

Issue  
#004



# GUJARATI SCHOOL NEWSLETTER



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# Introduction

Jay Shree Swaminarayan!

Welcome to the 4th edition of our Gujarati School Newsletter!

Why is this edition more exciting, informative and fun?

1. We have had a few new contributors to this edition. They have given us fabulous ideas and done some excellent research!
2. We have some great photos for you!
3. We have a very interesting staff interview!
4. We have learnt many new things during the months of December, January & February!

If you do like this edition please make more people aware and send them a PDF copy, the web link or a printed copy for them to read 😊

If you have any questions or would like to give us suggestions of features for our next edition then please send us an email at [school@sksst.org](mailto:school@sksst.org).

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this edition from those who have written articles to those who put this whole newsletter together!

Smita Varsani

# Kenton Mandir's 17th Patotsav

This year, we as a Gujarati School took part in the mandir's annual Patotsav. We had two groups of girls who ranged from the age of 7 to 12 years old and a group of four boys.

Shivani Patel, Darsita Jadva and Bansri Shah choreographed the dances for the girls and the girls' dancing was perfected in only 6 weeks. The girls were wonderful on the night and we are so proud of them!

Smita Varsani taught the four boys a prayer and in the same amount of time. The boys impressed us all on the night by singing the prayer off by heart and to a backing track. We were so proud to see such confident students on stage!



# Christmas Party & Open Day

This year we had our Gujarati School Christmas Party and Open Day on Saturday 21st December 2013.

This day was organised to give parents a chance to speak to their child's teacher as well as to mark the last day of the autumn term.

The students had different activities to do and later they played a game of 'pass the balloon' & musical chairs. We even got parents involved to play these games too.

We had a special guest too! Dineshbhai transformed into Santa Clause for the day!

The boys and girls who were taking part in the patotsav the following week also gave our parents, students and staff a special performance of their dance and prayer and this day really did boost their confidence!

If you were unable to attend this year's Christmas Party & Open Day, you really did miss out on a fabulous day and we hope to see you next year!



# Christmas Party & Open Day



# Christmas Competition Winners

This year's Christmas Competition involved students designing a Christmas Tree. We had some fabulous entries and it was extremely difficult to pick the winners.

## Christmas Winners

Shivam Shah (AM)  
Ashiv (AM)  
Yuvna (PM)  
Vanshika Vekaria (PM)  
Niva Patel (PM)  
Jayan (AM)  
Kushi (AM)  
Khushi Bhudia (AM)



## Runners Up

Khushi Varsani (AM)	Kishan Shah (AM)	Ria Varsani (AM)
Khushal (AM)	Sohan Bhojan (AM)	Janvi Patel (AM)
Bhavi (PM)	Dayan Gorasia (AM)	Ishika (PM)
Tiana Patel (PM)	Priyal Kanji (PM)	Rishi (PM)
Dhruvi (PM)	Janhvi (AM)	Nikita Kerai (PM)
Myia Bhudia (AM)	Keenal Shah (PM)	Alok Bhojani (PM)
Bhavani (AM)	Shivani Patel (AM)	Shayan Sanghani (AM)
Riya (AM)	Paavan (AM)	Ashil (PM)
Nirav Manji (PM)	Keshav (PM)	Khushi (PM)
Shreya (AM)	Rohin (AM)	

# Ekadashi

Ekadashi is the day when you have to fast. It is the eleventh lunar day of the Shukla or Krishna Paksha of every lunar month in the Hindu calendar. In Hinduism and Jainism it is considered a spiritual and beneficial day. Scriptures recommend observing a fast from sunrise on the day of Ekadashi to sunrise on the following day. Hindu scriptures teach that it is especially important to avoid all beans and all grains on this day because these 2 foods are contaminated by sin, one should eat only fruits and vegetables and milk products on this day. The Ekadashi day is recognized as the best of all days to fast because it is on this day of the moon phase in which the rays of the moon actually nourish the subtle nerves and feelings of the heart.

Two Ekadashis occur in one month according to positions of the moon. The progression of the moon from full moon to new moon is divided into fifteen equal arcs. Each arc measures one lunar day, called "tithi": The time it takes the moon to traverse that distance is the length of that lunar day. Ekadashi refers to the 11 tithi, or lunar day. The eleventh tithi therefore corresponds to a precise phase of the waxing and waning moon: In the bright half of the lunar month, the moon will appear roughly 3/4 full on Ekadashi, and in the dark half of the lunar month, the moon will be about 3/4 dark on Ekadashi.

