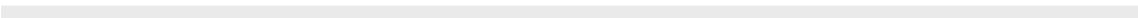




SWARAJ UNIVERSITY

Dear friends and family,

Warm winter greetings from chilly Udaipur!! As we venture towards the winter, this 2017 Newsletter brings you warm news from us at Swaraj University! These past few months have been a time of several transitions and lots of new experiments. We are excited to share some of these with you. We would also like to take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude to you for your tremendous support for all of the khojis. Without your continuous love, care and feedback, the dream of Swaraj University would not be possible. Thank you!

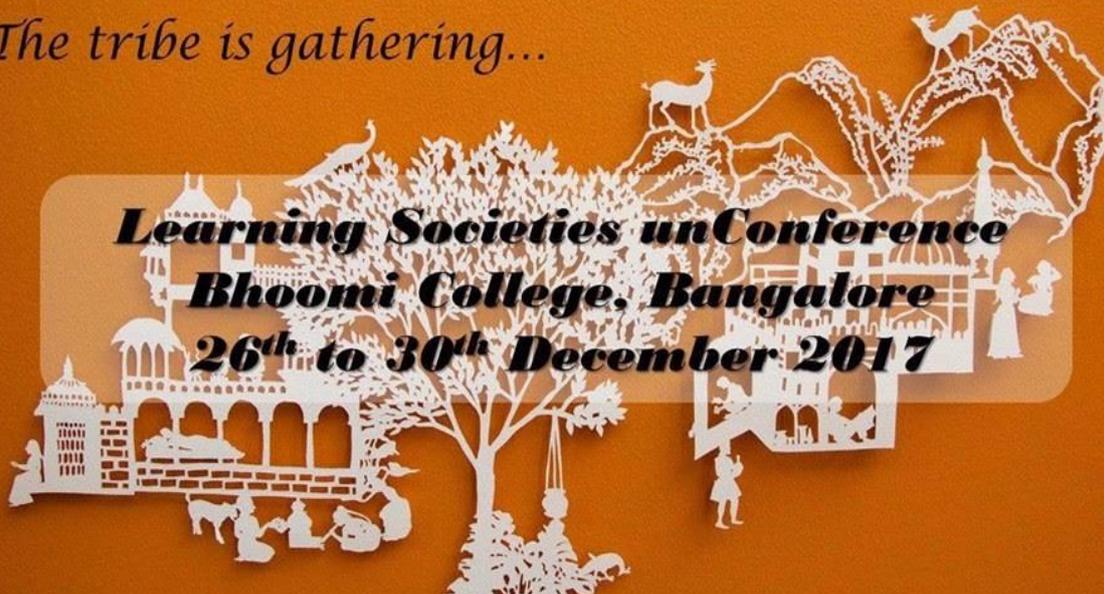


Upcoming Events

- [Learning Societies unConference 2017](#), co-hosted by Shikshantar, Bhoomi College, Swaraj University and many others in Bangalore, December 26-30, 2017
- [National Vikalp Sangam Meeting](#) - co-hosted by Kalpavris, Swaraj University, Shikshantar, Vidya Bhawan, November 27-December 1, 2017
- [Unschoolers Winter Camp](#) - a two-month camp co-hosted by Shikshantar and national unschooler kids (ages 10-17), December 15-17, 2017
- [Geo Dome Construction](#) - a 2 day interactive Earth Architecture building project will be hosted in collaboration with Mango People on December 6-7, 2017
- [Interplay](#) - come awaken your body intelligence and self-expression skills, January 16-18, 2018!

The tribe is gathering...

**Learning Societies unConference
Bhoomi College, Bangalore
26th to 30th December 2017**



Shikshantar, Bhoomi College and Swaraj University invites you to the [Learning Societies unConference](#) in Bangalore - a time to meet, exchange, unlearn and have fun!! Here is a small interview about the [LSUC](#) and [cool film](#).

Recent Events and Workshops

We hosted some really inspiring workshops and gatherings in the recent months:

- [Indian Multiversities Alliance](#): *We hosted the first meeting of the Multiversities Alliance which is a network of people creating alternative models of higher education across the Indian sub-continent.*
- [Swaraj Wisdom Talks with Satish Kumar](#): *We had a beautiful 2 days with Satish Kumar, a former Jain monk and long-term peace and environment activist, founder of Schumacher College UK and editor of Resurgence magazine who shared his life stories with the larger community.*
- [The Emperor Has No Clothes-Hacking the Education System Fellowship](#): *We hosted this two-month summer fellowship run by Shikshantar. This is a platform to design and implement projects that will disrupt the existing education/factory schooling system and promote alternative pathways of self-designed learning.*

