

Impact Assessment Study

Long term impact assessment of Swadharma programme on participants' lives (Aug 2020)



Auroville Campus Initiative

TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

www.aci.auroville.org
www.swadharma.auroville.org

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Executive Summary

Swadharma is a 5-week transformative learning programme offered by Auroville Campus Initiative (ACI) since 2016 for the youth to come, live and learn about various models in Auroville (an international township near Pondicherry) and in the process find their own true calling, laying the foundation of self-directed lifelong learning. By 2020, ACI completed 8 batches of Swadharma programme (total 120 alumni).

The challenges in the world today need a paradigm shift in the way in which we approach them. Primarily we see initiatives that address only the outer manifestations of challenges such as poverty, hunger and environmental issues. But as long as the root of these problems, which is human consciousness, is not addressed, these issues will continue to arise in one form or another. Swadharma intends to foster this inner shift and integrate both the inner and outer worlds in the youth (ages 18-30) by offering an education that is not only for the mind but for all parts of the being; an education that serves the soul, not just the market.

This study captures the qualitative and quantitative shifts in the inner and outer lives of the students during and after the unfolding of the programme and the resilience of these shifts over time. The learnings from this also serves as feedback to tune the Swadharma journey as it matures over time.

Attracting young seekers internationally from all walks of life, the diverse group creates a rich peer to peer learning experience and this is kept in mind during the selection process. The key demographics of Swadharma being - Working Professionals (45%), Students (40%) and those on a sabbatical or gap year (15%). The current professional background of the students varies from artists and therapists to architects, engineers and those in non-profits. Majority of the participants (80%) are drawn to the programme to find a deeper sense of connection with themselves and find the next step in their lives, a sense of passion or purpose that moves the needle towards a more awakened world. Swadharma being held in Auroville is also a significant contributing factor.

85% of the participants revealed that the programme was a turning point in their lives and 75% reported that their biggest takeaway was an increased level of self-awareness, the key to transformation in both the inner and outer worlds. Sustainable habits and importance of community building were the other biggest takeaways. 4 out of 5 participants said that they discovered a new inner gift and reconnected to an existing hobby after the programme, showcasing the power of the programme to unlock hidden creative potentials. In terms of outer manifestations, 35% of the participants reported a divergence in their field of work after the programme, others said they found more depth & clarity within their existing fields or a sense of direction to pursue. This indicates how the increased self-awareness gradually creates clarity in the outer world. Participants picked up many helpful practices for mental and physical well-being that are practiced and encouraged during the programme.

60% of the students picked up journaling for self-reflection. Other practices were meditation, yoga, spending time in nature and authentic sharing/listening. Another significant observation was that 86% of the participants said that they dropped an unhelpful habit, some of them being - overeating, smoking, excessive drinking and procrastinating.

One of the most meaningful findings was that 95% of the participants recommended the programme to at least 2 others - it reveals the genuine impact of the learning journey.

Auroville

Auroville is an international township near Puducherry on the Coromandel Coast of India. Founded in 1968, Auroville is based on the vision of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo and is endorsed by UNESCO and Government of India as an ongoing experiment in human unity. The Auroville Foundation was established in 1988 by an Act of Parliament of the Government of India.



The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity – in diversity. Today Auroville is recognised as the first and only internationally endorsed ongoing experiment in human unity and transformation of consciousness, also concerned with - and practically researching into - sustainable living and the future cultural, environmental, social and spiritual needs of mankind.

Over the years, Auroville has attracted seekers from all over the world, diverse in nature but united by a quest for higher living, over 3000 have made it their permanent home nurturing it with their love, hope, sorrow, and labour. The seeds of hope and labour and diversity have matured into a robust life ecosystem, not free of all problems but with many creative alternates.

The regenerative culture of Auroville has enabled it to accumulate a tremendous amount of wealth to share with the world.

Swadharna

The global challenges we face today call for people who are capable of creative, holistic and innovative thinking, people who are self-aware, and whose identity is grounded in their relationship to the whole. Overcoming these challenges requires the passionate commitment and engagement of young people.

Based out of Auroville - an international community with 50+ years of practical experience in working towards building a new society, the Swadharna programme is a response to the call for an education for our times. It offers young seekers – age 18 to 30 – the opportunity to embark on a transformative learning adventure with the goal of self-discovery. The aim of Swadharna is to create a social field which shifts students from ego identity to their truer self while being inspired by radical experimentation and creative alternatives in sustainability and social change to embody change themselves. The program is based on the idea that helping young people discover who they are and what brings them alive is not only meaningful at an individual level, but also essential for building a socially just, environmentally sustainable, and consciously awakened future. It's conducted as a 5 weeks residential programme.

Objectives of Impact Assessment

Since Swadharna is a transformative learning programme with the goal of self-discovery, we were keen on studying the impact it has been generating in the lives of our participants over the period of time. We observe changes during and after the unfolding of the programme but the objective of this study is to understand which and how resilient the takeaways from the Swadharna journey are. What are the underlying patterns? What are we able to deliver well? What could we do better?

The 1st Swadharna programme took place in August 2016. As of the date of this study, Swadharna has been running for 4+ years now and 8 batches have gone through, which is a substantial time for shifts to mature and the study to be meaningful.

Feedback is an integral part of our design process, and the learnings from Swadharna would help us tune our future programmes since Swadharna is a one-of-its-kind foundational programme from Auroville and has served as means of inspiration for the wider community interested in integral education.

The secondary objective of the study is community building, as a kind of reminder to the participants of their Swadharna and creating a means for them to reflect on their journey. The patterns help find a sense of solidarity in the community.

Methodology

The study was done via a survey sent out to the community members. The survey was designed keeping in mind Swadharma's learning objective. The learning objective is intended to be two-fold:

Inner development

The inner development is envisioned to help the student to identify one's inner nature and true calling by developing self-awareness and self-mastery. This would provide the necessary inner foundation for engaging with the outer world to manifest one's dreams. It is to be understood that the development of self-awareness and self-mastery are lifelong processes and the Swadharma programme is only laying the foundations for the student to make this lifelong journey.

Outer manifestation

While the inner development enables the student to come in touch with one's own calling, the outer expression and manifestation require many generic knowledge and skills to actively and creatively engage with the world around to manifest one's dreams. To facilitate this the programme has been envisioned to provide knowledge and skills such as design thinking, communication, collaboration, leadership, global citizenship, and sustainable living.

The study was adapted to cover these domains of inner development and outer manifestation, consisting of both qualitative and quantitative questions, and divided into 4 sections:

1. Generic info
2. Reflections on the personal journey
3. Auroville and Swadharma community
4. Summary

The survey form can be found in the appendix. Following are some general stats to lay the foundation that the responses are a fair representation of the community with an overall response rate of **38%**.

Batch	Strength	No. of respondents
Aug 2016	11	3
Jan 2017	15	3
Aug 2017	17	5
Jan 2018	16	9
Aug 2018	15	5
Jan 2019	16	8
Aug 2019	17	8

Jan 2020	14	5
Lifetime	121	46

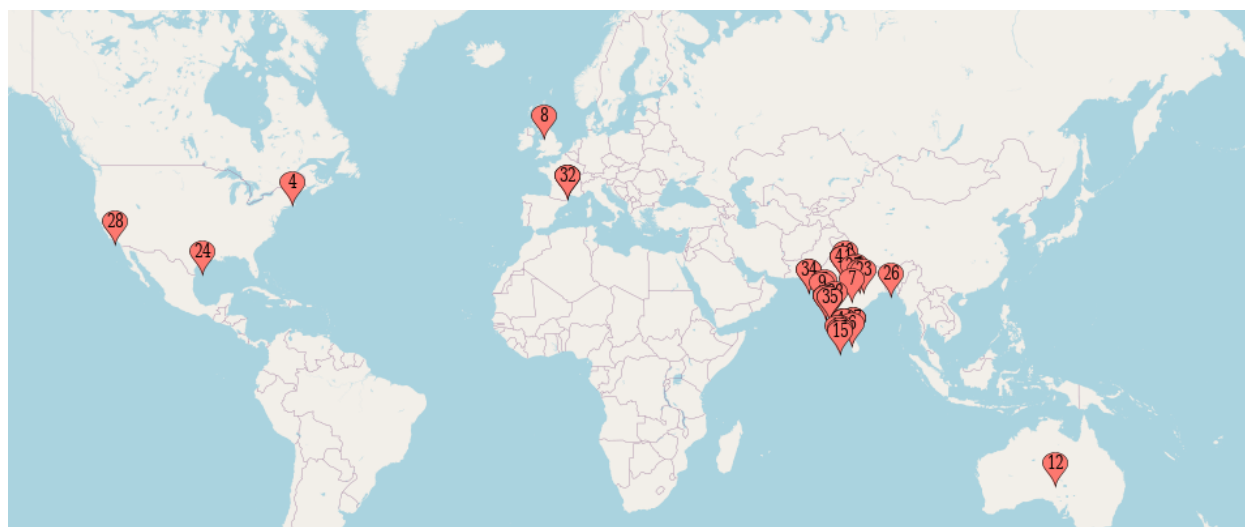
The participants surveyed were from 8 batches spread over a span of 4 years to 6 months post programme, the weighted average of time since Swadharma for the survey respondents is **2 years**.