Ekadashi (literally, "the eleventh day") refers to two days a month: the eleventh day after the new moon and the eleventh day after the full moon. Scriptures say that Ekadashi is a most favorable time for increasing spiritual practices and minimizing bodily needs. Krishna devotees fast on these days in order to spend more time hearing and chanting about Krishna.

Traditionally, all Vaishnavas abstain from grains and beans on Ekadashi, taking only water, milk, or fruits. Many fast completely from all food and water. With the time saved by avoiding any elaborate cooking arrangements, some chant extra jap and/or spend more time reading Srimad-Bhagavat or other scriptures. Some gather together and chant Krishna-Kirtan all night or engage in extra Deity service.



Vivek Davda  
(Standard 3)

# Makar Sankranti

Makar Sankranti is one of the most important festivals of the Hindu calendar and celebrates the sun's journey into the northern hemisphere, a period which is considered to be highly auspicious.



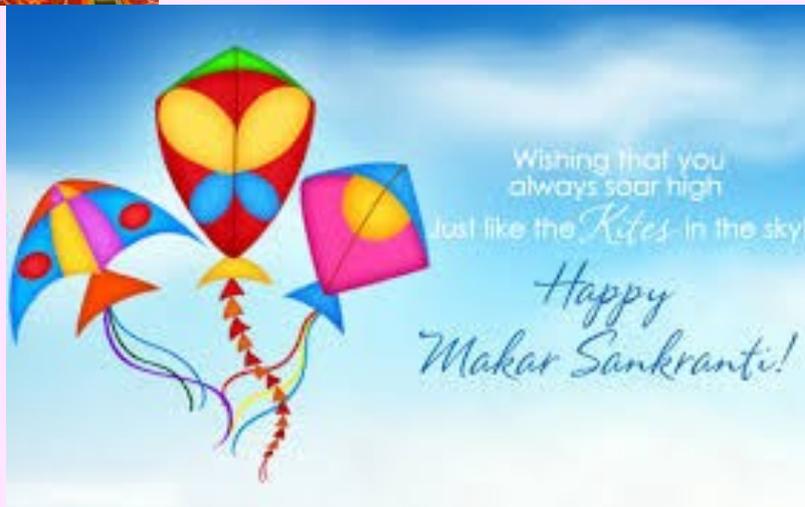
Both young and old celebrate this festival in Gujarat and Maharashtra by flying kites.

In Punjab Makar Sankranti is called Lohri. There, in Punjab, December and January are the coldest days of the year so they light fires, sit around them and throw sweets, sugarcane and rice into the bonfire. Also, families and relatives gather together on this day.

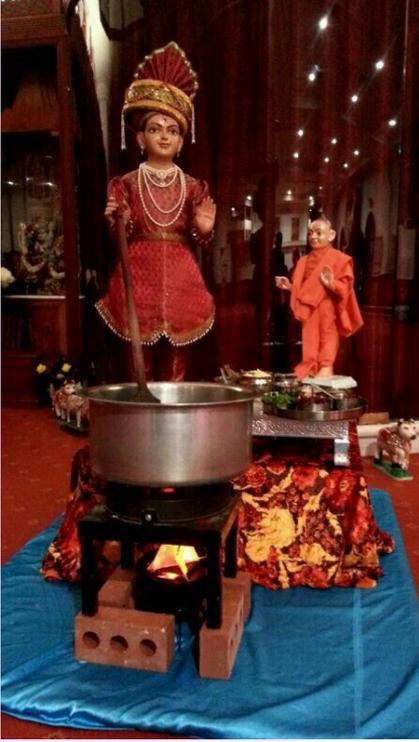
In Uttar Pradesh Makar Sankranti is known as Kicheri and on this day they think that having a bath is important. Some people are seen bathing at Sangam at Prayagraj which is where the river, Ganga, Jamuna and Saraswathi join together.



In Southern India it is celebrated as Pongal and lasts for 3 days. On the first day rice boiled with milk is offered to the Rain God. On the second day the same is offered but to the Sun God and on the third and final day, the family cattle is given a bath and dressed with flowers, bells and colours to praise them for their hard work in the fields.



