Patterns

OVERVIEW

This document establishes distinct voice patterns for the cast to address the audit finding: “Many voices share the same cadence; distinct speech patterns by class, age, or role would help characterization.”

The goal is authentic differentiation without caricature - voices should feel real to rural Maharashtra circa 2002-2003.

PART A: VOICE CATEGORIES

1. UPPER CASTE AUTHORITY (Formal Power)

Characters: Gadkari Saheb, Vasundhara, Devrao Gokhale, Sarpanch Vilas Patre

Linguistic Features: - **Sentence Structure:** Complete, grammatically correct sentences. Longer constructions with subordinate clauses. Never fragments. - **Vocabulary:** Sanskrit-derived words (dharma, kartavya, maryada). Formal pronouns (aap, tumhi vs tu). Administrative language when convenient. - **Formality Level:** High even in private moments. Maintains distance through language. - **Power Markers:** Speaks in declaratives, not questions. Uses “I will explain” not “Let me try to explain.” Commands disguised as observations.

Marathi/Hindi Markers: - “Samajhiye” (understand - imperative polite) - “Yeh toh aapko pata hai” (you already know this) - “Hamare yahan aisa nahi hota” (such things don’t happen here) - “Parivaarik maamla hai” (it’s a family matter)

Discomfort/Deflection Patterns: - Shifts to third person or passive voice when uncomfortable - Uses tradition/custom as shield: “Hamara riwaz hai...” - Sudden formality increase signals hiding something - Stands up or moves to end uncomfortable topics - Offers chai/hospitality to change subject

Sample Cadence:

“You are asking about matters that are not... let me say this differently.

The family has always maintained certain standards. What happens

within
these walls is not for outside discussion. You understand, of course.
As a fellow educated person."

2. MIDDLE CLASS EDUCATED (Professional Vernacular)

Characters: Teacher Shaila Jore, Postmaster Ramesh Bhat, Talathi Anand Sathe, Constable Mohan Ghadge, Havaldar Pradeep Phadke

Linguistic Features: - **Sentence Structure:** Mix of formal and colloquial. Complete sentences in professional mode, more relaxed in personal asides. - **Vocabulary:** Uses English technical terms naturally (report, file, evidence, pattern). Government vocabulary. Educational references. - **Formality Level:** Shifts based on audience - formal with superiors, warmer with villagers. - **Professional Markers:** Cites rules, procedures, "as per guidelines," "officially speaking."

Register Shifts: - Professional mode: "The report indicates..." / "As per records..."
- Personal mode: "Dekho, main kya kahoon..." (Look, what can I say...) - Confidential mode: Drops to whisper, uses "off the record"

Marathi/Hindi Markers: - "File mein likha hai" (it's written in the file) - "Mera kaam hai, main karta hoon" (I do my job) - "Personally speaking..." - "Sarkari naukri hai" (it's government service)

Discomfort/Deflection Patterns: - Retreats to official language when pressed - "I am not authorized to..." / "That's above my pay grade" - Papers shuffling, looking for documents - Uses passive constructions: "It was decided" not "I decided"

Sample Cadence:

"The file says drowning. Officially, that is what happened. But personally speaking... forty years I have sat in this office. I see patterns. I say nothing. Pension is coming soon. You understand what I am saying."

3. WORKING CLASS DIRECT (Labor Speech)

Characters: Prakash Kore, Dinesh Pote, Rukmini Lokhande, Sunita Dhere, Nilesh Raut, Kiln Workers

Linguistic Features: - **Sentence Structure:** SHORT. Subject-verb-object. Drops pronouns when obvious. No subordinate clauses. - **Vocabulary:** Concrete nouns (truck, brick, ash, fire). Body verbs (lift, carry, burn). Numbers and quantities. - **Formality Level:** Minimal honorifics except to clear superiors. Direct address. - **Labor Markers:** References to physical work, time (shift, night, morning), money (paisa, majdoori).

Physical Metaphors: - "Back is broken from this work" - "Hands know what eyes don't see" - "Fire doesn't ask questions" - "Heavy like wet bricks"

Marathi/Hindi Markers: - “Kaam hai” (there’s work) - “Paisa milta hai” (the money comes) - “Mujhe kya pata” (what do I know) - “Saheb” only for true authority

Discomfort/Deflection Patterns: - Returns to physical activity (continues working while talking) - Monosyllables: “Haan” “Nahi” “Pata nahi” - “I was working” as universal alibi - Sudden exhaustion: “Long day. Tired.”

Sample Cadence:

"Truck goes. Night time. Where? Not my business. I load bricks. Get paid. Go home. What Madhav-saheb does after dark – I don't ask. Questions don't feed children."

4. TRAUMATIZED/FRAGMENTED (Broken Speech)

Characters: Aarav More, Kalyani, Meena More (in grief), Raghoba (when confessing)

Linguistic Features: - **Sentence Structure:** INCOMPLETE. Trails off with “...” Restarts sentences. Jumps topics. Time confusion (past/present mixing). -

Vocabulary: Sensory words dominate (saw, heard, smelled, cold, dark). Child vocabulary for Aarav. - **Formality Level:** Collapses. No honorifics. Raw. - **Trauma Markers:** Repetition. Non sequiturs. Physical descriptions interrupt speech.

