

GREEN TEMPLES GUIDE

An Environmental
Guide for Hindu
Temples and Ashrams





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An Environmental Guide for Hindu Temples
and Ashrams



“Mata bhumih putroaham
prithivyaha” – the Earth is my
mother, I am the Earth’s son.

-Atharva Veda

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Foreword

The Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) and the Bhumi Project are delighted to join our Indian partners in launching this Green Temples Guide. ARC is an international secular NGO that supports the world's major faiths in developing environmental programmes based on their core teachings, beliefs and practice. The Bhumi Project, based in Oxford, UK, works in partnership with all members of the international Hindu family to encourage Hindus worldwide in the care and protection of Mother Earth.

Both of our organisations understand the vital role that Hindu temples and pilgrim sites can play in meeting the environmental challenges facing India today. For millions of people these places are the gateway to spiritual practice, providing guidance on how they can live moral lives in keeping with their religious beliefs. When temples and their communities exhibit a deep care for the planet and the natural world that sustains us, pilgrims and other visitors are able to share in this ethos. As these sacred towns and temples become environmentally friendly, the ripple effect of their example across India could be substantial.

The Green Temple Guide is a valuable toolkit for any Hindu community that wishes to take up this challenge. It has been created after consultation with more than 30 Hindu temples across India, with consultations in Dwarka, Mumbai, Shirdi, Varanasi and Vrindavan.

Within its pages you will find a range of practical and sustainable solutions for greening temple grounds and buildings and developing environmentally sound ways to manage waste, water and sanitation as well as advice about developing green themes for celebrations and faith-based environmental education. Many of the suggestions can be adopted at once and cost nothing, and by starting on the path to becoming a Green Temple you will be joining a growing network of sustainable and earth-friendly temples across India, together addressing the environmental challenges of the world in a spirit of co-operation, devotion and service.

Martin Palmer, Alliance of Religions and Conservation

Chantal Elkin, Green Pilgrimage Network

Gopal Patel, Bhumi Project

॥ कश्चात्तु न विदुः ॥

Introduction

The Hindu temple and the environment

Everything in the universe belongs to the Lord. Therefore take only what you need, that is set aside for you. Do not take anything else, for you know to whom it belongs.

-Isa Upanishad

The Isa Upanishad reminds us that God pervades everything on Earth. There is nowhere, no being, whom He does not pervade.

Yet although God is everywhere, Hindus believe that God's presence and energy is particularly focused in shrines and temples, the devasthanas, where the Divine is honoured. Temples strive to maintain a clean and pure, or sattvic, atmosphere, to ensure prayers and offerings are accepted. Environmental deterioration within any devasthanam's boundaries would surely be displeasing to the deity, and would be taken as a sign of waning Divine powers.

This has been the tradition for thousands of years in Hinduism, and yet today, at this time of global ecological crisis, the natural world is suffering in ways we have never experienced before. In India we see it dramatically. Where nature was once bountiful, we now see bare hillsides, polluted rivers, piles of untreated waste, the receding of wild places and the subsequent loss of wildlife. All of these bring problems for human communities including lack of clean water, air and other natural resources, and unforeseen natural disasters such as floods and landslides.

The environment in many holy places and pilgrimage centres is also being adversely affected by large influxes of visitors. These impacts typically include stress on basic services such as water and sanitation, accumulation of huge quantities of solid waste, high levels of pollution due to increased traffic, open-defecation, clearing of land and forests for temporary accommodation facilities for pilgrims, and disturbance to wildlife and habitat by crowds of people straying into national parks.

Generally, there is a very low level of awareness among visitors to temples and holy sites about keeping sacred sites and the broader environment clean. As Hindus we have a duty to care for wild areas that are home to innumerable animals, birds, and plants as well as to many groups of indigenous peoples - and this care extends into our own backyards in towns and cities and to our temples and holy places. As responsible temple leaders, we have a duty to ensure the sattvic consciousness created in the temple extends beyond the temple gates, into the towns and communities we serve.

The temple is a place to be humble in the presence of the Divine, and to meditate on how to live as a devout believer. If, when we go to temples, we encounter a space that has taken care to be a blessing and not a burden to the Earth, it can inspire us to bring a little bit of that blessing home to our communities, schools, houses and businesses, and to change our relationship with the Earth for the better. Let our temples, as guardians of our Hindu religion, reflect the Divine by transforming into green, healthy spaces that support and honour the sanctity of life.

The Green Temple Initiative

The Green Temple Initiative was launched by ARC, GPN and the Bhumi Project in 2014 to develop a network of environmentally conscious temples across India. Thirty temples were consulted when developing the Green Temples Guide, which will be updated regularly and provided as an online resource. This guide has been developed to inspire you as temple authorities to assess the current environmental

impact of your temple and to create a vision and action plan that will enable your temple to manage energy and water resources more efficiently, protect animals and wild places, integrate environmental themes into prayers and celebrations, and to raise the environmental consciousness of pilgrims and community members. By taking part in this initiative, your temple will join hundreds of others across India in a national network, linked to an international network of places of worship that are aligning their practices with the beliefs and values of their spiritual traditions.

It is expected that the Green Temples Initiative will:

1. Create a network of sustainable and earth-friendly temples across India
2. Join existing networks of international "green" places of worship
3. Encourage the sharing of best practice between temple sites in India, and with those around the world
4. Create a theological basis for environmental action
5. Encourage Hindu temples to work with government agencies, NGOs and private companies to make their holy places more environmentally friendly
6. Create practical action plans for promoting sustainability and care for the Earth
7. Share stories, wisdom and traditions
8. Ask pilgrims and visitors to walk lightly and travel responsibly in the spirit of their religion

Our vision is that all Hindu temples and ashrams act responsibly towards the natural environment, in line with their tradition and beliefs, and that they inspire pilgrims, visitors and the public to do the same.

For more information on the Green Temples Initiative please contact: Jayshree Balachander
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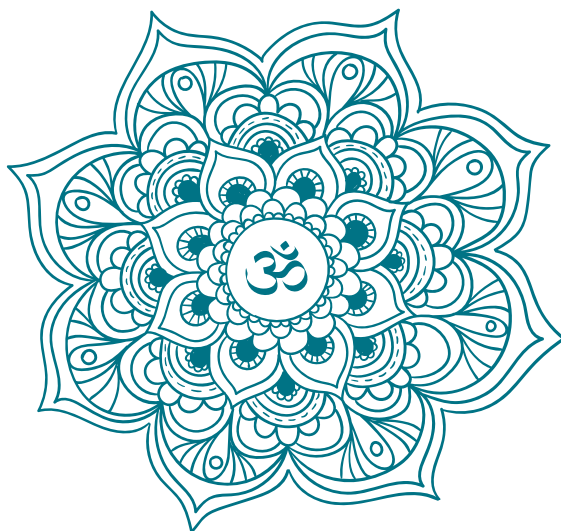
How to use this guide

The guide is designed to help you and your temple community understand the relationship between Hindu traditions and the need for green action to respect the Deity by preserving nature.

The first section looks at the way you might come together as a community to understand what needs to be done and make a plan of action to achieve it.

The second section is the toolkit gives examples of tried and tested methods used in other temples and religious places to improve their sustainability. You can use this section to help make your Green Temple action plan.

The third section is a list of resources that can provide more information and ideas to help your temple become more environmentally conscious. This includes a faith statement on the environment written by three distinguished Hindu theologians, and issued in 1995 when ARC was launched by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh and in the presence of religious leaders from all the major faiths, and a checklist for carrying out an environmental assessment at your temple. Please explore this guide and may it inspire your temple community to express its reverence for nature and all life in line with the beliefs and principles enshrined in our myriad Hindu traditions.





01. Getting Started

The vision for a green temple

Starting where you are

There are so many ways in which a temple and its community can 'go green' that the task can seem overwhelming. It is important that you act together, however, with shared understanding and agreed goals. This means involving people in discussion and planning. Start by asking your temple community where it would like to begin to incorporate changes. Which issues do they care most about? Once this is agreed the following 3-step process will help to achieve those goals:

Step 1: A roundtable of all interested partners, from secular to religious

Great things can often come from bringing people together to have a conversation about what they can do together. We suggest choosing representatives from your temple to form a Green Temple Committee, and if possible, working with other



temples in your area to meet regularly and share best practice.

Step 2. An environmental assessment

Doing an assessment of your temple practices gives you a clear idea of what the temple is already doing for the environment, and which major environmental issues can be addressed most readily. Use the template in Section III to conduct a quick assessment of your temple's current environmental practices.

Step 3: A strategic plan

Without a clear plan, many great ideas come to very little. Use the toolbox section (Section II) of this guidebook to inspire you with ideas of what other temples have been doing, and what your temple could do. Start by asking the following questions:

- ▶ What does it mean for us to be a green temple?
- ▶ What do we want to have achieved in the next five years or by the next generation?
- ▶ Who will help us? Local organisations? Environmental NGOs? Philanthropists?
- ▶ What are the next steps? Who will be in charge of managing activities? How will they be financed?

This guidebook has many suggestions on actions to green your temple - perhaps your community could begin by choosing just three things to do this year (and telling everyone about what you have done and why it is Hindu). Here are some suggestions:

Green pujas, worship and celebrations

Organise formal times of worship, temple pujas and celebrations in ways that reminds participants of the tradition's links to nature by highlighting environmental themes. Compost sacred flower offerings.

Awareness and education

Have the temple serve as an example to the community and to visitors and pilgrims. Put up signs within the temple grounds saying you are a green temple and telling people about the environmental issues (such as where to put waste and how to conserve water). Work with the local media to raise awareness about the links between religious principles and care for nature, and look into national and international awards and recognition for good environmental practices. You want to do the right thing, and you want other people to know about it so they can be inspired.

Greening the temple landscape

Increase the space in your temple complex under green cover, using native species where possible. Ensure that temple gardens are water-efficient and use non-chemical fertilizers for plants, fruits and vegetables.

Improving energy efficiency

Make an audit of energy use. Where is energy being wasted? Where could it be made more sustainable? Take steps to reduce energy use and introduce eco-alternatives like solar or biogas. And make sure worshippers know about what you are doing and why. Replace ordinary bulbs with CFL/LED bulbs.

Conserving water resources

Collect rainwater to provide for some of your water needs, or using recycled, non-potable water (eg grey water waste from showers) for irrigating gardens and reserve potable water for consumption.

Waste management

Introduce waste segregation into different coloured bins and recycling. Also, if there is a lack in the local area, work with local municipalities to ask for better waste disposal. You are the temple, you are the community: you have the power to make things change.

Protection of wildlife and wild places

Ensure that religious activities do not degrade the quality of the environment or harm a plant or animal community. Rather, include the theme of religion and wildlife protection – especially of threatened and protected species – in religious teachings, sermons, blessings and educational materials.

Faith and Food

Bring the principle of ahimsa into your food consumption – ensure that the milk served in the temple or ashram comes from cows treated well. Plant organic vegetables and fruits on temple grounds to supply some of your food needs without the use of toxic chemicals.