# Saak Utsav



## શાકોત્સવ

લોચામા સર્વત્ર ૧૯૭૭ ના માગશર/પૌષ મહિનામા શ્રી સ્વામિનારાયણ ભાદાને જાતે રથેલો ઉત્સવ ચેટલે શાકોત્સવ. સુશ પાત્રર ની ઢિગતી ચ્લને ચેક હરિભક્ત ની ૧૨૦૦ કીલો રીંગણા ની સેવા થી શરુ થયો ચ્લા ઉત્સવ. મહારાજ પુલજ રીંગણા જોઈ તે ચ્લતે રાજી થયા, ચ્લને સુશ પાત્રર થગી શાકોત્સવ ની જાહેરાત કરાવી ગજીક ના ગામોમા. ચેટલુજ ગહી પડા મહારાજે ગજી કર્યુ કે તે જાતેજ શાક ની નીચારી કરશે.

ચ્લા સાંભળી તે સો હરિભક્તો ચ્લાચ્ચર્ચ પામ્યા ચ્લને ઢિચાર મા હુલ્યા, કે મહારાજ જાતે સો જેટલા માણસો નુ જમવાનુ કેવેરીતે પહોંચી શકસે? મહારાજ ઘોળી ઘોળી ચ્લને શાલ પહેરી તે ૧૨૦૦ કીલો રીંગણા સુધારવા લાગ્યા. ત્રણ ક્કાઈ મા જીવે જીવે ચ્લાગતી પ્રગાવો તે ૩૬૦ કીલો ઘી થી વધાર ઈઈ. જુદા જુદા હરિભક્તો જુદી જુદી સેવા લઈ ચ્લાવલા હતા ચ્લા ઉત્સવ માટે. કોઈ નોમક લાવે તે કોઈ ઘાંડ, કોઈ લોટ લાવે, તે કોઈ મસાલા. મહારાજે હરિભક્તો તે કહ્યુ તે ચ્લેક ચ્લેક ક્કઈ મા જે જે વસતુ લાવ્યા હોય તે ક્કાઈ મા નાઈ. ચ્લેક ક્કાઈ મા ક્કલ હુલદર તે મરચુ ની ભુક્રે હોય તે ભોજી ક્કાઈ મા ક્કલ લોટ, નોમક તે ઘાંડ હોય.

સુશ પાત્રર ચ્લા જોઈ તે મુક્તાનંદ સ્વામિ પાસે ફરિયાદ કરવા ગયા કે મહારાજે ચ્લા શાક ભગાડી નાખ્યું. મુક્તાનંદ સ્વામિ જોવા ગયા તે જોયુ મહારાજ પ્રસેવા થી જાહી રહ્યા હતા, ચ્લાગતી ના તાય થી, ચ્લને નેમનો ચ્લાયો ચ્લાસુ થી ભરાઈ ગઈ હતી મરચા ની ભુક્રે ના કારણે ચ્લને નેમના કપડા મસાલા થી રંગાઈ ગયેલા હતા. મુક્તાનંદ સ્વામિ રાજી થઈ તે સુશ પાત્રરની સામે જોયુ.

શાક થઈ ગયુ ત્યારે મહારાજે ત્રણ ક્કાઈ માથી થોડુ થોડુ ભેગવો ચ્લેક ભોજમા મેળવ્યું. હરિભક્તો તે ચ્લને સંભો ની મહારાજ જાતે થીરચ્ચુ હુનુ. હરિભક્તો જમવામા માત્ર શાક જોઈ તે ચ્લાચ્ચર્ચ પામ્યા, પડા જ્યારે જ્જ્યા ત્યારે જેને જે સ્વાદ નો સંકલ્પ હતો, તેચ્લો તે તે સ્વાદ મલ્યો શાકમા થી. ચ્લાવો દિવ્ય હતો ચ્લા શાકોત્સવ.

ડિમ્પલ વરસાણી.

# India Republic Day

In India, **Republic Day** honours the date on which the Constitution of India came into force on 26 January 1950 replacing the Government of India Act (1935) as the governing document of India.

The Constitution was passed by the Constituent Assembly of India on 26 November 1949 but was adopted on 26 January 1950 with a democratic government system, completing the country's transition toward becoming an independent republic. 26 January was selected for this purpose because it was this day in 1930 when the Declaration of Indian Independence (Purna Swaraj) was proclaimed by the Indian National Congress.