Written Conventions: - Heavy use of “...” for trailing off - Em dashes for interrupted thoughts - (actions) interspersed: shaking, looking away, hands moving - Short paragraphs, lots of white space

Non-Verbal Cues to Write: - (long silence) - (stares at hands) - (voice drops to whisper) - (suddenly loud) - (rocking slightly)

Sensory Focus: - Cold/wet (drowning memories) - Smell (kiln smoke is key trigger) - Dark/shadow (night terror) - Sound (water, breathing)

Marathi/Hindi Markers: - Fragments: “Woh... woh aaye the...” - Repetition: “Do log. Do. Big. Not girls. Not.” - Child speech (Aarav): “Bad smell. Like bhatti. Gauri said so.”

Sample Cadence (Aarav):

"They came. Two... not girls. Big. Like... (gestures above head) ...taller than Baba. Face covered. Gamcha. No eyes. Just... (makes breathing sound) ...this sound. Heavy. Like running. But they weren't running. We were. Gauri... (stops, shaking)"

Sample Cadence (Kalyani - through gestures/writing):

(writes in dirt: two stick figures, one large in white sari)
(points toward Wada)
(draws water, two small figures under it)
(covers own mouth with both hands)
(tears, but no sound)

5. EVASIVE/LYING (Deceptive Speech)

Characters: Raghoba (early interviews), Madhav Gokhale (when questioned), Prakash Kore (before confession), Sarpanch (about money)

Linguistic Features: - **Sentence Structure:** Varies wildly. Either TOO complete (rehearsed) or suddenly vague. Answer length doesn't match question importance. - **Vocabulary:** Careful word choice. Avoids specifics. Uses "someone" "somewhere" "sometime." - **Formality Level:** Performative. Too polite or too casual - never quite right. - **Deception Markers:** Topic changes. Questions answered with questions. Over-explaining simple things, under-explaining complex ones.

Red Flags in Speech: - Repeats the question back (buying time) - "To be honest..." (about to lie) - "Everyone knows..." (deflecting to community) - Specific denials of things not asked: "I never went to the lake" (when asked about trucks) - Sudden memory clarity for alibi, vagueness for everything else

Rehearsed Phrase Patterns: - Identical wording when asked same question twice - Story has too many details (over-prepared) - Or has no details at all (avoiding) - Changes subject at exactly the same point each time

Marathi/Hindi Markers: - "Aapko shayad galat information mili hai" (you've received wrong information) - "Yeh sab purani baatein hain" (these are old matters) - "Log bahut bolte hain" (people talk too much) - "Main toh seedha aadmi hoon" (I'm a straightforward man)

Sample Cadence (Madhav - early interviews):

"The lake? At night? (laughs) Why would I go there? Ash disposal is at Rakhe site. East of here. Government approved. Everything documented. My brother handles the paperwork – ask him. You can see the permits. We are legitimate business. Sixty families depend on us. (pause) What exactly are you asking?"

Sample Cadence (Raghoba - before confession):

"That night, saheb? Which night? (pause) Oh. The twins. I was in Wada. Where else would I be? I am old man. Night comes, I sleep. (quickly) Haribhau saw me. In my room. We talked. No, wait – maybe we didn't talk that night. But he saw me. He will tell you."

6. RURAL ELDER WISDOM (Oracle Speech)

Characters: Gajanan Buwa, Rangubai, Old Pandit (referenced)

Linguistic Features: - **Sentence Structure:** Questions that aren't questions. Statements that are riddles. Inverted cause-effect. - **Vocabulary:** Metaphorical. Nature imagery. Body/death/spirit language. Archaic terms. - **Formality Level:** Outside formal structures. Neither polite nor rude - different register entirely. - **Wisdom Markers:** Proverbs. Oblique references. "You already know" constructions.

Proverb Patterns: - “The river knows where it flows” (things have their course) - “Fire cleans but ash remains” (evidence survives) - “Two eyes see, one mouth should speak” (know more than you say) - “Even the deaf wall has heard” (nothing is secret)

Oracle Constructions: - “The one who asks already knows” - “Look where you don’t want to look” - “Names are cages for truth” - “Everyone knows. No one speaks. This is the curse.”

Marathi/Hindi Markers: - “Pani apna raasta jaanta hai” (water knows its path) - “Jo dikhta hai woh nahi hai, jo hai woh nahi dikhta” (what’s visible isn’t real, what’s real isn’t visible) - Sanskrit fragments: “Satya... satya kabhi chhupta nahi” (truth never hides)

Sensory/Supernatural Vocabulary: - Smell of death vs smell of killing (different) - Eyes forced closed (murder detail) - Spirits don’t drive trucks - Ghosts don’t wear gamchas

Sample Cadence (Gajanan Buwa):

“You want names? Names are cages. The truth is bigger than names. But since you ask – look to where fire burns without light. Look to where water holds secrets. Look to where the great house hides shame behind charity. (smiles) See? You don’t need old Gajanan. You already know. You are afraid to know that you know.”

Sample Cadence (Rangubai):

“(exhales bidi smoke) I know death. I know what water does to body. I know what time does. (pause) I know what is wrong. (leans forward) Ghosts don’t leave kiln smell. Ghosts don’t force eyes closed. Seventy-five years I have lived by saying nothing. But you are Sarla’s daughter. Maybe... maybe it is time for truth.”

