Dear YJA Members,

How can we even begin to describe the last 12 months? Our long list of goals that we set out to achieve was met with an equally long list of roadblocks and challenges to overcome. The pandemic forced us to cancel three retreats this year, including what would have been our first-ever West ski retreat and the largest South Retreat in YJA history, not to mention the 2020 YJA Convention in Dallas.

However, each of these difficulties was met with an equal, if not stronger, force of resilience from our incredible community. We managed to host the largest ever retreat in YJA history in the Poconos and pivoted to an entirely virtual event in July: YJA Day 2020. In fact, our time at home forced us to take a closer look inward into the organization and focus on strengthening our core pillars of education, community, and service & events.

For education, we worked to find ways to make learning and practicing Jainism easier for the average YJA member. Our Derasar Handout has made practicing Chaityavandan easier, YJA Quantum has brought searching thousands of books in seconds right to your fingertips, and the Paryushan lecture series allowed us to deliver English youth lectures to the computers of members all across the country.

Strengthening our community without the ability to meet in-person countered our traditional model of bonding through retreats, national dinners, and our flagship biennial Convention. However, we were able to find innovative ways to engage the community that resulted in even more turnout than our in-person events could have achieved. Through multiple national and regional game nights, a 1,000+ person attendance at YJA Day 2020, and regular educational webinars and online sessions, attendees were able to interact with other members and speakers from all across North America.

Finally, this year we took the time to reflect on the resources available at our disposal and how we as an organization could support both our own community and other communities facing hardships. Within the Jain community, we were able to help support Sangh Pathshalsas as they transitioned to online learning, and we were also able to raise $10,001 to help support animal shelters in Gujarat as well as Jains in India who lost their jobs. Additionally, we helped raise awareness and funds for International Women’s Day, donating to CARE India, while our Local Representatives were able to do the same for UNICEF and The Loveland Foundation.

Adversity often has the ability to bring out the worst in us - anxiety, hopelessness, and fear. At the same time, it presents a unique opportunity to adapt and evolve as better human beings. Thank you to each and every one of you - our community is making active efforts to overcome these obstacles, stay open-minded to new experiences, and enact changes for the benefit of others. This is our legacy as YJA for the 2019-2020 year.

We’d be remiss if we didn’t take this opportunity to acknowledge the incredible work our fellow board members put in over the past year. From dedicating hours to planning and strategy to helping us navigate some of the most difficult decisions our organization has ever had to make, this talented team made serving the young Jain community one of the most fulfilling and memorable experiences we’ve ever had.

Thank you so much for coming along with us for this incredible journey these past 12 months, and we can’t wait to see what’s in store for all of us this upcoming year!

Parshva Vakharia & Vatsal Gandhi

To provide youth with a platform that promotes spiritual and cultural awareness of Jainism, fosters an interconnected community, and cultivates a Jain way of life in North America
This year, YJA collected and created a variety of resources for youth to use during Paryushan and Das Lakshan. Promoting reflection, introspection, and lifestyle changes, this year's offerings featured articles, a podcast, youth lectures, worksheets, vow spotlights, and more!

- 1st Paryushan youth lecture series to be hosted by YJA
- Digambar Voices campaign launched to bring light to how different people celebrate Das Lakshan

**YJA Pathshala**

*YJA Pathshala* is an online self-paced course for learning more about Jainism. Intended for youth ages 14-29 who cannot regularly access a traditional Pathshala, these materials will provide a basic foundational understanding of Jain principles and practices.

- **150+** Clicks Overall On Resources For The Hemchandra Acharya Pathshala Module
- **5+** Medians Utilized: Quizlet, Medium, Slide Decks, Handouts, Videos, Discussion Forums, Kahoot!

**Jainism 101**

*Jainism 101* is a series of videos that helps explain the fundamental concepts of Jainism in a simple way. These minute-long videos feature bite-sized pieces of content with relevant examples designed to help even non-Jains increase their understanding of this well-established faith.

- **4** Episodes Released
- **Karma Theory, The Five Vrats, Maharaj Sahebs, And Paryushan & Das Lakshan**

**YJA Jain Panchang**

Launched in January 2020, the *YJA Jain Panchang* allows youth and working professionals to stay on top of important Jain holidays and festivals, tithis, and kalyanaks over the course of the year through virtual Google Calendars that can be seamlessly integrated into their own. It has been used by youth to make active, spiritually-oriented lifestyle changes based on the occurrence of auspicious Jain dates.