Green initiatives in some prominent temples and ashrams in India

Temple/Ashram	Location	Green Measures
Golden Temple of Sripuram	Foothills of Malaikodi, a village within the city of Vellore in Tamil Nadu	Solid waste management, wastewater management, rainwater harvesting, biogas generation, organic farming, herbal gardens, hill and campus afforestation, harnessing of solar energy
Tirumala temple	South Indian city of Tirupathi, Andhra Pradesh	Community kitchen using solar energy, afforestation, wind energy
Shirdi Sai Baba Temple	Shirdi town, Maharashtra	Solar power to cook meals for devotees and light up the premises
Ambaji Temple	Gujarat	Waste management, tree plantation, solar steam cooking system
Golden Temple	Amritsar	No plastic waste, solar panels for the lighting and solar water heaters
Jagannath Temple	Puri, Odisha	Solar energy
Lotus Temple of Bahai	New Delhi	Use of solar systems for lighting and cooling
Art of Living Ashram	Bangalore	Organic farming, solar lighting, rainwater harvesting
Sivananda Ashram	Rishikesh, Uttarakhand	Solid waste management, solar heaters
Muni Seva Ashram	Gujarat	Solar, wind and biogas energy
Brahma Kumari Spiritual Trust	Mount Abu, Rajasthan	Solar systems for cooking prasadam food offerings for devotees
Parmarth Niketan Ashram	Rishikesh	Environment-themed aarti and teachings

02. Toolkit

1.

Green pujas, worship & celebrations

“In villages, in the forest, and in all gatherings on earth. In congregations, and meeting of people, we will speak of you, Mother Earth, in praise.”

Atharva Veda

Vision: For all temples to use times of worship, pujas and celebrations to remind participants of Hinduism's clear links to nature by highlighting environmental themes. To make sure that all food and materials has been ethically sourced, locally provided, and farmed according to ways that are kind to the Earth. And that at the end of the festival the place is cleaner and better than it was at the beginning.

Two Hindu reasons

When we worship at a Hindu temple we honour the Divine in everything. By bringing environmental themes to prayers, songs and moments of silence we remind ourselves that nature is part of divine creation.

Hindu festivals add colour, laughter and joy to our lives. They are times for families and communities to come together; to share with each other and worship God. Such festivities bring an increasing number of pilgrims to our religious sites. Religious pujas and celebrations are wonderful opportunities to highlight Hinduism's respect for all of nature.

One environmental reason

Religious celebrations are often attended by thousands if not millions of people (for example more than one million people attend the annual Chariot Festival in Puri in one day; one hundred million people attended the Maha Kumbh Mela over six weeks in 2013). However so many people venerating the Divine can disrespect the natural environment by leaving large areas covered with waste, polluting water sources, and disrupting animal life with loud noise, lights and traffic. They can also cause harm by supplying food or souvenirs and goods that are not in line with religious values.

Ten things your temple can do to make worship, pujas and celebrations greener

1. Create eco-themed sermons and celebrations: add statements, prayers, meditations, songs about caring for nature
2. Centre your celebrations around environmental themes and on special days such as Earth Day and around the annual Hindu Environment Week in February

3. Make sure waste is disposed of effectively at all your festivals. Make this part of the early planning rather than something thought of at the end
4. Get young people involved in the clean up; give them eco banners and sashes or branded T-shirts, and get them to contact local stall holders during procession to explain why they need to be eco and make sure they have rubbish bins outside their stall
5. Make the cleaning up a celebratory and holy activity in itself. Get important people to clean up after celebrations to show that this is not something for street sweepers
6. Be mindful of ways that noise, lights and traffic can be limited during your celebrations around environmentally sensitive areas
7. Use environmentally friendly paints (and not lead paints) when painting statues of deities
8. Perform blessings over cows and other threatened wildlife and wild places
9. Source the majority of food locally to minimize fuel use for transport
10. Plan outdoor services and spiritual outings in nature

Good examples

The nine-day **Durga Puja festival** in Kolkata and Howrah attracts around 30 million visitors each year. They now hold green-themed pujas at every festival on subjects including climate change, water conservation and conservation of tigers. Nearly 30,000 idols were painted with



lead free colouring in 2011; LED lamps have replaced other less energy-efficient lights. The organisers aim to use the pujas as a tool to inspire communities to engage in green practices throughout the year.

In February 2014 Hindus in the UK and India held the first ever Hindu Environment Week. It was initiated by the Bhumi Project and brought together Hindus from across the world, from different traditions, in a common cause in unprecedented numbers, with about 4,000 people participating. At the **Jagannath temple**

in Puri they had seven days of action, including planting trees and cleaning the temple grounds of litter. Students at Benares Hindu University held events each day including a cycle rally (to raise awareness) and cleaning the famous Kashi Viswanath temple and bathing spots.

Some pilgrims come on pilgrimage to visit, pray and then make their way back home, but others would like to stay longer and do seva. Be prepared with ideas for green seva and advertise these opportunities, especially among young people.

2.

Awareness and education

“Every god loves nature and loves natural things,
within his own boundaries.
He protects them,
maintaining his responsible authority.
He wants to be surrounded
by green trees;
and plants,
and water;
He wants animals and birds
to receive shelter.”
- From a folk song in Rajasthan, India

Vision: That the temple is an example to the community, and to visitors and pilgrims, of being environmentally aware and proactive. That the temple engages in awareness and outreach work to inspire others to adopt green practices and that it leads by example.

Two Hindu reasons

Generally, there is very low level of awareness among temple visitors about keeping sacred sites clean. This may be partly due to the belief that the deities or Mother Ganga will take care of all the problems in these sites. There is an important role for the temple in raising awareness amongst religious visitors and communities about personal responsibility based on Hindu principles and beliefs regarding safeguarding of the natural environment.

Hindus recognise that the environmental crisis is a spiritual issue, and that therefore its solution can only be found through exploring the root causes of this degradation. This can best be done by temples and temple priests fostering an ethos of compassion amongst pilgrims and local communities.

One environmental reason

First we must understand the causes of environmental degradation and the role of human beings in this destruction, in order to respond with appropriate solutions. We have a moral and spiritual responsibility to care for the planet, and to educate our friends, families and broader society about how we can help.

Twelve things your temple can do to raise awareness about the environment

1. Display billboards at strategic locations indicating the importance of forests, environment, pollution and nature in local languages; offer exhibitions displaying charts, photographs and different models of environmental conservation during annual festivals
2. Develop educational materials including signs, leaflets, posters and newsletters for pilgrims
3. Give teachings about nature in sermons, talks, celebrations and at darshan
4. Work with environmental organizations to understand the local environmental issues and develop joint messages for visitors to the temple on how they can help
5. Establish and support programmes to train religious teachers and future religious leaders on environmental issues

6. Work with schools affiliated with the temple to improve how they teach about the environment. Don't forget to make it interesting as well as informative. Form Eco-clubs in schools and youth organizations; arrange quizzes and essay writing and art competitions, and field trips into natural places
7. Understand government programmes on environmental issues, such as the Swachh Bharat campaign, and how it might fit in with your planned activities
8. Create at least one inter-generational awareness activity that brings adults, youth and children together, such as a nature walk or a small garden project on the temple grounds
9. Help a disadvantaged community plant a garden to supply some of their food needs
10. Contribute to recovery in an area affected by an environmental disaster, such as a landslide or flood. Sponsor work teams for ongoing rebuilding efforts
11. Publicise what your temple is doing through your communication networks to ensure visitors are aware of the temple's green projects, and to inspire other temples and community members to do the same
12. Host workshops on a variety of environmental topics in schools and colleges. Work with some chosen forest communities to spread conservation awareness.

Good examples

The Art of Living Foundation in Bangalore organises innovative agricultural workshops to help local farmers become economically self-reliant. They are trained in organic methods and ancient water harvesting techniques, the use of indigenous crops and also learn to, preserve seeds for use by other farmers. Villages allocate small plots for demonstration of these organic farming methods.

The Vrinda Kunj Ashram/VINA in Vrindavan raises awareness through street plays and banners.

At **Parmarth Niketan ashram** in Rishikesh, Swami Chidanand Saraswati holds aarti or public prayers every evening and often includes persuasive messages about protecting the River Ganges and treasuring India's wildlife and natural landscapes. During darshan he speaks about environmental themes.

3. Greening the temple landscape

“Do not cut trees because they remove pollution”

-Rig Veda 6:48:17

“We invoke all supporting Earth on which trees, lords of forests, stand ever firm”

-Atharva Veda 12:1:27



Vision: That each temple complex has at least 50% of its area under green cover, using native species where possible. That all temple gardens are water-efficient and use non-chemical fertilizers for their plants, fruits and vegetables.

Three Hindu reasons

Forests were the dwellings of the Rishis, the mythical sages of the Vedas and of spiritual seekers whose forest hermitages were set apart from the preoccupations of worldly life. India has over 100,000 sacred groves, many of which are dedicated to a deity that is understood to reside within it.

We worship trees as Vriksha Devata (tree gods), forests as Vana Devatas, mountains as Giri Devatas, rivers as Goddesses, cow and cattle for their agrarian utility.

Four environmental reasons

Depletion of native forests has led to soil erosion causing floods and landslides that devastate villages and farmlands. Without adequate forest cover, monsoonal rains carry off valuable topsoil, depleting the land of nutrients. Planting trees maintains soil health, improves air quality, absorbs carbon dioxide and helps reduce the impacts of climate change and erosion.

Planting trees and greenery in and around the temple grounds provides shaded outdoor areas, and when near buildings, has a cooling effect inside, reducing energy costs.

Planting native species ensures adaptability to local conditions, improved pest resistance and reduced need for water.

Sacred groves often contain species of plants and animals that no longer exist in the surrounding areas or that are being collected in unsustainable amounts.

Sacred Trees

Neem tree: The neem tree is sacred. It is often worshipped when there is no temple. Murtis are also placed at the base of a neem tree if a temple has not been constructed. In south India, neem trees are decorated, as they represent Vana Durga, goddess of the forest. Neem is also one of the most useful trees in the world. The seeds can be made into a natural insect repellent and a medicine and are used in skin care products. The pulp left after extracting the seed oil can be used as fodder for animals, or as fertiliser. The leaves can be chewed or drunk as bitter tea, and are believed to cure ulcers and boost your immune system. Leaf paste is traditionally used to treat skin infections and acne, and to moisturise the skin. The bark is used in dental care and is a traditional remedy for gum disease. The twigs have been used for centuries as toothbrushes. The flowers smell like honey; bees love them, and so do humans, who find the flower oil soothing. And the wood is useful firewood because the tree grows so well, with so little water, in very poor soils. Neem trees can bring acid soils back to neutral,

their tap roots can break through hard layers to improve the water holding capacity and nutrient level of the soil.

Pipal tree: Many Hindu sadhus meditate under pipal trees. The whole tree is considered sacred. The roots are said to be Lord Brahma, the bark Lord Vishnu, and the branches Lord Shiva. It is considered to be a great sin to cut down a pipal tree, and great benefits are said to come to those who plant one. The Mahabharata (6.126) says one must worship a pipal tree after bathing in the morning. The Atharva Veda (V. 4.3) notes that the pipal tree is the eternal residence of the gods.

Tulsi: According to Hindu teachings, a house is considered to be incomplete without a tulsi plant and no food offering to Lord Krishna is complete without tulsi leaves. It has many uses in Hindu practices and rituals. For instance, its leaves are mixed with water and given to the dying so that their soul may reach heaven. The Skanda Purana states that, "by touching Tulsi devi, one's body becomes pure. By praying to her, all diseases are removed. If one waters her or makes her feet wet, the fear of death is removed."

