

SAIIR Annual Report – Vidyamandir 2025-26

1. Name of unit: Vidyamandir

2. Unit executives: Deven and Radhika

3. Report writers: Deven and Shaalini

4. Introduction:

A few sentences. Why does the unit exist, what are its aims? Were there any special goals this year?

To offer learning programs based on Indian Knowledge Systems in the context of Integral Yoga and Auroville's intention of realizing unity in diversity. During 2025–26, we continued to deepen and refine transformative learning journeys rooted in the wisdom of the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and related traditions, with a strong emphasis on practical application in daily life, collective reflection and inner growth. This year we also had a special goal to publish a research paper based on our work.

5. Enrollment/beneficiaries:

For schools: number of students in each grade.

For other units: who were the beneficiaries and how many people participated?

100+ participants (Auroville residents and well-wishers from around the world) attended our workshops/programs organized between April 2025 and March 2026.

6. Activities of the year:

In general and/or highlights. Who, what, when...

We refined the transformational learning framework of श्रवण, मनन, निदिध्यासन, साक्षात्कार (Listening, Reflecting and Sharing, Embodying and Realizing through experiential understanding) and offered several programs in this format. Participants committed for a collective learning journey for few weeks at a stretch with daily participation in the morning from 5 am to 6 am along with suggested practices and reflection questions to bring the learning in daily life.

Isha Upanishad in Daily Life

We offered a collective learning space for integrating the wisdom from ईशोपनिषद् (ISHA UPANISHAD) in daily life.

Date: 6th to 26th April, 2025

Time: 5 am to 6 am (Everyday)

Place: Online Zoom Call
Facilitator: Deven

Bhagavad Gita in Daily life

We offered a collective learning journey with daily practices to integrate the teachings of Srimad Bhagavad Gita in our day-to-day life. We referred to all 700 shlokas in Sanskrit and excerpts from Sri Aurobindo's Essays on the Gita and The Mother's writings on the Gita.

Dates: 25th December, 2025 to 14th January, 2026

Time: 5 am to 6 am (Everyday)

Place: Online Zoom Call

Facilitators: Deven and Shaalini

Dates: 29th March, 2026 to 24th April, 2026

Time: 5 am to 6 am (Everyday)

Place: Online Zoom Call

Facilitators: Deven and Shaalini

Other Initiatives and Programs:

This year we experimented with engaging with young students and faculty members by offering experiential learning programs in Auroville that were rooted in the Indian Knowledge System and Integral Yoga through topics and learning formats that they can connect with. In June 2025 we offered a week-long immersion program in Auroville to 70 students and 4 faculty members from RV University Bangalore and in December 2025 for 20 students and 2 faculty members from Srishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design and Technology. Both the programs were deeply enriching experience for all involved and served as good pilot experiments for deepening our engagement with Indian Universities. We also hosted Dr Janki Santoke and organized a talk by her at SAILER on Swabhava and Swadharma in which she also shared about her project of building world's first Vedanta University with UGC recognized PG Diploma courses.

In the spirit of unending education, Vidyamandir team is continuously learning and enhancing their knowledge and skills. Some of the workshops we attended this year are Dharmagraha and Mahabharata Within from Ritambhara (the tools form which we also use in the Heartweaving initiative), Certification course in Spoken Sanskrit offered by Dr Anuradha Choudry on the NPTEL platform and other workshops /sessions in Auroville like the Research Program by SAILER Research Desk and Parts of the Being with Manoj apart from weekly reading sessions with Jean Yves and Deepti Tewari at Last School.

We offered weekly Sanskrit Mantra chanting at Matrimandir on Sundays, facilitated Mantra chanting sessions for a small group of teachers for Auroville's birthday, weekly learning sessions to chant the Bhagavad Gita at The Mother's Flower Garden on Sunday mornings with more intense practice sessions nearing our annual offering of full Bhagavad Gita chanting on the Gita Day which was at Savitri Bhavan this year on 1st December, 2025.

7. Outcomes:

What was created; how did participants benefit?

The transformational learning program that involves reflections and practices in daily life felt deeply enriching and meaningful for all involved. The joy and peace we witness in the participants during and after attending our programs is the most precious outcome that keeps us going. Here are few messages we received after completing the learning programs:

"I have noticed a calmness inside since I have started this program, a faith emerging that I am not doing but it is being done. It has brought a sense of ease and knowing that things are happening not always as I plan but they are happening as the Divine sees best."

"Self-realization is a continuous journey. Such gatherings and sharings are a great help."

"Attending this course for the first time, it gave me a new perspective on how to listen/ read the Bhagavad Gita and introspecting it. Use of prompts for each chapter and journaling them helped me gain insights on how I can actually implement those teachings in my life."

The sessions have generally helped me increase my own knowledge and wisdom. Though, I had some life changing things that happened in the duration and after the course and I feel it does have something with the change in my energy field."