Program - Experiments and Experiences

We welcomed the **Eighth Cohort of Khojis (K8)** in August. The cohort of 15 enthusiastic youth have spent a fruitful and enriching time in their first meet followed by a dynamic Learning Journey to Pune. Some of the highlights included:

- The cohort broadened their perspective on food and the food industry through a 5 day workshop hosted by a food activist, Purvi Vyas. Intense discussions, movie screenings and a visit to the Saras Dairy (factory) farm left the khojis with some powerful food for thought. The cohort also carried out various food experiments like cooking with millets and many varieties of salads.- The energy of a playful child came alive when the khojis engaged in a Gamethon - playing cooperative games in public spaces to build a container of trust. After learning to play amongst themselves, the khojis shared the spirit of friendship with the children in the nearby village and with the city folks.- Ravi Gulati, the founder of Manzil in Delhi, engaged both the cohorts for an entire day through an interesting game that brought out group dynamics and a different perspective of power and hierarchy,



Re-birth of ZOMSA

The khojis of the 7th and 8th cohort worked together on rebuilding the ruins of Zomsa - a khoji hangout area at Tapovan. They worked hard not just to renovate but totally re-create and re-design the space. Bringing their spirit of innovation, they embedded lighting systems under the ground and designed a cool smoking system that makes a gentle flow of smoke (created by burning citronella and neem) beneath the seating of Zomsa to keep the mosquitoes away! Since they re-inaugurated Zomsa Cafe, they have served yummy snacks and herbal teas on several occasions in the evenings. We next look forward to repairing the seating area - do come and join us!

The Seventh Cohort of Khojis (who are in Year 2 now) is laden with enthusiastic and powerful hosts and facilitators. Seeing their strength, we invited the khojis to bring in more deeply the practice of a co-created and a peer supported program. The khojis hosted processes to understand varied needs of each member of the cohort and how they can take more leadership in designing their time together in the khoji meet, including agreements on how to better live and work together as a community.

- In this meet, one of the main effort was connecting khojis with their deeper visions through various processes such as Nature Quest – which included being in nature (solo) and fasting

for 16+ hours with an intention which was close to their heart. The output of these processes became a basis for planning their self-designed learning time and planning their future projects.

- Khojis visited organisations and individuals to hear about their passions and interests and how they find balance in their work and life. Each of us also shared with one another at least two of our favourite projects from around the world that have deeply inspired us. This brought out an interesting collage of different projects running through several causes such as food, inequality, generosity, human rights, education, alternative currency, etc.

Some of the inspiring startup projects that the seventh cohort have started working on include:

"The Road Less Traveled" is an inspiring hitch-hiking learning journey for young change makers who have a drive to contribute to the society. Akarsh and Sumit began their first learning journey on the 21st of October from Udaipur to Himachal Pradesh.

Driven by his passion to bring acceptance for the LGBTQIA+ community in India, Harsh Khanabadosh started **"Shades of the Sea"**. Shades of the Sea aims to create a platform for all of us to discuss and share words on LGBTQIA+ individuals, understanding them as humans and supporting them to come out with their gifts and talents. It also aims to serve as a platform to interact with the untouched/marginalized part of our society.



#KALAKUMBH was a bright beginning to the second year for Khojis from the seventh cohort. An art festival and art residency for a week, this event was fully organized and led by khojis. The idea behind Kalakumbh was for khojis to co-create and co-learn with other artists in the serenity of Tapovan Ashram. For 6 days, the khojis hosted, learned and co-created with artists involved in singing, filmmaking, storytelling and theatre. It was also a time to connect with the life stories of the artists and have conversation about art and life. To conclude a beautiful week of art, nature, music and friendship, they held a **KALAMELA@Fatehsagar** inviting local people of Udaipur to channel their inner muse and join in singing Meera bhajans, sharing stories, playing games and engaging in live group painting.

Naya Aagaz - A new beginning!!

We celebrated the initiation of two years for the sixth cohort. We had a beautiful Milan with the presentations and walk-through of the cohort along with celebration and fun. We are excited to share some of the projects that the khojis began in their second year and are continuing to engage with.

Sangitha, a 17 yr old girl from Patna, started an alternative after-school learning center for children from her [Manjhi/Musahar](#) community called **Mastishala**. Through alternative education, she wants to build the children's relationship with their parents, improve expression skills, remove fear and social isolation, and empower the children.



Bringing together his love for adventure and his skill of cooking, **Yash Sapre** joined **Seescap**, an organisation that conducts adventure camps. Yash Sapre is exploring his love for cooking, travel, working with people/children and nature through his job as head chef in the camps.

Stanzin and Samyuktha, are currently doing **earth building** in Samyuktha's village. Keeping in mind their values and interest in eco-architecture, they are building a house using the earth bag technique.