Eight things your temple can do to green the temple landscape

1. Create community, herbal and meditation gardens within temple grounds or on rooftops
2. Establish a productive nursery that grows and distributes saplings from a variety of indigenous trees and plants. In the course of worship, distribute young tree saplings as prasada, or offerings and encourage the pilgrims to take them home and plant them there

3. Use non-toxic pesticides (including chilli and garlic) around temple premises, with notices informing visitors about what you are doing and why
4. Choose areas along roads or rivers near your temple that can be made greener, and begin a tree planting and care programme
5. Use ceremonial tree planting to encourage benefactors to make donations for the purchase and planting of sacred native trees such as neem, peepal, bel, amla and ashoka
6. Encourage use of native vegetation to cut down on over-watering
7. Plant shade trees around the temple to reduce heating and cooling costs
8. Experiment with “living walls” and roofs in which plants are enabled to grow on various surfaces

Good examples

Ganga Action Parivar in Rishikesh has plans to plant thousands of trees and other plants that will provide shade, fruit, medicines and other benefits for communities, and decrease erosion along the Ganges River.

The Jagganath Temple in Puri is re-developing two gardens located within the temple complex and a committee at the temple is establishing a green-zone around the temple to improve the overall environment of the temple and its surroundings.

In Varanasi, 80% of **Kashi Vishwanath BHU temple** is under green cover, 50% of Sankat Mochan and 40% of Tulsi Manas.

The forests of India play a central role in many important Hindu stories

When Lord Rama and Mata Sita were sent into exile they spent fourteen years living in a great forest. Later, when Sita was kidnapped by the demon Ravana, it was only with the help of the forest animals, especially the monkeys that Rama succeeded in rescuing her. Lord Krishna grew up in the twelve forests of Vrindavan on the banks of the Yamuna River. One day, there was a great forest fire that threatened all of the animals and people of Vrindavan. The people prayed to Lord Krishna to save them, and with great compassion he devoured the fire and saved the forests and the inhabitants of his town.

Case Study:

Tirumala Temple, Tirupati, South India

The Tirumala temple, in the south Indian city of Tirupati, is one of Hinduism’s holiest and richest shrines. Around 50,000 pilgrims visit this city of seven hills daily. The heavy visitor traffic puts huge pressure on local resources such as water and electricity. The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams is an independent trust that manages the temple and, over the past 15 years, its dedicated forestry department has planted more than 44 lakh (4.4 million) trees to restore vegetation on the Tirumala hills. The trust launched the 1.5 crore (about \$250,000) Haritha project to conserve soil and rainwater, improve the groundwater and plant new forest in a 29,500 acre area in the hills around the city. The temple has established a productive nursery that grows seeds from a variety of indigenous trees and plants and every year the trust plants

about 50,000 saplings with the help of pilgrims, and distributes plants as sacred gifts to devotees in religious rituals.

The temple's community kitchen feeds over 25,000 visitors daily. In 2001 Tirumala adopted solar cooking technology, allowing it to dramatically cut down on fuel. Solar dishes on the temple roof rotate automatically to capture the sun's energy. This is then used to convert water into high pressure steam, making cooking faster and cheaper saving Rs 20 lakh (more than \$3,000) a year, and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 1.2 tonnes per day. Half the project cost of Rs.1.1 crore (about \$175,000) was borne by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams trust, and the rest by a subsidy from the Ministry of Renewable Energy Sources. In addition wind turbines – donated by believers and sited on the hills surrounding the temple – are generating about 7.5 megawatts of power every day (offsetting 19,500 tonnes of CO₂).

The temple sells the emission reduction credits to a Swiss green technology enterprise, Good Energies Inc. It all makes sound economic sense: with the government subsidizing up to 50% of the costs of installing green technology, temples like Tirumala can make steady returns selling the resulting carbon credits. The temple is developing green cover and restoring the reserve forests around the temple to become carbon sinks - a carbon sink is anything that absorbs more carbon than it releases.

Tirumala temple has also banned plastic bottles inside the temple, as a step toward making Tirupati Hills a plastic-free zone. It has set up a recycling plant near the temple complex to crush 150kg of plastic bottles daily, making them into pipes that are sold to farmers at subsidized pricing for micro irrigation. It has also set up small dams to help recharge the aquifer in the hills.



4. Improving Energy Efficiency

“Born of Thee, on Thee move
mortal creatures;
Thou bearest them - the biped and
the quadruped;
Thine, O earth, are the five races
of human beings, for whom
Surya (Sun), as he rises spreads
with his rays, the light that
is immortal.”

-Atharvaveda 12.1-15

“Of lights I am the radiant sun”
-Bhagavad Gita, 10.21

Vision: That all Hindu temples will plan for, and achieve, a reduction of energy use and that they will investigate and make use of sensible and sustainable eco-alternatives

Two Hindu reasons

“Hindu religion wants its followers to live a simple life. It does not allow people to go on increasing their material wants....Do not use anything belonging to nature, such as oil, coal, or forest, at a greater rate than you can replenish it.” (Swami Vibudhesha Teertha: Hindu statement on the environment, 2003).

“A religion that takes no account of practical affairs and does not help to solve them is no religion.” Mahatma Gandhi (Young India, 1925)

Four environmental reasons

Cutting down on energy use and using more efficient energy sources can lessen the impact of climate change, reduce energy bills and can provide a secure energy supply.

By switching to green technologies, temples using green technologies can earn carbon offsets, or credit, which they can sell.

Solar cooking is clean, hygienic and efficient, especially when large quantities need to be cooked. Although the initial investment is high, the long-term savings can be huge.

Turning to renewable energy can dramatically cut down cooking gas, diesel and other energy costs and can provide alternative uninterrupted electricity for the entire community.

Eight things your temple can do to increase energy efficiency

1. Bring in an energy auditor to help you understand what types of energy your temple is using right now and how much you are using
2. Switch to energy-efficient light bulbs such as LEDs (Light-emitting Diodes) and CFLs (Compact Fluorescent Bulbs). These produce the same amount of light with a quarter of the energy, and last more than seven times longer
3. Try to use natural lighting and ventilation where possible
4. Investigate the cost of installing solar and wind power in your temple for lighting, cooking and water heaters
5. Solar powered LED lights can be used in place of conventional lamps around the temple grounds.



6. Look at certification programmes such as Energy Shield: <http://www.greenfaith.org/programs/greenfaith-shield/energy-shield>
7. Make sure everyone knows to switch off the lights when they are not being used
8. In the temple offices people will probably be using chargers for their mobile phones and printers and computers. Make sure they are switched off when not being used, and particularly in the evening and when people leave to go home

Good examples

The **Jagannath Temple** in Puri has installed solar panels on temple buildings

Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh has installed solar water heaters in place of conventional water heaters. Large solar panels have been installed on the rooftops of several residential buildings.

In **Tirupati**, the solar-operated community kitchen helps the shrine save Rs. 20 lakh a year (more than \$3,000), while it reduces carbon dioxide emissions by 1.2 tonnes per

day. Half the project cost of Rs.1.1 crore (about \$175,000) was borne by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam Board, and the rest by a subsidy from the Ministry of Renewable Energy Sources. On the hills that surround the Tirupati temple, the temple management is using donated wind turbines to harness wind energy, which generate about 7.5 megawatts of power every day.

The Sai Baba Ashram at Shirdi in Maharashtra uses one of the world's largest solar cooking systems to cook for 50,000 devotees every day. The energy from 73 parabolic dishes installed on the rooftop generates 3,600 kg of steam daily and saves nearly 100,000 kg of cooking gas annually. It cost Rs. 1.3 crore (just over \$200,000) including a subsidy of Rs. 58 lakh (around \$95,000) from the central government's Non-Renewable Energy Ministry. With an automated sun tracking system, the dishes rotate continuously along with the sun's movement, harnessing the solar rays.

Muni Seva Ashram, in Gujarat, which combines spiritual practice with social activism, is working to make its premises entirely green by using solar, wind and biogas energy. A residential school for 400 students run by the ashram is running exclusively on green energy.

by its 5,000 daily visitors. The Golden Temple combines tranquillity, greenery and peace with its terracotta-tiled ceiling providing ample natural light and ventilation. The temple has a zero waste management policy that includes a biogas plant and Waste Processing Facility. Compost is used as fertiliser on temple grounds or sold with recyclables for Rs. 1 lakh per month (about US\$16,000). The temple has installed rainwater harvesting and residents have created a small organic farming area as well as herbal gardens, organic paddy fields and tree plantations. They have covered hill and campus with forest and trees and harnessed solar energy. A ghoshala (cow-shed) maintained by the temple management generates three tonnes of cow dung, the raw material for its biogas plant, which produces 50 kgs of biogas daily, and is used for cooking. Biogas, generated from a mixture of cow dung and waste food is used at the temple's accommodations, hospital and community kitchens. Solar heaters generate hot water for the kitchens, reducing the need for conventional fuel by 80 per cent.

Golden Temple of Sripuram, Vellore

The newly-built Golden Temple of Sripuram, inaugurated in August 2007 and situated on 100 acres of land within the city of Vellore in Tamil Nadu involved green awareness from the very beginning. Constructed by Sri Narayani Peedam, and headed by spiritual leader Sri Sakthi Amma, the temple is a model environmental site despite the two tonnes of waste generated every day





5. Conserving water resources

“Let him not discharge urine or
faeces into the water,
nor saliva, nor clothes defiled by
impure substances,
nor any other impurity, nor blood,
nor poisons”.

-Manu Samhita IV.56

“We believe water is a purifier, thus
we offer a daily prayer to the deity
of water: “The waters in the sky,
the waters of rivers, and water
in the well whose source is the
ocean, may all these sacred waters
protect me.”

-Rig-Veda 7.49.2

Vision: That rivers and other water bodies
around temples are clean. Temples make
sure groundwater is at sustainable levels
and clean water is available to all for
drinking and washing.

Two Hindu reasons

Water is essential to all forms of life. Pure and uncontaminated water commands a high value in Indian culture. The Manusmriti and Padma Purana both emphasise the need to keep water clean.

Indian religious traditions regard all rivers as sacred. The Rig Veda and other ancient Veda collections lavish praise on such holy rivers as the Yamuna, the Saraswati, the Indus, and the Ganges. No ceremony, from birth to death, is seen by Hindus as complete and perfect without gangajal, or water of the River Ganges. A number of annual Hindu religious bathing fairs and festivals are held on the banks of the Ganges, including Somwati Amavasya, Kartik Poornima, Shravan Poornima and Ganga Dussehra.

Three environmental reasons

Clean water is essential to maintaining life, be it for drinking or for bathing or growing crops. Without clean water disease will spread and crops will languish. India's groundwater resources are being depleted and her rivers and water bodies polluted with sewage and agricultural runoff.

People throw many sacred or ritual objects (including havan samagri and decoration materials such as cloth, polish, paint, cosmetic items, flowers, garlands, oily substances and polythene bags and other plastic items) into rivers, which is very hazardous. The chemicals and non-degradable substances affect various species living in water, which can contaminate food consumed by humans.

The chemical colours used to dye the idols frequently submerged in rivers contain poisonous elements, including mercury, zinc

oxide chromium and lead, which can be potential causes of cancer.

