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President's Message

Jai Jinendra,

December marks the close of a remarkable year for our community, and there's so much to celebrate. From shared moments of our virtual online sessions to seeing various community gatherings in the year, this month is a time for reflection and gratitude. In this final newsletter of 2024, we celebrate all of you - who joined us virtually or at the in person regional meetups, who have been behind the scenes helping with the various initiatives or taking time to connect and bring the community together. And I hope that you will join us in even more community-driven growth in 2025!



As we wrap up 2024,

1. **1100+** members have registered in the online KOJAIN directory.
2. **300+** new members added to the KOJAIN mailing list this year
3. **125+** members joined across the various virtual sessions
4. **60+** participants joined the newly launched Mentor Mentee Program.
5. **50+** new candidates joined the matrimonial program in 2024
6. Around **50** students migrated to USA for higher studies

I would also like to thank the dedicated volunteers who have been supporting various KOJAIN initiatives this year.

- **Directory** - Deepak Gada(NJ), Dimple Dedhia(CA), Manish Mota(AZ), Nainil Chheda(MA), Nitul Haria(CA)
- **Host Family Program** - Manish Mota(AZ)
- **Matrimonial Program** - Dipti Shah(NJ), Mulchand Gala(PA)
- **Mentor Mentee Program** - Amit Shah(IL), Nilam Maru(MA), Priyank Chheda(NY)
- **Loan Program** - Priti Haria(KY), Vijay Savla(CA).
- **Scholarship Program** - Love Patel(TX), Pali Parekh(TX), Shefali Chandaria(GA)

Besides the above teams, Vasant Nagda and Khushal Vira have been helping Narendra Visariya and myself with all the finance related operations for a smooth transition. If you would be interested in helping in any of the initiatives, kindly please reach out to me or anyone in the BOD.

Our youth team has done a tremendous job with securing locations for both east and west coast retreats for 2025. JAINA 2025 will be held in Chicago, during July 3rd - 6th 2025 and we will be planning a KOJAIN get together during JAINA. Stay tuned for more details.

In this newsletter you will find exciting updates to our website, youth updates, details about various regional Diwali meetups and accomplishments awards to KOJAIN members.

Wishing you all Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

Bhavini Gada

President | KOJAIN 2024-25

**** Exciting Updates to KOJAIN Website ****

We're thrilled to share that our website has undergone some fantastic updates to better serve our community. Here's what's new:

1. Regional Communication Page

<https://kojain.com/regional-communication>

Our newly added page lists various communication channels that are available within all the local regions. Stay connected with the latest updates and events from your local KOJAIN community.

2. Sammelan Page

<https://kojain.com/activity/sammelan/>

Planning for future Sammelans just got easier! Check out the newly added Sammelan page for comprehensive information on a guide to host a Sammelan. Walk down the memory lane of past Sammelans.

3. Members Directory Page

<https://kojain.com/members-directory/>

Finding and connecting with fellow members is now seamless with our enhanced Members Directory. Enjoy an improved layout and updated search feature for life members.

4. Newsletter Page

<https://kojain.com/newsletter/>

Missed a recent newsletter? No problem! Our updated Newsletter page lets you catch up on all previous editions and ensures you're always in the loop.

Visit <https://kojain.com/> today to explore these updates and make the most of our well connected and vibrant community!

**** KOJAIN YOUTH of America ****



KYA Thanksgiving Food Drive

This Thanksgiving season, KYA (Kutchi youth) organized a food drive that united communities in support of those in need. With generous contributions from donors across the Northeast, we raised over **\$400**, enabling us to purchase and donate over 100 items of food to the Acton Food Bank in Massachusetts, which helps individuals and families from across the local area. Witnessing the impact of our efforts firsthand was a powerful reminder of the difference we can make together.

The funds raised allowed us to focus on nutritious, vegetarian food items to meet a wide range of dietary needs. These included essentials like oatmeal, fruit, pasta sauce, rice, pancake mix, and more.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this food drive was the opportunity to directly hand out food to individuals and families in need. Meeting these individuals and seeing their gratitude firsthand was a deeply moving experience that highlighted the immediate and tangible impact of our actions. It was a poignant reminder of the importance of community support during the holiday season.

This initiative held special significance as it took place during Thanksgiving, a time of reflection, gratitude, and giving. By addressing food insecurity and offering meals to those in need, we not only provided practical support but also shared the warmth and hope of the season.

The success of this Thanksgiving food drive encourages us to continue building on these efforts. We aim to strengthen our partnerships with local organizations and expand our reach to assist even more families in the future.

