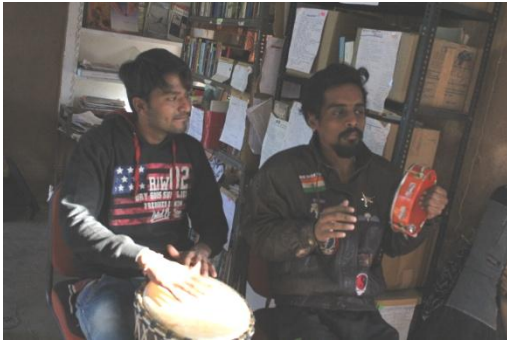


Swaraj University



Dear friends and family,

Warm greetings from Swaraj University!! This February 2017 newsletter brings to you some interesting snippets from last 6 months at Swaraj University.

RECENT EVENTS & UPDATES

In last six months, we hosted '*Art of hosting(AOH)*' workshop at Swaraj University campus facilitated by Mark Leviette, Tanuja Vashishta, and Manish Jain. The theme/foundational question for this workshop was – '*How can I contribute to Regenerate and Transform communities in the places and systems I live in?*' A lot of interesting tools of hosting were shared and practiced by all the participants and even some live projects were worked upon using the tools of AOH.

'Learning Societies Un-conference' – a confluence of 500+ people from diverse background coming to co-create was held for a week in



Participants sharing about 'Open Space Technology' during Art of Hosting workshop



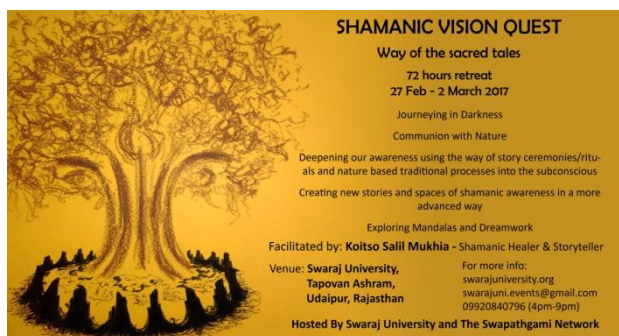
Participants coming and co-creating at LSUC

Sardarshahar, near Bikaner. The un-conference was the birth-place of many interesting ideas and experiments. One of them was 'having an alternative currency in circulation'. Ideas on having a *People's University*, *Unlearning on love*, *Un-learning on gift culture* was also floated during the unconference. Some of the khojis put up stalls one of the days – Yash and Aditi put up a healthy snacks stall, Kamalbir and Nidhi put up their bags and crafts for exhibition. Sanjeev, Navedita, Gautam and Bhupender painted a wall.

Two of Swaraj University's team members – Suyash and Reva – participated in a workshop cum host training program called Warrior of the Heart Dojo this February. One major take away was -

importance of developing a personal practice – it helps to stay centred in tough times. Personal practice helps in hosting self and others and through that leading and co-creating. Aikido was practiced to help individuals to first observe their personal patterns in dealing with tough situations and then through this practise carving your new stance to deal with the current world. They also learned a powerful tool called the FLOW game which helps the participants to open up different dimensions through which they can answer their life important questions.

Meanwhile, on media front, *Eenadu*, a well-known Telugu newspaper published an article on Swaraj University which triggered a lot of enquiries from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana region. . Also, plans and talks with various organizations and individuals are in process to initiate different versions of Swaraj across India.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Some upcoming events co-hosted by Swaraj University, Swapathgami and Shikshantar, starting with

1) Shamanic Vision Quest: a 72-hour intensive retreat that would delve into accessing our natural potential to heal and transform using Shamanic vision quest,

sacred lore, ceremonies and rituals. Hosted from 27th Feb to 2nd March 2017 and facilitated by Salil Mukhia.

- 2) Jeevan Vidya:** Co-hosted by Swapathgami Network and Centre for Holistic Learning, it is intensive and guided 40-hour introspection and learning experience that seeks to bring one's attention to neglected and subtle facets of life; issues related to interpersonal relations, education, society, environment, aspirations, success are discussed and participants are provided critical tools to help them explore the rich web of connections between seemingly disparate aspects of life. Facilitated by Vinish Gupta and Karuna Morarji and starting from the 5th March to 12th March 2017.
- 3) Admissions at Swaraj University** – The admission process for the next cohort at Swaraj would begin April 2017 and the orientation meets would happen in May and June. For those interested, kindly mail us at swarajuni@gmail.com and look at our FB page for frequent details.