PART B: CHARACTER VOICE CARDS

1. GADKARI SAHEB (Zamindar, 72)

Primary Voice: Upper Caste Authority **Secondary:** Traumatized (when twins mentioned)

Signature Phrases: - “Yeh hamare parivaar ki zimmedaari hai” (This is our family’s responsibility) - “Main samjhaata hoon” (I will explain) - “Aap samajh nahi sakte” (You cannot understand)

Speech Tics: - Clears throat before difficult topics - Uses “we” instead of “I” for family matters - References “tradition” and “duty” when deflecting

Topics That Change Pattern: - Twins: voice breaks, becomes almost childlike in grief - Kalyani: stiffens, formal to the point of coldness - Curse: genuinely believes, speaks with fear

Sample Rewrite: BEFORE: “Those children died years ago. Why are you asking about them now?” AFTER: “The... the little ones. (clears throat) That tragedy was fifteen years past. The family has grieved. We have performed our duties. What purpose does this reopening serve, officer? The dead deserve peace. As do the living.”

2. VASUNDHARA (Zamindar's Wife, 68)

Primary Voice: Upper Caste Authority (cold variant) **Secondary:** Evasive/Lying

Signature Phrases: - “Main jaanti hoon kya uchit hai” (I know what is proper) - “Kuch baatein ghar mein rehni chahiye” (Some matters should stay within the home) - “Aapki seva mein aur kya chahiye?” (What else do you require?)

Speech Tics: - Questions that dismiss: “Is this relevant?” - Uses plural “we” for her decisions - Refers to self in third person when righteous: “A wife must protect her husband’s honor”

Topics That Change Pattern: - Kalyani: icy precision, clipped sentences - Twins: no grief, only concern about “the talk” - Her husband: possessive, controlling language

Sample Rewrite: BEFORE: “I don’t know anything about those children. We donated money. That is all.” AFTER: “Those children. Yes. (sits straighter) The family provided charitable support to the mother. As is proper. As is our dharma to those less fortunate. Beyond that - what would I know? I am a woman of this house. I manage servants and pujas, not village matters. (pause) Is there something specific you are implying, officer?”

3. MADHAV GOKHALE (Kiln Operator, 52)

Primary Voice: Evasive/Lying (early), Working Class Direct (confession)
Secondary: Upper Caste Authority (when playing businessman)

Signature Phrases: - “Hum toh seedha kaam karte hain” (We just do straightforward work) - “Business hai, saheb” (It’s business, sir) - When caught: “Kya karna tha?” (What was I supposed to do?)

Speech Tics: - Laughs inappropriately when nervous - Offers tours/documents unprompted - Uses “we” to spread responsibility

Topics That Change Pattern: - Night trucks: immediate deflection, blames rumors - Children: too quick denial - Confession: becomes chillingly direct, no deflection

Sample Rewrite (BEFORE CONFESSION): BEFORE: “I don’t know about any lake activities. We dump ash at Rakhe site.” AFTER: “Lake? (laugh) Saheb, why would we take ash to the lake? That’s... that’s opposite direction entirely. Someone is filling your ears with nonsense. (stands, gestures toward east) Rakhe is there. Government approved. You want, I show you the permits? Everything documented. My brother - Devrao - he keeps excellent records. (pause) Who told you this lake story? These villagers talk too much.”

Sample Rewrite (CONFESSION): BEFORE: “Yes, I killed them. They saw what they shouldn’t have seen.” AFTER: “Fine. (sits back) Yes. I killed them. All four. The Karande children. The More girl. The boy was supposed to die too but he ran. Mistake. (shrugs) They saw the truck. The girl - she said my name. ‘Madhav-kaka, what are you doing?’ What was I supposed to do? Let her go home? Tell her father? (cold) I did what was necessary. Business is business.”

4. PRAKASH KORE (Transport/Muscle, 45)

Primary Voice: Working Class Direct **Secondary:** Evasive/Lying

Signature Phrases: - “Saheb bolta hai, main karta hoon” (Boss says, I do) - “Paisa milta hai” (The money comes) - “Bacche the... bacche” (They were children... children)

Speech Tics: - Monosyllables when uncomfortable - Refers to Madhav as “saheb” - deferential - Physical deflection (spits, looks away, keeps working)

Topics That Change Pattern: - Children: genuine discomfort, shorter sentences - Madhav: protective/fearful - Confession: relief mixed with guilt

Sample Rewrite: BEFORE: “I drove the truck. Madhav told me what to do.” AFTER: “Truck. Yes. I drove. (spits) Madhav-saheb said go to lake. I went. He said wait. I waited. Then... (long pause) ...he came back. Wet. Said drive. I drove. (quieter) I knew. I knew what happened. But paisa milta hai. Family is there. What to do.”

5. RAGHOBA (Old Servant, 70)

Primary Voice: Evasive/Lying (early) shifting to Traumatized/Fragmented (confession) **Secondary:** Working Class Direct

Signature Phrases: - “Saheb, main toh naukar hoon” (Sir, I’m just a servant) - “Madam ne kaha...” (Madam said...) - “Pandrah saal... pandrah saal...” (Fifteen years... fifteen years...)