We would like to thank one of our biggest donors, Sunny Dharod, the founder of the KOJAIN Youth initiative, and someone who continues to support us in our endeavors.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to making this initiative a success. Together, we have shown that small acts of kindness can make a profound difference in the lives of others.

This successful effort was led by **Neev Maru and Tanay Gada**, who worked tirelessly to ensure its impact and effectiveness.

The success of these initiatives was made possible by the efforts of the KYA Impact team, which also includes: Reeya Vora, Janak Shah, Rohan Gala, Khushi Haria, Rheyra Gala, Riya Gada, Neev Maru, and Tanay Gada! Together, we demonstrated that small acts of kindness, creativity, and teamwork can make a profound difference.

Thank you to everyone who participated and supported these initiatives. Your generosity and spirit of giving truly made this Thanksgiving season special!

❖ KYA Dance Fundraiser

On December 7th, KYA (Kutchi Youth) brought together people from diverse backgrounds across New York City for a Bollywood dance workshop to support a meaningful cause: Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan, an organization dedicated to empowering women in rural Kutch. The event showcased KYA's mission and the impact of its efforts while participants enthusiastically embraced the challenge of learning an engaging new choreography. During water breaks, attendees connected, networked, and built lasting relationships, all while having fun and burning some calories.

Thanks to the energy and generosity of everyone involved, we successfully raised over **\$200** to further KYA's mission. A heartfelt thank you to all who participated—your support truly makes a difference! Special thanks to **Chintan Maheshwari and Chery Gada**, two incredible dancers and members of the KYA team, for leading these incredible efforts!



❖ Upcoming KYA Retreats

KYA team is thrilled to announce that the dates for the upcoming KYA retreat have been finalized. Do look out for communications from the KYA team for registration [here](#)

- **5/29 - 6/1** East Coast Retreat in Millersville, PA.
- **6/27 - 6/29** West Coast Retreat in Placerville, CA.

** Regional News : Region 1 **

◆ So Cal Diwali Party



On October 26, 2024, the SoCal Kutchi community gathered for an unforgettable Diwali celebration, beautifully themed Chennai Express. Despite the anticipated traffic challenges from major city events, the evening radiated the warmth, energy, and vibrancy of Kutchi culture, making every moment and every mile worth it.

Honoring the Past and Embracing the Future

The celebration began with meaningful connections. We joyfully welcomed new babies, newlyweds, students, and families who joined our community this year. Respect was paid to our Tapasvis (ascetics) for their spiritual dedication, and a moment of silence was observed to honor the loved ones we lost in 2024. These moments reminded us of the bonds that unite us and the traditions that keep us grounded in our heritage.

Vibrant Festivities and Endless Memories

Every detail of the evening was infused with the spirit of Diwali. The Lungi Dance set the tone, followed by the lively Garba beats of Falguni Pathak, keeping the dance floor alive. Guests were mesmerized by captivating Bharatanatyam and Kathak performances, showcasing the elegance and diversity of Indian classical dance. A delightful duet of Ek Chatur Naar by Gunjan Dedhia and Nilesh Jain added a playful touch, while the breathtaking Ghoomar dance by Hemlata Khina, Hansa Nagda, Madhu Soni, and Geeta Khona brought timeless grace to the stage.

The evening also allowed ample time for medavo (mingling) and taking pictures, ensuring everyone could capture the spirit of the event and create lasting memories.



Behind the Magic

This extraordinary celebration came to life thanks to the dedication and teamwork of our SoCal Kutchi family:

- **Jignya and Vitesh:** Designed an exceptional menu and coordinated last-minute entertainment details, despite their busy tax season.
- **Malti and Pankaj Shah:** Secured a perfect venue over a year ago, ensuring the seamless event from start to finish.
- **Priti Dharmesh Shah:** Created stunning hand-painted centerpieces and a beautifully intricate rangoli that perfectly captured the essence of Diwali.
- **Urvi and Pujan Chheda:** Coordinated flawless entertainment, proving that passion can light up any event—no DJ needed!
- **Yash Shah:** Collaborated with students to bring fresh energy and excitement to the celebration.
- **Darshana and Rajeev Gala:** Managed our finances with precision, ensuring that every penny was thoughtfully allocated.
- **Pankti Bhavin Shah:** Led communications leading up to the event, keeping everyone informed and excited.

