



SOMAIYA
VIDYAVIHAR UNIVERSITY



REACH FELLOWSHIP 2026-27

THEMATIC AREA 'LIVING TRADITIONS'

- **Ajarkpur Chapter**
- **Soil Probiotics Chapter**
- **Gond Chapter**
- **Warli Chapter**

REACH is not just a fellowship—it is a journey of exploration, research, documentation, and preservation rooted in lived experiences and community knowledge.

Here, stories are told with facts, with lived realities, with quiet mysteries.

Here, knowledge becomes a bridge—between awareness and public consciousness, between memory and the future.

At its heart, REACH is about digitising living knowledge—

not to take, not to extract,

but to honour what already exists,

what communities have nurtured,

what the Earth continues to hold.

It reaches inward—to question, to unlearn, to rediscover.

It reaches outward—to communities, cultures, living knowledge.

It reaches forward—to digitise, archive, and share what must not be lost.

REACH Fellows are truth-seekers, curators, pathmakers and storytellers,

They walk between worlds—

between science and story,

between tradition and technology,

between data and lived wisdom,

between comfort and courage.

Each fellow engages in a project that is half within their strength, half beyond their comfort.

Because transformation lies in the unknown, and the unknown is where learning begins.

They do not merely study.

They reside, observe, listen, co-create.

They document, facilitate, empower, and sometimes fail.

And in that failing, they discover deeper truths.



Theme 2026-27
Living Traditions

Fellowship offered
4 Fellows

Fellowship Nature
Residential Fellowship


Duration
9 Months

Applicable
Somaiya Alums Only

Eligibility
Postgraduate Less than 26 yrs

The REACH initiative **views the campuses**, landscapes, communities, and cultural spaces **within the Somaiya ecosystem as a porous ecosystem of Open Living & Learning Spaces** associated with Somaiya Vidyavihar University. Each campus represents a unique ecosystem shaped by its people, practices, landscapes, traditional knowledge systems, and cultural contexts. From the University's perspective, these campuses function as interconnected Living & Learning Labs that enable immersive learning, field research, documentation, innovation, and community engagement grounded in lived experiences and local knowledge systems.

Somaiya Kala Vidya (SKV)

 <https://www.somaiya-kalavidya.org/en>

SKV is an educational institution dedicated to sustaining traditional crafts by strengthening artisans' creative agency, cultural integrity, and livelihoods. Originating from Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya (2003), founded by Judy Frater with an Ashoka Fellowship, SKV was formally established in 2014 and became part of the Somaiya Vidyavihar ecosystem in April 2022. Based in Kachchh, Gujarat, and Bagalkote, Karnataka, SKV offers tailored design and business education for artisans and is supported by an in-house campus with accommodation and food facilities, making higher education accessible while preserving living cultural heritage. SKV also provides on-campus accommodation and hospitality facilities.

How to Reach (Kachchh Campus)

An overnight train journey from Bandra Terminus (BDTS) or Dadar (DDR) to Adipur Railway Station. From Adipur, SKV is approximately a 30-minute drive, while village-based course locations may require an additional 45–60 minutes of travel.



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Nareshwadi Learning Centre (NLC)

 <https://www.nareshwadi.org/en/>

NLC is set on a 12-acre campus within the lush Experimental Farm of Girivanvasi Pragati Mandal (GVPM), founded by Karamshibhai in 1974 as a model for integrated rural development. The campus houses schools, vocational and skill-training centres, hostels, a children's home, and a school farm and nursery. Surrounded by paddy fields and fruit orchards of mango, coconut, and chickoo (sapota) trees, it offers a natural, immersive environment that fosters creativity and experiential learning. With in-house facilities and strong ties to local communities, NLC provides hands-on exposure to ecological practices, traditional knowledge, and community engagement.

How to Reach (Dahanu Campus):

Travel involves approximately 3 hours by local or express train to the Dahanu station, followed by a 1-hour road journey to the campus.

Ecosystem



Madhuban Eco Retreat



<https://www.madhubanecoretreat.com>

Established in 2019 by the Somaiya Group, Madhuban Eco Retreat is a 20-acre eco-learning campus nestled within the Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary, Madhya Pradesh. Surrounded by forests and hills, it offers an immersive setting for experiential ecological learning through nature walks, wildlife observation, and interactions with naturalists. With eco-friendly accommodation options ranging from camping and glamping tents to mud houses, along with farm-to-fork dining, birdwatching, and essential amenities, the retreat seamlessly blends sustainability, comfort, and education—making it an ideal space for learning with and from nature.