## **Republic day parade**

To mark the importance of the occasion, every year a grand parade is held in the capital, New Delhi, from the Raisina Hill near the Rashtrapati Bhavan (the President's residence), along the Rajpath, past India Gate.



Prior to its commencement, the Prime Minister lays a floral wreath at the Amar Jawan Jyoti, a memorial to unknown soldiers at the India Gate at one end of Rajpath, which is followed by two minutes silence in the memory of unknown soldiers. It is a solemn reminder of the sacrifice of the soldiers who died for the country in the freedom movement and the succeeding wars.



## **Beating Retreat**

The Beating Retreat ceremony officially denotes the end of Republic Day festivities. It is conducted on the evening of 29 January, the third day after the Republic Day. It is performed by the bands of the three wings of the military, the Indian Army, Indian Navy and Indian Air Force. The venue is Raisina Hills and an adjacent square, Vijay Chowk flanked by the North and South Block of the Rashtrapati Bhavan (President's Palace) towards the end of Rajpath.

The Chief Guest of the function is the President of India who arrives escorted by the (PBG), a cavalry unit. When the President arrives, the PBG commander asks the unit to give the National Salute, which is followed by the playing of the Indian National Anthem, Jana Gana Mana, by the Army developed the ceremony of display by the massed bands in which Military Bands, Pipe and Drum Bands, Buglers and Trumpeters from various Army Regiments besides bands from the Navy and Air Force take part which play popular tunes like Abide With Me, Mahatma Gandhi's favourite hymn, and Saare Jahan Se Achcha at the end.

By Divyam Samyak Shah

# Shivratri



**Maha Shivratri, the night of the worship of Lord Shiva, occurs on the 14th night of the new moon.**

After creation was complete, Parvati asked Lord Shiva which devotees and rituals pleased him the most. The Lord replied that the 14th night of the new moon, in the dark fortnight during the month of Phalgun, is his most favorite day. Parvati repeated these words to her friends, from whom the word spread over all creation.

## **Why we celebrate Maha Shivratri**

The absolute formless God, Sadashiv appeared in the form of "Lingodbhav Moorti" exactly at midnight on Maha Shivratri. That is why all Shiva devotees keep vigil during the night of Shivratri and do "Shivlingam abhishekham" at midnight.

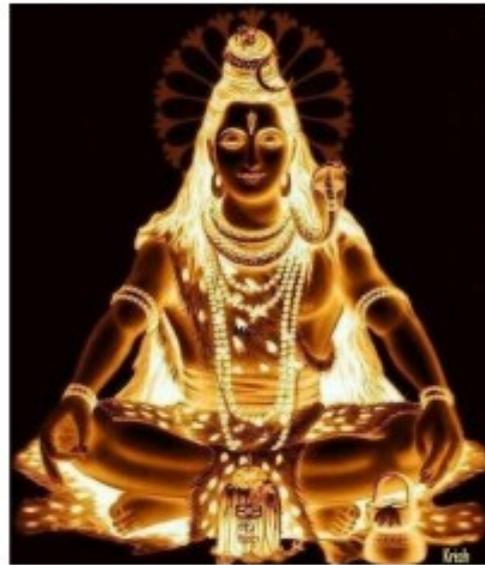
# Shivratri

## Shivratri Celebration

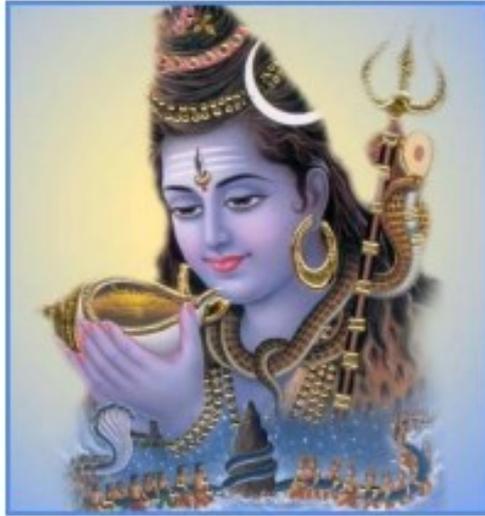
Shivratri is one of the holiest nights of the year. It is the night dedicated to the worship of Lord Shiva. Shivratri means, "**The great night of Shiva**". It is celebrated on the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> day of the dark half of the month of Phalgun (February – March).