- **2,000+** Views On The YJA Samvatsari Pratikraman Recording With English Explanations
- **670+** Interactions With The Michhami Dukkadam Posts Across All Social Media Platforms
- **500+** Clicks On The 14 Niyams Handout, Intended To Inspire Vow-Taking Among Those Aged 5+
- **100+** Attendees At Tejalben Shah’s Youth Lectures
- **18** Nights Of Nightly Prayers With 30+ Unique Attendees

**Derasar Handouts**

This project aims to create comprehensive, supplemental guides to rituals for Jain youth to use at their temples and Jain centers. These feature English translations of sutas, pictures accompanied by English directions, and access to sutra recordings.

- **20** People at the first-ever ritual workshop
- **Chaitra-yudhan Handout Was Approved By Hem Yasha Shriji Maharaj Saheb**

**Trivia Challenge**

*YJA's Trivia Challenges* are held each season and are designed to encourage learning about Jainism through a fun, competitive, and virtual event. Typically held on Facebook, these appeal primarily to those with some background in Jainism but are open to all levels of Jain knowledge.

- **80+** Total Participants
- **60+** Unique Questions

**Younger Minds**

*Younger Minds* is an all-new, quarterly publication meant for budding young Jains across the country. It strives to provide children with the opportunity to develop a connection with Jainism and a love for learning at a younger age, whether reading alone or with a parent.

- **1st resource created explicitly for the “YJA-incoming” age group**
- **Features philosophy lessons, Jain stories, activities & puzzles, life lessons, and pathshala spotlights**

**Jain Math Tournament**

The *Jain Mathematics Tournament* is a week-long math tournament where contestants attempt to solve challenging math problems related to Jain philosophy, cosmology, and number theory.

- **2 Seasons**
- **400+ Problem Solvers**

**Maharaj Saheb Messages**

This Project Team aims to build a bridge between Sadhus and Sadhvis and Jain youth via written correspondence. MSM hopes to create an accessible platform that will allow more opportunities for youth to ask questions and receive answers from various Maharaj Sahebs while reigniting their faith.

- **Added Acharya Ratnasundar Suriji to the network**
- **Featured 18 vow-takers during Paryushan/Das Lakshan**

**Jain Quantum**

*Jain Quantum* is a Jain literature search engine that aims to create the most accessible search experience for everyone, including Pathshala students, teachers, university professors, and non-Jains, as well. Jain Quantum was created through OCR (optical character recognition) and full-text search technology to enable a parse of the book collection on JaineLibrary.

- **20,000+** Views In The First Four Days
- **25,000+** Texts Available
YJA’s Celebration of Compassion was a month-long and Facebook Photo Campaign that explored how YJA’s community could demonstrate compassion through thoughts, words, and actions. Throughout December, YJA spotlighted compassionate individuals, suggested ways to celebrate with vegan, cruelty-free, and compassionate recipes and gifts, and highlighted organizations that demonstrated compassion in their purpose and work. Campaign Included: Interregional Clothing Drive, Blankets & Bhavanas, Thoughtful Thursdays, Compassionate Gift Giving Guide, YJA Pathshala Module on Religious Tolerance, Philanthropic Fridays, Saturday Spotlights, and Facebook Photo Campaign.

Clicks On Gift Giving Guide: 300+
Volunteer Hours Logged: 500+
Individuals Highlighted: 30+
Blankets Made: 50+

Newsletters

This platform features news and events in the Jain community. YJA’s newsletters were revamped this year with 14+ releases and a new design. YJA aspires for this platform to be the formal method of communication between the leadership and the community. If you haven’t already, make sure to subscribe!

Subscribers: 3,000+

Young Minds

Young Minds is YJA’s flagship publication that allows Jain youth to share and learn from each other’s perspectives, stories, ideas, and opinions, highlight key events and projects, and share Jain educational content. This year, YJA published 2 full issues while collaborating with 100+ people around the world to make them possible. The June 2020 issue was the second-longest ever at 46 pages!