Maneuvering Through the Madness

Despite Los Angeles' notorious traffic, which was compounded by major events such as the Dodgers vs. Yankees World Series game, USC football, the Lakers vs. Suns game, and concerts by David Gilmour and Jeff Lynne's ELO, **150 Kutchi Madu** made their way to the celebration, proving their unwavering dedication to the community. Even with the chaos on the roads, everyone arrived to join in the festivities, embodying the spirit of perseverance and connection.

While other major events were taking place across the city, the SoCal Kutchi Diwali celebration took center stage for all who joined, reminding us of the resilience and unity that define our community.

A Night of Joy and Unity

This year's Diwali celebration was more than just an event—it was a heartfelt reflection of our shared values, love, and respect for one another. It's a beautiful continuation of the torch that was first lit about 50 years ago by a few families who came to the US and settled in SoCal. What began as a small community has now blossomed into 200+ members, and as we continue to grow, we remain committed to building on that foundation of warmth and inclusion.



Wishing everyone a Happy Diwali, filled with light, joy, and unity! ✨🍪



** Regional News: Region 2 **

❖ KutchValley's 23rd Diwali Extravaganza

On Sunday, October 27th, KutchValley (KV) lit up the India Community Centre in Milpitas with its spectacular 23rd Diwali celebration! This year's theme, **Shabdrangi दिवाली - Tyohar Ek Bhasha Anek**, brought an unparalleled blend of diversity and culture to the stage to showcase the multilingual heritage of India.

The grand festivity, a sold out event with **530+** attendees was nothing short of a cultural masterpiece, featuring over 13 mesmerizing performances on stage led by 24 creative leads with a staggering **170+** performers. The stage burst with life as participants from ages 3 to 60+ showcased their talents in dance, music, and drama, representing the vibrant tapestry of India's many states with performances in multiple languages. The MC team of Adults and Seniors brought their own comic flair to stitch the whole series of performances together. The energy and creativity by all participants were truly contagious!

To watch the performances on YouTube video, use this [LINK](#)

The day-long celebration commenced at 10 AM with a delightful breakfast of Jalebi, Fafda with Chai, setting the tone for a day of joy and social Medavo. Attendees took a break at the Intermission to savor a meticulously planned lunch that echoed the event's theme with regional dishes such as Dal Pakwan, Dhuska Vada, fusion dishes like Dabeli Taco and paired with rich desserts of Ghevar Rabdi, Raspberry Lamington, Chocolate Paan Mousse. The giant LED screen on the stage as well as a customized Banner in the lobby area provided a perfect opportunity for attendees to take pictures and selfies! The festivities concluded with an evening of Chai/Coffee with Nashta and dancing away to the beats of the DJ, leaving everyone with cherished memories.



This year's Diwali team consisted of (in alphabetical order) Beleena Veera, Bhanik Shah, Bhavini Gada, Jaikit Savla, Jayesh Gada, Madhavi Khona, Naman Gala, Nitul Haria and Romil Rambia.

Planning for this event began at the start of the year with the venue booking and the implementation kicked in early August with performance planning and practices by the participants who eagerly look forward to the bonding and fun times that brings them together every week!

Kudos to the creative leads, dedicated participants and the community volunteers who helped us on the day of the event to ensure a smooth experience for everyone and a big thanks to our event sponsors without whom the rich experience of the event would not have been possible. A glimpse of the entire event can be watched [here](#)

The KV Diwali event is undoubtedly the highlight of the year for the Bay Area Kutchis, who eagerly anticipate this vibrant celebration each year.





On October 26, Seattle KVO held their final gathering of 2024. This year was particularly special as it saw the arrival of 10 new babies, the highest number ever.

Diwali marked the last event before the dreary Washington winters set in for the next few months. As usual, the event featured delicious food and was brimming with people dressed up and ready for endless socializing. The games kept the energy high throughout the event.

Additionally, we had the joy of seeing grandparents visit their grandchildren, with three generations attending together.



**** Regional News: Region 3 ****

❖ DFW Kutchi Diwali Party

DFW (Dallas) Kutchi group celebrated their annual Kutchi Diwali Party on November 16th 2024 in Richardson.

The group celebrated Sunil Dharod's 60th birthday with a birthday cake.

The event was attended by around 80+ attendees.



**** Regional News: Region 6 ****

❖ Arvin Shah Honored with Lifetime Business Achievement Award for Sky Bird Group



Arvin Shah was honored with the Lifetime Business Achievement Award by the North American Indian Chamber of Commerce on November 9th, 2024. As chairman and founder of Sky Bird Group, Arvin's unwavering dedication to the travel industry over four decades has earned him this prestigious recognition. The award highlights his tireless work and leadership in building one of the nation's leading airline consolidators for travel agents.