Nine things your temple can do to conserve water resources

1. Commission a team to do an audit, to understand how much water the temple uses for different purposes including drinking, washing, irrigation etc. What is the daily withdrawal of groundwater and surface water?
2. Investigate whether your water is discharged into rivers or lakes without decentralized treatment or whether it is treated
3. Eliminate plastic water bottles and provide clean, drinkable water in the ashram, temple and associated health centres, schools, offices etc
4. Consider harvesting rainwater to provide for some of your water needs
5. Use recycled, non-potable water (eg. grey water waste from showers) for irrigating gardens and reserve potable water for consumption
6. Use bio-toilets
7. Plant native tree and plant species around the temple, as they use less water than exotics
8. Ensure taps are turned off and fix drips and leaks promptly
9. Put up notices to ask people to save water while showering, cleaning their teeth and explain why this is a Hindu thing to do

Good examples

At the Golden Temple of Sripuram, canals and ponds have been specially created within the temple complex to help recharge groundwater. The temple generates water for its own needs and also supplies some for public use when rainfall is insufficient.

The Art of Living, Bangalore, has been undertaking water management on a large scale, especially in nearby villages. The initiative includes educating farmers about judicious usage of water, and teaching them to construct small dams to store rainwater for use in the non-rainy seasons

Auroville in Pondicherry has constructed wetlands for wastewater treatment

Parmarth Niketan ashram in Rishikesh is experimenting with biodigester toilets that use bacteria to break down faecal matter, releasing water and methane that can be used as an energy source and for irrigation

The Taj Mahal, one of the most famous religious buildings in the world, uses waterless urinals that use biodegradable liquid sealants to trap gases and odours, saving water and money

6.

Waste management

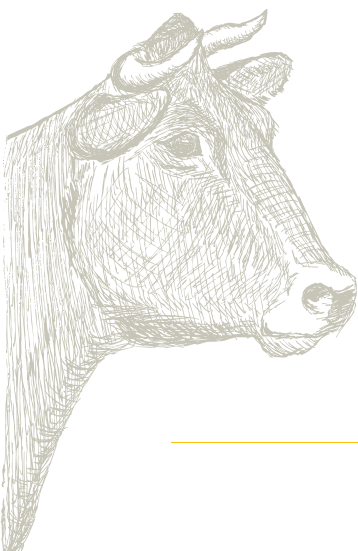
“Do not disturb the sky and do not pollute the atmosphere.”

-Yajur Veda, 5:43

“It brings great sin if fire is not offered purifying material (havan); if trees are cut down on auspicious days, if human waste and spit and phlegm etc. are dropped in water.”

-Shanti Parva

Vision: That disposal of all waste in Hindu temples is done in an environmentally friendly manner with proper waste segregation and recycling.



ISKCON's Govardhan EcoVillage:

Govardhan EcoVillage, two hours drive north from Mumbai, is a model farm community and retreat centre based on the spiritual values taught in the Bhagavad-gita and Srimad Bhagavatam. Activities include organic farming, cow protection, water conservation and alternative energy. There is also a strong focus on education, cottage industries and outreach to rural communities on environmental activities and understanding.



Two Hindu reasons

A holy place should be pure and completely in harmony with nature.

A Hindu should not disturb the sky nor pollute the atmosphere.

Four environmental reasons

The cleanliness and sanctity of many sacred places and holy rivers in India are marred by plastic bags and non-degradable packing materials, lack of organized municipal pick-up of garbage and absence of municipal dumping grounds.

Garbage litters the roadsides, drains, ravines, riverbanks, irrigation channels and hillsides, creating a serious health hazard for humans and animals.

Toxins from such waste may enter the groundwater through unsecured landfills. Lack of waste management enables disease-carrying rodents and insects to thrive. Cows can ingest polythene bags containing food and sometimes die. Burning recyclable and non-recyclable garbage causes significant air pollution.

Management of solid waste has not been tackled adequately by local urban authorities. It is also therefore the responsibility of the temples and ashrams to see they effectively manage their own waste.

How fast do things biodegrade when left in the natural environment?

Vegetables	5 days –1 month
Paper	2–5 months
Cotton T-shirt	6 months
Orange peels	6 months
Tree leaves	1 year
Wool socks	1–5 years
Plastic-coated paper milk cartons	5 years
Leather shoes	25–40 years
Nylon fabric	30–40 years
Tin cans	50–100 years
Aluminium cans	80–100 years
Glass bottles	1 million years
Styrofoam cup	500 years to forever
Plastic bags	500 years to forever

(from <http://www.sciencelearn.org.nz/Contexts/Enviro-imprints/Looking-Closer/Measuring-biodegradability>)

Twenty-one things your temple can do to improve waste management

1. Do an audit of the temple's current system of collecting and disposing waste.
2. Organise a meeting to see how this can be improved and make sure the majority of people are on board. Set targets for the short term and medium term.
3. Put up signs to encourage pilgrims to not drop their litter
4. Develop a system for segregating different types of wastes in different coloured, bins (labelled in Hindi and local language as well as English, with pictures to make it clear): One should be for the organic compostable food wastes and another for recyclable items such as plastics and papers. Also make a place for disposing of batteries, tin cans, glass etc.
5. Recycle worship flowers through compost areas or as incense (see box).
6. Compost kitchen and garden waste to enrich soil
7. Explore if there is any recycling of solid and organic wastes in the broader community that you could participate in
8. Make the temple grounds a plastic-free zone
9. Work with local businesses to stop them using plastic bags; sell biodegradable bags for use in temple premises
10. Carry reusable water bottles with you that you can refill
11. Install water fountains around the temple
12. Ensure there are enough toilets for pilgrims, and that they are cleaned regularly, using eco-friendly products
13. Educate pilgrims on the need to keep the pilgrim town clean and green
14. Form partnerships with NGOs and concerned citizens to reduce litter and waste
15. Switch to steel cutlery and give up Styrofoam. Work out a schedule for doing this over an agreed amount of time.
16. Use leaf plates, bowls, clay kulhads, bagasse plates, compostable paper plates, areca nut plates as alternatives to plastic, Styrofoam or paper plates
17. Use cow dung to fuel kitchens or langar/ kitchen and garden waste
18. Use non-toxic low polluting chemical products instead of detergents for kitchen cleaning. For cleaning puja utensils and brass items use a mixture of tamarind and lime juice with ash from havankunds (ritual fire pits) using coconut coir. These natural cleaning techniques have been used for hundreds of years in temples.
19. Develop recycling on temple grounds or share recycling capacity with other temples
20. Work with volunteers to organise a clean-up in the streets around the temple. Actively engage local people, youth and students in order to deepen their knowledge about environmental issues and to create interests in clean-up efforts.

21. Create a temple cleaning endowment fund through donations and grants that can be used for cleaning roads and ghats (banks) adjacent to the temple, for supplies such as bags and gloves and donations of rubbish bins to stall-holders.

Good examples

Inside the **Sivananda Ashram** in Rishikesh there is a system for segregating the different types of wastes through different coloured bins; also there is a proper disposal of worshipped flowers and garlands. Flowers are put in a separate pit, as they are regarded as sacred. The compost is used in gardening. Inorganic waste is collected by Clean Himalaya Society and further segregated for recycling.

Volunteers at Amma's Embracing the World charitable organizations are using non-recyclable plastic to weave bed bases for foldaway beds for disaster survivors.

Vrindavan is considered the land of Krishna and his cows. Recently, a law was passed stopping shopkeepers from giving plastic bags to customers following an increase in the number of cows that have died or suffered from eating plastic bags. They now hand out cloth bags. Similar laws have been passed in other towns and cities across India.

At **Mankameshwar temple** in Lucknow, flowers are converted into incense sticks using indigenous methods. Under the Mission Sakshama project initiated by the Lucknow-based Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants laboratory (CSIR-CIMAP), workers are trained to find uses for the huge quantities of flowers that were previously thrown away after

worship. Now marigolds are recycled to make incense sticks, roses are distilled into rosewater and other flowers are made into herbal products. The project has been running for four years, giving the mostly female workers the option to sell the products in bulk in wholesale markets or sell directly from their own shops.

Golden Temple of Sripuram: The Golden Temple of Sripuram in Tamil Nadu state attracts over 5,000 visitors daily, which translates into two tonnes of waste. The temple authorities have set up a processing facility employing 70 workers which converts the bio-degradable waste into organic manure through aerobic composting and vermicomposting while recyclables are segregated into 48 categories, packed and sold on, creating an average income of Rs.1 lakh (US \$2,500) per month. Wastewater is recycled and used to irrigate the grass and plantations.

Where municipal waste collection and disposal is ineffective, temples can create a network for waste management activities in the surrounding area. One outstanding example is the Clean Himalaya Society, which collects waste in Rishikesh and processes it at a sorting shed for recycling and composting. (See case study in Section III for more information)





Step by Step Composting for Sacred Waste – Flower Offerings

1. Make a special "puja-flower compost yard" on the ground with brick walls of 11 cm on all the four sides (length: 1.8 metres, width: 1.2 m; height: 1.2 m) within the temple complex, or in any corner of a garden.
2. Put a lid on the top with a wire mesh that can be opened and closed from the top. This is done to avoid the entry of animals, and allow sunlight and oxygen (air) in the compost pit.
3. Keep on adding all the flowers and leaves such as tulsi or bel patra in this pit every day.

4. Every 15 days add about 20kg (44 lbs) gobar (cow-dung) from the gausala (cow-shelter) to accelerate composting. The cow-dung is regarded as sacred, and it will make the compost nutrient-rich.
5. The compost pile should be moist, but not too wet. Add water periodically.
6. Turn the pile after every 15 days with a bamboo, shovel or a pitchfork. After six months, a rich and crumbling compost will be prepared with the organic matter and nutrients your plants need to thrive.
7. Distribute this compost as Prasad within the community, or use in the temple garden.

7.

Protecting animals and wild places

“Don’t destroy the forest with tigers and don’t make the forest devoid of tigers. Forests can’t be saved without tigers and tigers can’t live without forests because forests protect tigers and tigers protect forests.”

-Virat Parrva 5.45-46



Vision: That religious activities do not harm animals or degrade the wild places where they live. And that instead they encourage visitors, pilgrims and the temple community to honour and sustain all life.

Three Hindu reasons

Hindu tradition is founded on principles of non-violence, care for those that cannot defend themselves, and a sense that all elements of creation are holy and interdependent, be they in the form of a person, a tree or a tiger. The Hindu community therefore has an important role to ensure the immortality of India’s creatures and their forest homes.

Many Hindu stories feature animals. In the Puranas, animals are the vahanas, or vehicles, and therefore the representatives of the gods. The bull is the vahana of Lord Shiva, the cow is the vahana of Lord Krishna, the tiger of Goddess Durga, the elephant of Lord Indra, the peacock of Lord Kartikeya. We worship certain trees like

the banyan and pipal, view some mountains (including the whole Himalayan range) as sacred, and immerse ourselves in holy rivers like Mother Ganga.

Every step of the pilgrimage journey is a time to honour God in all its forms. We can help reduce the pressures that threaten rare wildlife and their habitats by directing our compassion towards them and by increasing the awareness in our communities about the connection between our faith and nature protection.

Two environmental reasons

Wildlife and their habitats are in crisis from poaching, illegal land clearing, pollution, development and habitat encroachment. As wild natural places become more accessible with improved infrastructure, millions of people are now visiting these once remote, fragile areas, putting increasing pressure on India’s natural landscapes and their wildlife. The temple can

play an important role in maintaining India's globally important natural areas and animals.