Impressions: 25,000+
Words: 24,541

Medium Blog

This platform allows Jain youth to share stand-alone articles. The site also hosts all of the digital archives of Young Minds articles where they are easily searchable and shareable. YJA hopes that this will encourage more people to read the work of our talented writers.

Articles: 16
Views: 3,700+
Reads: 1,900+

YJA Reflect

YJA Reflect aims to be a space where members can come together to interact with and learn from others, discuss, respond, comment, and dive into topics of Jainism like never before. This Project Team launched the YJA Reflect Facebook group, transitioning away from the YJA Forums interface and then have since begun hosting events, such as book clubs and group film discussions.

Panelists: 11
Attendees: 100+

College Chapters

This project supports existing college chapters and helps Jain college youth create new ones as well. In addition, this Project Team provides resources, advice, and connections to incoming college freshmen. This year, the team began the process of starting new college chapters at UMD, in Philadelphia, and in the Boston area. They also started the College Communications initiative and the College Applications Workshop to further involve high school seniors with YJA and connect them with Jains in college.

Webinars

As high school seniors were making decisions on colleges and current college students have transitioned to distant learning, YJA took the opportunity this past April to discuss navigating through college with the youth in the community!

Panelists: 11
Attendees: 100+

YJA Restaurants

Whether you are currently a Jain-vegetarian/vegan or aspiring to become one, looking to explore Jain local food options while traveling, or are looking to try something new, YJA Restaurants can help you find a restaurant through its ever-expanding database. This year, YJA published the first-ever national database of Jain-friendly restaurants including both national and local restaurants and franchises.

Orders Placed: 150+
Items Ordered: 275+

YJA Shop

YJA Shop gave members the opportunity to purchase YJA and Jainism-themed merchandise this year. A pop-up model was used, in which the shop was open for a 2-week period and orders were fulfilled once the shop closed.

Orders Placed: 150+
Items Ordered: 275+

Networking Database

This platform aims to increase professional networking within the YJA community and alumni network. This tool helps members of all ages, ranging from high school seniors seeking college application advice to experienced professionals looking for networking opportunities for years to come. The team completely redesigned and revamped the existing networking database (both UK & maintenance) and then increased the visibility across YJA’s audience. The database grew from 50 to over 250 contacts!

Listeners: 250+
Minutes Of Audio: 200+
Overall Streams: 1,500+

Humans of YJA

Humans of YJA is a photoblog composed of stories from different people all around the world. The initiative aims to positively use social media to share experiences of the Jain youth and help connect more members.

Posts: 4
Average Words/Post: 649

Placed: 1100+
Average Impressions/Post: 1,100+

Blankets and Bhavanas: Attendees of all ages at various sanghs came together to learn more about the issue of homelessness, understand the auxiliary Bhavana (contemplation) of compassion, and apply their newfound knowledge through a blanket-making service activity.
YJA hosted a fundraiser for CARE India, an NGO that serves underprivileged women & girls in rural areas, as well as works for women empowerment, girls’ education, and maternal & child healthcare through various projects.

In January of 2020, Australia suffered from devastating wildfires that harmed and endangered the lives and habitats of many living beings. In order to support relief efforts, YJA hosted a fundraiser for the World Wildlife Fund through its social media platforms. YJA committed to donating $2 to the World Wildlife Fund for each “green act” that a member of the community completed and shared on social media. Green acts included using a reusable water bottle, bringing bags from home for groceries, and recycling. On behalf of the entire YJA community, the 2019-2020 Executive Board would like to sincerely thank each and every member who supported YJA and its fundraisers, events, and other initiatives this year. The organization would not have been able to make an impact of this caliber without their support.

Sadharmik Bhakti and Jiv Daya Fundraiser

This year, in conjunction with Parushan and Das Lakshan, YJA hosted a fundraiser for Shree Navkar Saravar Kendra located in Ahmedabad, India. The objective of this was to practice the Jain values of Sadharmik Bhakti (service to fellow Jains) and Jiv Daya (compassion for other living beings) during this auspicious time by supporting a cause. Shree Navkar Saravar Kendra supports animal welfare and fellow Jains in Ahmedabad that have recently experienced financial difficulties due to COVID-19. Because of the pandemic, many families have struggled due to loss of jobs and business, and are struggling to make ends meet. This organization provides aid to families who need assistance with paying rent, food, school tuition, and more.