Since the survey was partly composed of qualitative questions, the responses have been in some places slightly moderated to simplify for understanding, and recognising patterns, if any. Utmost attention has been paid to not lose the essence in the process.

Background of the respondents

Current place of residence of respondents

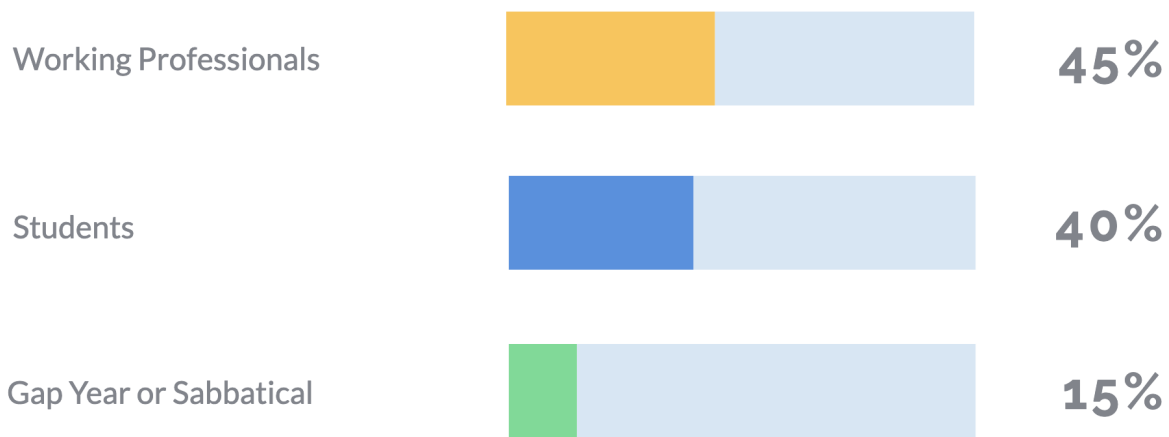
Swadharma programme was opened to accept international students from the 5th batch (Aug 2018) onwards.



Current place of residence of respondents

Contexts Swadharma participants come from

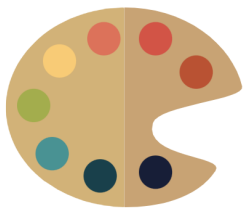
The participants come from all walks of life, and this enables a creative and potent group dynamic which is a key component of how learning happens through the Swadharma programme.



Working professionals, students and those on a gap year or a break are the key demographics of those joining Swadharma. This [graphic](#) in the Appendix captures in more detail the contexts the respondents came from before joining Swadharma.

Diverse Current Professional Backgrounds

Swadharma's strength is its diversity. The image below summarizes the recurring themes around the professional backgrounds of the participants at the time of the study. The rich diversity enables high-quality peer learning as it leads to a constructive coming together of people from different backgrounds and perspectives.



Arts and Therapy



Mental Health, Healing and Wellness



Architecture and Design



Non-Profits, Sustainability and Policy



Music, Film and Content Writing



Engineering, Teaching & Entrepreneurship

We aim at achieving a fine balance in the group dynamic during the selection process of a given batch. Refer to the [Appendix](#) for a more in depth view.

Findings

The findings have been distributed in 4 sections:

1. Snapshot
2. Inner Discovery
3. Outer Manifestation
4. Community

The general format of presentation of findings is the finding followed by insight or significance if any.

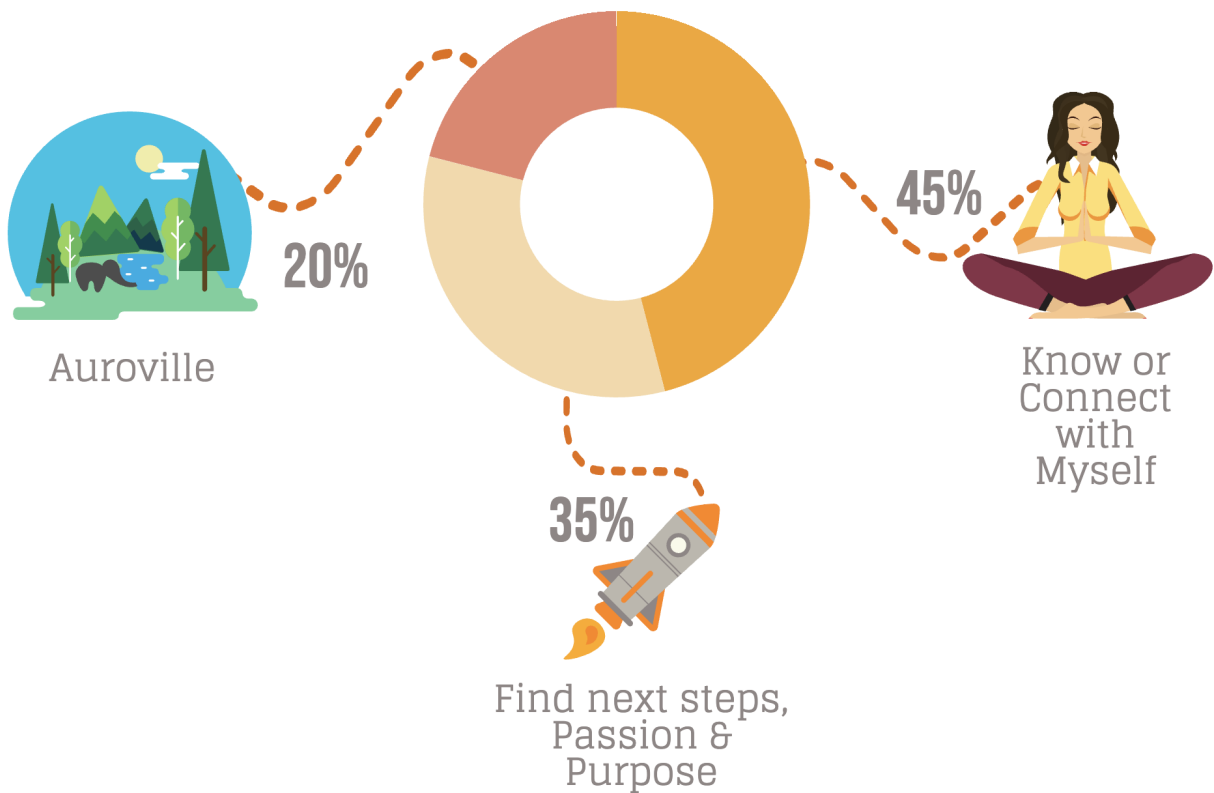
Snapshot

- What brought you to Swadharna?
- Your 3 biggest takeaways?
- Was Swadharna a turning point in your life?

What brought you to Swadharna?

Quoting some of the responses:

- *Seeking something. A strong pull towards the unknown & finding an anchor within.*
- *I was looking for my life's purpose or to be more specific I had completed my Undergrad and I had absolutely no idea where I was supposed to go after that.*
- *I was at a juncture where I was feeling suffocated with the ideologies with which I was brought up. I needed perspective and clarity in my life.*
- *I was in search of a new experience that would allow me a space to get to know myself better.*
- *Break after college.*
- *I wanted to educate myself in ways that seemed more important than college.*
- *The need to answer existential questions, introduction to sustainable living, a way out of daily confusions which extend to confusions regarding career path and to combat lack of motivation.*



The main recurring themes that are seen in the responses are

1. *To know and reconnect with oneself*

A sense of disconnect with one's feelings and identity is prevalent in today's busy world and seekers are drawn to Swadharma for a rare opportunity to pause and look within themselves.