In the recent past, we have had 'open for public' workshops & gatherings like Art of Hosting, Water Innovation Labs, Learning Societies Unconference. Water Innovation Lab India (WIL India), a 12-day journey aimed to develop future water leaders, began in Mumbai, moved to Bhuj and traversed to Swaraj University, Udaipur for a 4-day Leadership Development Program and Capacity Building for participants and resource guests to share knowledge, plan scenarios, and develop project ideas. Eco-versities, an emerging collective of individuals and communities from a variety of learning projects around the world also organized its second gathering of 'Kindred Folk Re-imagining Education' in Costa Rica.

PROGRAM – EXPERIEMENTS AND EXPERIENCES IN YEAR 1 & YEAR 2

Some of the experiments we tried this meet keeping in mind the intentions were:



Artisan Mela – For 4 half-days, an artisan mela (gathering) was held. Ramdan ji shared his skill of playing a musical instrument Raawanhatta; Bhuri Lal ji shared sculpting soap stone, Lata shared Miniature painting, Rajmal ji shared wood work and Choti bai shared quilt-making. The idea was to encourage a different way of engagement with learning, understand about artisans' tradition, thoughts, and way of living, build relationships with them and bring in much needed hands-on focus. It was also a way of introducing the localization experience to the khojis and testing the idea of strengthening Naya Kheda (the village where Swaraj Uni. is located) and Udaipur city relationships.

Sabha: Although, it is a self-designed learning program, a lot of time khojis hesitate to take responsibility in decision making and leave it on the facilitators to do it, because that seems easy and that is what they have been trained throughout their lives. But the core of the program is to empower khojis to participate actively in the planning, organizing, decision-making as well as conflict resolution. So, we experimented with this idea of having a weekly 'Sabha' - in which people can bring up conflicts, needs, violation of community agreements or personal space in front of a community elected jury. We named the Jury 'Khyal (care) Council'. Every week there was a different Khyal council to hold it with no facilitators in it. Khojis designed the process and implemented it. Of course, it was a trial this meet and there were many hiccups, but we plan to pursue Sabha in the next meet too.



Udaan Utsav - A first cohort khoji of Swaraj Ravi Gaikwad had initiated Udaan Community Center in Badgoan region of Udaipur 3 years back focusing on the kids and adolescents, who are sharp and creative but due to their living conditions and social challenges, do not get the due space for their creativity and enterprising to emerge. Ravi aims of co-creating that space for them. In this meet, one of the days, all the k7 cohort khojis went to Udaan and spent the day getting kids and the youth involved in various activities like dancing, drumming, cooperative games, clown-face making, macramé making, etc with a few intentions in mind – Firstly, to give energy and power to Ravi's dream; and Secondly, to do something together as a group

Awakening the mind and freeing the heart workshop – We began this meet with a 3-day mindfulness retreat hosted by Nirali Shah, a mindfulness facilitator currently living in California. After returning back immediately from their SDL period, it helped a lot of khojis to reconnect with self, relationships and the Earth. Some very interesting mediation practices were introduced in this workshop like – walking meditation, gratitude meditation, 5-rythms, Silence, nature-connect, reconnecting with the ancestors, etc.



Men circle and Women circles – One of the interesting ideas we experimented this meet was to host men and women circles. Some of us in the facilitating team had attended and hosted similar circles but it was new to this cohort and they were excited to be a part of it. The idea of these circles is to create a safe space for men as well as women (in their separate circles) to share, be vulnerable, bond, and also challenge certain notions that get stereotyped with one's gender. One of our guests Dmitriv, from Belarus, who has attended a lot of men circles around the world initiated and held the first men circle.

Menstrual Circle – Sylvanna, from Italy, shared a very interesting process of 'Menstrual Medicine – a way to reconnect with the body and the Earth' She has been hosting Menstrual circles with women-folk around the world and it was the first time that she hosted this circle where men also participated as observers. It turned out to be a very powerful experience for a lot of khojis who could shed their inhibitions around the subject of 'menstruality'.

Self-led Cycle Yatra – Every year, we take our khojis for a yatra - a sacred yatra where we don't take any money, gadgets, medicine, food, pen, paper. A pilgrimage khojis take for a week travelling to unknown villages, without any shields, in order to understand nature, locals, villages, in spirit of learning from them, getting involved in their day to day work like farming, cleaning, construction, taking care of the cow shed, etc. K7 cohort took on this challenge and did this yatra without the presence of any facilitator. They self-led the yatra taking care of each other.