Religious pilgrimage is having a significantly negative effect on India's wildlife parks. Many temples and holy sites are located inside or near some of India's most important tiger reserves. For days if not months at a time during holy festivals, hundreds of thousands of people throng through wildlife reserves, whose animals and habitats are already threatened. Over half the remaining wild tigers left in the world are in India, for example, many in areas impacted by pilgrims. The tiger is a symbol for all animals and forests, and is India's national animal, symbolizing our natural heritage.

Ten things your temple can do to protect wildlife and wild places

1. Make sure that there are systems in place for trash disposal so that the forest is not littered with plastic and other waste. Put in place a ban on plastic bottles and bags in pilgrimage areas, especially those in national parks. Create a sacred place for puja waste.
2. Take measures to limit the noise made in the forest during religious celebrations so as not to disturb wildlife populations, particularly at night.
3. Include the theme of religion and wildlife protection – especially of threatened and protected species – in religious teachings, sermons, blessings and educational materials.
4. Get your team to reach out to local conservation organizations about how you can help with protection efforts in nature reserves and around your temple.

5. Remind all pilgrims that when we step into a nature reserve during pilgrimage, we are in a sacred place. If pilgrimage occurs in or near a forest, ensure that pilgrims stick to designated pathways and do not infringe upon the homes and pathways needed to protect animals.
6. Develop a cow care/ protection programme.
7. Develop green areas within the temple grounds that can be used by migratory birds.
8. Show compassion towards all animals, refraining from hitting them or overloading them, and making sure they are well fed and looked after.
9. Lead by example and encourage the religious community to actively respond to the wildlife crisis by advocating for greater protection, respect and compassion towards wildlife and the natural world.
10. Make wildlife part of your temple's engagement with young people in the community.

Good examples

Sri Sailam, Andhra Pradesh, is the largest tiger reserve in India. It is also home to the famous Sri Bhramaramba Mallikarjuna Temple. Access to the temple is via a road that cuts through the reserve. Conservationists at the reserve have put up signs along the pilgrimage road encouraging pilgrims not to drop litter. Using imagery and language that is easily understandable, the signs are an effective way of communicating an important message.

Ranthambore Tiger Reserve, Rajasthan: With ARC's support the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology in the Environment (ATREE) spearheaded a 'Green Ganesha - Clean Ganesha' campaign linking religious values and beliefs with environmental care ahead of the annual 'festival of Ganesh Chaturthi' in August 2014. They have inspired community and conservation stakeholders to become involved, as well as the Ganesh temple inside the reserve, which has issued messages of care for the park's wildlife and habitat during times of pilgrimage.

Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR), Tamil Nadu: Several years ago ATREE launched with local partners a programme to reduce the pressure of the annual pilgrimage on the park. ATREE's research shows that pilgrimage has resulted in a 400% increase in traffic in the park, with 5,000 cars enter forest during festival days - with an associated 600% increase in road kill. There has also been a 500-fold increase in microbes in the main river, a critical water source for wildlife. ATREE, the local forest department and community partners now support programmes addressing plastic waste, traffic, and protecting core biodiversity areas. Discussions with The Lord Sorimuthu Iyyanar temple inside the reserve are progressing.



8. Faith & food

“When one's food is pure, one's being becomes pure”

–Chandogya Upanishad 7.26.2

“All beings live on food grains, which are dependent on rain.

Rain is produced by yajna (religious activity) which is based upon the performance of duties as taught in the Vedic scriptures.”

–Bhagavad Gita 3.14-15

Vision: That all temples and ashrams develop policies to ensure the food they buy, grow or eat – in worship and celebration, in their schools, restaurants and retreats – honours their beliefs about caring for creation, and is kind to the Earth rather than destroying it.

Four Hindu reasons

Hinduism has always advocated ahimsa, non-cruelty, as an important component of Dharma. Food is also seen as a gift from God and plays a central role in our worship. The Bhagavad Gita tells us that the way to ensure abundance is to please Bhumi, Mother Earth, by doing our religious duty. According to Vedic scriptures, all food should be offered as a sacrifice to God before it is eaten.

Annandana is the gift and giving of food: all other ethical arrangements in society get looked after if everyone is engaging in annandana on a daily basis: According to an ancient Indian saying: "there is no dana (act of generosity) greater than the giving of food to the hungry and water to the thirsty."

Hindus believe that what we eat determines our mental as well as physical state. Eating sattvic, or pure, food helps us to become sattvic ourselves. If we eat food that in its very growing has harmed the environment, through fertilizers that harm the earth, or pesticides that kill the bees, then there will be negative consequences.

The Yajur veda says: You must not use your God-given body for killing God's creatures, whether they are human, animal or whatever."

Three environmental reasons

Agriculture has a huge impact on the environment, from the destruction of forests to plant crops or graze livestock; to loss of biodiversity due to intensive, industrialised farming; to the pollution of water courses from pesticides and fertilisers.

How we treat livestock is also a moral issue, as is whether we pay farm workers a decent price for their work and produce. Our choices of what, when and how we eat have a huge impact upon the Earth, our fellow human beings and other living creatures.

Increasingly in Europe and America and around the world, milk is produced from animals that do not see fields, who live lives in sheds, whose calves are taken away from them at birth, and who after a year or two are so full of antibiotics that they can no longer be productive and are

slaughtered. Organic certified milk shows the animals have been treated more kindly and have been fed with fewer drugs.

Seven things your temple can do

1. Buy food and milk consciously from producers who do not use toxic pesticides
2. Support the growing of organic and sustainable produce
3. Advertise your support of organic and sustainably grown produce
4. Organise discussions in the temple or ashram about food issues
5. Plant organic vegetables and fruits on temple grounds to supply some of your food needs
6. Be kind to cows according to the principle of ahimsa – ensure that the milk served in the temple or ashram comes from cows treated well
7. Pure, clean food scraps and cooked food waste can be given to animals or composted
8. Plan a celebration with a "green" theme, featuring locally and sustainably grown foods

Good Examples

Food for Life in Vrindavan is a Hindu charity that has distributed more than 3.5 million meals to children, girls and women. It has an organic farm and nursery where it grows vegetables for the local community, using cow dung as fertilizer and cow urine and neem leaves to protect small plants from bugs and insects. They take thousands of saplings to poor communities in order to help feed them for generations to come. It also runs a goshala for 200 cows run on ahimsa principles.

The Hindu Bhaktivedanta Manor in the UK practises cow protection, which means the animals are not killed; they are hand-milked; calves suckle from their mothers and bulls are given work such as ploughing and hauling. When an animal becomes too old to work or give milk it is gently retired and lives until the end of its natural life. The 16 dairy cows produce about 50,000 litres of cruelty-free milk, feeding thousands in the temple kitchens, and used for making the sweets, or prasad, offered to Krishna in rituals.

Quick Framework for Developing a Green Temple Action Plan

After considering the themes above for greening your temple, use this framework to develop a plan of action.

Vision: What does it mean for us to be a green temple?

Objectives: What are your temples objectives under this initiative? What do you want to have achieved in the next five years in relation to the themes highlighted in this manual? In the next ten years? By the next generation?

Committee Structure: Who from your temple will be responsible for and involved in this action plan?

Temple assessment: Use the checklist in Section V to assess your temple's current environmental practices and to think through how green your temple could be.

Project Description: Describe what will take place under each of the chosen themes during the project in one or two paragraphs.

Timeline for Completion: Estimate how long it will take to complete your objectives and target dates for completing specific phases.

Assessing Your Resources: Consider what each project requires in terms of resources and what you can realistically accomplish with the resources currently available. How much time and energy would it take to carry out each project? What skills would be needed and does anyone in the temple community already have those skills? If not, could we learn the skills or bring in someone to help? What tools and materials would be needed? How could we obtain them? What costs would be involved? How could we raise funds?

What are the next steps? Agree on next steps with the committee and assign responsibilities for action.



Two case studies from Rishikesh

Rishikesh has a large flow of religious visitors from across India, especially during times of pilgrimage. If you go upstream from the town of Rishikesh you will find several pilgrim routes, passing special riverbank areas, sacred sites and religious pathways, leading to the most sacred sites of Badrinath and Kedarnath. These areas are also ecologically fragile and increasingly threatened. The sacred Ganges and the Himalayan foothills near Rishikesh are spoiled by intense development, lack of organized municipal pick-up of garbage and absence of municipal dumping grounds. Coupled with the fact that many local businesses and visiting pilgrims and others use plastic bags and non-degradable packing materials intensively. Garbage litters the roadsides, drains, ravines, banks of the sacred river, irrigation channels and hillsides creating a serious sanitation and health hazard. It's not just the people. Animals eat the rubbish and die painful deaths.

The end-point for much of this garbage is the sacred Ganges. Toxins enter the groundwater and thus enter the many wells dug along the riverbanks. The waste thrown into irrigation channels not only pollutes the irrigation water, but often end up littering farmland. Lack of waste management increases the risk for disease while cows die ingesting polythene bags containing food. When people burn recyclable and non-recyclable garbage the result is toxic air pollution.

Several ashrams and religious leaders have recognized a need to develop codes of conduct for the ashrams and temples in Rishikesh, to protect the area's natural, divine endowment as well as its tourist value.

Case Study 1:

The greening of Sivananda ashram, Rishikesh

Sivananda Ashram is the headquarters of The Divine Life Society founded by Swami Sivananda. It is a large ashram with approximately 300 permanent residents and covers several acres of land with residential units, a Printing Press, Charitable Hospital, Academy, Temples, Auditorium, Music Hall, Bhajan Hall, Samadhi Hall and other buildings. The ashram has developed the following green initiatives:

A. Waste management

It has formed an in-house sanitation department in a dedicated office including a sanitation committee, a manager and assistant manager and 15 paid sanitation workers. First steps have included placing labelled coloured bins throughout the ashram: blue bins for the collection of inorganic waste and green bins for the collection of organic waste. There are signboards throughout the site requesting ashram residents and guests to follow basic guidelines for sadhana including separating waste and using bins.

The President of The Divine Life Society, H.H. Sri Swami Vimalanandaji Maharaj, personally urged ashram residents and workers to use the bins and segregate their organic and inorganic waste. They were urged to never dump garbage over hillsides or into the nalas or forest areas.

a. Management of organic and inorganic waste

Inorganic waste is collected by sanitation staff and packed in large bags. These bags are then collected by The Clean Himalaya

Society for segregation into 17 types of recyclable waste and sold for recycling.

Organic waste is collected by the Sanitation Staff and taken to the Sivananda Composting Unit. Food waste is simply mixed with a cow dung slurry and allowed to compost in composting beds naturally for several months, without turning (so as to avoid a foul smell). The compost is used in the many ashram gardens.

Flowers from the many daily pujas in the ashram are no longer put into the Ganga. They are taken to an above-ground pit—where no one can trod—and left to decompose naturally.

b. Community Service

When the three, two-month Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy courses are in session, students volunteer Sunday mornings for one to two hours and join The Clean Himalaya Society to pick up stray garbage at the Ganges Bank or the Muni-ki-reti Bypass Road, a lovely winding forest road.

Many visitors to the Ashram also join The Clean Himalaya Society on their weekly early Thursday morning and Saturday afternoon clean-ups at the Ganga and in Tapovan.

