

Rajiv Jain
9205 Lake Braddock Dr.
Burke, VA 22015
Rajiv728@hotmail.com

b) What KOJAIN should do to get youths involved in its activities and make them the future leaders of KOJAIN?

As second generation Kachchhi Oswal Jains attempt to grow up in this country, vastly conflicting cultures, lifestyles, and values confront them. They face an onslaught of contradictory belief systems in their day-to-day life that stems from both their home-life and the world outside. As young Jains grow up, they are exposed to more American culture than their parents before them and even though American lifestyle often appears to dominate, it is still important for them to remember their heritage through contact with each other. If today's youth does not dedicate itself to preserving their parents' legacy and ancient tradition, the Kachchhi culture will be swallowed up completely here in America. KOJAIN, however, was created to ensure that the Kachchhi Oswal community lives on in the hearts of its youth, which one day will in turn pass on their inheritance to their own children.

In order for KOJAIN to maintain its appeal and continue to be able to identify with the ever-changing Kachchhi community, it needs to begin to address itself to the youth population. Urging young people to become involved with organizations such as KOJAIN and taking active roles in such institutions will play a vital role in ensuring a continuous and thriving Kachchhi society far into the next generation.

The first issue that should be addressed by KOJAIN is teaching the Kachchhi language to all the youth. If nothing else, parents should be encouraged to teach their children Kachchhi because that is crucial for keeping the culture alive in America. If the youth can not even speak the language how can they be expected to take an active role in the Kachchhi community. Parents should start teaching

their children Kachchhi and introduce them to their native culture at a young age. That is the only way the Kachchhi culture can survive its competition in America.

If KOJAIN wishes to get its youth involved, it needs to recognize that they are the products of both the American and Kachchhi culture. While KOJAIN should maintain the Indian culture in its activities, it should also recognize the new culture of those born in the United States and gear some activities towards the youth. For example, many youth have not even visited their native Kutch, which means they are missing out on a vast portion of their heritage. KOJAIN could start a program where youth who wish to volunteer could spend their summers in Kutch helping others. The youth would gain the experience of staying in Kutch while helping out earthquake victims or assisting the Bidada hospital. In this way, KOJAIN could continue to promote Kachchhi culture by making young people familiar with their homeland, and at the same time reinforce the value of the Kachchhi belief system that endorses the aiding those in need.

KOJAIN should also start one or two annual youth gatherings and create a youth directory so children can meet each other. Unlike their parents, many youth do not know each other from previous experiences. Creating strong bonds between today's Kachchhi youth will show the importance of having the next generation keep KOJAIN alive. Once the youth become involved organizing and attending these types of conventions, they will also become active in KOJAIN leadership as well. A youth directory or E-mail list would help keep us scattered Kachchhis closer together and more likely to support organizations such as KOJAIN.

The survival of KOJAIN will eventually depend on today's youth. While KOJAIN has taken some steps toward promoting itself to today's generation, much more effort can be given to develop future KOJAIN leaders. The interest shown in today's youth will manifest itself into a vibrant Kachchhi culture still alive in the future.