Over the years, Arvin's leadership has not only transformed his company but has also shaped the market as a whole. His commitment to excellence and innovation has set new standards for the airline consolidation industry, creating a lasting impact on the agencies that rely on Sky Bird for competitive fares and unparalleled service.

Moreover, giving back to the community through philanthropic work has always been a priority in Arvin's life. In addition to various charitable donations, the Shaha established the Jaya Rehabilitation Institute in 2004 to provide prosthetic treatment to victims of the 2001 Kutch Earthquake. During this time, they also started the Jaya Charitable Foundation—A nonprofit organization in Detroit whose mission is to improve the human condition through outreach initiatives that promote empowerment and opportunity.

He is active in his local community as a member of KOJAIN, JAINA, and the Jain Society of Greater Detroit. Additionally, he was the 2019 recipient of the Jain Society Lifetime Achievement Award.

Reflecting on his career, Arvin expressed deep gratitude for the award: "I'm fortunate to have had the opportunity to help so many in the travel industry, and I look forward to continuing to contribute in new ways."



**** Regional News: Region 7 ****

❖ 2024 American College of Rheumatology Distinguished Fellow Award



Dr. Sonali Bracken, daughter of Jagdish and Kalpana Shah (Gaam: Kandagara), received the prestigious 2024 Distinguished Fellow Award from the American College of Rheumatology (ACR) on November 15, 2024 in Washington D.C. The award, which is given to only ten fellows across the country annually, recognizes outstanding achievements in research, advocacy, and education in rheumatology. Dr. Bracken is a senior fellow in the Division of Rheumatology at Duke University Medical Center.

The ACR Distinguished Fellow Award is a mark of excellence and recognizes exceptional performance during rheumatology fellowship. Dr. Bracken's selection reflects her deep commitment to research, patient care, and the broader rheumatology community.

Dr. Sonali Bracken graduated from the University of Connecticut with her M.D. and Ph.D. degrees.

Her engagement in scientific research contributed heavily towards her selection for this award. As an immunologist, her research focuses on understanding how B cells contribute to the development of human autoimmune diseases. This work, which is currently funded by the National Institutes of Health, has earned her recognition from the ACR and underscores her commitment to advancing treatments for patients with rheumatologic diseases. She specializes in the care of patients with systemic sclerosis (scleroderma), a rare autoimmune disease that leads to hardening of the skin and internal organs.

Dr. Bracken resides in North Carolina with her husband and two kids.

** Regional News: Region 8 **

❖ Kutchi's of NJ Celebrate Diwali in Style

This year, the Kutchi community of New Jersey celebrated Diwali with grandeur on **Saturday, October 19th**. The date was thoughtfully chosen to fall between Navratri and Diwali, ensuring the festive spirit of Navratri seamlessly transitioned into the joy of Diwali. The event took place at Rishta Banquet Hall in Parsippany and drew over 110 attendees for an evening filled with games, fun, laughter, camaraderie, and delicious food.



The celebration began on a spiritual note with a Laxmi Maa Aarti, beautifully performed by the youngest members of the community. The Aarti set a harmonious tone for the evening, symbolizing blessings and prosperity. Following this, a series of entertaining games were organized for the children, who enthusiastically participated in activities designed and run by dedicated volunteers. Their laughter and energy were contagious, setting the stage for the next round of fun.

Adults soon joined the festivities with a lively game that pitted ladies against gentlemen. In true celebratory fashion, the ladies emerged victorious, much to everyone's delight. The event then transitioned into a more traditional segment, with attendees of all ages taking to the floor for garba and dandiya. The vibrant rhythms and spirited dance moves brought the community together, culminating in a Bollywood dance session that kept the energy levels high.

This memorable event was a testament to the hard work and creativity of the many volunteers who devoted countless hours to planning games, coordinating activities, and ensuring everything ran smoothly. Their efforts created a joyous and inclusive atmosphere that resonated with attendees of all generations.

For those who wish to relive the evening or catch a glimpse of the fun, photos from the event can be viewed at [this link](#).

❖ Chaitya Paripati and Tapasvi Bahuman

As part of the Paryushan Kartavya, the Kutchi Group of New Jersey organized a memorable Chaitya Paripati (also known as Panch Tithi) — a spiritual journey visiting five Jain temples. The plan was to start early at 7:00 AM and conclude the visits by 1:30 PM. However, the group exceeded expectations, visiting six temples within the scheduled time.

