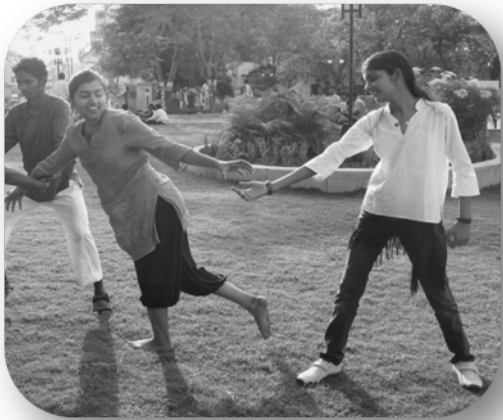




SWARAJ UNIVERSITY:

*A transformational approach to
learning and leadership*



Imagine if the youth of today...

- Were equipped with the skills to deal creatively with complexity, uncertainty, collapse and change in the world?
- Had a personal vision of and commitment to building healthy and resilient communities and lifestyles?
- Were able to put their ideas and dreams for social change into real action?



Mission

The mission of this university is to nurture youth leaders who would be able to start 'green' enterprises and movements in their own local communities, and experiment with new ways of personally and collectively living with *swaraj** in the 21st century.

**swaraj – It is a call to regain control of the unique and inter-dependent 'self' – our self-respect, self- mastery and self-reliance - and to co-create healthy and resilient communities.*



Self-design
learning

Swaraj University uses a self–design learning approach in which each learner is encouraged...

- To explore their learning styles, **questions** and **passions** without the institutional constraints that smother interest and joy, and breed mediocrity
- To engage consciously with **unlearning, *jugaad*** (playful improvisation), **deep dialogue and gift culture** processes
- To design individualized learning webs that are based in **authentic** real world trans–disciplinary projects and inter–generational relationships
- To build **feedback** processes and mechanisms to reflect on their learning
- To use the close, supportive learner **community** as a base from which to engage with local, regional and global communities

The 'campus'

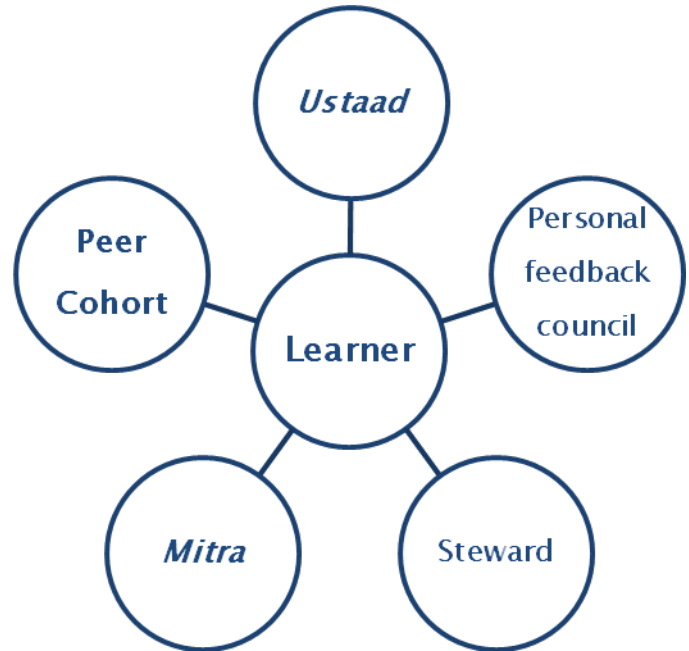
At Swaraj University we believe that the world is our campus. To get the best out of different communities and get the opportunity to meet inspiring people, for the first time ever, we are starting the concept of rotating campus.



The learners will converge together every few months to cross-fertilize their learnings at a rotating campus with hubs in Rajasthan (Udaipur), Gujarat (Baroda/Ahmedabad), Maharashtra (Nashik) and Madhya Pradesh (Indore) to start.

The support structure

Our research and experience indicates that a strong support structure is essential for self-design learning to unfold. Each learner will co-create their own personalized support network.



Ustaads

The heart of the program would lie in intimate one-on-one relationships with *ustaaads*. Learners will be placed with cutting edge leaders in their respective fields, who are able to engage with youth in a true spirit of co-learning and friendship, across a range of dynamic situations and contexts. Some of our *Ustaads* are:

Claude Alvares – *Goa*

Claude is known for his critical writing on the features of modernity and education. His passion for journalism and activism has led to a unique publishing house and a book store which concentrates on alternative themes on education, environment and several such issues that are ignored by the mainstream. Claude is also knowledgeable on environmental legal issues and has made a big contribution in maintaining Goa's ecological balance.