Speech Tics: - Trembles when lying - Names escape him in dreams (screams “Ira! Asha!”) - Excessive use of “saheb” when nervous

Topics That Change Pattern: - That night: visible shaking, voice drops - Vasundhara: fear and loyalty mixed - Confession: complete collapse, wailing

Sample Rewrite (CONFESSION): BEFORE: “I held them under the water. One after another.” AFTER: “(sobbing) They trusted me. Raghoba-kaka, they called me. (voice breaks) Ira first. I held her... held her under. She struggled. Strong for small girl. But I was... I was stronger. And Asha... (screaming cry) ...Asha SAW. She saw what I did to her sister. Her eyes... asking why... fifteen years those eyes are looking at me...”

6. AARAV MORE (Child Witness, 8)

Primary Voice: Traumatized/Fragmented (child variant) **Secondary:** None - pure trauma response

Signature Phrases: - “They came.” (simple, declarative) - “Bad smell. Like bhatti.” - “Gauri said...” (always references sister)

Speech Tics: - Whispers critical information - Describes adults as “big” (child perspective) - Sensory details dominate (smell, sound, touch) - Uses demonstration over words

Topics That Change Pattern: - Sister: voice cracks, sometimes stops entirely - That night: dissociation, speaks in present tense - Ghosts: believes supernatural explanation (coping)

Sample Rewrite: BEFORE: “I saw two figures. They were tall and had covered faces.” AFTER: “Two... not girls. Big. (gestures above head) Taller than Baba. Both big. Face... (touches own face) ...covered. Gamcha. Like this. (demonstrates) No eyes. Just dark. And... (makes heavy breathing sound) ...this. Like tired. Like running. But not running.”

7. KALYANI (Mute Mother, 45)

Primary Voice: Traumatized/Fragmented (non-verbal) **Secondary:** None

Communication Methods: - Drawing in dirt/paper - Pointing - Physical gestures (covering mouth, rocking) - Facial expressions - Tears (but silent)

Signature “Phrases” (gestures): - Points toward Wada (when asked about killers) - Draws woman in white sari - Covers own mouth (the silencing) - Two fingers down into palm (drowning)

Interview Conventions: - Interviewer describes gestures in detail - Other characters interpret for her - Her silence is eloquent - write what she DOESN'T do - Physical proximity conveys trust/fear

Sample Scene:

LEENA: Kalyani-mavshi, who hurt your daughters?

(Kalyani is still. Then slowly raises her hand. Points – not toward the lake, but toward Wada. Her finger trembles but doesn't waver.)

LEENA: Someone from the big house?

(Kalyani's hand moves to her own chest, clutches the fabric of her blouse. With her other hand, she draws in the dirt floor – a figure in a triangle shape. A sari. She adds lines around the head. White hair or a white covering. Then she draws a second figure. Smaller. A man. With lines on the face. A beard.)

LEENA: A woman in white. And a man with a beard.

(Kalyani covers her mouth with both hands. Not silencing herself – showing that she WAS silenced. Her eyes fill but no sound escapes. Fifteen years of soundless grief.)

8. RANGUBAI (Death Ritual Woman, 75)

Primary Voice: Rural Elder Wisdom **Secondary:** Working Class Direct (practical details)

Signature Phrases: - “I know death. I know what water does to body.” - “Seventy-five years I have lived by saying nothing.” - “Ghosts don’t force eyes closed.”

Speech Tics: - Smokes bidi throughout - exhales mark thought breaks - Touches own body parts when describing corpse evidence - Shifts from mystical to clinical unexpectedly

Topics That Change Pattern: - Bodies: becomes precise, medical almost - Danger: drops wisdom voice, becomes direct - Survival: practical, unsentimental

Sample Rewrite: BEFORE: “I found marks on the twins’ throats. Someone held them underwater.” AFTER: “(exhales smoke) The twins. Fifteen years ago. Everyone said drowned. Flash flood. But bodies that drown in flood look different. Battered. Bruised. Water throws them against things. (leans forward) The twins? Perfect. Like sleeping. No bruises. Only... (touches own throat) ...here. Small marks. Like someone pressed. Not strangle. Held. Under water. (demonstrates with hands) Different marks. I have seen it before.”

9. GAJANAN BUWA (Wandering Holy Man, 70)

Primary Voice: Rural Elder Wisdom (oracle variant) **Secondary:** None - committed to the role

Signature Phrases: - “The one who asks also knows.” - “Names are cages.” - “Look to where fire burns without light.”

Speech Tics: - Mixes Hindi, Marathi, Sanskrit - Refers to self in third person (“old Gajanan”) - Questions that are accusations

Topics That Change Pattern: - Direct questions: deflects with riddles - Sarla’s daughter (Leena): sudden clarity - The real killers: specific hints disguised as madness

Sample Rewrite: BEFORE: “There are two killers. The first killed for jealousy, the second for money.” AFTER: “Two killers? (holds up two fingers) Three deaths. But people think one. This is their mistake. (puts one finger down) One killer killed from love’s corruption. Shame made flesh. (raises both) The other kills from greed’s necessity. Same water. Same lake. Same lie. Different hands. (wild laugh) Everyone knows. No one speaks. This is the curse - not ghosts, not spirits - just silence.”

10. SARPANCH VILAS PATRE (Village Head, 50)

Primary Voice: Upper Caste Authority (political variant) **Secondary:** Evasive/
Lying

Signature Phrases: - “This is village, officer. Things happen differently here.” -
“We are simple people.” - “The curse... the lake... these are the answers.”