2. *To find next steps in life, one's passion and purpose*

In a world filled with distractions and expectations from society, students are confused in terms of knowing what it is they truly want in their lives and Swadharma provides a setting in which these questions can be explored

3. *Context of Auroville*

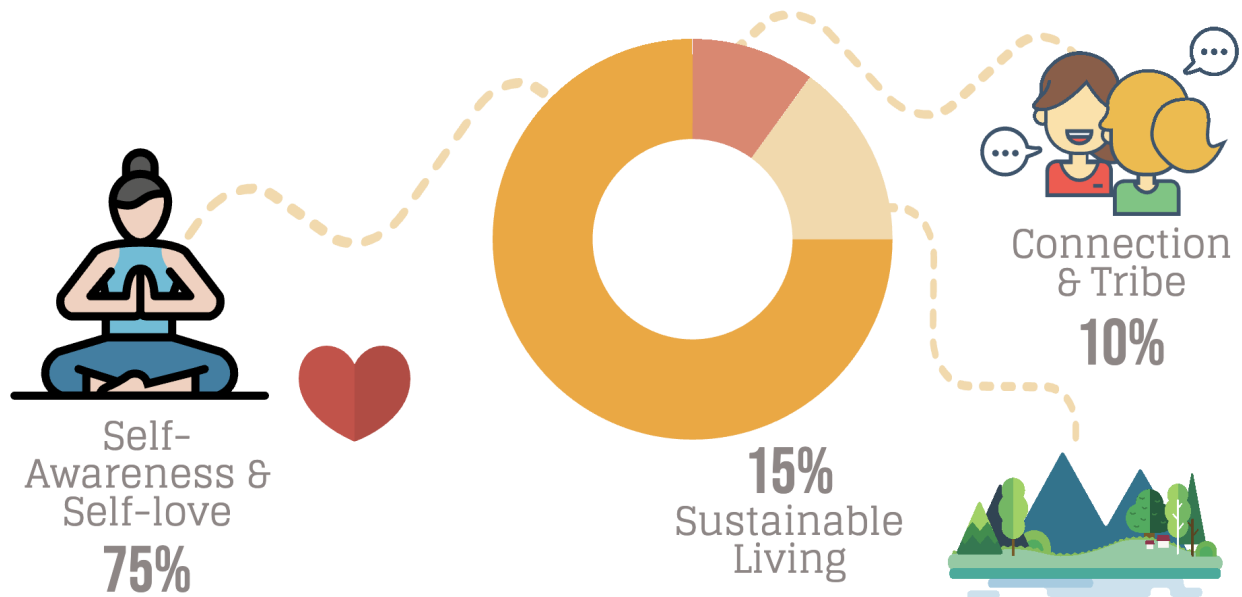
Students recognize the rich nurturing space that Auroville is and with the skilled residents here pursuing diverse passions, there is a tremendous opportunity for learning, guidance and mentoring.

The above reflects that we're clear in our communication and the participants we receive are in alignment with the intent of our messaging, which is a call to young people who find themselves

at crossroads, and wish to work on themselves towards a more awakened world. Find a more detailed breakdown of the responses in the [appendix](#).

3 biggest takeaways from Swadharna

The figure below reveals a keenness in the participants to become a better version of themselves by shifting something within, which is a direct validation of the programme philosophy that stands for transformation as an inside-out phenomenon. Quoting from the messaging of the programme, "those who want to transform the world by transforming themselves."



The key takeaways can be summarized as follows

1. *Self-awareness*

The programme consistently emphasises the critical importance of self-awareness. With the tools and practices shared in Swadharna, students quickly see how this awareness directly impacts every aspect of their lives and their productivity.

2. *Sustainability*

Swadharna gently shows the students how one can be caught up in an endless consumption and not see the different hidden destructive consequences to self, society and the environment. Being immersed in Auroville also inculcates a sustainable way of being to the students

3. *Connection & Tribe*

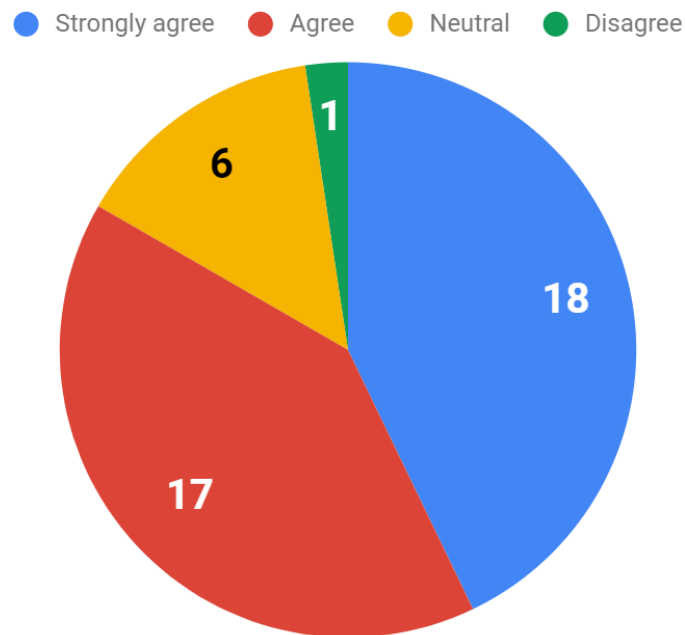
Going through an intimate 5-week journey with 10-15 other seekers and sharing vulnerabilities, joys & sorrows with each other really makes one understand the importance and beauty of having a tribe and having true connections.

The nature of the takeaways has an involuted sense or is an expression of inner values, meaning something that helps an individual cultivate a deeper self-knowing and build a life that's in better alignment with who they are and what they want in their life. This aligns well with the programme objective, the diversity of the responses reflects the fact that different individuals pick up different aspects from the programme as per where they are and what they need in their journey, which is a built-in acknowledgement in the programme design.

The most recurring takeaways reflect aspects touching the 3 key aspects of the programme: **Self, society, and environment**. A detailed compilation of the responses can be found in the [appendix](#).

Was Swadharna a turning point in your life?

The participants were asked, looking back, do they feel Swadharna was a turning point in their life. Out of the 42 responses received, 18 strongly agreed, 17 agreed, 6 were neutral, and 1 disagreed.



Swadharna as a turning point in life

An average score of 4.23/5 on whether the programme was a turning point reflects that the programme is offering something very unique and innovative. It places the individual at the centre of their development instead of social norms or industrial needs which is a novel and valuable experience for most individuals.

Inner Discovery

- Inner shifts
- Reconnected with an existing hobby
- Discovered a gift through Swadharma
- Dropped an unhelpful practice

Inner Shifts

The discovery of the inner self is a gradual layered process to arrive at the core of the being, like peeling the layers of an onion. Swadharma aims at supporting/initiating that process for those who have a seeking. The below list reflects a shift in self-awareness, i.e., distinguishing between the various parts of being and getting in touch with the presence of the inner guide revealing one's potential and purpose. This opens the doors of intuition and inspiration setting in motion self-directed work in harmony with one's own nature.

Key Inner Shifts



Higher degree of self-awareness



Deeper connection with oneself and others



More centered, confidence in oneself and trust in one's path



Dropping away of unhelpful patterns and people

The inverse of the shifts translates into degeneration of the being, and the shifts lead the individual on the path of regeneration and connection.

The aspect of connection with self and others, self-care, and self-awareness reflect as the strongest points of impact of the programme resulting in a variety of shifts across different aspects of an individual's life. The journey is a cumulation of several shifts over a period of time, moving from peak to higher peak. The inner shifts as captured from the responses validate that something of the inner material gets touched through the Swadharma journey and has a substantial resilience as the shifts continue to reflect even after 2 years. A detailed compilation of the responses can be found in the [appendix](#).

Reconnected with an existing hobby

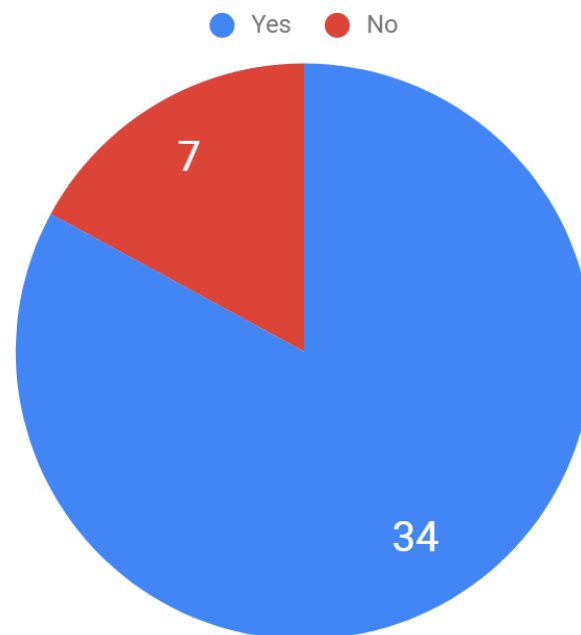


Figure 4 - Reconnected with an existing hobby

We encourage our participants to look for things that make them come alive, we encourage them to drop the idea, but how would I make a career out of it? The premise is we all have unique inborn gifts, things that bring us delight and make us experience a state of flow, some we've already experienced while others are lying dormant, yet to manifest. It could be things like playing football, singing, painting, poetry, tending to plants, things that put us into a state of flow and allow us to really experience the moment without overthinking.