Some of the experiments from in the 2nd year of the program (from the last meet):

Personal Mastery – An intense visioning workshop hosted by Suyash Saboo that intended to help Khojis develop their personal vision – vision for various aspects of their life – self, work, relationships, money, home, community, etc. The visioning took a good amount of time over the period of four days. This was a very important exercise for Khojis because as we proceeded in the meet this vision now became a reference point for the Livelihood Projects that Khojis chose to embark upon. The projects that were chosen by khojis included subjects or fields such as starting a healthy food café, farming, working with government schools and children in the grassroots, designing bags, women empowerment through skill development. Eight Khojis out of twelve felt ready to go ahead and decide an AP for themselves. We did this through a powerful Art of Hosting process called the Pro-action Café, in which a Khoji shared her/his proposal of AP with other Khojis who came in small groups with intentions of – checking whether the AP is practical and achievable in the amount of time planned; to brainstorm and give ideas on what else can make AP more in sync with the vision; and to understand what support would he/she need and determine where can they seek it.



Abhiram sharing his prototype on reducing and managing waste on the campus.

REFLECTIONS ON MEET AND PROGRAM



Khojis sharing at the meet closure

While reflecting during a team meeting before the meet, we made a list of purposes khojis come with when they join Swaraj and then assessed how much of it is met with the program we co-design with them. It was a good reflective exercise for us as it made us see the bigger picture and helped us chart out some action plan for the coming years. And we felt it would be a good opportunity to try some in this meet as an experiment.

Aagaazis leading Swaraj Uni. - all of us in the team felt that for the program to grow and continue, khojis who have completed their 2-year program at Swaraj (whom we call 'Aagaazis') take a lead and hold the program. Two of us from the full-time facilitating team are Aagaazis. And thus we also invited other Aagaazis who had shown interest to interact and facilitate. It has been a great learning opportunity as it brings in fresh perspectives and working styles in the team and the program. Next meet, we are inviting 3-4 Aagaazis to bring in their energies and skills to nurture the Swaraj process. We also plan to invite some families on the campus who hold the capacity to nurture khojis with their presence as well as learn and participate in the program.

Team-learning together – We felt the team is too much involved in day-to-day running of the program and thus it sometimes gets difficult to have a Eagle's view of it. We felt if someone could help us take that view while we are in the meet, it would help us be more effective. Art of Hosting workshop came as a great relief because we got to learn some really interesting tools for our reflection and sharing. One of them was 'Powerful question' – a medium of transforming 'alive questions' to 'powerful questions'. The team also had a capacity building web-session with Mark Levitte, an Art of hosting facilitator, the focus of which was to learn some processes, guidelines or practices for communicating and working effectively as a team and host quick updates / reflections / check ins/ brainstorm. He shared with us an interesting tool called '**STOP**' – (Stop – Think – Organize – Proceed) and helped us assess where we need to focus more energy as individuals and as a team. We plan to practice this tool as a team and also continue our conversation with Mark to understand more around chaos and groan zone and our engagement with it.

Non-consequence based process – We have had struggles with khojis not taking care and responsibility of the campus and program and thus it has been draining. Having a conflict holding and resolution mechanism at community level helped a little, although designed by khojis, it was still difficult to hold as it felt intellectual and consequence-based and high resistance from khojis made it worse. We were glad that it happened and feel it would be great to practice it more the next meet, make it less intellectual and consequence based and have some capacity building from other organizations that are run by similar learning communities. We also felt that rather than we introducing this or similar process for the next cohort, someone from the current cohort can become a holding council for them as they would find it less authoritative and would be more accepting.

Meet 2 chaos – One of the intention for meet 2 was to allow space for chaos that comes with questioning. We felt that we keep limited planning for meet 2 because chaos is inherent in this evolution and during this meet, a lot of khojis struggle to find their balance with their own interests, questions, and family pressure. We felt from next year 2nd meets, we can put our efforts in interesting experiments and ideas we can bring in during the chaos rather than following schedule. We also felt 2nd meet times perfectly with giving them exposure to networks through guests coming on the campus.

Looking forward to your presence,

Sonika Gupta – Rahul Hasija – Suyash Saboo – Pradnya Khadilkar
Sameer Dandage – Deepankar Raina – Shivendra Vaiyapuri
Aas Bai – Choti Bai – Ravi Gaikwad
Reva Dandage – Manish Jain - Nitin Paranjape

To know more, check our FB page: www.facebook.com/swarajuniversity Website: www.swarajuniversity.org Contact us at: swarajuni@gmail.com or call us at +91 8764279302