$10,001 In Total Contributions

Community

Intl. Women’s Day

YJA hosted a fundraiser for CARE India, an NGO that serves underprivileged women & girls in rural areas, as well as works for women empowerment, girls’ education, and maternal & child healthcare through various projects.

Giving Tuesday

Giving Tuesday is an event to support nonprofit organizations, during which Facebook matches donations made to these entities. Each year, YJA uses this fundraiser to amplify donations that are made to the organization and raise money to support YJA initiatives.

$2,207 Raised Via Facebook

$117 Donated To CARE India

Australia Fundraiser

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$10,001 in Total Contributions

Big Bucks For Change

Over the summer, a team of South and Mid-West Local Representatives coordinated with 45 other Local Representatives in six regions to fundraise for COVID-19 relief and a therapy fund for Black women and girls. Fundraising methods consisted of individual outreach on Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp, and personalized fundraising pages for each Local Representative through 99Pledges.

$2,800 Donated To UNICEF’s COVID-19 Relief Efforts

$2,800 Donated To The Loveland Foundation
LARGEST. RETREAT. EVER.
Local Events

Until March of 2020, YJA held many in-person events such as bowling and ice skating nights, board game nights, socials, and youth Sangh lock-ins. Afterwards, YJA local events took place virtually in the form of game nights, sessions, and service events like cardmaking for seniors.

22 Events
382+ Combined Total Attendees

National Dinners

National Dinners are one of YJA’s traditional social events held every October to November to kick off the new board year. They give Jain youth in cities all over North America a chance to meet others while trying out Jain and vegan-friendly meals! Attendees engaged in conversations about Jainism and created friendships that grew throughout the year.

32 National Dinners
440+ Total Attendees

National Game Nights

National Game Nights quickly became one of YJA’s most popular virtual events this year. These events officially lasted 2-3 hours, but many members stayed on for 5-6+ hours spending time with new and old friends from all over North America!

1020 Local Representatives Attended

Regional Cup

For the first time ever, YJA hosted the Regional Cup that allowed youth from all 6 regions to participate in 5 different activities. Of the 5 events, 3 were actively competitive (regions were able to face head-to-head on the virtual event) and 2 were passively competitive (teams completed events at a designated time for their region and then were compared to other regions).

186 Participants

Clothing Drive

The YJA National Clothing Drive is an annual tradition where YJA collaborates with Jain Centers to collectively donate new and gently-used clothing to shelters and other organizations. During this time, YJA relies on Local Representatives and other YJA Committee Members to coordinate these efforts. This year, YJA had over 12,000 articles of clothing donated across all 6 regions - the most ever collected!

IRLR Calls

Interregional LR (IRLR) Calls was a new initiative designed to bring LRs from all 6 regions together to increase collaboration and talk about various subjects. This was the first time ever Local Representatives were given an opportunity to converse in such a way. Attendees were able to share their perspectives and learn from others on various topics.

100+ Local Representatives Attended

Online Pathshala

As the COVID-19 pandemic began to emerge, Pathshalas across North America were working to figure out how they were going to host classes without in-person gatherings permitted. In March, the Executive Board worked to help Pathshala classes migrate onto Google Meet, providing them with tutorials and instructions on how to use the platform.

Through these efforts, YJA was able to help 55+ classes at 8 Sanghs as they moved their Pathshala classes online. These included Sanghs in Chicago, Houston, New Jersey, Virginia, New York, Michigan, and Ohio.

Jains In Action

Jains in Action (JIA) is a YJA Project Team focused on creating opportunities for Jain youth to practice social entrepreneurship and problem-solving. The JIA team organized their first-ever Virtual Hackathon this year! 8 teams with 39 total participants worked together to identify a world issue or problem and develop an actionable solution that was connected to Jain values. This year, one of the projects that started out at JIA 2018 - the Jain Mentorship Program - officially launched with over 50 mentor-mentee pairs!

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Regional Retreats

YJA’s annual retreats are both a spiritual and a social experience - they give Jain youth the opportunity to learn from each others’ experiences and perspectives on Jainism, all while forming new friendships! While YJA had 6 in-person retreats planned for 2020, COVID-19 resulted in 3 of the 6 transitioning to a virtual setting.