There are numerous interesting and intriguing mythological stories about celebration to Mahashivratri.

Devotees believe that Shivratri is auspicious because it marks the marriage of Lord Shiva and Mata Parvati. Lord Shiva's first wife was Sati and Sati's father, King Daksha, opposed her marriage with Shiva. At a yagna (holy sacrifice) the king ignored Shiva's presence and thereby insulted Sati publicly. Sati was so angered by this that she jumped into the sacrificial fire and ended her life. Lord Shiva unleashed his fury at the death of his wife by performing the violent dance, called Taandav. Lord Shiva wiped out Daksha's kingdom, undertook rigorous penance and retired to the Himalayas.

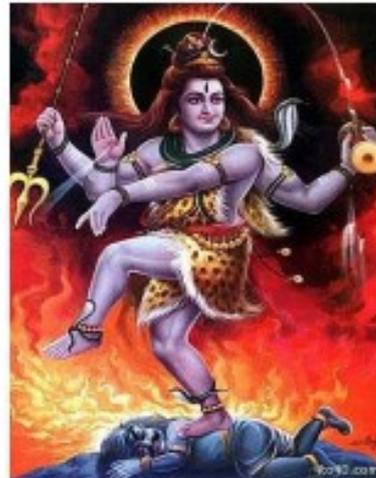


The Gods, who feared that the severity of Shiva's penance might bring an end to the world, revived Sati in the new avatar of Parvati. Shiva-Parvati married and this reunion is celebrated on Maha Shivratri



According to the Puranas, during the great mythical churning of the ocean called Samudra Manthan, a pot of poison emerged from the ocean. The gods and the demons were terrified as it could destroy the entire world. When they ran to Shiva for help, he in order to protect the world, drank the deadly poison but held it in his throat instead of swallowing it. This turned his throat blue, and since then he came to be known as Nilkantha, the blue-throated one. Shivratri celebrates this event by which Shiva saved the world.

However, many believe that Mahashivratri signifies the auspicious night when Lord Shiva performed the dance 'Taandav' that led to the creation, conservation and devastation of the universe.



*Which ever mythological stories one believes, we should always remember that Lord Shiva made numerous sacrifices for the sake of humanity and we should always be grateful for this kindness.*



# Teacher Interview



Full Name: **Shivani Deepti Patel**

Age: **18**

Place of Birth: **Royal Free Hospital**

Title at Gujarati School: **Head of Admin**

How many people in your family and who are they? **4 – My parents, my younger sister and I**

Tell us about your education at Gujarati School? **I started Gujarati School at the age of 7 and have been here ever since**

When did you join Gujarati school's Office Admin? **2008**

Tell us about your experience as Head of Admin? **It's been a rollercoaster of emotions with lots of wonderful and memorable experiences along with a few stressful days, but overall I've loved every second of my time here. I cannot imagine what my Saturdays are going to be like without having to wake up early to get to Gujarati School on time.**

Why do you like Gujarati School? **I love the spirit of the students and the bonds I build with them throughout their time here. I also love the closely knitted staff and it honestly feels like I have my own little Gujarati School family!**

What has been your most memorable experience at school? **Teaching the girls a dance for this year's Patotsav especially as we built strong bonds with the girls as they got more comfortable with us**

I hear, you are leaving Gujarati School to go off to University? **Yes, I am going to be studying law at the University of Bristol**

What will you do on your Saturday off now? **Sleep and occasionally make my way back to London... Gujarati School won't be able to get rid of me that easily, I will always come back to visit!**

Describe yourself in five words: **talkative, enthusiastic, loud, confident & caring**

Words of wisdom or advice to students? **Don't talk back to your parents when they force you to come here, in the future you'll appreciate it. I've spent 11 years of my life at Gujarati School and don't regret it at all!**

Your favourite food? **Dosa and Paneer**

Hobbies? **Dancing, playing the piano & getting myself pampered**

Habits you do not like? **Knuckle cracking, nail biting, people who eat rice with a spoon, people who don't know how to use cutlery properly**

What countries have you travelled to? **Thailand, India, Spain, Portugal, Italy, America, Cyprus, Malta, France, Germany, Dubai and going to Sri Lanka and the Maldives in July.**

What are you scared of? **Spiders, the dark, rides,**

Tell us about the sky dive you did for Charity? **I raised £2,750 for St Mark's Hospital Foundation. I am actually terrified of heights but St Mark's Hospital is extremely important to my family, and so to mark my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday I wanted to do something to show them how much I appreciate what they have done to help my family. I am such a confident person but the day of the sky-dive was the one time that I was absolutely petrified but once I had jumped out of that plane the experience was sensational, even if I was wearing a horrific outfit! It was a fabulous and unforgettable experience!**



# Teachers' Training

## When was teachers' training?

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2014.