How to Reach
Travel by train

How to Reach (Madhuban Campus):

An overnight train journey from Lokmanya Tilak Terminus (LTT), Mumbai, to Rani Kamalapati Railway Station (Bhopal), followed by an approximately 2-hour road journey to Madhuban Eco Retreat.



K J Somaiya Institute of Applied Agricultural Research (KIAAR)



<https://kiar.org/en>

KIAAR, an NGO established in 1971 (originally as the Karnataka Institute of Applied Agricultural Research) to support agriculture and farmers in Northern Karnataka, is recognized by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi as a Centre of Research in Agriculture. Located within the premises of Godavari Biorefineries Ltd., one of India's largest ethanol producers and pioneers in ethanol-based chemicals from agricultural feedstock, KIAAR provides students with an unparalleled experiential learning environment. Its focus areas include soil health, plant breeding, regenerative agriculture, smart farming, farm advisory services, outreach, community engagement, and industrial ecology, seamlessly connecting science, sustainability, and industry practices.

How to Reach (Sameerwadi Campus):

An overnight train journey from Dadar to Kudachi Station, followed by approximately 1-hour road journey to Sameerwadi village and the GBL campus.

REACH Thematic Area 2026-27

Living Traditions are dynamic knowledge systems, practices, crafts, stories, ecological wisdom, and cultural expressions that continue to evolve through everyday life and community interactions across generations. Rooted in relationships between people, landscapes, biodiversity, spirituality, agriculture, art, and local resources, they represent living systems of learning, coexistence, creativity, and sustainability rather than static remnants of the past.

India or Bharat, with its extraordinary diversity of languages, crafts, art forms, ecological practices, cultural expressions, and knowledge systems, represents a vast living repository of traditions shaped by philosophies of interconnectedness and coexistence such as *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (“the world is one family”) and *Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah* (“may all beings flourish”). Across regions and communities, generations have nurtured practices that embody ecological wisdom, resilience, sustainability, and community-centred ways of life. Similarly, the **Somaiya ecosystem, through its campuses, landscapes, community connections, and cultural spaces**, engages closely with farmers, artisans, tribal communities, traditional knowledge holders, and diverse heritage systems, **creating interconnected Living & Learning Labs for immersive research, education, documentation, and knowledge co-creation.**

The REACH Fellowship supported by Somaiya Vidyavihar University is one of the flagship initiatives, under Sustainability & Environmental Experiential Educational Development (SEED programme of the Centre for Achieving Sustainable Climate Action, Development and Engagement (CASCADE), Somaiya Institute for Research & Consultancy. **REACH focuses on building foundational knowledge landscapes at the intersection of traditional wisdom and scientific inquiry to support translational research, comparative studies, standardised practices, educational frameworks, sustainable product systems, and context-sensitive innovations.** Through immersive engagement, documentation, research, and co-creation, REACH seeks to preserve, interpret, and reimagine Living Traditions within contemporary education, sustainability-focused research, creative practice, and public engagement.





MENTORS

- Dr Nandkumar Kunchge, Director –K J Somaiya Applied Agricultural Research (KIAAR)
- Dr Larry Walker, Professor of Eminence and Co-Director CASCADE, Visting Scientist KIAAR
- Mr Aniket Mahulikar, General Manager Nareshwadi Learning Centre;
- Mr Nishit Sangomla, Director, Somaiya Kalavidya (SBI YFI Alumnus - Batch 2016-17)
- Ms Kirti Kathad, Program Coordinator - Special Projects and Curation, Somaiya Kala Vidya
- Dr Monalisa Behera, Assistant Professor, School of Civilisation Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
- Mr. Shibajee Mitra, Herpetologist and Programme Manager, Madhuban Eco Retreat, Bhopal.
- Dr Parvathi JR, Assistant Professor and Co-Director, CASCADE; Executive Coordinator-Special Projects
- Dr Rupal Thakkar, Associate Professor, School of Education
- Dr Irfan Siddavatam, Director- Somaiya School of Design

ADVISORS

- Dr Padma Vankar, Former Head Shimadzu Somaiya Centre of Excellence; Former Professor Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur with specialisation in dyes and colourants
- Padmaja Shrivastav, Architect – Gond Art Specialist
- Dr Ankit Dwivedi, Storyteller & Solopreneur
- Dr Yamini Shah, Assistant Director and Assistant Professor, Centre for Kachchh and Desert Studies, Somaiya School of Civilization Studies, Festival Director-Afsana, the Somaiya Storytelling Festival
- Megha Ahuja, Head- Somaiya Centre for Experiential Learning