B. Solar water heating

Solar water heating has been provided on most ashram buildings.

C. Other simple environmentally friendly guidelines

Ashram residents and guests are encouraged to use compact fluorescent lights, ensure lights are turned off when not in use, and turn off public water taps that may have been turned on by monkeys. Burning leaves, which gives off toxic fumes, is forbidden in the ashram and gardens.

D. Guidelines for success

Practices that can make a huge difference to the environment are not difficult but require a change in consciousness that is not always easy. The two most important ingredients for success are passion and a strong will and determination to make a change. Other essential ingredients include:

Administrative/Spiritual Head: The administrative or spiritual head of the institution needs to be fully behind responsible environmental changes and actively encourage that practices be implemented down the ranks. Active participation of the administrative or spiritual head lends a very important dignity to an otherwise often disregarded duty.

Sanitation Department/Committee: It is very helpful to have a committee responsible for training and guiding staff involved in making environmental changes, but essential to have one or two individuals taking responsibility to ensure decisions are implemented—even at the risk of being unpopular.

Sanitation Staff: Taking the time to supervise sanitary workers and holding them to a high standard in a kind and loving way is essential. Acknowledging the importance of their work and treating workers with respect

and concern for their health and welfare go a long way in creating a positive atmosphere and results in less supervision required in the future as staff members feel the value of their work. As absenteeism among sanitation workers can be high, bonuses for good attendance can make an importance difference, especially as sanitation workers are usually living below poverty level.

Case Study 2:

The Clean Himalaya Initiative, Rishikesh

Members of the Sivananda Ashram launched the initiative in 2000 to respond to the severe lack of action on solid waste by the municipality. They began with two rag pickers collecting plastics from local guesthouses. Now, in 2015, it is an enterprise with 14 employees, generating regular income for at least families. They collect solid waste from homes, ashrams, shops and hotels all around Rishikesh and segregate them for recycling and environmentally-sound disposal.

This project is the only grassroots programme in Rishikesh managing waste in an eco-friendly way. It aims to develop a comprehensive entrepreneurial waste management programme not dependent upon state support and is a model for other sacred Hindu areas. It involves:

- Collecting garbage daily from paying users, including residents, hotels, a few ashrams and schools

- Carrying inorganic waste to the Clean Himalaya workshop where it is segregated into grades of plastics, paper, glass, metal etc, and subsequently sold where possible

- Transporting non-recyclable garbage and food waste to a temporary dump

- Placing public dustbins in key areas and along the banks of the Ganga and organizing for them to be cleaned and emptied regularly

- Organising "education through action" activities with volunteers and workers cleaning roadsides, drains, ravines and hillsides

- Enabling well-wishers to "adopt" a section of roadside, or a garbage dump, and finance its regular cleaning

- And vitally: cooperating with the municipality to encourage municipal and private sweepers to stop dumping garbage into ravines and over hillsides

The project covers around 25% of the Rishikesh area, so there is significant potential to expand the service and environmental benefits of the Clean Himalaya model. The concept is easy to understand and simple to implement, and so is replicable by temples and ashrams in other regions, even on a large scale.



03. Resources

The vision for a green temple

1. Key Hindu and environment calendar dates

January	Vasant Panchmi (first day of spring)
Third week of February	Hindu Environment Week (HEW)
March	Holi
8pm, last Saturday in March	Earth Hour
22 March	World Water Day
22 April	Earth Day
May/ June	Ganga Dussehra
5 June	World Environment Day
8 June	World Oceans Day
11 July	World Population Day
16 October	World Food Day
October/November	Diwali

2.

List of resources and organisations

The main organisations involved in creating this guide are:

- a) **The Alliance of Religions and Conservation** (ARC): is a secular body that supports the world's major faiths on creating and following environmental programmes based on their core teachings, beliefs and practice. ARC also works to raise awareness among environmentalists about the role faiths can play in caring for the natural world and brokers partnerships between the two groups. It was founded in 1995 by HRH Prince Philip and is based in the United Kingdom. It has helped religions around the world produce 60 long-term plans aimed at caring for the Earth. www.arcworld.org
- b) **The Bhumi Project** is an initiative to encourage the global Hindu community to better care for the environment. It is based at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. Using Hindu teachings, perspectives, and its ancient culture, Bhumi works with Hindu temples, communities and leaders to take a more active role in the care and protection of our Mother Earth - Mother Bhumi. Free from philosophical and theological bias, it works with all members of the international Hindu family as a unique voice on the global environmental stage. The Bhumi Project was launched in 2009 in Windsor Castle, near London, in the presence of His Royal Highness Prince Philip, and His Excellency Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations. www.bhumiproject.org
- c) **The Green Pilgrimage Network**: ARC launched the international Green Pilgrimage Network

(GPN) in Assisi, Italy, in November 2011, with nine pilgrimage cities from several different faiths including Christianity, Daoism, Hinduism and Sikhism, located across Europe, Africa and Asia. The first India meeting of GPN was held in Hyderabad in October 2012 with representatives of Hindu, Sikh, Muslim and Buddhist cities, followed in November 2012 with a meeting of Hindu holy sites in Rishikesh. The GPN vision is of pilgrims, and the pilgrim sites that receive them, becoming models of care for the environmental and leaving a positive footprint on this Earth. <http://www.greenpilgrimage.net>

3.

Other faiths' guides to greening their places of worship

Buddhist:

The Karmapa's 108 Things & Monasteries Guide: <http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=308>

Christian:

Living Churchyards: <http://www.arcworld.org/projects.asp?projectID=271> and Church of South India Eco-Audit list: <http://www.arcworld.org/projects.asp?projectID=353>

Daoist:

Daoist Ecological Handbook: <http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/Daoist-Eco-Handbook-Eng.pdf>

Jewish:

Synagogue Audit: <http://www.arcworld.org/projects.asp?projectID=146>

Muslim:

The Green Up! Toolkit – For Muslims: <http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/Green-Up-My-Community-Toolkit.pdf>

Sikh:

Green Gurdwaras Guide: http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/Green-Guide_GURDWARAS-12-09-01.pdf

Interfaith and other:

Green Pilgrimage Handbook: <http://greenpilgrimage.net/resources/handbooks/>
Green Pilgrimage Network India handbook: <http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/GPN-India-Handbook.pdf>, https://greenpilgrimage.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/green_pilgrimage_network_handbook.pdf **Green Faith:** <http://greenfaith.org/getting-started/houses-of-worship/6-steps-for-getting-started-in-your-house-of-worship>. **Cool Congregations Start Up Kit:** <http://www.coolcongregations.org/start-up-kit/start-up-kit-for-congregations/25-steps/>. **The Live Simply Award:** <http://livesimplyaward.org.uk>. **Unitarian Green Churches:** http://www.uua.org/documents/congservices/greensanctuary/g_s_manual.pdf

4.**Tackling waste**

Green Faith on pest management: <http://greenfaith.org/resource-center/stewardship/toxics-reduction/non-toxic-pest-management/integrated-pest-management>

Vermi-composting floral offerings: http://www.academia.edu/3760835/Solid_waste_management_of_temple_floral_offerings_by_vermicomposting_using_Eisenia_fetida - Case study 1 for vermicompost of floral offerings <http://www.environmentaljournal.org/1-2/ujert-1-2-11.pdf> - Case study 2 for vermicompost of floral offerings

Composting for beginners: http://www.plowhearth.com/neighborhood/HT_composting_for_beginners.asp

Sivananda Ashram on vermi-composting food waste: http://www.sivanandaonline.org/public_html/

Clean Himalaya: Grassroots waste management <http://www.cleanhimalaya.org/>

Amma's charitable activities, Kerala: <http://amma.org/global-charities/green-initiatives>

ICLEI - sustainability in cities: <http://www.iclei.org/>
Civil society group in Bangalore: <http://www.theuglyindian.com>

Swachh Barat Campaign, Indian Government: moud.gov.in/SwachchBharat

For small steps towards greener living: <http://www.sustainablebabysteps.com/religion-environment>

For energy saving tips: <http://www.ase.org/resources/energy-saving-tips>

Kitchen composting and garden composting to enrich soil and to use organic waste: <http://www.howtocompost.org/>

Online article of Times of India on waste in Varanasi: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/varanasi/Unholy-mess-Temple-waste-a-concern/articleshow/21872439.cms> -

Case study on Waste Management in Temples of Bangalore: <http://swmrt.com/Readings/SWMRT%20case%20study%20on%20the%20Waste%20Management%20of%20Temples%20in%20Bangalore%20-%20June%202012.pdf> -



5.

Making sure food is sustainable and compassionate

Faith in Food: Changing the world one meal at a time, Susie Weldon and Sue Campbell, Alliance of Religions and Conservation, Bene Factum Publishing Ltd., London, 2014

6.

Making energy sources faith-consistent

http://www.unidorc.org/emc_dect.htm

Green Faith's Energy Shield: <http://greenfaith.org/programs/greenfaith-shield/energy-shield>

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design:

<http://www.usgbc.org/?CategoryID=19>

http://www.iclei.org.br/polics/CD/P2_4_Estudios%20de%20Caso/3_Eficiencia%20Energetica/PDF115_EC109_Bhubaneswar.PDF

- Case study for installation of energy efficient lighting at Lingaraj Temple at Bhubaneswar

<http://www.swaminarayangadi.com/london/newtemple/energy/energy.php>

- Case study for Swaminarayan temple in London for Sustainable Energy Programme

Green Sermons, Prayers, Celebrations

Hindu Environment Week is held every third week in February: <http://www.bhumiproject.org/environmentweek/>

Environmental teachings and awareness raising activities at Parmarth Niketan ashram in Rishikesh: www.parmarth.com

Create eco-themed sermons and celebrations: <http://greenfaith.org/resource-center/spirit/eco-themed-worship-services>

Green Durga Puja: www.engio.in

Toolkit of tips for hosting a successful Sikh Environment Day, March 14: <http://www.ecosikh.org/programs/sikh-environment-day/toolkit-for-march-14th/>

7.

Biodiversity

Greening pilgrimage in tiger reserves, from ATREE www.atree.org

Environmental issues in India:

WWF India:

<http://www.wwfindia.org/>

Wildlife Trust of India:

<http://www.wti.org.in/>

Vandana Shiva's Navdanya:

<http://www.navdanya.org/about-us>

The C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation:

<http://cprfoundation.org>

India Biodiversity Portal :

<http://indiabiodiversity.org/>

National Biodiversity Authority :

<http://www.nbaindia.org/>

Sacred Plants of India, Nanditha Krishna & M. Amirthalingam, Penguin Books, India, 2014:

<http://www.nandithakrishna.in/books.html>

Sacred Animals of India, Nanditha Krishna, Penguin Books, India, 2014:

<http://www.nandithakrishna.in/books.html>

04. Hindu statement on the environment



This statement is based on papers and comments by: Dr. Sheshagiri Rao, Chief Editor of The Encyclopaedia of Hinduism; Swami Chidananda Sarasvati, Founder of the India Heritage Research Foundation and Spiritual Head of Parmarth Niketan Ashram; Shrivatsa Goswami, Vaishnava Acharya of Shri Radharaman Temple, Vrindavan Chairman of the Vrindavan Conservation Project; Swami Vibudhesha Teertha, Acharya of Madhvacarya Vaishnavas, Udupi, Central Advisory Committee Member of the Visva Hindu Parishad.