• All in-person retreats had a Jainism 101 Session: a short 15-20 min presentation where attendees were taught the basics of Jainism, allowing everyone to have a basic introduction and Jainism basis for the rest of the sessions that weekend. Topics included: the soul, karma theory, the 4 kashayas, the 3 As, moksh, and diksha.

• All in-person retreats had 100% Jain meals, with vegan options available at every meal.

• All virtual retreats were 100% free and hosted via Zoom.

Mid-West
The Mid-West Retreat was held in Saugatuck, Michigan with 42 attendees!

Session Highlights
• Networking 101: Attendees learned the basics of reaching out to others, preparing for coffee chats, and utilizing YJA’s revamped Networking Database.
• One Bite at a Time - a Discussion on Progressive Approaches to Jain and Vegan Eating: Attendees were able to hear how young Jains are able to use their diet to be compassionate to living beings and abide by Jain principles.
• Stress is a Snowball: A discussion on mental health, well-being, and managing stress.

West
This virtual retreat had 25 attendees and lasted three hours!

Attendees participated in ice breakers, a debate, a YJA trivia competition, and games such as Skribbl and Codenames.

South
YJA’s South Region hosted two virtual retreats!

Each retreat had a different session where attendees could engage in conversation and meet new young Jains.

Northeast
This retreat was held in Windham, NY with 15 people!

Session Highlights
• Annual Bake-Off: Attendees were given three base recipes for cookies and three secret ingredients. They were asked to make two out of the three recipes, and four different groups competed to see who made the best batch of cookies.
• A Single Story: A TED talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie ignited the conversation among attendees about Anekantavada and how it applies to their daily lives.

Mid-Atlantic
YJA hosted its largest retreat ever with 92 attendees at the Poconos this year!

Session Highlights
• Jain Values: Attendees participated in an introspection exercise and reflected on personal and Jain values.
• Taco ‘Bout Taboos: Attendees were split into 2 groups where they discussed common taboos and best possible ways to approach them.
• Bhangra Workshop led by the P&P Dance Crew!

Service & Events

755 Jain Meals Served
280+ Registered Before COVID-19
92 Attendees At Poconos
39 First-Time Attendees
32 Sessions
7 Total Retreats
4 Virtual Retreats

Jain Meals Served
Registered Before COVID-19
Attendees At Poconos
First-Time Attendees
Sessions
Total Retreats
Virtual Retreats

Mid-West

West

South

Northeast

Southeast

Mid-Atlantic
In the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic and an international conversation around racial justice, YJA, like each of you, has been striving to adapt to a changing reality. To provide young Jains with a medium for exploration, learning, and discussion, this year’s Convention Committee hosted YJA Day 2020 on Saturday, July 11th. In keeping with the original theme of #ProgressingWithPurpose for the 2020 YJA Convention, YJA Day had a variety of online programming. With an incredible keynote, engaging social activities, and an inspiring roster of guest speakers composed of leaders, activists, and experts, the team made history by hosting YJA’s biggest event ever!

Daytime Programming
Throughout the month of May, the team hosted distinguished guest speakers to talk about topics like their spiritual journeys, mental health and journaling, innovation and entrepreneurship, and South Asian representation in the media. Subsequently, at YJA Day, the attention was on discussing various social issues, including combating racism, championing LGBTQ+ equality, and environmental justice.

Social Programming
The team realized many of our members felt inactive at home, so YJA found ways to get moving together as a community. Through Zoom-ba, Bollywood dance and Bhangra, bodyweight training, and power pilates, members were able to get up dancing and exercising every weekend of May! Fast forward to YJA Day in July, the Social Programming Committee had many take on the challenge of the YJA Virtual Escape Room, participate in the YJAWorld Community Showcase and mixtape launch, and play games and meet new people during the game night and all-nighter.

JNF Programming
Catering to those ages 21 and up who are busy in their professional and academic lives can be tough, but the JNF Programming Committee was able to engage this demographic at a whole new level. Through trivia nights, a poetry slam, networking, and more, JNF aged-members were able to bond and interact in a smaller group setting over Zoom throughout May. Leading up to YJA Day, the JNF House Cup sorted members into Houses, where they competed in a series of challenges for the opportunity to donate to a charity of their choice.