Speech Tics: - Dismissive laugh when challenged - Uses “we” to invoke village
solidarity - Stands/sits to control interview pace

Topics That Change Pattern: - Zamindar family: careful, deferential - Kiln bribes:
immediate deflection - The boy Aarav: slight hesitation, knows location

Sample Rewrite: BEFORE: “The children drowned because of the curse. Everyone
knows this.” AFTER: “Curse. Yes. (sits heavily) Officer saheb, Korde Tal has been
here since before my grandfather’s grandfather. Stories older than memory.
Sometimes it gives water. Sometimes it takes lives. This is how village works. We
do not question the lake. (leans forward) You are from Pune. You see patterns. Here
there are no patterns. Only the lake. Only the curse. Only what the lake decides to
take.”

11. TEACHER SHAILA JORE (Retired Teacher, 65)

Primary Voice: Middle Class Educated **Secondary:** Upper Caste Authority (when
guarding)

Signature Phrases: - “History teaches me that power protects itself.” - “I have
learned when to speak and when to stay silent.” - “Some truths are not mine to tell.”

Speech Tics: - Removes and cleans spectacles when thinking - References teaching/
history as framework - Formal language even in personal moments

Topics That Change Pattern: - Dead students: genuine grief, less formal -
Zamindar secret: becomes cryptic, redirects - His own silence: regret breaks through
formality

Sample Rewrite: BEFORE: “The children asked questions about trucks and died
soon after.” AFTER: “(removes spectacles, cleans them slowly) They asked. Neelam
and Omkar. About trucks that come at night. Old records they found somewhere. I
told them - children should not worry about adult matters. (puts spectacles back)
One week later, they were dead. And I have spent eight years wondering - if I had
asked more questions instead of telling them to be quiet... (voice breaks) would they
still be alive?”

12. POSTMASTER RAMESH BHAT (Postmaster, 62)

Primary Voice: Middle Class Educated **Secondary:** Working Class Direct (when
confiding)

Signature Phrases: - “Forty years I have been here. I see everything. I say
nothing.” - “Silence gets you pension.” - “Money orders are private matters.”

Speech Tics: - Adjusts spectacles when nervous - Refers to ledgers/records as backup - Shifts between official and personal registers

Topics That Change Pattern: - Payment patterns: initial resistance, then detailed - Personal opinion: drops official voice - Retirement: practical, self-preserving

Sample Rewrite: BEFORE: "I noticed regular payments from the kiln family to the victims' families." AFTER: "(adjusts spectacles) The first pattern started fifteen years ago. Right after the twin girls drowned. Money to Kalyani - the mother - from the Wada. Regular. Monthly. Charity, everyone assumed. (leans forward) But charity doesn't work this way. Charity is public. This was hidden. Systematic. Like... (carefully) ...guilt. Or payment for silence."

13. DEVRAO GOKHALE (Elder Brother, 58)

Primary Voice: Upper Caste Authority (businessman variant) **Secondary:** Traumatized/Fragmented (when learning truth about Madhav)

Signature Phrases: - "Family is family." - "We take care of our workers." - "Madhav handles operations. I handle accounts."

Speech Tics: - Offers hospitality (chai) to establish control - Uses "we" for family, "I" when defensive - Becomes agitated when legitimacy questioned

Topics That Change Pattern: - Madhav: protective but uncertain - Illegal activities: genuine denial (doesn't know) - Documents: confident ("Everything is documented")

Sample Rewrite: BEFORE: "My brother runs the operations. I don't know what he does at night." AFTER: "(relaxes slightly) Madhav handles operations. Day to day. I handle business side. Accounts, supplies, customers. Division of labor. (slight hesitation) He came back from Mumbai ten years ago. Business didn't work out. Family is family. I gave him responsibility. The kiln has grown since then. More customers. More efficiency. (carefully) Madhav has his own ways. But he is not stupid."

14. MEENA MORE (Grieving Mother, 45)

Primary Voice: Traumatized/Fragmented **Secondary:** Working Class Direct (when angry)

Signature Phrases: - "Ask." (one word, hollow) - "My daughter's face was not peaceful." - "Just child. That's what they always say."

Speech Tics: - Long silences - Doesn't look at speaker - Sudden sharpness when contradicted

Topics That Change Pattern: - Gauri: voice breaks, goes quiet - The truck sound: becomes insistent - Protecting Aarav: fierce, direct

Sample Rewrite: BEFORE: "I heard a truck that night but no one believes me." AFTER: "(without looking up) They went out to play. Evening time. Don't go far, I said. Don't go near water. (long silence) They didn't come back. And somewhere far... I thought I heard... (stops)

LEENA: What did you hear?

(whispers) Truck. Engine sound. But then it stopped. I thought I imagined.

RAGHUNATH: (quickly) There was no truck. She is confused-

(suddenly sharp) I heard what I heard. Don't tell me what I heard."

15. RAGHUNATH MORE (Grieving Father, 48)

Primary Voice: Traumatized/Fragmented (grief variant) **Secondary:** Working Class Direct

Signature Phrases: - "Nothing matters now." - "Children feel things we cannot." - "Safe. Away from here."