Over time, as we grow up and life takes over, and partly by the design of our social context which doesn't particularly encourage the unique in the individual but levies its agenda on their growth, these things get left behind.

Via active reflection and enabling a safe space we encourage our participants to access the flow state by means of several activities like talking to the inner child, reflecting on experiences that have made them come alive in the past, sharing circles, experiential workshops, and an overall healthy environment. Such moments allow the learner to create windows that can penetrate the mental and emotional blocks and bring forth the experience of flow.

Additionally, we encourage them to recognise the value of these experiences which acts as a natural anchor to revisit these things. We also support them with modules like habit-building that can help integrate these practices in their lives. Hobbies help unwind and relax and are a great act of self-care.

34 of the 41 respondents reconnected with an existing hobby through Swadharna, hence, this is a very positive indicator. The most recurring hobbies reconnected to include writing, poetry, art, painting, music, cycling, reading, yoga, dancing, etc.



MUSIC



ART & PAINTING



**READING, WRITING &
POETRY**



YOGA



CYCLING



DANCING

This is a strong indication of coming in touch with the soul. Art, poetry, music and literature and the *perfect tools for the soul's education*.

Discovered a gift through Swadharma

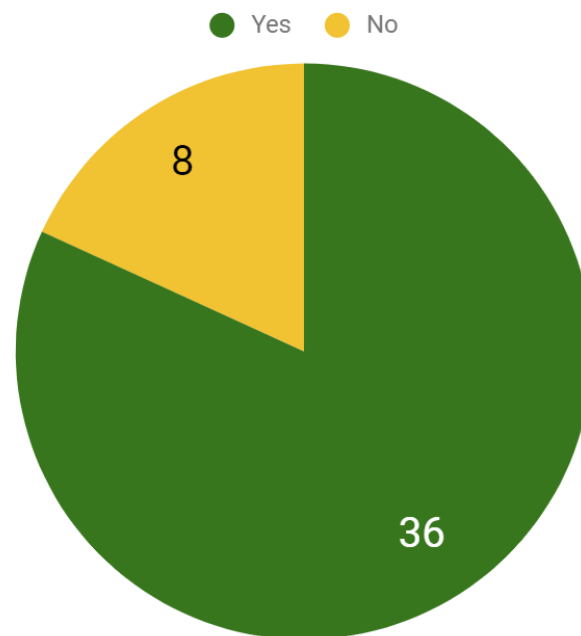


Figure 5 - Discovered a gift through Swadharma

Since we've already built the case above, we all have in us unique inborn gifts some of which we haven't yet realised. The faculty's experience and peer support & sharing encourage natural capacities in individuals to come forth. Our philosophy is to encourage the positive, it helps the learner become aware of the pattern in their positives which they otherwise think of as ordinary, more often than not.

The programme offers a diverse set of opportunities for natural strengths to show up like weekly presentations, group responsibilities, recognising values, soul forces, active listening and supporting each other, one-on-one conversations with the faculty. The participants are also required to take up a 10-day long project where they work on manifesting an idea that inspires them, which acts as a great means for some of them to discover their unique interests/strengths in the process. Some of the responses we received are very unique, below are a few from a list of many.

The ability to visualize in great depth, I thought it was common.

Doodling can be used for anything. You can listen when you doodle hence you have deeper conversations with people. I have a gift to sort problems by doodling. It's like a mental massage.

Through Swadharma, I discovered that I have a fair ability to communicate verbally. This was mainly because of the weekly presentations we had during Swadharma. I also feel like I discovered that I'm more of a people's person. I wasn't aware of this fondness for people before.

Strength type, Photography, Connecting with people

Thanks to the mentors and friends at Auroville, I know that I understand emotions on a very deep level. I have a high level of maturity, and I am extremely sensitive, which can be both good and bad, depending on the situation. Simplicity is one of my biggest values, in all aspects of my life, including graphic design :)

Manoj once told me, when we were sitting at the Visitors' Centre, that I have a very good ability to handle Life's challenges, whatever they may be. These are words I will never forget, and they always come to mind when I'm stuck.

I became more confident in my ability to communicate ideas and stories, and that I can actually bond with others more deeply than I thought.

Swadharma has made me a little more independent and open-minded.

36 of 44 respondents said they discovered an inner gift through Swadharma.

Outer Manifestation

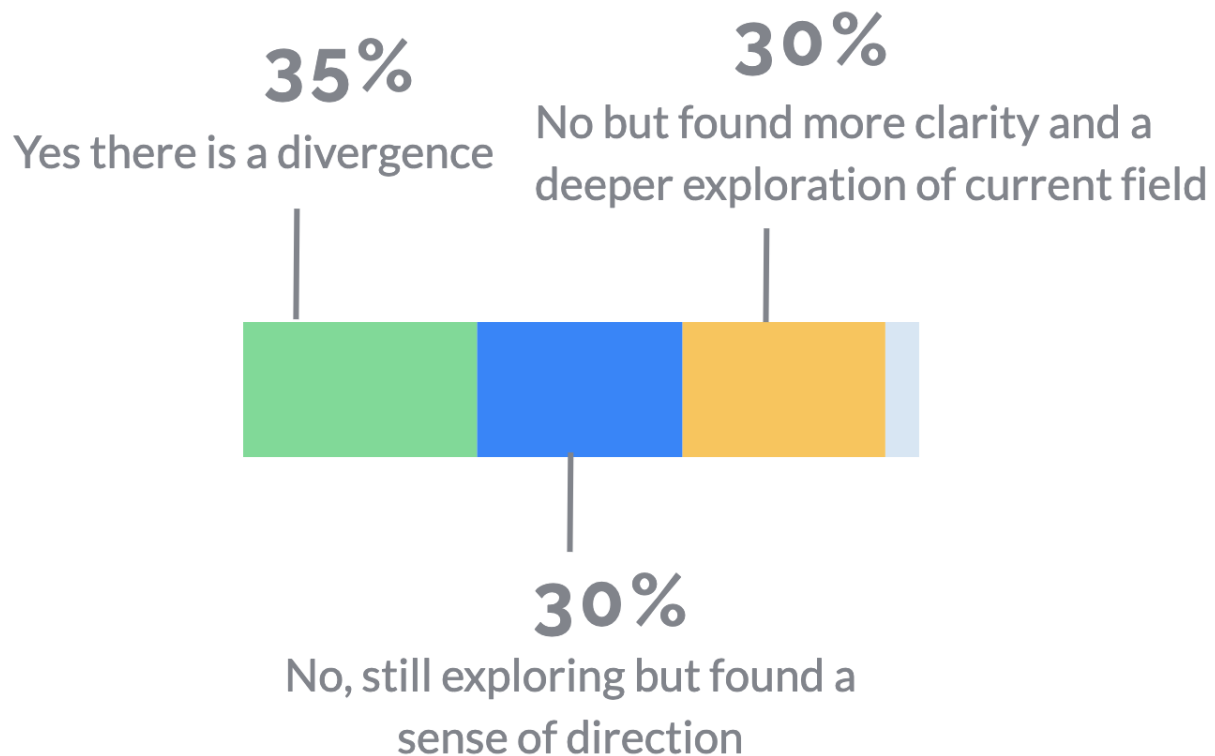
- Divergence in field of work
- Helpful practices developed through Swadharma
- Dropping of unhelpful practices
- Challenges in transitioning learnings

Divergence in field of work

While it's not easy to leave the comfort of a settled job, many participants already exhibit a great amount of courage who choose to take up a programme like Swadharma. This is a very important parameter of evaluation since roughly 1 in 2 participants come looking for the next steps in life, seeking to find their passion, gaining perspective, clarity, purpose and meaning in life as can be seen from what brought you to Swadharma section.