"It has brought more awareness of the Oneness, of how important it is to not judge and to love without expectation."

"Overall I feel growing presence of Sri Krishna and spirit of karma yoga in my daily life through this collective journey."

"I want to be available for the divine to work through me - only now this understanding is more experiential."

"I can sleep well in night, I don't resist the desires, rather see it as a part of Prakriti playing its role and I being the witness to it."

"The suggestions/prompts for each chapter of the Gita gave me good insights and learnings. I will go back to them to have more understanding of Myself and the world around me. And groups sharing of the views was a good learning. After the sessions I am more aware of my thoughts and actions in my daily life."

The above-mentioned quotes are just excerpts; here is an example of detailed feedback from one of the participants of the Bhagavad Gita in Daily life program in March 2026:

Are there any key learnings or insights or experiences from this collective journey that you

would like to share?

"The central learning for me from this journey has been the importance of living more consciously. To pause, reflect on my actions, and more importantly, to understand the source of those actions, where the thought is arising from. Alongside this, the practice of separating the self from action, and gradually reducing attachment to outcomes, has stayed with me. The idea of ultimately offering one's actions to the divine is deeply powerful, even though I recognize that I am still some distance away from truly embodying that state.

This has also led me to reflect on my work and the way I structure my time and expectations. I am beginning to see more clearly that who we are is reflected in everything we do. There has to be a deeper alignment between the work we engage in and the person we are trying to become. When that alignment is missing, it creates a subtle but persistent dissonance. Recognizing that this is not easy to resolve, I have consciously given myself this financial year, from April to March 2027, to explore and move towards that alignment with patience and honesty.

I was also deeply moved and inspired by Deven bhai's ability to conduct a session immediately after a significant personal loss. It was a powerful demonstration of living one's values, not just speaking about them.

Around the same time, I had to drop a friend to the railway station and attended the session from the car and briefly from the station. At that point, I had half a mind to skip the session. Later, reflecting on Deven bhai's action, I saw my own hesitation more clearly. His example helped me recognise what truly matters and strengthened my resolve to show up for my karma with sincerity and integrity. In many ways, that single action conveyed the essence of the teachings more powerfully than any discourse could.

Another insight that stayed with me was the idea that the Mahabharata is not just an external narrative, but an internal one, that the various characters represent different forces, tendencies, and voices within us. This perspective has deepened my curiosity to revisit the Mahabharata, not just as a story, but as a mirror to better understand the inner conflicts and alignments within myself.

Has this collective engagement with the Bhagavad Gita brought about any positive changes in your life? If yes, we request you to share something about it from your heart.

Yes, it has, though I would say it is still early to speak about tangible changes with certainty. What I do feel is a clear shift in awareness. This phase feels like an important point of reflection, where I am beginning to approach life with greater consciousness and intention.

The 5 am to 6 am Brahmamuhurta time has played a meaningful role in this. Starting the day in that space creates a certain clarity and steadiness, and it acts as a gentle reminder to carry that awareness into the rest of the day. It does not automatically change actions, but it

creates the conditions to observe them better and gradually align them in a more conscious way.

Do you have any suggestions or ideas to make such collective learning more enriching for future participants?

It was a very thoughtfully curated experience. A few aspects that worked particularly well for me:

1. The 5 am to 6 am timing sets the tone for the day. It creates a quiet, undisturbed space to engage with the text and carry that energy forward.
2. The consistency of meeting every day, including Sundays, helped build strong momentum. Even when it felt challenging, it ensured continuity and depth in the journey.
3. The pause to self-reflect on the verses for about 10 minutes, rather than simply moving through them, made the learning deeply personal and contextual to one's own life. The sharing that followed felt natural and appropriate, and added further depth to the reflection.
4. The diversity of participants added significant depth. Listening to different interpretations and lived experiences enriched the understanding in ways that an individual reading cannot.
5. The approach of holding space rather than instructing stood out. It allowed for genuine reflection and internalization, and encouraged each participant to engage with the material in their own way. This is something I find very valuable and would like to explore in other learning contexts as well.

In terms of what could be improved, nothing specific comes to mind immediately. I would like to think on this further, and if something more concrete emerges, I will share it separately through a direct email. Thank you."

On the days when we are not actively offering learning programs from 5-6 am, we started offering a space to connect in silence and then reflect in words towards the end only if there is a need, else we end in collective silence. This spontaneous email we received made us realize the importance and value of this simple offering:

"Namaste Deven bhai, and all my co-travellers, co-explorers, and co-seekers 😊

I feel deeply grateful to be connected to this space, in whatever small way I can. A heartfelt thank you to Deven Bhai and the Vidyamandir initiative at Auroville for conceiving and nurturing this beautiful program.