Speech Tics: - Stares at floor/ground - Protective of wife (speaks for her) - Flat affect punctuated by breaks

Topics That Change Pattern: - That day: methodical, trying to make sense - Gauri: voice cracks - Aarav's location: becomes guarded

Sample Rewrite: BEFORE: "My daughter went to the lake even though she was scared." AFTER: "Gauri... she said she had bad dream. Night before. About the lake. Two girls calling her name. I told her - bad food, bad sleep. Forget it. (stares at hands) She was afraid. She was always afraid of that lake. And she went anyway. Why? (voice cracks) I ask myself every day. Every hour. Why?"

16. MAHESH MORE (Victim's Uncle, 45)

Primary Voice: Working Class Direct (angry variant) **Secondary:** None - consistent

Signature Phrases: - "Brother. Yes. We share blood. That is all." - "Questions don't get you killed. Answers do." - "The big people do what they want."

Speech Tics: - Spits on ground for emphasis - Keeps working while talking - Loud, doesn't care who hears

Topics That Change Pattern: - Brother (Raghunath): bitter but protective - Niece (Gauri): genuine grief breaks through anger - Kiln people: drops voice, looks around

Sample Rewrite: BEFORE: "I suspect the kiln people but I won't say their names." AFTER: "(returns to work, hoes the ground hard) You want to know what I think? The curse is nonsense. Someone in this village has blood on their hands. Not ghost blood. Real blood. (looks up) Names? (shakes head) Names get you killed around here. I have wife. Children. I am angry, not stupid. (lower) The kiln people. The big families. They can do anything. No one asks questions."

17. SUNITA DHERE (Food Carrier, 50)

Primary Voice: Working Class Direct **Secondary:** Traumatized/Fragmented (when recounting)

Signature Phrases: - “I am poor woman. I don’t make trouble.” - “On your mother’s head, you promise?” - “What kind of person stays quiet when children die?”

Speech Tics: - Looks around nervously - Whispers key information - Seeks assurance of secrecy

Topics That Change Pattern: - Her job: defensive, protective - What she heard: drops to whisper - Her guilt: self-recrimination

Sample Rewrite: BEFORE: “I heard Madhav and Prakash talking about the children who saw them.” AFTER: “(looks around, then leans closer, whispers) I heard them. Madhav-saheb and Prakash. Few days after children died. Behind storage shed. They didn’t see me. Madhav-saheb was angry. Very angry. He was saying... (hesitates) ...he was saying ‘those children saw us.’ Over and over. ‘Those children saw us.’ (pause) Then they laughed. Both of them. Cold laugh. Like they were laughing at something secret. I ran. Too scared to hear more.”

18. DINESH POTE (Night Watchman, 45)

Primary Voice: Working Class Direct **Secondary:** Traumatized/Fragmented (ghost fear)

Signature Phrases: - “I see things at night. Lights. Moving.” - “Maybe ghosts. Maybe not. Easier to think ghosts.” - “Night duty is lonely work.”

Speech Tics: - Crosses himself/makes protective gesture - Speaks fast when scared - Conflates different nights in memory

Topics That Change Pattern: - Night activities: mixes supernatural and real - The truck: specific details emerge - Being witness: fear of consequences

Sample Rewrite: BEFORE: “I saw the truck go to the lake at night.” AFTER: “Lights. I see lights at night. Moving toward lake. Sometimes truck. Sometimes... (makes vague gesture) ...other things. I tell myself ghosts. Easier to think ghosts. (quieter) But ghosts don’t have engines. Ghosts don’t smell like Madhav-saheb’s tobacco. Ghosts don’t come back with wet clothes. (quickly) But I see nothing. Nothing. I am watchman. I watch. That is all.”

19. NILESH RAUT (Inherited Kiln, 32)

Primary Voice: Middle Class Educated (anxious variant) **Secondary:** Working Class Direct

Signature Phrases: - “My father told me to send the money. I don’t know why.” - “I just want to run a small kiln.” - “Whatever they do - I’m not part of it.”

Speech Tics: - Startles easily - Looks over shoulder - Pleading tone when defensive

Topics That Change Pattern: - Father’s payments: genuinely confused, guilty - Madhav: fearful, deferential - Being implicated: near panic

Sample Rewrite: BEFORE: “My father started sending money to the families after he heard about the deaths.” AFTER: “(face pales) Who told you that? (long silence) Yes. He gave money. I still give money. I don’t know why. (stands, agitated) He told me - before he died - ‘Nilesh, every month, send money to these families.’ Names. Amounts. Charity, he said. Good karma. But... (trails off, sits down) The families he named. They are all connected. To the deaths. I didn’t ask him why. He was dying. Cancer. What if he... what if he was involved in something?”

20. SARLA SHIRKE (Leena’s Mother, 52)

Primary Voice: Working Class Direct **Secondary:** Upper Caste Authority (when protecting secrets)

Signature Phrases: - “Eat something first. You are too thin.” - “If I tell you, it stays with us.” - “I was protecting everyone but those dead children.”

Speech Tics: - Continues cooking/working while talking - Uses daughter’s comfort to deflect - Sharp when challenged

Topics That Change Pattern: - Aarav: protective, matter-of-fact - Kalyani’s secret: becomes guarded - Her own silence: genuine guilt

Sample Rewrite: BEFORE: “Kalyani knew who killed her children. She drew pictures showing me.” AFTER: “(sits down heavily) If I tell you, it stays with us. That child has suffered enough. (pause) He is here. In Vasti. I am keeping him. His mother brought him to me that night. She said ‘Sarla-mavshi, save my son. They will come for him too.’ (quieter) She didn’t say who. But she was terrified. Real terror, not ghost fear.”