Keynote Conversation
YJA Day’s keynote conversation, moderated by Mihir Shah, was with award-winning actor, author, and activist Maulik Pancholy! Other speakers included: Aanya Gandhi, Ambika Bumb, Anjli Shah, Ami Talsania, Brittany Oliver, Hari Venkatachalam, Parag Mehta, Simran Jeet Singh, Sonali Vakharia, Tejal Shah, Vaibhav Jain, and Vivek Maru

JNF House Cup Fundraiser
While the JNF House Cup was competitive and pitted Houses against each other in the battle for victory through crosswords, memes, podcasts, and more, it also brought awareness to a number of causes that JNF members were passionate about. In raising $1,100, YJA was able to make a lasting impact on a number of charities. Coming in first place, Team Gryffindor donated $400 to Luvin Arms and Sakhi. The runner-up, Team Slytherin, donated $280 to SEWA Rural. Dumbledore’s Army donated $230 to the CDC Foundation, Team Hufflepuff donated $150 to Sanskar Tirth, and Team Ravenclaw donated $50 to the Coalition for Rainforest Nations. This event truly embodied the event theme of #ProgressingWithPurpose.
Executive Board Highlights

Finances
Through savvy financial management and cost-saving initiatives, the Executive Board was largely able to maintain or reduce the cost of retreats year-over-year. This allowed the board to reallocate donations and event fees towards various projects and initiatives, financial assistance and transportation subsidies for retreat attendees, and general operating expenses, all with little-to-no increases in event registration fees.

AWS Migration
YJA’s technology stack was recently moved over to AWS Lambda, Github Pages, and Cloudflare from a single Digital Ocean server. This change brought flexibility in how YJA can develop new applications and allowed YJA to easily set up the Convention and YJA Day websites.

500,000+ Requests Served Monthly Through AWS Lambda

Operating Manual
Internal documentation is extremely important to ensure efficiency, consistency, and proper transfer of knowledge across board terms. A focus this year was to revisit the YJA Operating Manual and update information that may have changed over the past couple of years. Additionally, the Executive Board made efforts to fully integrate the YJA Brand Style guide into all internal documentation as well. Other steps taken to improve consistency and efficiency included the introduction of 1-page guides for every major YJA project, a retreat-planning Starter Pack to help with the retreat planning process each year, and improvements to templates for databases and trackers.

Brand Revamp
This year, the Executive Board determined that YJA’s brand could be improved in order to strengthen external presence through the following goals: to strengthen the quality and professionalism of the YJA brand; to establish consistency across platforms of the organization; to ensure that YJA content is cohesive, recognizable, and unified.

The board set a new mission statement and objectives for the organization, as well as revamped its visual identity.

Quickbooks
A key area of focus for the Finance Team this year was reorganizing YJA’s Quickbooks. The team reconciled past bank and credit card accounts, reorganized the Chart of Accounts, and reviewed past transactions to ensure completeness and accuracy. These efforts provided YJA with the opportunity to clean our books and ensure our finances were in order at the start of the term. The team also established a Finance Audit Chair to ensure continuous improvement and consistent maintenance of finances throughout the year.

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Donors
The Executive Board would like to thank our generous donors this year. In addition to raising funds for operations, YJA had the privilege of raising money for several causes such as accessibility to therapy, animal welfare, women empowerment, and COVID-19 relief! We also would like to thank the many members who donated a portion of their retreat and Convention fees back to the organization! Their continuous support is greatly appreciated as the organization’s events and initiatives would not be possible without their help.

Thank You
Young Jains of America is an entity of the Federation of Jain Associations in North America, a non-profit tax-exempt organization (IRS Code Section 501 (c)(3)).

2019-2020 Executive Board

Co-Chair
Parshva Vakharia
Co-Chair
Vatsal Gandhi
Director of Education
Harshita Jain
Director of Events
Charmi Shah
Director of Finance
Sanjana Jain
Director of Fundraising
Dhara Bhalani
Director of Project Development
Pranay Patni
Director of Publications
Satej Shah
Director of Public Relations
Ruchi Vora
Director of Technology
Anish Visaria
Mid-Atlantic Regional Coordinator
Aayush Shah
Mid-West Regional Coordinator
Miten Shah
Northeast Regional Coordinator
Pratik Shah
South Regional Coordinator
Rupal Sanghavi
Southeast Regional Coordinator
Mahin Bhavsar
West Regional Coordinator
Bansari Shah