It is encouraging to see the number of divergences and overall satisfaction level in the field of work plus the spirit of exploration and the emergence of clarity for the participants in the long run. The results are well aligned with the motto of Swadharma, and validate its approach of helping the learner connect with their inner guide which triggers a life long journey and several shifts in the outer life. An in depth view of the responses can be found in the [appendix](#).

Divergence in Field of Work



We went a step further and asked the participants about the changes in their approach to work. Here are a few recurring responses we received: dealing with failure better, looking for value alignment in work, more confidence, listening to myself, greater clarity, perspective, creativity, patience, more organised, authenticity, work as offering, and many more.

Quoting some of the responses received to share insights on the unique and subtle ways Swadharma has impacted the lives of the participants.

There's definitely a huge divergence. Swadharma and the exposure I got in Auroville opened a world of new possibilities for me. It also gave me the confidence to explore my interest in Ecology and the Natural World. I feel like Swadharma was a door for me: from one world to another.

I think Swadharma encouraged me to be able to pursue music on a non-traditional path that was unique to me. I was doing music before but did not have an idea on how I wanted to further pursue it.

I have definitely diversified my field of interests after Swadharma and also got a newfound interest in my original field of study.

There is a partial divergence, I have decided to pursue my previous field of work, but still continue to work on my new found interest along with it. I have taken this path as I need to sustain myself financially while I continue to work for my interests.

I guess my journey was a bit more circular than divergent. I always knew what I wanted to do but I got lost on the way and swadharna (and especially my time in Auroville) helped me find my path again.

Yes, totally! After Swadharna I did feel a bit lost; maybe because in reality, things are not as easy as they are in one's head. But eventually, I made up my mind and with the support of my loved ones I was able to explore my new passions.

Swadharna instilled in me a great learning and process which is to be the extension of your own work or visa versa. Which helps me work on myself as a person also. Earlier I would have kept work and self different.

Helpful practices developed through Swadharna

Swadharna in the context of Auroville offers a unique environment which naturally encourages healthy behaviours and practices. But the challenge is transitioning them after the programme when the participants are on their own, back to the context they came from, without the active and immersive community support.

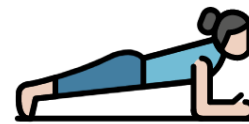


Journalling & Self-reflection

Picked up by 60%
of participants



Meditation & Mindfulness



Yoga and Physical Wellness



Listening & Authentic Sharing



Following Intuition



Spending time in Nature

Therefore, we lay a lot of emphasis on habit building as understanding habit-building enables long term changes and can act as anchors through the ups and downs of the journey. Practices people pick from Swadharma are shown in the image below. These practices are what anchor the participants in times of distress and keep that forward momentum going.

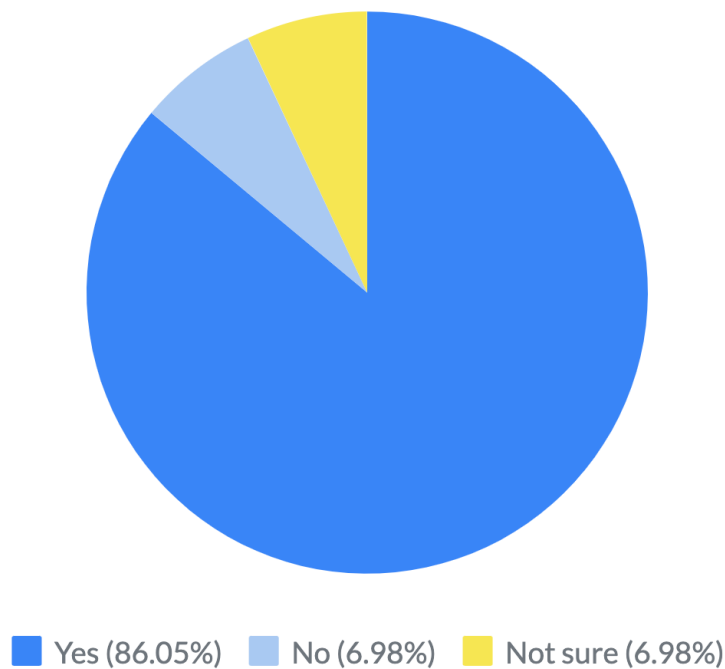
Swadharma provides frameworks and tools that the participants can use to develop habits and feel the rewards and the power of these healthy habits. A detailed view of the responses can be found in the [appendix](#).

Dropping unhelpful practices

The underlying idea is to create a space to become more conscious and self-aware, and a natural byproduct is dropping what's unhelpful (at least a part of it). Through the course of the programme, we touch on a wide range of the psychological spectrum spanning physical, emotional, and mental aspects, and take the participants through the degeneration and regeneration of these.

Our approach is not labelling this or that as bad, but helping cultivate a self-awareness that provides the strength and clarity on what an individual needs at a given point in time and what is not serving them, those things can be let go of.

Dropped an Unhelpful Practice?



What are the things keeping them from the version of themselves they would like to be? It's not a forceful deletion but a letting go from a place of deeper self-knowing. This is also aided by the habit-building module. A healthy environment, supportive community, nature, reflection, activities, mentor support, etc. support this process for the learners. Below is a tally of the responses.

Unhelpful Practices Dropped



Overeating, junk eating & wastage



Self-doubt, self-judgement & overthinking



Smoking and excess drinking



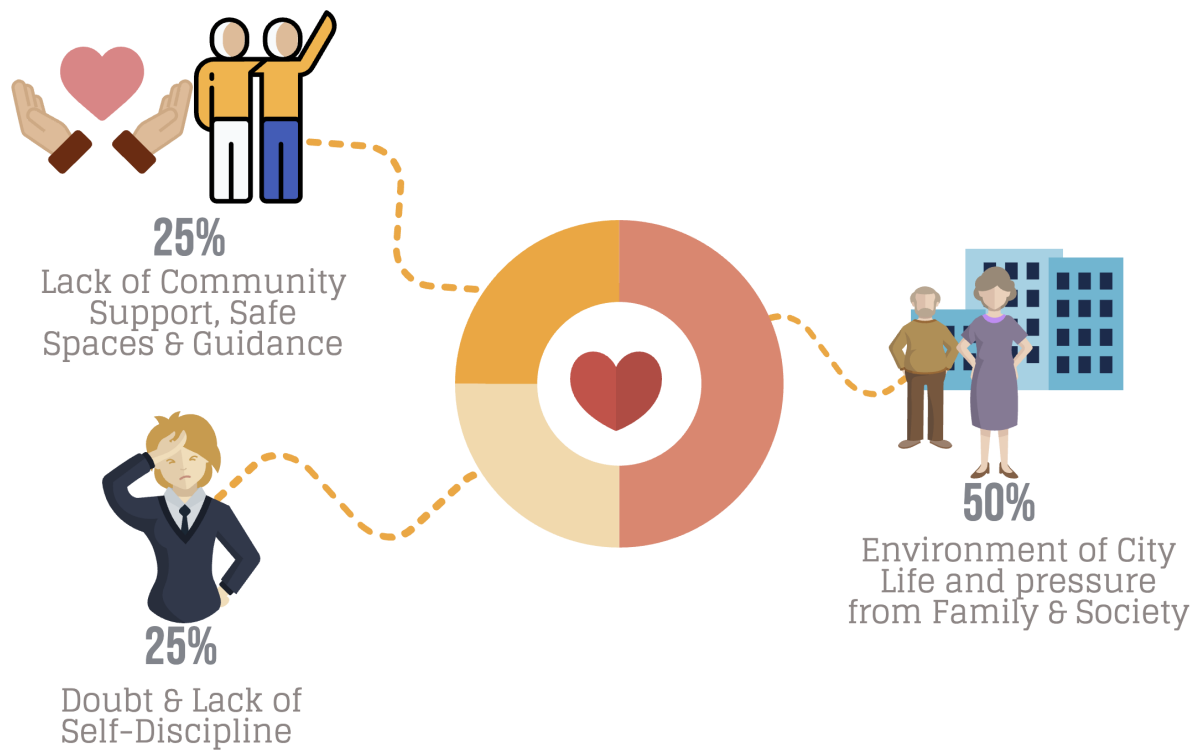
Laziness

For a detailed snapshot, see [appendix](#)

Challenges in transitioning learnings

Following are some of the challenges reported by the respondents in transitioning learnings from Swadharna into their lives post programme.