21. CONSTABLE MOHAN GHADGE (Local Police, 48)

Primary Voice: Middle Class Educated (bureaucratic variant) **Secondary:** Evasive/ Lying

Signature Phrases: - “Case closed. Accidental drowning.” - “As per procedure...” - “What else could we do?”

Speech Tics: - References procedure constantly - Defensive about closures - Blames “lack of resources”

Topics That Change Pattern: - Official records: confident, procedural - Pressure from above: becomes vague - Physical evidence: dismissive

Sample Rewrite: BEFORE: “We investigated properly. There was no evidence of foul play.” AFTER: “Investigation was done. As per procedure. Site was visited. Witnesses were questioned. Bodies were examined. (defensive) What evidence? The lake takes bodies. Monsoon takes evidence. What were we supposed to find? (pause) Report was filed. Case was closed. Accidental drowning. Three families, fifteen years, same conclusion. (quietly) What else could we do?”

22. HAVALDAR PRADEEP PHADKE (Junior Police, 35)

Primary Voice: Middle Class Educated (conflicted variant) **Secondary:** Working Class Direct

Signature Phrases: - “I wrote what I was told to write.” - “There are things that don’t get written.” - “I have family. Children.”

Speech Tics: - Glances at door (worried about superiors) - Speaks in hypotheticals (“If someone saw...”) - Nervous energy

Topics That Change Pattern: - Senior’s orders: careful, deferential - What he actually saw: lower voice - His conscience: breaks through

Sample Rewrite: BEFORE: “I noticed inconsistencies but I didn’t report them.” AFTER: “The report says drowning. That is what the report says. (glances at door) But if someone was at the scene first... if someone saw the body before it was moved... (very quiet) The More girl’s hands. Scrapped. Like running, falling. People who drown in calm water don’t have scraped hands. (quickly) I wrote what I was told to write. I have family. Children. You understand.”

PART C: REVISION CHECKLIST

Interviews Flagged for Voice Revision

The following interviews show characters speaking too similarly and need revision based on these guidelines:

1. INTERVIEW #04 - Sarpanch vs INTERVIEW #18 - Devrao Gokhale

Issue: Both use same formal deflection patterns. Nearly identical sentence rhythms.

SARPANCH (Current): > “Pattern? (laughs dismissively) Pune people see patterns everywhere. This is village, officer. Things happen differently here.”

DEVRAO (Current): > “Ash? We have a designated area. Rakhe site. East of here. Government approved. We follow all rules.”

Both: Complete sentences, similar rhythm, defensive but smooth.

REVISION - SARPANCH (Add political condescension): > “Pattern? (laughs, sits back) Officer saheb, with respect - you are from Pune, yes? University education, city posting. You see patterns. Here? We see what the lake shows us. What ancestors have shown us. Sixty generations of pattern is called tradition. (spreads hands) I cannot explain this to someone who thinks in your way. It is not insult. Simply... different worlds.”

REVISION - DEVRAO (Add businessman defensiveness): > “(frowns) Ash? What about ash? We have designated site. Government papers. Everything documented. My brother Madhav handles- (stops) Why this question? Who has said something? These rumors are bad for business. Sixty families depend on this kiln. We cannot have CID asking about ash when we have permits. (stands) I will show you permits. Right now.”

2. INTERVIEW #08 - Mahesh More vs INTERVIEW #06 - Raghunath More

Issue: Brothers both express grief in similar flowing sentences despite different characters (one angry, one broken).

MAHESH (Current): > “Brother. Yes. We share blood. That is all we share.”

RAGHUNATH (Current): > “Ask. Nothing matters now.”

Both: Short sentence, similar resignation.

REVISION - MAHESH (Add anger, physicality): > “(spits on ground) Brother? (kicks at soil) Blood. We share blood. He got the good land - water, fertility. I got this. Rocks and clay. (gestures at barren field) So yes. Brother. The word means nothing. (returns to hoeing) You want to know if I killed his children for land? Ask. Ask directly. I’m not afraid of questions.”

REVISION - RAGHUNATH (Add hollowness, physical stillness): > “(staring at floor, motionless) ...Ask. (long silence) (doesn’t look up) (even longer silence) Nothing matters. Ask what you want. (voice flat, dead)”

3. INTERVIEW #11 - Rangubai vs INTERVIEW #13 - Gajanan Buwa

Issue: Both elder wisdom figures sound too similar - mystical, flowing, rhythmic.

RANGUBAI (Current): > “I know death. I know what water does to body. I know what time does. I know what is wrong.”

GAJANAN BUWA (Current): > “The one who asks also knows. The one who knows is afraid to say. Why ask an old fool when the truth walks among you?”

Both: Parallel structure, rhythmic, wisdom-speaker cadence.

REVISION - RANGUBAI (Add practical death-worker knowledge, physical description): > “(stubs out bidi, examines her own hands) These hands. Sixty years of washing bodies. (turns palms up) I know what death does. Water death - specific

marks. Time death - different marks. Violence? (touches own throat) ...here. Different again. (looks up sharply) You want wisdom? Go to temple. You want to know what those bodies showed me? Sit. Listen. No riddles."