This year, with over 40 members observing Atthai or higher Tapasya, the group decided to honor the Tapasvis with a special **Tapasvi Bahuman** ceremony.

The journey included visits to:

- **Munisuvrat Jinalay** (the main large temple in NJ)
- **Parshwath Jinalay** (the oldest Jain temple in NJ)
- **Siddhachalam** (a prominent tirth in the US)
- Three **ghar derasars** along the route



The final stop was at Siddhachalam, where a small lunch was followed by the Tapasvi Bahuman ceremony. Seventeen Tapasvis were honored with **Shreefal** and malas, acknowledging their dedication and devotion. The event saw enthusiastic participation from Siddhachalam's president, staff, and over 50 attendees.

The day's spiritual journey and the heartfelt celebration of Tapasya left everyone inspired and connected to their faith.

📷 **Relive the Moments:** [Click here to view the event photos](#)

❖ **Kutchi Community Walkathon in New Jersey: A Fun-Filled Day at Orange Reservoir**

On Saturday, November 9th, members of the Kutchi community in New Jersey came together for an invigorating 5K walkathon and jog at the scenic Orange Reservoir in West Orange. With its picturesque 1.7-mile loop around the lake, the location provided the perfect backdrop for this community gathering.

Participants of all ages joined in, including children, adults, and even the group's youngest and most energetic member—Leo, the dog! While some walked and chatted, others jogged or ran the 5K (Completed the 1.7 mile loop 2 times) at their own pace, making it an enjoyable event for everyone. The pleasant weather added to the cheerful atmosphere, making the experience even more memorable.

After the walkathon, a few participants extended the fun by gathering for lunch at a local Indian restaurant. It was a day of fitness, camaraderie, and great conversations.

Inspired by the success of this event, the group has decided to organize similar walkathons in the spring and fall of 2025. These future events promise to continue building bonds and promoting a healthy, active lifestyle within the community.



** Regional News: Region 10 **

◆ NEW England Kutchi Diwali Party

New England Kutchis celebrated Diwali on Nov 9th 2024 in Bedford, MA.

Diwali is our biggest event of the year and we had more than 100 Kutchhis attending the event



This year's celebration theme was "**Band Baaja Baraat**" and the cultural team choreographed a love story that led to a grand wedding celebration.

There were about 30 participants that enacted and danced in various roles along the story line. It was a very well coordinated script led by Pooja Bauaa.







The party was enjoyed with delicious Indian food with Jain and Vegan options for all and truly enjoyed by everyone dancing to Raas-Garba, Bollywood, Bhangra and Sannedo. It was amazing to see kids enjoying Fugadi this time.



❖ Connecticut Walkathon

Kutchis in Connecticut continued their annual tradition for the Walkathon at Sherwood Island Park in Westport, CT on Sunday October 26th 2024. Everyone enjoyed the 2.5 mile beautiful trail by the ocean and then enjoyed picnicking with snacks and our kutchi medavo.



**** Regional News : Region 11 ****

❖ KOJAIN Canada (KOJIC) - Community Picnic July 2024

On 21st July 2024, the Kutchi community in Canada came together at Centennial Park, Etobicoke (Toronto), for a vibrant and memorable picnic attended by nearly 200 members.

The day was filled with fun and laughter, with a variety of interactive games, icebreakers, and engaging activities for all ages. Guests enjoyed a delightful spread of yummy food, reflecting the rich culinary traditions of the community.



The success of this event was a result of the tireless efforts of dedicated volunteers: Dimple, Shital, Akshay, Divya, Avni, Jennisha, Kinjal, Mahesh, Manisha, Neha, Nirav, Rashi, Rupa, Manish, and Rajveer. Their teamwork and meticulous planning made every aspect of the picnic seamless and enjoyable.

Thanks also to Sagar, Lataben, Bhupesh, Bhavesh, Neha, and Dhairya for supporting the core team with managing food, paperless registration, and many miscellaneous tasks.

A heartfelt thanks to everyone who participated and contributed to turning a hot summer day into a cherished celebration! More photos and videos can be viewed at:

https://photos.google.com/share/AF1QipPM89PoT9hLdR8ZMy_VbZrBBwX1LRVzGOXqWdLcvqoFh-UQa3QWqPPQ5VGo-669RQ?key=dIJLQnVoRng5aExUVm8zZjNQXy1ROGYwVVdOeEJB