SCHEDULE

July – Induction and training workshops on basic scientific concepts, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), research design & questionnaire building, storytelling & visual narratives, AI tools for documentation, presentation and related upskilling sessions, interactions with REACH 2025 batch, advisors and mentors

August – November – Field-based data collection, community engagement, documentation, and literature survey/review

December – February – Field immersion Course and workshop development, preparation of exhibitions and showcases for Somaiya Sustainability Dialogue and Afsana respectively

February – March – Compilation, synthesis, archiving, and final submission of project outputs and documentation

REACH-1

Natural Dyeing Systems (Ajrapur Chapter)

Residential Fellowship tethered to **Living & Learning Lab**- Somaiya Kalavidya (SKV), Adipur, Kachchh, Gujarat, Bharat.

Eligibility / Academic Requirement

Applicants must be alumni and should have completed their postgraduation in any of these disciplines: Environmental Science, Microbiology, Biotechnology, Botany, Chemistry.

Applicants **must be proficient in Gujarati or Kachchhi (Read, Write and Speak) language** as the fellowship requires extensive interaction with local communities and documentation of regional knowledge systems.



The REACH Fellowship offers Fellows an opportunity to work closely with natural dyeing communities across Gujarat and document the living traditions associated with indigo and other natural dye-yielding plants. The Fellow will travel to different locations, interact with artisans and local practitioners, observe traditional dye preparation and application methods, and document the plants, practices, and stories associated with natural dyeing systems.

The primary task of the Fellow will be to support the initial groundwork for establishing a Natural Dyeing Research Centre at the SKV campus by developing a structured documentation and reference base on natural dyeing traditions. This includes identifying and cataloguing dye-yielding plants; documenting local knowledge on harvesting and preparation methods; conducting interviews with artisans and communities; and visually recording processes through photographs, sketches, illustrations, and field notes. The Fellow will also review literature and case studies from other regions to compare practices, and connect with existing research centres and laboratories to understand the basic requirements for laboratory design, research facilities, equipment, and tools needed for the proposed centre.

Deliverables

Natural Dyeing Knowledge Repository & Technical Dossier

A structured and curated archive documenting traditional natural dyeing systems, including dye-yielding plants, local uses, harvesting and preparation methods, cultural practices, scientific observations, sustainability perspectives, photographs, sketches, process diagrams, field notes, interviews, and community interaction records. The repository will serve as a consolidated technical and cultural reference base to support future research, documentation, and interventions in natural dyeing traditions.

Groundwork & Laboratory Planning

Support the initial groundwork towards establishing a Natural Dyeing Research Centre at the SKV campus by connecting with existing research centres, and laboratories, dye experts to understand basic requirements for laboratory design, infrastructure, equipment, workflows, and potential research activities related to natural dyeing systems.

Immersion Module Development

Designing workshops, field immersions, storytelling-based experiences, and experiential learning modules that engage students with traditional knowledge systems, sustainability, community narratives, and natural dyeing practices.



This work contributes to the development of an Ecocultural and Narrative Living Lab at Somaiya Vidyavihar University, Mumbai that integrates indigenous knowledge systems into education, sustainability, creative practice, and public engagement

Why Join REACH?

The Fellow will gain skills and exposure in:

- System thinking and codesigning approach
- Immersive field learning and community engagement
- Documentation, storytelling, interviewing, and creative research communication
- Knowledge synthesis, baseline data generation, and repository building in natural resources for dyeing
- Collaborative research networking at the intersection of sustainability, biodiversity, culture, and indigenous knowledge systems

REACH-2

Traditional Fermented organics (Soil Probiotics Chapter)

Residential Fellowship with **Living & Learning Lab**- K J Somaiya Applied Agricultural Research (KIAAR), Bagalkot District, Karnataka, Bharat.

Eligibility / Academic Requirement

Applicants must be alumni and should have completed their postgraduation in any of these disciplines: Microbiology, Biotechnology, Environmental Sciences, Life sciences and related fields

Applicants **must be proficient in Kannada (Read, Write, and Speak) and resident of Karnataka** as the fellowship requires extensive interaction with local communities and documentation of regional knowledge systems.