Anju Uppal– *Ambarnath, Maharashtra*

Anju Uppal, along with her husband- Probir, runs a media organisation, Media Matters, that cares for the rights and dignity of the marginalised communities. This organization is mainly involved in making interesting participatory plays on different societal issues. She is a writer, theatre person, community media activist and a sensitive mother.

Deepak Suchde– *Harda, Madhya Pradesh*

Dipak Suchde is not your typical farmer. One thing that strikes when you meet him is his passion and insurmountable knowledge about eco-farming. He has an art of drawing people into the world of soil, plants, and the eco system. He is busy spreading the need to enrich the degraded soil made worse by use of unlimited chemicals and greed so that we could claim our



right to organic living.

Learners own unique self-designed learning webs would be complemented by:

- Learners' gatherings
- Skill workshops
- Community service projects
- Learning journeys
- International youth dialogues
- Organizational internships

Each learner will build their own portfolio that will be comprised of recommendations, self-reflections, published work, photographs, etc.



This effort not only proposes to re-define the processes of learning but also the content and the outcomes. **Youth will prepare themselves to start their own green ventures in their communities rather than merely getting a job.** We honor principles of ecological sustainability, cultural diversity, social justice and localization. Examples of key entrepreneurial areas include:

1 Organic farming and stores

2 Zero waste crafts

3 Community media

4 SELF-HEALING TECHNIQUES AND PRODUCTS

5 Cooking with indigenous local grains and healthy foods

6 Eco-building and renewable energy

7 Natural fabrics and fashions

8 Beyond schooling



Who are the learners?

They are young adults from throughout India, who are interested in co-creating their own learning paths and, in the spirit of Gandhi's *lok sevaks*, wish to serve their local communities and the larger world.



**lok sevaks – people committed to the ideals of volunteerism, community activism and trusteeship.*

Youth leading change...

Manoj Prajapat is a 21 year-old gourmet chef who walked out of school after grade 10. He has developed his own local community-based catering service to bring the healthy, local and organic food movement into Udaipur.



Sandeep Chavan is a community activist. He has been working for the past 3 years on bringing zero waste and upcycling practices into local communities in Nashik.

Sukhmani Kohli is a theatre artist who has been working with local children to introduce upcycling art and creativity in Chandigarh. She has developed an innovative youth volunteer-run learning café.



Mukesh Jat has initiated a learning center which produces and promotes vermicomposting and works with local farmers in Madhya Pradesh to spread organic farming.

After the self–design study. . .

We envision that the graduates:

will inspire those around them with self–confidence and personal commitment,

will have deep hands–on knowledge,

will have skills to creatively mobilize resources,

and will be able to take their ideas into action to build more healthy and resilient communities.

Youth will have the vision and practical skills to:

- Start a local community–based enterprise of their dream and raise resources for it as well
- Work for (and shake up) leading social organizations in India and abroad
- Get fellowships for launching social innovation ideas
- Be an active part of larger social movements

Faces behind this initiative:



A Team Committed to Systemic Change

Nitin Paranjpe is one of the founder-members of Abhivyakti: Media for Development. For more than 20 years, his passion has been around supporting community media for deeper personal reflection and social dialogue in local communities. Most recently, Nitin developed and ran an innovative youth fellowship program with the Berkana Exchange.

Reva Dandage has been passionately involved with Democratic Education since 2002. Her interest to understand the pedagogy of self-directed learning has taken her to several alternative and free schools around the world. She also experienced being a self-directed student during her graduate studies at Goddard College.





Manish Jain is the founder–coordinator of Shikshantar Andolan which has been significant in shaping the larger unschooling movement in South Asia. His passion is in the areas of organic farming, healthy cooking, zero waste living and community media. He was one of the visionaries behind UNESCO’s Learning Without Frontiers programme for the 21st century.

Deborah Frieze is co–president of The Berkana Institute, USA and developed the Berkana Exchange. She is passionate about entrepreneurship, self–organizing systems and new models of leadership. She has an MBA from Harvard Business School.



Swaraj University is a unique educational vision whose time has come in India. It will build on the traditions of Gandhi's Nai Taleem and Tagore's Shanti Niketan and set a new trend for the 21st century. **We invite you to be in touch with us to explore how you can contribute your wisdom, resources and relationships to support this revolution in learning.**

The volume of education continues to increase, yet so do pollution, exhaustion of resources, and the dangers of ecological catastrophe. If still more education is to save us, it would have to be education of a different kind: an education that takes us into the depth of things.

E.F. Schumacher

For more information write to: swarajuni@gmail.com