REVISION - GAJANAN BUWA (Add performative madness, Sanskrit fragments): > "(chuckles, ash falling from matted hair) Kon poochta hai? Who asks? (switches to Sanskrit-inflected Hindi) Jo jaanta hai, woh poochta nahi. Jo poochta hai... (laughs wildly, then sudden clarity) ...woh jaanta hai lekin darta hai. (grabs Leena's wrist, whispers) Satya tumhare beech chalta hai. Walking. Among you. (releases, returns to mad voice) But old Gajanan is fool. What does fool know? Ask the lake. Ask the fire. Ask the silent mother."

4. INTERVIEW #16 - Aarav vs INTERVIEW #21 - Nilesh Raut

Issue: Child trauma and adult anxiety both rendered with similar incomplete sentence patterns.

AARAV (Current): > "They came. Two... not girls. Big. Like... taller than Baba."

NILESH (Current): > "My father? He's dead. Three years now. What about him?"

REVISION - AARAV (Add child vocabulary, sensory overwhelm): > "(whispers) They came. (pause) Two. Not girls. (holds up two fingers) Big big. (gestures WAY above own head) Like... like... (struggles for comparison) bigger than Baba. Bigger than house. (suddenly) BAD SMELL. Like bhatti. Gauri said- Gauri said 'Aarav, it smells like-' (stops, hands shake)"

REVISION - NILESH (Add adult anxiety, complete-but-nervous sentences): > "(startles visibly) My father? Why-why are you asking about my father? He died. Three years. Cancer. He's dead. (realizes he's repeating) What is this about? (stands up too fast) I'm just running the kiln. Small operation. I don't- I don't know what you're- (sits back down) What about my father?"

5. INTERVIEW #22 - Postmaster vs INTERVIEW #12 - Teacher

Issue: Both middle-class educated characters have identical pattern of formal-to-confidential shift.

POSTMASTER (Current): > "Money orders are private matters. I cannot share details without proper authorization."

TEACHER (Current): > "You mentioned to the constable that the Karande children were asking questions before they died." > "I may have said that. Yes."

REVISION - POSTMASTER (Add bureaucratic precision, ledger-speak): > "(adjusts spectacles, doesn't look up from ledger) Money orders. Yes. Private. Sender, receiver, amount, date. All recorded. All confidential. Section 4, clause 7, Postal Service Act. (finally looks up) You have warrant? Authorization letter? (pause) No? Then what I can tell you is limited. Officially."

REVISION - TEACHER (Add educator's hedging, chalk-dust pauses): > “(removes spectacles, breathes on them, cleans slowly) That matter. Yes. I may have... mentioned something. To the constable. At the time. (puts spectacles back) The children were curious. As children are. Questions about... various things. (carefully) Whether I recall specifics - after eight years - that is different question.”

6. INTERVIEW #39 - Sunita vs INTERVIEW #17 - Sarla

Issue: Both Vasti women sound identical when revealing secrets.

SUNITA (Current): > “You promise? On your mother’s head?”

SARLA (Current): > “If I tell you, it stays with us.”

Both: Direct, conditional revelation pattern.

REVISION - SUNITA (Add poverty fear, self-abasement): > “(grabs Leena’s hands, desperate) You promise? On your mother’s head? On your father’s spirit? I am poor woman. If Madhav-saheb knows I talked... (releases hands, whispers) my children will starve. Who will hire woman who talks? Promise. Promise me first. Then I tell.”

REVISION - SARLA (Add maternal authority, kitchen confidence): > “(continues chopping vegetables, doesn’t look up) What I tell you stays here. (chops harder) This is not request. (finally looks at daughter) I know you are doctor now. CID people. Important. But you are still my daughter. What I say does not go in any report. (waits for nod) Good. (resumes chopping) Now. The boy.”

Summary: Before/After Revision Principles

Issue	Before	After
Same rhythm	All complete sentences	Vary length by class/state
Generic deflection	“I don’t know about that”	Class-specific deflection patterns
Similar grief	Flowing sad sentences	Broken vs angry vs hollow
Wisdom homogeneity	Parallel mystical phrasing	Practical vs performative oracles
Uniform nervousness	“I... I don’t...”	Child sensory vs adult anxiety
Same revelation pattern	“If you promise...”	Fear-based vs authority-based secrets

APPENDIX: QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

When Writing Each Voice Type:

UPPER CASTE AUTHORITY: - Long sentences, never fragments - “We” not “I” for decisions - Commands as observations - Hospitality as deflection

MIDDLE CLASS EDUCATED: - Mix formal/informal registers - Technical terms natural - “Officially” vs “personally” - Procedure as shield

WORKING CLASS DIRECT: - Short. Subject-verb-object. - Body/labor metaphors - Monosyllables when uncomfortable - Physical activity continues

TRAUMATIZED/FRAGMENTED: - Incomplete sentences, “...” - Sensory details dominate - Time confusion - Non-verbal cues essential

EVASIVE/LYING: - Question length doesn’t match importance - Rehearsed phrases repeat exactly - Topic changes at same points - Specific denials of unasked things

RURAL ELDER WISDOM: - Questions that aren’t questions - Proverbs and metaphors - “You already know” - Sudden clarity breaks through

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