The REACH Fellowship offers Fellows an opportunity to undertake immersive, field-based work with traditional sugarcane farming communities in Sameerwadi, Karnataka, to document indigenous soil fertility and organic farming practices. The Fellow will work closely with progressive farmers to understand traditional approaches to soil health management, sustainable farming systems, and locally developed agricultural knowledge associated with sugarcane cultivation.

The primary task of the Fellow is to document indigenous agricultural organic formulations, fermented mixtures, and biologically active preparations traditionally developed and used by farmers, particularly those linked to cow-based systems and local ecological knowledge. This includes documenting jeevamrut, beejamrut, microbial and botanical formulations, composting practices, vermicompost systems, and soil management approaches by recording ingredients, preparation methods, fermentation processes, application regimes, seasonal variations, and associated ecological knowledge through field interactions and interviews with farmers and practitioners.

The fellowship will involve visual and narrative documentation through photographs, sketches, process illustrations, field notes, and records of farming practices and community interactions. The Fellow will also undertake an in-depth literature review and comparative study of indigenous formulations and their regional variations across India in relation to soil fertility, microbial ecology, regenerative agriculture, and sustainability practices.

Deliverables

Indigenous Formulations Technical Compendium

A structured documentation of farmer-developed indigenous formulations, fermented mixtures, composting systems, and probiotic preparations, including ingredients, preparation methods, fermentation processes, application practices, and associated ecological knowledge.

Visual Process Atlas & Knowledge Repository

A curated archive of photographs, botanical sketches, process diagrams, field notes, interviews, oral histories, and community interaction records related to natural dyeing traditions.

Comparative Literature & Practice Dossier

A comparative field- and literature-based dossier documenting regional variations, preparation practices, ingredient adaptations, ecological contexts, and application systems of indigenous agricultural formulations across India.

Why Join REACH?

The Fellow will gain skills and exposure in:

- System thinking and codesigning approach
- Immersive field research and community-based learning
- Documentation, interviewing, archiving, and research communication
- Knowledge synthesis, baseline data generation, and repository building in indigenously developed traditional fermented organic products for agriculture
- Collaborative research networking across sustainability, biodiversity, regenerative practices, and traditional knowledge systems

REACH-3

Anthropomorphism in Adivasi Art (Gond Chapter)

Residential Fellowship **tethered to Living & Learning Lab**- Madhuban Eco Retreat, Near Ratapani Wildlife Sanctuary, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, Bharat

Eligibility / Academic Requirement

Applicants must be alumni and should have completed their postgraduation in any of the disciplines : Art History, Social Anthropology Civilisation Studies, Art Psychology, Design, or Mass Communication, with an interest in culture, sustainability, storytelling, community engagement, and traditional knowledge systems are encouraged to apply.

Applicants **must be proficient in Hindi (Read, Write, and Speak)**, as the fellowship requires extensive interaction with local communities and documentation of regional knowledge systems.



The REACH Fellowship offers Fellows an opportunity to undertake immersive field-based engagement with Adivasi artists and communities, particularly within traditions such as Gond art, to document anthropomorphism, ecological narratives, and cultural storytelling embedded in tribal art practices. Through interactions with artists, storytellers, and local knowledge holders, Fellows will explore how animals, trees, rivers, spirits, and other living forms are represented through human-like characteristics shaped by ecological relationships, memory, identity, and lived cosmologies.

The primary task of the Fellow is to build a structured documentation and reference base on anthropomorphic representations and ecological storytelling traditions in Adivasi art systems. This includes documenting recurring motifs, symbolic representations, oral narratives, artistic processes, ecological associations, and socio-cultural meanings through interviews, field observations, participatory interactions, and visual documentation. The Fellow will also curate photographs, sketches, process illustrations, schematic representations, field notes, and narrative records while also undertaking literature review to situate the work within broader spectrum on tribal art, anthropology, indigenous knowledge systems, and ecological storytelling. In addition, the Fellow will explore pathways for creative public engagement, educational interpretation, and sustainability-linked cultural awareness through exhibitions, storytelling formats, and experiential learning modules.

Deliverables

Anthropomorphic Tribal Art Knowledge Repository

A structured visual and narrative documentation archive comprising motif catalogues, symbolic interpretations, ecological narratives, process illustrations, photographs, sketches, artist interviews, oral histories, field notes, and cultural storytelling records related to anthropomorphism in Adivasi art traditions.

Curated Exhibition & Public Showcase

Development of a thematic exhibition and public engagement showcase presenting tribal ecological narratives, artistic symbolism, and anthropomorphic storytelling traditions through visual displays, interpretive communication, and immersive experiences.