This text was issued at the launch of ARC at Windsor Castle in 1995 and presented formally to HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, ARC's founder. "Let there be peace in the heavens, the

1

“Earth, the atmosphere, the water, the herbs, the vegetation, among the divine beings and in Brahman, the absolute reality. Let everything be at peace and in peace. Only then will we find peace.”

Sustaining the balance

Swami Vibudhesha Teertha

These days it looks as if human beings have forgotten that a particular natural condition on Earth enabled life to come into existence and evolve to the human level. Humanity is disturbing this natural condition on which his existence, along with the existence of all other forms of life, depends. This is like the action of a woodcutter cutting a tree at the trunk, on the branch on which he is sitting. According to Hindu religion, dharanath dharma ucayate, that which sustains all species of life and helps to maintain harmonious relationship among them is dharma. That which disturbs such ecology is adharma.

Hindu religion wants its followers to live a simple life. It does not allow people to go on increasing their material wants. People are meant to learn to enjoy spiritual happiness, so that to derive a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment, they need not run after material pleasures and disturb nature's checks and balances. They have to milk a cow and enjoy, not cut at the udder of the cow with greed to enjoy what is not available in the natural course. Do not use anything belonging to nature, such as oil, coal, or forest, at a greater rate than you can replenish it. For example, do not destroy birds, fish, earthworms, and even bacteria which play vital ecological roles; once they are annihilated you cannot recreate them. Thus only can you avoid becoming bankrupt, and the life cycle can continue for a long, long time.

Conserve ecology or perish

This is the message of the Bhagavad Gita, a dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna that is a clear and precise Life Science. It is narrated in the third chapter of this great work that a life without contribution toward the preservation of ecology is a life of sin and a life without specific purpose or use.

Life is sustained by different kinds of food; rainfall produces food; timely movement of clouds brings rains; to get the clouds moving on time yajna, religious sacrifice, helps; yajna is performed through rituals; those actions that produce rituals belong only to God; God is revealed by the Vedas; the Vedas are preserved by the human mind; and the human mind is nourished by food. This is the cycle that helps the existence of all forms of life on this globe.

One who does not contribute to the maintenance of this cycle is considered as a destroyer of all life here. When the Lord desired to create life, He created the Sun, Moon, and Earth, and through them a congenial atmosphere for life to come into being. Therefore the Sun, Moon, Earth, Stars and all objects in the universe jointly, not individually, create the atmosphere for the creation, sustenance, or destruction of everything in the universe. The Earth is the only daughter of the Sun to produce children. The Moon is essential for the creation of the right atmosphere for those children to exist and evolve. This we say because of the influence of the Moon on high and low tides in our rivers and oceans. This is narrated also in the Bhagavad Gita:

I become the moon and thereby supply the juice of life to all vegetables.

We cannot refute this influence of the Moon on life. It is proved by the movement of all liquid on this globe depending on the movement of the Moon. Therefore ecology in totality must be preserved: just a part of it would not suffice.

Living bodies subsist on food grains, which are produced from rains. Rains are produced from performance of yajna [sacrifice], and yajna is born of prescribed duties. Regulated activities are prescribed in the Vedas, and the Vedas are directly manifested from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Consequently the all-pervading Transcendence is eternally situated in acts of sacrifice. My dear Arjuna, one who does not follow in human life the cycle of sacrifice thus established by the Vedas certainly lives a life full of sin. Living only for the satisfaction of the senses, such a person lives in vain.

Bhagavad Gita 3:14-16



Hinduism and Nature

Hinduism is a religion that is very near to nature. It asks its followers to see God in every object in the Universe. Worship of God in air, water, fire, Sun, Moon, Stars, and Earth is specially recommended. Earth is worshipped as the spouse of God, hence very dear and near to God. All lives on Earth are considered as children of God and Earth.

Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita says:

I pervade the Universe. All objects in the Universe rest on me as pearls on the thread of a garland.

The Upanishads narrate that after creating the Universe, the Creator entered into each

and every object to help them maintain their interrelationship. The Upanishad says “tat sristva ta devanu pravisat”: (“after creating the universe He entered into every object created”). Therefore to contribute toward the maintenance of this interrelationship becomes worship of God. Hindus believe that there is soul in all plants and animals. One has to do penance even for killing plants and animals for food. This daily penance is called visva deva. Visva deva is nothing but an offering of prepared food to the Creator, asking His pardon.

The Hindu religion gives great importance to protecting cattle. At every Hindu house there is a cow and it is worshipped. The cow is a great friend of humans. It nourishes us through its milk and provides manure to grow our food. This it does without any extra demand—it lives on the fodder got while growing our food. Advanced countries have started to realize the harmful effects of consuming food grown with chemical manure. When we use chemical manure, the topsoil loses its fertility. This generation has no right to use up all the fertility of the soil and leave behind an unproductive land for future generations.



Humanity's contribution

There is no life that is inferior. All lives enjoy the same importance in the Universe and all play their fixed roles. They are to function together and no link in the chain is to be lost. If some link is lost, the whole ecological balance would be disturbed. All kinds of life—insects, birds, and animals—contribute toward the maintenance of ecological balance, but what is humanity's contribution toward this? Humans are intelligent

animals, therefore our contribution should be the biggest. But it is not. We are nullifying the benefits of the contributions made by other species of life. We are disturbing the balance because of our greed for material enjoyment and our craze for power. We do not allow earthworms and bacteria to maintain the fertility of the soil by using chemical manures and insecticides that kill them. We destroy plants and forests indiscriminately and come in the way of plants providing oxygen essential for the very existence of life.

By destroying plants and forests we become agents for increasing the deadly carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. We pollute the air by burning oil for all sorts of machines. We produce unhealthy sounds through our various machineries and instruments which cause sound pollution. By building towns and cities in the banks of rivers we pollute the water. The Hindu religion holds all rivers as holy; polluting them is a big sin. Hinduism encourages the planting of trees like Tulasi, Neem, Peepal which are rich in medicinal properties.

Rishis gave the navel to Brahma, the creator, and to the sustainer Vishnu they gave the heart as His abode. The destroyer, Shiva, was given control of the brain. By doing this they wanted us to know that the language of the heart only can sustain us. When we start speaking through the language of the mind our destruction becomes inevitable. Therefore, a thinking animal has to be very careful while it uses its mental abilities: these are to be applied only with spiritual background. Mind is to act as our friend and not as our enemy. It is to function under our control; we should not succumb to its control. Mana eva manusyanam karanam bandha moksayoh: for human beings, mind is the cause of bondage and

mind is the cause of liberation (Amrita Bindhu Upanishad 2).



Why was humanity created?

There should be a purpose for the creation of humanity. What it might be! We could be the sustainer of interrelationship among numerous life species on Earth. We are ones who can see God, and all objects, as the controller and sustainer of ecological balance. All other animals play their roles without knowing what they are doing, but humans do everything with full consciousness. God created the human mind to see His own reflection as in a mirror. The human mind can meditate on God and know him more and more.

When humanity develops consciousness of the presence of God and His continuous

showering of blessings on the universe, it develops deep love for Him. To enjoy this nectar of love, God created people. Only people have a time-space conception. Therefore, only humanity can see God, pervading time-space, conserving the ecological balance which is the greatest boon bestowed on the universe by God. Though humans cannot contribute toward the conservation in the same way as other animals do, they can help all lives and other objects in the universe to play their roles effectively by persuading God through prayers of love to grant them the required energy and directions. "Yavat bhumandalam datte samrigavana karnanam, tavat tisthati medhinyam santatih putra pautriki": "so long as the Earth preserves her forests and wildlife, man's progeny will continue to exist." This is the Hindu approach toward the conservation of ecology.



2

Sacrifice and Protection

Dr. Sheshagiri Rao

Sacrifice

The Creator, in the beginning, created humans together with sacrifice, and said,

“By this you shall multiply. Let this be your cow of plenty and give you the milk of your desires. With sacrifice you will nourish the gods, and the gods will nourish you. Thus you will obtain the Highest Good.”

(Bhagavad Gita 3:10–11)

Sacrifice does not just mean ritual worship—it means an act that protects life. Personal health depends on eyes, ears, and other sense organs working together in harmony; human prosperity and happiness depend on a well-ordered society and nature; the universe is sustained by the cosmic powers such as the sun and moon working together in unison. Sacrifice reinvigorates the powers that sustain the world by securing cosmic stability and social order. It activates the positive forces of the universe, and protects the Earth from degeneration.



Nonviolence

God’s creation is sacred. Humanity does not have the right to destroy what it cannot create. Humans have to realize the interconnectedness of living entities and emphasize the idea of



moral responsibility to oneself, one's society, and the world as a whole. In our cosmic journey, we are involved in countless cycles of births and deaths. Life progresses into higher forms or regresses into lower forms of life based upon our good or bad karma. Kinship exists between all forms of life. Reincarnation warns us against treating lower forms of life with cruelty.



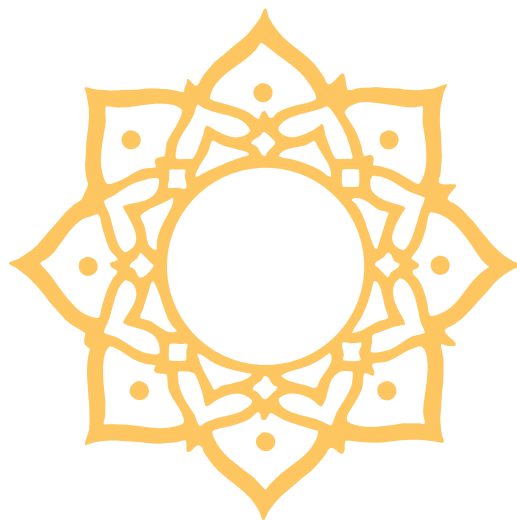
Cow protection

Man has evolved from lower forms of life. We are, therefore, related to the whole creation. The principle of cow protection symbolizes human responsibility to the subhuman world. It also indicates reverence for all forms of life. The cow serves humans throughout its life, and even after death. The milk of the cow runs in our blood. Its contributions to the welfare of the family and the community are countless. Hindus pray daily for the welfare of cows. When the cows are cared for, the world at all levels will find happiness and peace.



Earth as mother

Hindus revere the Earth as mother. She feeds, shelters, and clothes us. Without her we cannot survive. If we as children do not take care of her we diminish her ability to take care of us. Unfortunately the Earth herself is now being undermined by our scientific and industrial achievements.



3

Breaking the family

Shrivatsa Goswami

“ Let there be peace in the heavens, the Earth, the atmosphere, the water, the herbs, the vegetation, among the divine beings and in Brahman, the absolute reality. Let everything be at peace and in peace. Only then will we find peace.”

The goal of human life

According to Hindu philosophy, the goal of human life is the realization of the state of peace. Dharma, loosely translated as religion, is the source by which peace can be fully realized. This peace is not the stillness of death; it is a dynamic harmony among all the diverse facets of life. Humanity, as part of the natural world, can contribute through dharma to this natural harmony.

The natural harmony that should exist in the play of energies between humanity and the natural world is now disrupted by the weakest player in the game: humanity. Although it is the totality of this game that provides our nourishment, through ignorance of our own natural limits we destroy this source of nourishment.