This is useful info for the programme team as it helps us in 2 ways, one, validation that the space being created at Swadharna in Auroville is highly conducive for growth, and two, to lay greater focus on community building aspects post programme. We already had some initiatives in this regard and have strengthened our efforts with community-building activities so that support can be harnessed from within the community without strong dependence on the programme team.



It is also not a surprise to see the responses, as training the faculty of will is one of the longest and most challenging parts of the journey of transformation. We are invested in helping create long term shifts in the lives of our participants and plan to continue providing the necessary support. Some of the responses received are as follows:

I think the biggest challenge has been self-discipline and to have to do it alone. Also, the fact that there is not much guidance so at times you don't know how to go about things.

It's still hard because most people around me (family and friends) do not have the same or similar values as me. But as changes go, mine was slow- I've been taking time (about 6 months now) to incorporate lifestyle changes so friends and family are slowly coming around.

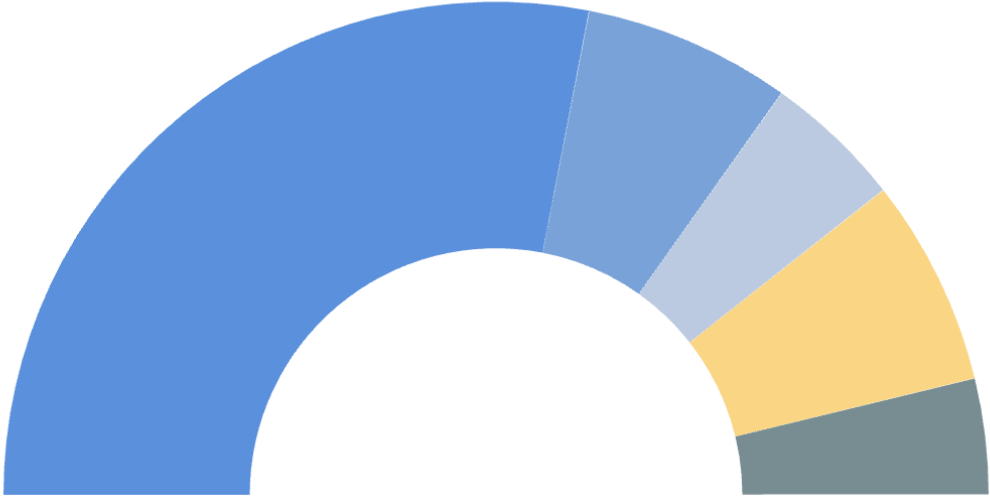
Since a large part of daily life involves a whole bunch of people, it's been very hard to show them a new way of doing things – for example, I have tried to incorporate more sustainable practices at my house, but my flatmate doesn't put in the same kind of effort (I do have plans of moving out!).

As a lot of us said, it has been impossible to explain Swadharma to people, especially when speaking to close friends or relatives who might actually benefit from the experience.

Consistency and discipline in following my passion and taking action.

Obstacles in maintaining regularity

We probed a bit further to understand what obstacles do the participants face in maintaining regularity. Following reflects the responses received:



- Willpower & Self Discipline (56.06%)
- Time Management (13.64%)
- Lack of Nature & Personal Space (9.09%)
- Lack of Community Support (13.64%)
- Emotional Flux (7.58%)

Willpower and Self-Discipline is one of the major obstacles largely coming due to the fragmentation of different parts of our being, each one wanting something else, constantly pulled by desires. A steadfast aspiration is required to stay the course and create changes in oneself. We have also begun alumni support groups online to help one another progress in their practices. With more online spaces and opportunities emerging, the community support is also growing powerfully.

These insights would help us prepare the future batches better in terms of the challenges they might face and share some tools to improve readiness to respond to these obstacles. A detailed compilation of responses [here](#).

Community

- Recommending the programme
- In touch with the mentors
- In touch with the tribe
- Stayed back in Auroville
- Meetups
- Recurring phrases in Swadharma WhatsApp groups

Recommending the programme

Many of the applications we receive are through word of mouth. Past participants have actively recommended the programme to the ones they care about. We often hear from new participants that a friend/cousin/senior/sibling recommended this programme because they felt it would make a huge difference to them.

43 of 45 people recommended the programme further. The graphic shows the number of people it was recommended to.

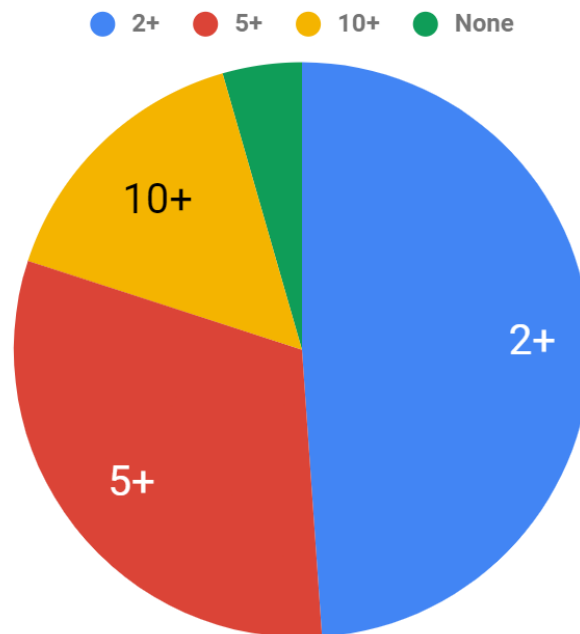


Figure 6 - Recommended Swadharma to how many people

In touch with the mentors

The participants were asked if they are in touch with the mentors from Swadharma and seek their advice.



Figure 7 - In touch with the mentors

In touch with the tribe

The participants were asked if they are in touch with other members of the Swadharma community.

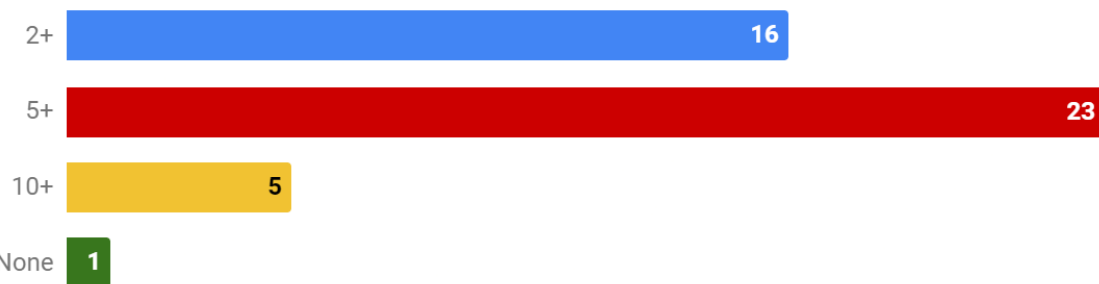


Figure 8 - In touch with the tribe

Stayed back in Auroville

Excluding short visits.



Figure 9 - Stayed back in Auroville after Swadharma

Meetups

We asked if the participant has ever attended a Swadharma meet up inside/outside of Auroville?



Figure 10 - Attended Swadharma meetups

Quoting some of the responses:

- Never attended a meetup but I meet my swadharma mates ever so often in Auroville.
- Haven't attended. Would like to, with the expectation of having good meaningful dialogue.
- I have stayed in touch with people and met them individually but haven't attended a meetup.
- Yes once, it's always a safe space to open up.
- Yes, One. It was a joyful and happy moment to feel the connection.
- Haven't done anything as such yet. But I would love to. Just connect with like-minded people, maybe brainstorm on creative ideas, a sharing circle and just deeper and more meaningful conversations. I think it would help create a sense of a tribe and help seek out help in times of distress to have stronger bonds with Swadharma grads.

Recurring phrases in Swadharma WhatsApp groups

Since each batch has a WhatsApp group, we wanted to look at what are the most prevalent themes in these groups, in the long run, so the participants were asked to share the 3 most recurring themes/keywords in their group. A snapshot of the responses received is as below. The responses indicate these groups as spaces of positivity and support.



Conclusion

This study has been a helpful exercise towards understanding the long term impact of the Swadharna programme. Since the nature of the learning journey that Swadharna initiates is very individualistic, a lot of diversity can be seen in the responses and yet there is an underlying thread with a very high level of acknowledgement of the inner self. Which is also precisely what the programme achieves to aim, to put the learner in touch with their true inner guidance inherently present in each one of us.