Experiential Learning & Workshop Module

Design of workshops, storytelling sessions, field immersion formats, and educational modules focused on tribal art, ecological imagination, indigenous knowledge systems, and sustainability-linked cultural learning and livelihood



Dedicated Showcase in Sustainability Dialogue Flagship and Afsana respectively



This work contributes to the development of an Ecocultural and Narrative Living Lab at Somaiya Vidyavihar University, Mumbai that integrates indigenous knowledge systems into education, sustainability, creative practice, and public engagement

Why Join REACH?

The Fellow will gain skills and exposure in:

- Immersive field-based learning with Adivasi artists, storytellers, and living cultural landscapes
- Field research, visual documentation, storytelling, archiving, and creative communication
- Collaborative exploration of art, ecology, sustainability, culture, and indigenous knowledge systems
- Contribution to exhibitions, knowledge repositories, and public cultural showcases

REACH-4

Ecocultural Narratives and Storytelling Traditions (Warli Chapter)

Residential Fellowship tethered to **Living & Learning Lab**- Nareshwadi Learning Centre, Dahanu, Palghar, Maharashtra, Bharat.

Eligibility / Academic Requirement

Applicants must be alumni and should have completed their postgraduation in any of the disciplines : Art History, Social Anthropology Civilisation Studies, Art Psychology, Design, Mass Communication, and Education with an interest in culture, sustainability, storytelling, community engagement, and traditional knowledge systems are encouraged to apply.

Applicants **must be proficient in Marathi (Read, Write, and Speak)**, as the fellowship requires extensive interaction with local communities and documentation of regional knowledge systems.



The REACH Fellowship offers Fellows an opportunity to undertake immersive field-based engagement with tribal and rural communities to document storytelling traditions connected with ecology, biodiversity, culture, and community memory, with a particular focus on Warli and other Adivasi communities of Maharashtra. Through field interactions with storytellers, artisans, and local practitioners, Fellows will explore Warli as a community-based narrative system that functions simultaneously as visual art, ritual expression, performative tradition, and oral storytelling practice.

The primary task of the Fellow is to document diverse storytelling systems—visual, oral, ritual, and performative—with a focused exploration of Warli traditions as a visual narrative art form interconnected with oral traditions, ritual practices, folklore, living practices, traditional architecture, crafts, seed storage systems, and indigenous material use. Through interviews, participatory observation, sketches, photographs, audio-visual documentation, and literature review, the Fellow will examine how relationships between humans, animals, forests, agriculture, landscapes, and spiritual systems are represented within Warli narratives and artistic practices, reflecting collective life, coexistence, labour, celebration, and cosmology. The fellow will also explore the contemporary potential of Warli as a medium for ecological storytelling, minimalist design, art therapy, visual communication, educational interpretation, and sustainable product development through collaborations with artisans, storytelling communities, and design teams to co-develop context-sensitive Warli-inspired products, storytelling formats, and creative outputs linked to cultural awareness and sustainable livelihoods.

Deliverables

Ecocultural Narrative Compendium

A structured documentation and curated archive of oral narratives, songs, ritual storytelling traditions, visual narratives, ecological motifs, interviews, field recordings, photographs, sketches, story maps, and narrative records related to Warli storytelling traditions and ecological knowledge systems.

Experiential Learning & Workshop Module

Design of workshops, storytelling-based learning experiences, immersive courses, and educational modules linking biodiversity, sustainability, folklore, coexistence, and indigenous knowledge systems

Warli-Inspired Co-creations

Collaborative development of Warli-inspired products, visual communication materials, and creative outputs with artisans, storytellers, and design teams, culminating in showcases and Sustainable livelihoods



Dedicated Showcase in Sustainability Dialogue Flagship and Afsana respectively



This work contributes to the development of an Ecocultural and Narrative Living Lab at Somaiya Vidyavihar University, Mumbai that integrates indigenous knowledge systems into education, sustainability, creative practice, and public engagement

Why Join REACH?