You may not fully realize how much impact you are creating for people like me. Waking up at 4:30 AM (and sometimes even joining at 5 AM 😊), and spending that time reading, reflecting, sharing, or simply sitting in silence, has been profoundly transformative for me.

This has become a golden hour in my day. On the days I miss it, I carry a strange heaviness throughout the day—as if I have forgotten something very important within myself.

Over time, I have noticed that this simple practice helps me move through the rest of the day with greater awareness, and connection to myself. In a world that often pulls us in many directions, this hour has become an anchor that gently brings me back to myself.

Please never stop this, Deven Bhai. Sitting in silence together is as powerful as reading together, reflecting together, and sharing together. There is something deeply nourishing in simply showing up and being present in each other's company during these sacred hours.

I sincerely hope this continues for a long time, because it is touching lives in ways that may not always be visible.

With gratitude,
Y*"

**As the report is published publicly, we are not sharing the names of the people who have written these messages. The names and full messages are available in our records as received through emails and feedback form submissions.*

8. Research highlights:

Please describe anything done in the last year which was especially research-oriented or innovative. What did you find out, and will you take it further?

We attended a six-month Research Training Program led by the SAIER research desk from October 2025 to February 2026 to understand how to do research and how to write a research paper. As part of this initiative, we worked on a research paper titled "Living the Bhagavad Gita in Auroville" with support from Sohela, Chaitanya and Auroshree.

The questionnaire was shared with the entire community via Mass Bulletin and we received 42 responses. We were moved by the depth of sharing from Aurovilians, old and new with the period of residence ranging from 56 years to two years. We were also fortunate to receive feedback from Dr Sampadananda Mishra and Dr Anuradha Choudry. We completed the first draft of the paper by early Feb and Deven presented the research paper and key findings at the *International Conference on Discovery and Application of Vedic Knowledge* at Auro University on 13 Feb, 2026. The paper was well received and was chosen as one of the top three impactful research papers out of the 67 research submissions at the conference. Thanks to SAIER, we were able to undertake this research and intend to work on the next phase of this research.

9. Reflections:

What was most meaningful this year? What was challenging and what was learned?

A key learning this year has been the transformative power of sincere intention and action. Again and again, we observed that when a space is held with openness, goodwill and an aspiration for truth, something greater than individual viewpoints begins to emerge. We also learned that inner work and collective harmony are inseparable; the more deeply we turn inward, the more capable we become of listening, understanding and serving together. Holding spaces of light, peace and aspiration amidst an atmosphere of uncertainty and conflict has been one of the most meaningful gifts we have both offered and received, dissolving the boundaries between facilitators and participants and reminding us that we are all fellow travellers and instruments of one Divine Consciousness.

10. Conclusion:

Any final remarks, and/or intentions for next year.

Psychic discovery and the aspiration to become more conscious instruments of the Divine Consciousness continue to form the foundation of all our work. Over the past few years, our approach to transformational learning has gradually matured, integrating study, reflection, practice, silence and collective inquiry into a coherent learning process rooted in the wisdom of the Indian Knowledge Systems and Integral Yoga.

A significant milestone this year was our first formal research project, culminating in the paper Living the Bhagavad Gita in Auroville, which was warmly received at the International Conference on Discovery and Application of Vedic Knowledge at Auro University. This experience reinforced our conviction that inner transformation can be explored not only through practice but also through rigorous inquiry and documentation.

Looking ahead, we aspire to deepen both dimensions of our work: offering transformative learning journeys that support inner growth and unity, while also strengthening the research and documentation of their impact. We remain grateful to SAIER, our participants, collaborators and the wider Auroville community for their trust and support, and we look forward to continuing this journey of learning, service and conscious evolution.

11. Links and attachments:

Photos (please attach as separate files), links to videos and websites, any other supplementary material that you would like to share.





Recording of one of our chanting sessions at the Mother's Flower Garden:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRTsWcYkcmc>

The spirit of gift in which we make all our offerings: <https://vidya.auroville.org/gift>

Reflections by Gomathy Balasubramanian after attending the Isha Upanishad learning journey: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/inhabiting-cosmos-here-now-embodiment-gomathy-balasubramanian-phd--m8mic/>

Reflections by Suresh Srinivas after attending the Bhagavad Gita learning journey: <https://substack.com/home/post/p-184285368>

We contributed an article on "Sanskrit in Auroville" that was published in the Golden Chain – Alumni Journal of Sri Aurobindo International Center for Education (SAICE – also called 'Ashram School') <https://goldenchain.in/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/2026-02.pdf>

The research paper on "Living the Bhagavad Gita in Auroville"

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1laYMF6Cr6UYD5i0VGG3y78Pqb6D1HWXu/>

Presentation with findings and highlights from the research

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tas6RMRnpdEJcP8SM_Hq_LaAxyREGVX6/view