This awareness of ecological play or playful ecology is inseparable from awareness of the need for friendship and play as the real basis for human relationship. The family within which these relationships are nourished is not limited to its human members. Just as the human child has to be nourished by Mother Nature, and the human spirit has to be embraced and loved by beautiful nature, so the human being who has grown old or sick has to be supported by caring nature. If humans distress the mother,

rape the beauty, and beat the caring nurse, what happens? The relationship collapses, and the family is broken.



The environment as our home

The Sanskrit for family is parivara, and environment is paryavarana. If we think of the environment as our home and all of its members as our family it is clear that the key to conserving nature is devotion, love—giving and serving. Nature, prakriti, as the feminine can give and serve. But the role of humanity, purusha, is then to protect. Nowadays purusha, humanity, is interested not in protecting but in exploiting, so prakriti, nature, has to defend herself. This is why we see nature in her furious manifestation—in drought, floods, or hurricanes. If we rape the mother's womb she has convulsions, and we blame her for devastating earthquakes. If we denude her of her lush hair and beautiful skin, she punishes us by withholding food and water.

As it is through ignorance that we destroy our relationships in the family and within the environment, that ignorance becomes the root cause of our suffering. The best way to get rid of this ignorance is to unlearn what is wrong. This unlearning is shaped not only in the school but in the family and community, and it has to begin with the very young.

Traditional Hindu education covers all facets of life—economic, political, cultural, and above all religious. Whether we speak of Krishna, of Chaitanya, or of Gandhi, we see that they drew no clear division between the economic or political and the religious or cultural facets of life. The body and mind are in the service of the heart. In the same way politics and economics are rooted in and guided by religion and culture, and ultimately by spiritual experience.





05. Checklist.

How green is your temple?

Please use the following checklist to understand the current environmental impacts of your temple and to begin the self-inquiry into the kinds of practices the temple would like to initiate as part of its greening programme. It will give you a way to document where your temple is currently at in terms of environmental impact, so that you can plan where to go from here. This is not an exhaustive checklist but is meant to inspire your own process.

Green Pujas, Worship and Celebration

Does your temple integrate environmental awareness into prayer and celebration? For example,

- | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| sermon topics | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |
| music | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |
| meditations | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |
| food | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |
| waste management
etc. | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |

What other worship, celebrations or spiritual practices could help deepen your temple community's relationship with nature?

During times of worship or celebration, are visitors to the temple adding to traffic congestion? How could this be addressed?

Education & Awareness

Does your religious education programme help children and adults understand their place in nature and the interconnectedness of all life? ☐ Y ☐ N

How could this be improved, if at all?

Does your temple have social and environmental action programmes? (For example, has your temple undertaken a project to protect or restore natural resources and habitats on temple grounds or in local communities?) ☐ Y ☐ N

If not, is one planned, or could it be? ☐ Y ☐ N

What opportunities exist for collaboration with local groups to raise environmental awareness or to help other communities tackle environmental issues? ☐ Y ☐ N

Have you assessed what skills and experiences within your temple community might contribute to furthering environmental activities? ☐ Y ☐ N

What were the key results of this assessment? Where is your temple particularly strong and where can it bring in outside help? ☐ Y ☐ N

Greening the Landscape

Does your temple have gardens, native trees, green areas? ☐ Y ☐ N

How do you care for your land and gardens? What are your practices and policies for landscape management (such as including native species and minimizing chemical fertilisers and pesticides)? ☐ Y ☐ N

Improving Energy Efficiency

What sources of energy does your temple use?

solar	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
wind	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
electricity	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
biomass - from natural materials like wood, plants, manure...	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
fossil fuels (oil, coal, natural gas)	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N

What are your energy consumption patterns? (Review utility bills from recent months/ years.)

Please tick the practices that could help reduce your energy consumption:

- | | | |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| turning off lights and computers in empty rooms | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |
| switching to LED and other energy-saving light bulbs | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |
| using natural lighting and ventilation | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |
| having notices to ask people to shut down their phone chargers | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |
| organising car sharing | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |
| encouraging visitors to use public transport | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |
| walk or cycle | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |

Which practices are you following already and how could you do better?

Managing Water Resources

Which sources do you use for water?

- | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| ground water | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |
| rainwater catchment | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |
| well | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |
| river | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |
| reservoir | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |

What do last year's water bills tell you about how much water your temple uses?

- | | | |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Can any of these practices be used to reduce your water usage? | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |
| Do you water the temple grounds? | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |
| Do you have water-saving devices such as low-flow toilets? | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |
| Do you recommend careful water use to those visiting or living within temple grounds?) | <input type="checkbox"/> Y | <input type="checkbox"/> N |

Do you know the status of your water quality? Are there any threats to free and open access to good quality water for your temple?

☐ Y ☐ N

Waste Management

Do you have separate labelled bins for organic and non-organic waste?

☐ Y ☐ N

How do you handle the recycling for your temple?

☐ Y ☐ N

Is there an established recycling policy?

Do volunteers take charge of this activity or a dedicated staff person?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
Is local recycling available?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
Do you compost kitchen and puja waste?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
Do you have policies for purchasing nontoxic cleaning products, recycled or sustainably sourced kitchen items such as napkins and plates, and office products like paper?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
Do you organise volunteer clean ups?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
Is the municipality clearing waste adequately from the surroundings near the temple?		
Is there municipal recycling?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
If not, how can you or the Hindu community around the temple encourage them to do better?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N

Protection of Animals and Wild Places

Is your temple located in a wild natural area or important wildlife corridor (i.e. areas that are not formally protected but important to the animal’s range)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
Do globally important wildlife inhabit the area surrounding your temple?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
Are there ways that the temple can work with organisations or government agencies that are protecting these areas and species? (Eg. Awareness activities for visitors/ pilgrims on taking care not to litter, disturb the wildlife)	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
Do temple celebrations and events create noise, light and waste that could disturb wildlife?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
Does your temple have a gaushala?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
Are the cows well treated?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
Are neighbouring cows well treated?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N
How might you improve their circumstances?	<input type="checkbox"/> Y	<input type="checkbox"/> N

Does your temple follow special practices regarding sustainable food (eg. Choosing locally grown, plant-based, and/or organic foods). Are there areas for improvement?

☐ Y ☐ N

☐ Y ☐ N

List of Ideas for Future Green Activities for your Temple

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Guidelines for Segregation at Temples

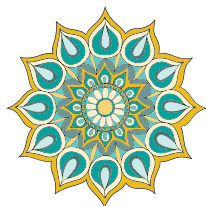
Type of waste	Colour code	List of items	Recommended location of bins
Wet/ organic	Green	Fruits, flowers, leaves, kitchen waste, leftover oil from lamps, leaf plates and bowls, wood, ash, kumkum, turmeric, chandan, vibhuti/ash, incense sticks, camphor etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> kitchen and dining area. inside the sanctum where the priest can dispose compostable items. at the entrance and exit of the temple.
Dry/ Recyclable	Blue	Plastic wrappers, plastic covers, paper, milk sachets and any other recyclable materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> kitchen and dining area. inside sanctum for the priest to use at entrance and exit of the temple.
Reject	Red	Candles, earthen lamps, broken glass/sharps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small Bin at the garbage collection point in the temple. There should be minimal amount of reject waste generated.
Electronic waste	Yellow	Bulbs, Tube Lights, CDs etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small bin at the collection point. Need not be accessible to general public.

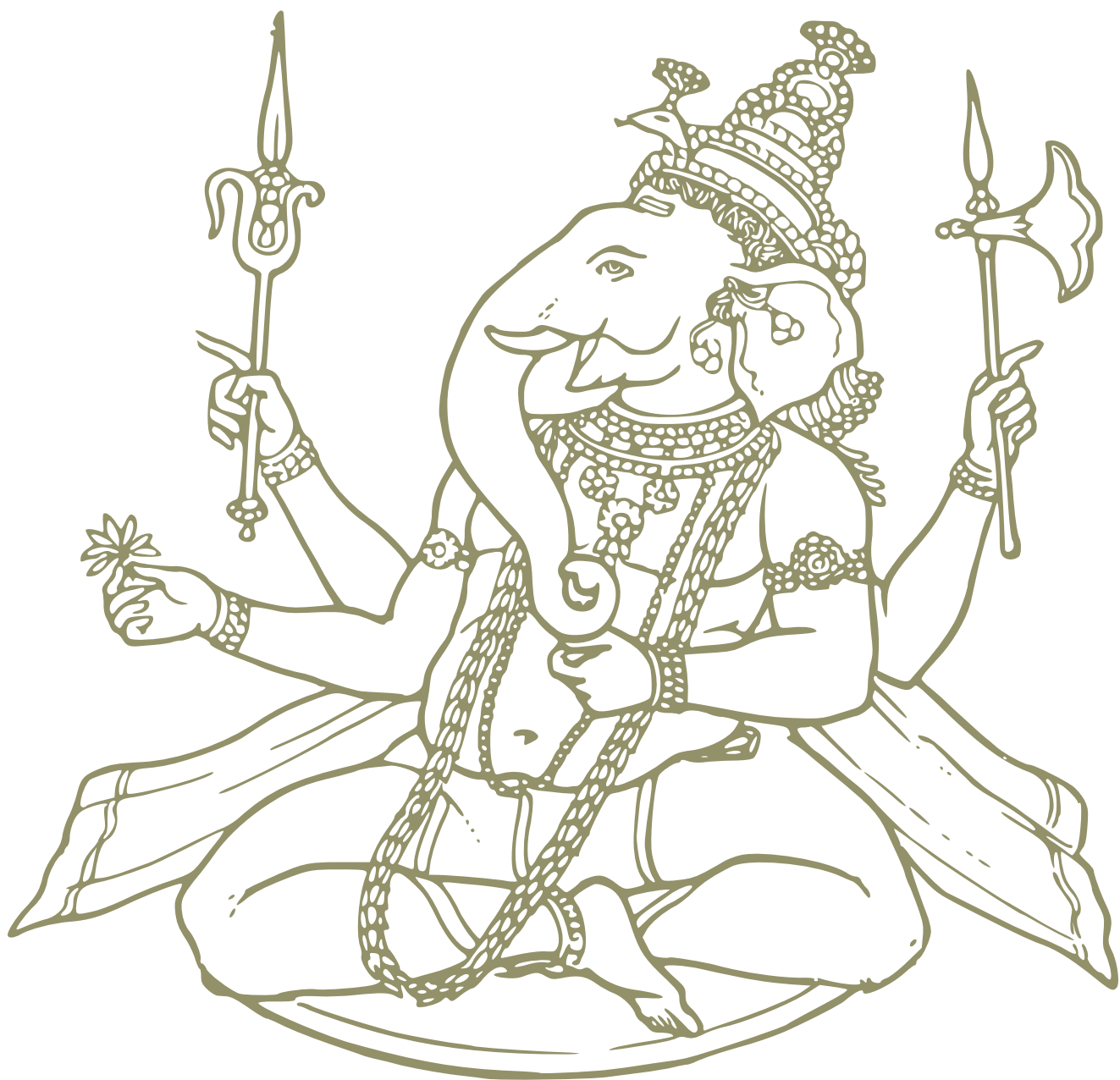




“Everything rests on me
as pearls are strung on
a thread. I am the original
fragrance of the earth.
I am the taste in water.
I am the heat in fire and
the sound in space. I am
the light of the sun and
moon and the life of all
that lives.”

–*Bhagavad Gita 7.7-9*

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



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