## Is teachers' training important?

Yes!

## Why is teachers training important?

In the same way paperwork and records need to be updated, our way of thinking or current experience needs to be updated too! Not matter your age or your gender, training and development is always important – for your current and future prospects.

Developing and adapting yourself is both fun and encouraging not only for you to think 'outside of the box' but also to support and advise others around you!

Knowledge and Learning is free and you should never stop sharing ideas with others; or stop someone from wanting to expand their thoughts or views. It's about bringing the best out of everyone.



## Main Objectives this year for the teachers' training?

- ◆ For all the senior and experienced teachers to get to know the younger assistant teachers and voluntary starters, in order to guide them and shadow them.
- ◆ For all the younger assistant teachers and voluntary starters to feel more confident bring themselves out to share ideas and new styles or methods of teaching.
- ◆ For me to refresh all teachers on our school's policies, safety instructions and discipline rules.
- ◆ To learn from one another, to talk to each other and to motivate themselves to grasp different ways of teaching, learn new techniques, and strengthen their skills.

**Smita Varsani (Head of Training and Development)**

## Let us read what one of our teachers' thinks:

I think that teacher training sessions should contain many aspects which aid the teacher to provide a high quality education. The main aspects I think that need to be included in teacher training sessions are:

- ◆ Learning how to prepare lessons.
- ◆ Learning how to consistently deliver good, enjoyable and engaging lessons.
- ◆ Given ideas for possible exercises that can be conducted and also how to vary activities and make them different.
- ◆ Learning how to maintain discipline within the class effectively



**Vaishni Patel (Balpothi Teacher)**



# Mid-term exams

## MID – TERM EXAMS ARE IMPORTANT!

“Mid-term exams for students should include a summary of questions of what has been learnt since September. This should reflect the student’s progress and it can help the teachers to identify each student’s weakness which we can then target straight away. If tests like these are not undertaken then the student’s weaknesses will not be identified as quickly and we as teachers would not have a clear understanding of what students are struggling with and how to make them progress further in their studies.”

### Roshni Kerai (Balpothi Teacher)

Even though we are a part time Education Centre we work to achieve the best results and discipline on a full-time basis!

We set two official exams: 1 mid-term which takes place between Jan-Feb each year (which tests the students’ knowledge for the first 5 months) and 1 end of year exam which determines if the student moves up into another standard or needs to repeat the year again.

This helps the teachers to set targets and see the strengths and weaknesses of each student. This then determines which areas both teachers and students need to make extra effort.

The exam results and record sheets are completed by the teacher with the students’ result and brief comments. To help parents interact with their child and also work with them at home to encourage them to complete their homework and do revision of their class work.

Of course, where needed I work along-side each class to ensure they have the right ways of teaching, materials and creative techniques to boost the student’s learning and help teachers build a rapport with each of their students.

If parents have any questions please email [school@sksst.org](mailto:school@sksst.org) or speak to me directly.

### PASS RATES THIS YEAR:

Ankodi, Balpothi, Std 1, Std2, Std 3- 60% (60/100) at least.

Std 3 students willing to go directly into GCSE because they are a) capable and willing and b) completing GCSE in their mainstream schools need to score 80% (80/100) at least.

Std 4 students willing to go directly into GCSE because they are a) capable and willing and b) completing GCSE in their mainstream schools need to score 80% (80/100) at least.

Thank You

**Smita Varsani (Head of Training and Development)**



**KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
STUDY  
FOR EXAMS**

# Thank you

This newsletter was produced with the help of:

- Shivani Patel
- Smita Varsani
- Pooja Parmar
- Harshil Kerai
- Nyal Vekaria
- Sonali Poojara
- Darsita Jadva
- Vivek Davda
- Vaishni Patel
- Roshni Kerai
- Naina Poonja
- Divyam Samyak Shah
- Yasmin Patel
- Dimple Varsani

Thank you to you all for all of your help!

We hope that you enjoyed this edition of our newsletter!