The responses across some of the parameters we have outlined in the study indicate a sense of journey. As can be seen from the responses, the impact of the programme in participants' lives has been significant. The programme delivers particularly well at invoking and getting the learner in touch with a deeper aspect of their truer nature as a result of which several shifts are triggered. It also delivers well at creating a value-based awareness around the natural environment.

Insights into challenges the respondents face in transitioning learnings and the obstacles faced in maintaining regularity, particularly the development of the faculty of will over the long term are helpful for the programme team as they can be given greater attention during the programme. As well as building a better community and harnessing support from the community is a potential opportunity to deepen and accelerate the transformative journey.

Since Swadharna's tagline is "Find your true calling", we asked the participants how is the same playing out in their journey? Below are some of the responses received.

My learnings from Swadharna are my driving factors - therefore I'm coming closer to my true calling each day.

I think I have found my calling. And that it is to be of service to nature and the Natural World. That calling was already alive in me before Swadharna. Swadharna acted like a catalyst to reveal it. And some further digging after Swadharna confirmed that this is what I want to dedicate the foreseeable future of my life to.

I think I am headed there. Still finding this as I go but on the path!

True calling is something you may or may not find 'during' the program. But you do set forth in the right path after it and it does open you up to embrace different perspectives and opportunities.

In my journey, I do feel like I have found my calling. It's a general sense of direction and purpose that excites me each day to grow and move forward. Its specific manifestation (music career, educator, healer) I think will continuously evolve and keep changing. But I feel deeply connected to my heart's calling and following it without compromise.

I am simplifying, I am cutting the noise.

I am living a life with my purpose in mind. And being part of the community always reminds me of that.

It's clear that the participants see self-discovery as a journey, and rightly so. The process is lifelong and we are only setting in motion the beginning of the journey.

Below graphic captures change across some of the key metrics of Swadharna.

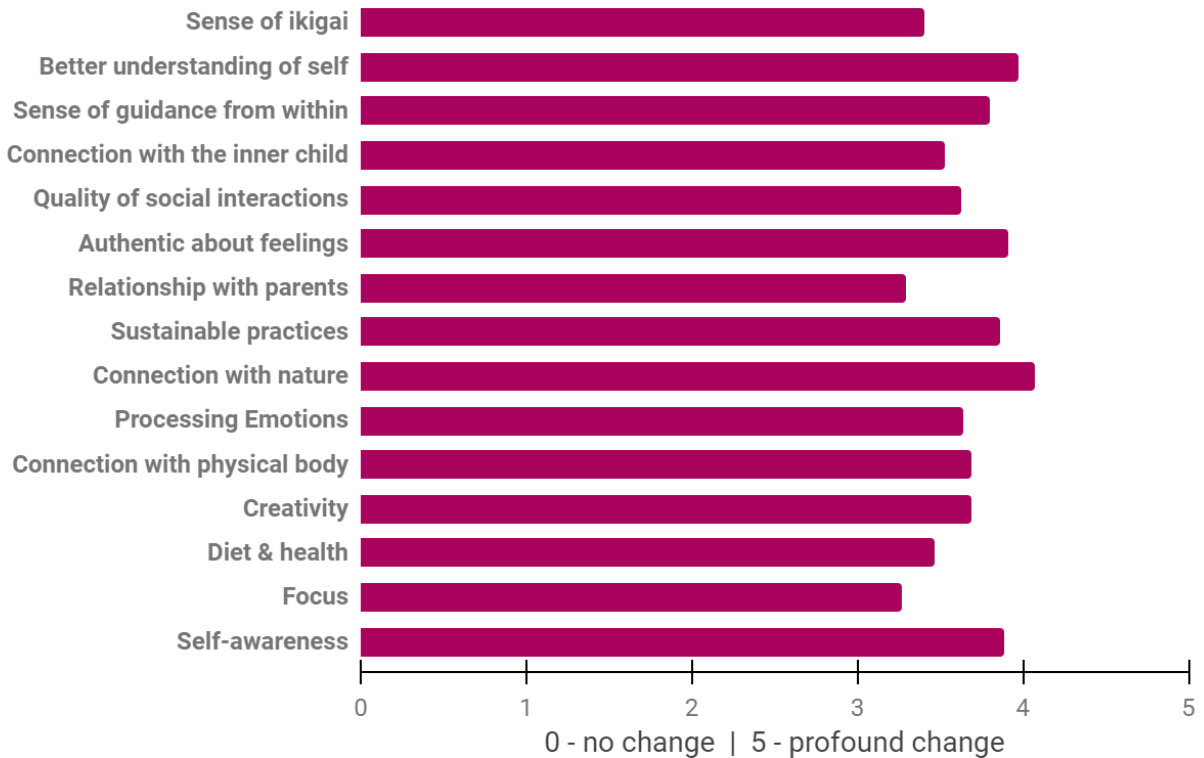


Figure 11 - Key metrics of Swadharna

The most effective aspects impacting the learning journey of the participants include the focus on the self, creative immersion in the field of Auroville, interacting with Aurovilians and other participants, a great amount of personal attention & careful programme delivery, experiential nature of the journey, and an integral approach touching all parts of the being.

Appendix

Questionnaire from Survey

The survey form was sent as a google form, the questions in the form are as below divided into 4 sections:

Generic info

1. Name
2. Phone
3. Batch no. (1, 2...)
4. Date Of Birth
5. Gender
6. Where are you currently based out of?

Reflections on the personal journey

7. What brought you to Swadharna?
8. What were you doing before coming and what did you do after; track your journey from then to now (you could've done multiple things after, please mention all).
9. Is there a divergence in your field of work before and after? If yes, would you attribute this divergence to Swadharna and how? If there is no divergence in the field of work, is it because you're still unsure/exploring or you were fairly settled into your previous field of work, enjoyed it, and weren't looking for a change there. Any other comments?
10. How has your approach/relation to work changed after Swadharna? How would you have dealt with the same project before Swadharna?
11. Did you discover after going through Swadharna that you're gifted in certain ways you weren't aware of earlier? What gifts did you discover?
12. Can you list some helpful practices you think people would pickup from Swadharna (e.g meditation, physical health, journaling, etc)
13. What obstacles do you face in maintaining regularity in practice?
14. Do you feel a shift in your inner life and how? Some example indicators are the kind of friends you spend time with, your social circle, alone time, kind of books, taking better care of yourself, practicing compassion, anxiety, meditation, emotional flux, insecurities, consumption habits, listening, sense of connection with self, mindfulness, beauty etc.
15. Did you reconnect with any existing hobby or interest of yours through Swadharna?
16. Did you drop any unhelpful traits/practices?

17. Below are some key metrics of Swadharma. Mark them on a scale of 1 to 5 as per your experience and take-away from the programme. 1 indicating no change, 5 indicating a profound change. [Sense of your ikigai, Do you know yourself better now, your values, temperaments, nature?, Sense of guidance from within, Connection with the inner child, Quality of social interactions, Authentic about your feelings, Relationship with parents, Sustainable/care about the planet, Connection with nature, Processing emotions, Connection with your physical body, Creativity, Diet & health, Focus, Self-awareness]

Auroville and Swadharma community

18. Did you recommend the programme to anybody, how many people?
19. Did you stay back in Auroville after the programme (do not count short visits), need not necessarily be right after, how long?
20. Did you ever visit Auroville again after Swadharma: <2, 2-5, 5+? What brings you here?
21. Are you in touch with the mentors from Swadharma? Do you seek their advice?
22. Have you ever attended a Swadharma meet up inside/outside of Auroville? If yes, how many? What would be your expectation from such meetups?
23. What according to you are the most recurring themes/keywords in your Swadharma group as might be showing up in WhatsApp group chats or calls? Up to 3.
24. Are you in touch with people from your batch or another batch of Swadharma?
25. Do you participate in sharing circles with your group? Avg. frequency?

Summary

26. What does self-discovery mean to you?
27. What challenges have you faced in transitioning learnings from Swadharma into daily life?
28. In hindsight, does Swadharma feel like a transformative experience for you? How transformative? Respond on a scale of 1-5. 1 is meh, 5 is turning-point.
29. Swadharma's tagline is "Find your true calling". How is this statement playing out in your journey?
30. Your 3 biggest take-aways from Swadharma in 3 keywords/phrases.
31. Any other info/insights you would like to share?