Abhiram, from Andhra Pradesh, began his exploration in organic farming since he joined Swaraj. Taking his passion ahead, he is now working at **Aranya Alternatives**, a Permaculture farm in Hyderabad. He is also helping to organize the International Permaculture Conference.

Taaka is an initiative by **Nidhi Naik** from Goa. It is a creative pathway for her to explore her love for playing with colours, fabric and patterns. She is weaving together her joyful memories of colours with the craft and skill of the local tailors of Bhulana, Udaipur, to bring forth a collection of bags, pouches and organizers.



This is a Connection Map of the various places the sixth cohort has explored on mentorships and learning journeys over the past two years.



Aagazi Reunion

Swaraj had its first ever alumni reunion in September. The 3-day gathering brought together khojis from different parts of the country to: reminisce their days as in Swaraj University, to share the current journeys they are on and the challenges they

are facing, and to contribute ideas on the future of the Swaraj University living experiment. Some of the challenges that the former khojis raised were: the lack of host communities with deep processes outside of Swaraj University, their fears of losing core values around sustainability, community and healthy living, and difficulties in finding a life partner who understands them. The gathering ended with an amazing collaborative session where current khojis and former ones shared the projects they are working on and the support they are seeking. This brought out an array of offers of support, contacts and ideas. Through this process, lots of current khojis particularly received strong support for their mentorships and startup projects.

What are former Khojis are up to???

***Arti Bhandari** was in the 5th cohort and is currently living in Nagpur. She is an **expressive arts facilitator** exploring and exposing young people to the profound healing power of the arts. Theater, dance movement, visual arts and rhythm are some of the tools being used by Arti for creating varied unlearning and healing spaces. Arti has been conducting open and collaborative workshops with colleges and schools in Nagpur where she offers children the opportunity to engage in themes like reflection, body-mind integration, life possibilities, social perspectives, etc.*

Madhur Anand, from the 3rd cohort, co-founded **Sehatvan** in Bhopal where he manages the forest space and hosts healing workshops. [Sehatvan](#) is a place to explore means of slowing down ageing, reversing lifestyle diseases and practicing eco-living. His recent project, [Sahaj Sehat](#), is an open source knowledge base. It shares all the latest scientific health researches in Hindi through easy to understand educational videos. He is also working to spread the idea of eco-living among youth through different events.

Dhaval Shukla, from the 2nd cohort and living in Ahmedabad, believes that **map-making** is a powerful tool to bring communities together to solve problems, to change perspectives from a micro level to a macro level, and to understand how cultures and people have evolved. Studying and working at SU helped him realise that he has a knack for understanding and presenting information to people. Being fascinated with maps since he was 6 years old, he decided to bring together his childhood passion with his values that have been deepened over the years. Working on maps has also helped him find a creative side of himself. He is currently developing several maps for the city of Ahmedabad.

Swaraj also welcomes some new team members on board !!!

Shruti Tharayil has joined us as a Year 1 facilitator. She is a co-facilitator/co-organiser of various Yes! World Jams, India and a co-founder of [Rela - Rhythms of Change](#), Andhra Pradesh, engaging with tribal rural communities.

Asawari Mathur, from the 6th cohort, has joined us as an intern. Asawari has been an intricate part of [Aarohi Life Education](#), an alternative learning center in Bangalore.

Mohit Trivedi and Bhavna Trivedi with their three adorable unschooled daughters have shifted to the Tapovan campus. The lively couple successfully ran a pay-it-forward enterprise called [Cafe Satori](#) in Udaipur. Mohit, Bhavna and the kids play an active role as *mitras* on campus!

These new faces have brought in a lot of new and colorful energies to the program.



Experimenting with Leadership and Deepening Swaraj

Many of you know Swaraj as a space of radical learning, a place that is redefining what learning and living means for young seekers and explorers (*khajis*). However, little is known of its conscious practices and experiments to make decisions about running the university.

This year, the Swaraj experiment is being taken to the next level to deepen the Swaraj spirit of self-rule. Inspired by multiple examples around the world and in Indian villages, we have brought in a system of co-holding within which we aspire to experience a space which is co-owned, governed, and run by all who work-live in Swaraj University. In this model, there is no one person that makes systems, defines roles, etc. for the organization, but a rather collective who is making decisions by consensus.

We are only six months into this experiment and still learning to figure how we work in this way. We have observed some challenges in: establishing a common understanding of what is asked for and needed in each role, who has what decision-making powers, how often and how long to meet, how to share decisions across the larger community, etc. We are also discovering and learning about many gifts that we as individuals and as a team bring together in the process of co-holding.

We envision that over the next couple of years Swaraj University will be fully run by the former *khajis*. We currently step into this experiment with a talented mixed team of old and new faces.

We are deeply grateful to many of our well-wishers and supporters who have humbled us with their offerings and valuable resources.

Warm Regards and Gratitude,
Team Swaraj!