

Eco-Sikh Five Year Plan - Summary

Introduction

There are 25 million Sikhs worldwide, 20 million in India and five million in the diaspora with large communities in Europe and in North America. An integral part of the identity of a Sikh is a connection to the environment. Ten years ago Sikhs celebrated the inauguration of the Cycle of Creation. The 300-year long cycle is a time for Sikhs to reflect upon and celebrate their relationship with the environment. This plan comes out of that reflection.

Five Year Plan

The guide to creating an eco-Sikh plan was prepared by a small group of Sikh environmentalists and leaders from around the world and by the youth at the Guru Gobind Singh Foundation with support from the Sikh Council on Religion and Education (SCORE). The resulting plan was presented to 250 Sikh leaders in Delhi in July 2009 who made a commitment to a five-year plan combating climate change from their own regional community's perspective.

The plan focuses on five key areas -- assets, education, media/advocacy, eco-twinning, and celebration – and articulates a Sikh eco-theology that finds its roots in Guru Nanak Dev Ji (the founder of Sikhism in the early 16th century) and continues through the work of modern day Sikh eco-patrons like Bhagat Puran Singh Ji.

Emerging from this theology is a clear plan of action that will be implemented over the next five years. This will be developed and managed by an elected steering committee that includes diverse representation capable of connecting the plan with various Sikh communities across the globe. This steering committee will be responsible for establishing a timetable for the full implementation of the EcoSikh Plan over the next five years, raising the necessary funds and resources for the initiative, and keeping the initiative on target throughout its implementation.

Vital to its progress is the launch and development of a new website dedicated to the environment www.ecosikh.org. This aims to act as a resource, as a showcase for best practice, for model green gurdwaras and EcoSikh leaders, as a home for a master

EcoSikh Grid, news stories, a forum for eco-theological reflection, an eco-twinning directory, Sikh-specific eco-tips, and postings of customised EcoSikh Plans.

Every participating individual or community is encouraged to share their customised EcoSikh Plan on the EcoSikh website. Each of these customised plans represents a tree in the EcoSikh forest. The website will be translated into Punjabi.

The EcoSikh Plan is both ambitious and challenging. Our Seed Plan – inspired by the 3x3 grid drawn up by the American Jewish environmental group Hazon, is designed to guide all of us – individuals / gurdwaras / wider community – to take concrete steps to improve our ecological practices. It has practical steps in three areas – assets, education and celebration and our other two key areas, media/advocacy and eco-twinning, will enable us to create partnerships and connections that will help to take these steps together, in solidarity as Sikhs.

We invite every gurdwara to create an Environmental Council, with its first task being to craft a customized EcoSikh Plan with firm timelines to meet goals.

We invite individuals and families to:

Assets:

- participate in local recycling programmes;
- participate in local co-op gardening programmes;
- buy locally grown and organic foods;
- plant herb gardens for home cooking.

Education:

- Learn about food choices and their impact in the world;
- Learn about the impact of transportation choices;
- Learn about the energy efficiency of our homes and how to reduce energy; consumption by 10 per cent each year.

Celebration:

- Plant an ecoSikh garden or tree;

- Visit their local parks monthly as time for spiritual reflection and renewal.

We invite gurdwaras and other organisations to:

Assets:

- invest in solar panels for gurdwaras and start rainwater harvesting programmes;
- Consult green architects to improve eco-friendliness of gurdwaras;
- invest in copper storage pots to sterilise water;
- purchase reusable plates and cups or materials made out of recycled and compostable material for langar;
- Print all materials on recycled paper.

Education

- Hold seminars on home composting, gardening, and energy efficiency;
- Create a space to post weekly ecotips at the gurdwara;
- Learn about and support eco-initiatives at other gurdwaras through eco-twinning programmes;
- Incorporate classes that celebrate Sikh eco-theology;
- Host “open gurdwaras” (like open houses) where you invite people from around the community to see how they can use your greening practices as a model.

Celebration

- Have the ragis sing more shabads with environmental themes;
- Distribute tree saplings;
- Participate in EcoSikh holidays.

We invite the wider community to:

Assets

- support food sustainability initiatives;
- help community advocate for local green transportation, bike lanes, etc;
- support seed banks and biodiversity initiatives.

Education

- Join interfaith environmental advocacy groups;
- Invite elected officials and other advocacy groups to speak at the gurdwara about environmental issues.

Celebration

- Become an active part of Earth Day celebrations;
- Join interfaith environmental celebrations.