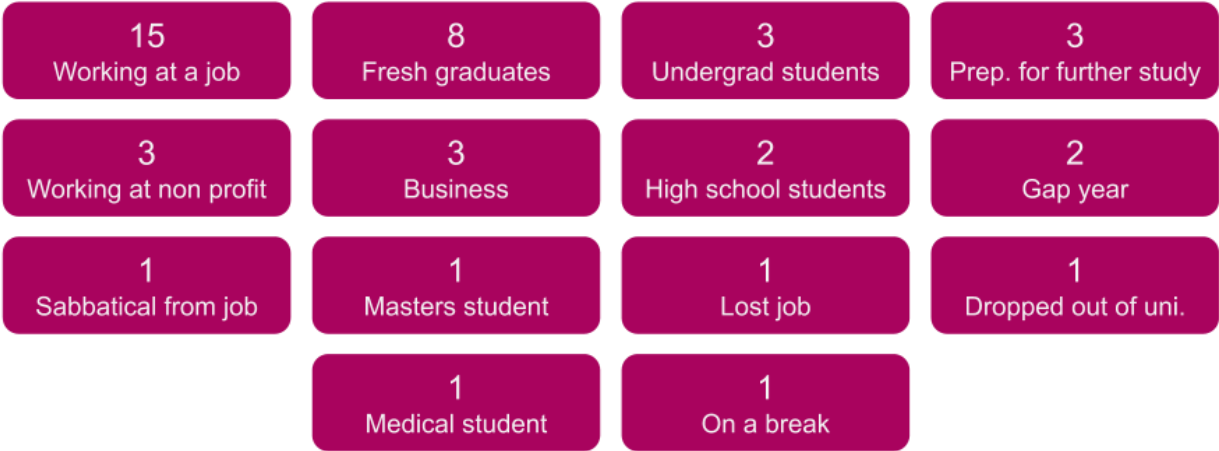


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Complete list of compiled responses

Contexts Swadharma participants come from



Diverse Current Professional Backgrounds of Participants
Design, traditional crafts
Brand strategy, film & photography
Content writing, ecology
Music
Liberal studies, work involving society.
R&D hempcrete, Civil engineer
Product management, reforestation
Art therapy, mental health
Visual design
Food, wellness
Consulting
Developmental studies
Public policy
Child rights and protection
On a break
Travel, health, job

Music, educational content creation, healing and awareness
Visual design
Cognitive science
Stock trading, freelance consulting
Psychology
Teach for India fellow
Gardening, cooking
Architecture, journalism
Yoga
Art, painting
Fashion communication, sustainability, and doodling
Creative, entrepreneur, manager not-for-profit
Painting, art therapy, architecture
Arts several modalities
Sustainability studies student
Entrepreneurship, working with kids
Stock trading, blogging
Medicine
Teaching, NGO sector
Art and therapy
Textile design, communication design
Architecture
Gemstones, writing and stand up
Travelling, health and wellness, yoga
Doctor, health & healing
Film and documentary making
Teaching, architecture
Entrepreneurship, art, curation, mindfulness coach and practitioner
Helping companies do their CSR responsibly

What brought you to Swadharma?

Know myself better	7
Find my passion	7
Find the next steps in life	7
Reconnect with myself	6
Auroville	6
Find purpose and meaning	5
Seeking something	3
Focus energies	3
Needed perspective and clarity	3
Explore within	3
Dissatisfaction	2
Recommendation by a friend	2
Peace of mind	2
Explore	2
Fate	2
Break after college	1
Find my flow	1
Gap year	1

3 biggest takeaways from Swadharma

Sustainable habits	7
Self-awareness	7
Be open and welcoming to people / connecting	7
Tribe	7
Having faith/self-belief	7
Love in my heart	6
To be grateful	6
Connecting with the inner child	6
Care for all parts of being/wellness	5
Loving and knowing myself	5
Authenticity	5
Importance of peace in the body	4
Mindfulness	4

Need to persevere	4
My Ikigai	4
Recognising and acknowledging intuition	3
Love for nature	3
Inspiration	3
There is an alternate way to living	3
Open-mindedness	3
Dealing with my fears	3
Journey inside	3
Emotional hygiene	3
Need for self-discipline and reflection	2
Life long learner	2
Accepting my mistakes	2
Dropping the past	2
Compassion	2
Connection with Auroville	2
Inaction to action	2
Appreciating small things	2
To have fun on the journey	1
Can't change the world alone	1
Practice before you preach	1
All life is yoga	1
Writing as healing	1
Respecting boundaries	1

Inner Shifts	
Deeper connection with myself	15
Better self-care	14
Faith in the journey	11

Prioritise who I spend time with	11
More alone time	11
Practice mindfulness	10
Higher self-awareness / aware of patterns	10
Better self-acceptance	8
Connection with my inner call/child	8
Deeper connection with others	7
Understanding insecurities from childhood / reduced insecurities	6
Calmer	6
Sustainable practices	6
Care less about things in a good way	6
Optimism in thoughts	5
Spend time in nature	5
Confident	5
Listen without judgement	4
Taking time to reflect	4
Shift in reading material/music	4
Less anxious	4
Decluttering / Simplifying / Minimalism	4
Understanding and managing my emotions	4
More alive in the present moment/centred	3
Discipline and regularity	3
Reduced consumption of alcohol and smoking	3
Mindful eating	3
Be more vulnerable	3
Investing time in my hobbies	3
Clarity on what I want to do in life	2
Wider perspective to life, not black-n-white	2
Reawakened curiosity to learn	2
Making friends who are supportive	2
Better connection with my body	2
Ask for help	1
Practising compassion	1
Creating healthy boundaries	1
Comfortable with the opposite sex	1

Better understanding in relationship	1
Better embodiment of what I already know	1
Creating visual stimuli to expand my potential	1
Appreciating the beautiful	1

Divergence in field of work

Yes	11
Helped me validate my path and dive deeper	7
Was satisfied work-wise, got more clarity.	5
Still exploring	5
No, but found a sense of purpose	4
No	4
Yes, but continue to explore	3
No, but found a new interest in the original field.	2
Yes, partially. Continue the old as well as new	2
Yes, but not because of Swadharma, but it helped me become more open to non-conventional careers.	1
No, but started trying out a lot of new things	1

Helpful practices developed through Swadharma

Journaling	29
Listening and authentic sharing	19
Meditation	16
Yoga	12
Awareness of one's body	10
Physical wellness/Exercise	10
Cycling	7
Focus/Concentration/Tratak	7
Mindfulness	7
Practising emotional hygiene	6
Gratitude	6

Spending time in nature	5
Looking at projects in terms of core values and ikigai and soul forces	5
Mindful eating	4
Following intuition	4
Environmentally conscious practices	3
Mental Wellness	3
Self-acceptance	2
Teamwork	2
Presentation skills	2
Connecting with the inner child	2
Self-love	2
Meeting new people	2
Regularity	2
Art as therapy	1
Time away from the screen	1
Respecting boundaries	1

Unhelpful practices dropped/reduced	
Overeating / junk eating / wastage	8
Judging myself and others too soon	6
Laziness	4
Overthinking	4
Self-doubt	4
Smoking	3
Not beat myself up all the time	3
Unsustainable practices	2
Regretting	2
React without analyzing	1
Non-listening	1
Excess drinking	1
Over stressing	1
Preach without practice	1
Got out of a toxic relationship	1

Frustration	1
Stubbornness	1
Meaningless sexual indulgences	1
Playing victim	1

Challenges in transitioning learnings

Environment of city life and mainstream society	18
Self-discipline	13
Family and friends not being able to understand	13
Lack of safe space which Swadharma created	7
Lack of community	6
Lack of guidance	4
Finding work that aligns with my values	1
Doubt	1
Resistance	1

Obstacles in maintaining regularity

Will power/self-discipline	16
Community	8
Laziness	8
Not having a routine	5
Mental excuses	4
Time management	4
Lack of nature / poor environment	4
Lack of mental peace	2
Hectic	2
Change of place and routine	2
Emotional flux	2
Lack of personal space	2
Monotony	1
Feels a lot of effort	1
Lack of guidance	1

Lack of motivation	1
Impatience	1
Not taking responsibility	1

Recurring keywords in Swadharma WhatsApp groups	
Sharing / safe space	16
Connection	6
Love	6
Gratitude	5
Auroville	5
Miss you	3
Feeling	3
Support	3
Sustainability	2
Fear	2
Values	2
Consciousness	2
Community	2
Birthday	2
Peace	2
Growth	2
Flowing of energy	1
Self-discipline	1
Best wishes	1
Reconnect	1
Swadharma	1
Clarity	1
haha	1
thank you	1
Courage	1
Broken relationships	1
Reflection	1
Balance	1

Meetups	1
Nature	1