The Fellow will gain skills and exposure in:

- Immersive field learning and engagement with tribal communities, storytellers, artisans, and practitioners
- Documentation, audio-visual storytelling, archiving, visual communication, and research synthesis
- Collaborative exploration across sustainability, biodiversity, folklore, anthropology, design, culture, and indigenous knowledge systems
- Contribution to knowledge repositories, public showcases, educational initiatives, and creative projects centred on ecological storytelling and coexistence

**Ms Bhakti Narsale**

| REACH Fellow |

I always wanted to work for society, but being raised in a city, I was unaware of the everyday struggles faced by rural communities. The REACH Fellowship gave me the opportunity to work closely with a tribal community in Haladpada village, Dahanu Taluka, Palghar district, Maharashtra, under the theme “Water Stewardship.” Through this experience, I learned community engagement, water resource mapping, survey methods, and identifying grassroots challenges. The induction programme was an eye-opener, where we interacted with university leaders and experts, and were mentored in documentation, interview preparation, social and visual communication, and rural participatory approaches that was immensely helpful in my fellowship journey.

Along with my rural anchors, Sonali Gavit and Yamuna Bhuyal, I conducted extensive village surveys, water budgeting studies, and comprehensive mapping of local water bodies. We also compared our findings with the Jal Jeevan Mission database, where several borewell records were found to be missing. The village had no ponds, only one seasonal stream that remained dry from April to mid-June, and twelve public borewells, of which only two were functional. We collected and tested water samples from borewells and the stream, and the results showed that the available water sources were not potable. Through this process, I also learned important field and social skills, including understanding basic land records like Satbara (7/12 extracts), interacting with Panchayat members, and seeking permissions for community engagement and surveys.

Despite being proficient in Marathi and Hindi, communication was still challenging because the local tribal dialect and style of interaction were very different. However, the support of my rural anchors and the Nareshwadi Learning Centre team helped me connect better with the community. During the fellowship, we also collaborated with NGOs working on water conservation initiatives. Based on the water budgeting exercise and community discussions, we supported the construction of a ferrocement water storage tank with a capacity of 10,000 litres to improve local water access during scarcity periods.

The fellowship made me more confident, ambitious, and solution-oriented. It helped me strengthen my communication skills, adaptability, and problem-solving mindset while working in real community settings.

Currently, I am pursuing my PhD at Somaiya Vidyavihar University as a University-sponsored Junior Research Fellow, and this journey has strongly shaped my research approach toward more community-centric and field-based work. I would recommend this fellowship to anyone passionate about working with society and would encourage future fellows to stay open, empathetic, patient, and willing to truly learn from the community.

Being part of the first cohort of the “REACH Fellowship 2025–2026,” I had the opportunity to work in Mota Varnora village, Kachchh, Gujarat, under the thematic area of Water Stewardship. The experience helped me understand interconnected rural challenges related to water scarcity, water quality, livestock dependency, migration, and community livelihoods. The induction workshop played an important role in shaping my perspective by introducing me to field ethics, documentation, community engagement, and systems thinking approaches toward identifying challenges and practical solutions.

During the fellowship, I first focused on building connections with the community by participating in social gatherings and observing everyday life before beginning fieldwork. Along with my REACH anchors, Manjula Jepar and Mehul Jepar, I conducted household surveys for water budgeting and interacted with Rabari, Vankar, and Bava communities to understand local water-related issues and community perspectives. I also carried out primary water testing from various ponds and borewells using both field-based testing kits and NABL-accredited laboratories to compare results and understand reproducibility. Through this process, we found that most village water storage sources were not potable. I also conducted village-level awareness sessions to help community members understand simple ways to test and improve water quality using locally available resources and practices.

Not knowing Gujarati or Kachchhi language initially was challenging, but continuous interaction, observation, and learning small phrases helped me adapt over time. The fellowship pushed me beyond my comfort zone and strengthened my communication, documentation, observation, adaptability, patience, and community engagement skills. Guidance from my mentor Ms. Yashika, REACH anchors and programme leaders gave me valuable insights into grassroots work and field-based research. As part of the intervention process, we worked on the digging and natural boundary development of the Nathurai pond to improve groundwater recharge and long-term water storage.

Currently, I am pursuing my PhD at SVU as a University-sponsored Junior Research Fellow, and this experience has strongly shaped my approach toward research and community-based work.

For future fellows, I would strongly suggest spending time understanding the community, landscape, and local knowledge systems, along with extensive documentation, before planning interventions. Real change begins with listening, trust-building, and understanding people and their lived realities. Every interaction and field experience is unique and cannot be repeated in the same way again. The time spent observing, learning, and engaging with communities becomes valuable knowledge that transforms both the researcher and the work they undertake.



Mr Prathamesh Gahandule

| REACH Fellow |



REACH Fellows and REACH Rural Anchors 2025-26 with Programme Leaders and Regional Mentors

Connect Minds | Cultivate Ideas | Create Solutions

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