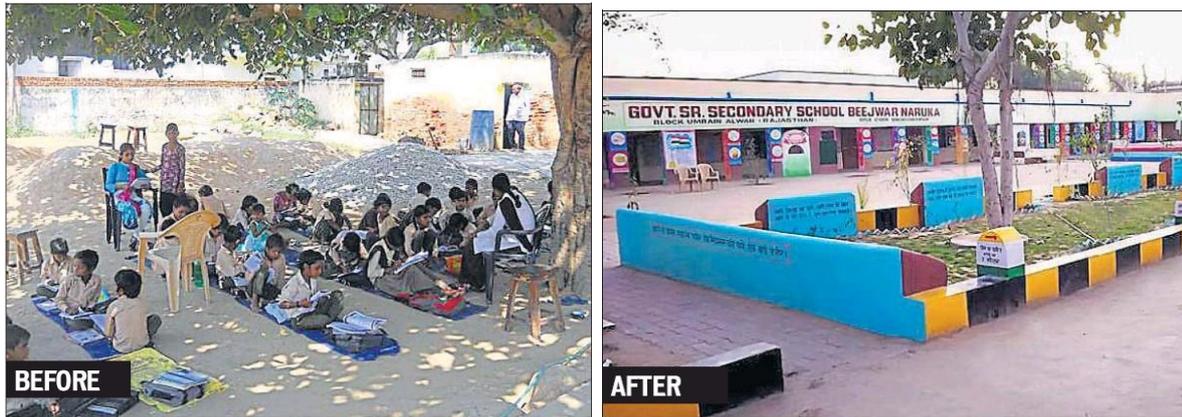


### **Teachers, community transform this government school**

JAIPUR: Admissions in government schools will begin in May, Priyanka Jaiswal tells parents every day these days. The principal of the government senior secondary school in Rajasthan's Beejwar Naruka village says parents are approaching her for admissions after seeing the new face of the school.



“Every day, I have visitors who want to withdraw their children from nearby private schools and admit them to ours,” says the 35-year-old, who joined the school in May 2018.

Until six months ago, the Beejwar Naruka government school had a dilapidated building, broken classrooms, ceilings that leaked and an unattractive facade. When it rained, the classrooms were flooded. Classes were mostly run under a tree on the school ground.

According to the 2016 Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) survey of schooling and learning levels in rural India, Rajasthan is among the top three states with highest dropout rate in children of 11 to 14 years. Against the all-india average of 3.5%, Rajasthan has 5% dropout rate in this age group.

The Beejwar Naruka government school is changed now: the building has been repaired and painted, decorative plants line entrances to classrooms, there's a geometry wall along the pathway, and the corridor walls have been furnished with information about the country and the state. There are different toilets for boys and girls. The girls' toilet has an incinerator for used sanitary pads.

The before-and-after photos are a study in contrast.

The change began on the International Yoga Day on June 21 last year, a month after the new principal joined.

“We held a meeting with the villagers and told them to do something for the school. I volunteered to donate to raise a fund for renovation. The villagers came on board,” said the principal.

The teachers and other staff donated ₹1,100 each and the villagers donate, too. “We had ₹50,000 ready. Then we approached Sehgal Foundation for help,” Jaiswal said.

Sehgal Foundation is a nonprofit organisation that has developed 30 government schools in the district. The foundation roped in Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) junior engineer Rajesh Lawania to develop facilities.

Lawania has earlier constructed a replica of an airplane for a classroom at a government school in the district, and has modelled another like coaches of a train.

“We have spent ₹20 lakh on the development of the school in six months,” said Sehgal Foundation official Mahipal Singh.

Lawania said the corridors of the school have information about Presidents and Prime Ministers of India, Bharat Ratna recipients, photos of government school alumni who have made a name for themselves, festivals, dances, dams and crops of the country.

“It is a veritable treasure trove for students who can brush up their general awareness as they play in the corridors during breaks,” said the principal.

The school has 371 students. “We hope to have many more when the admissions open for the new academic session between May and July,” she added.