

A Sikh Response to Global Warming and Climate Change

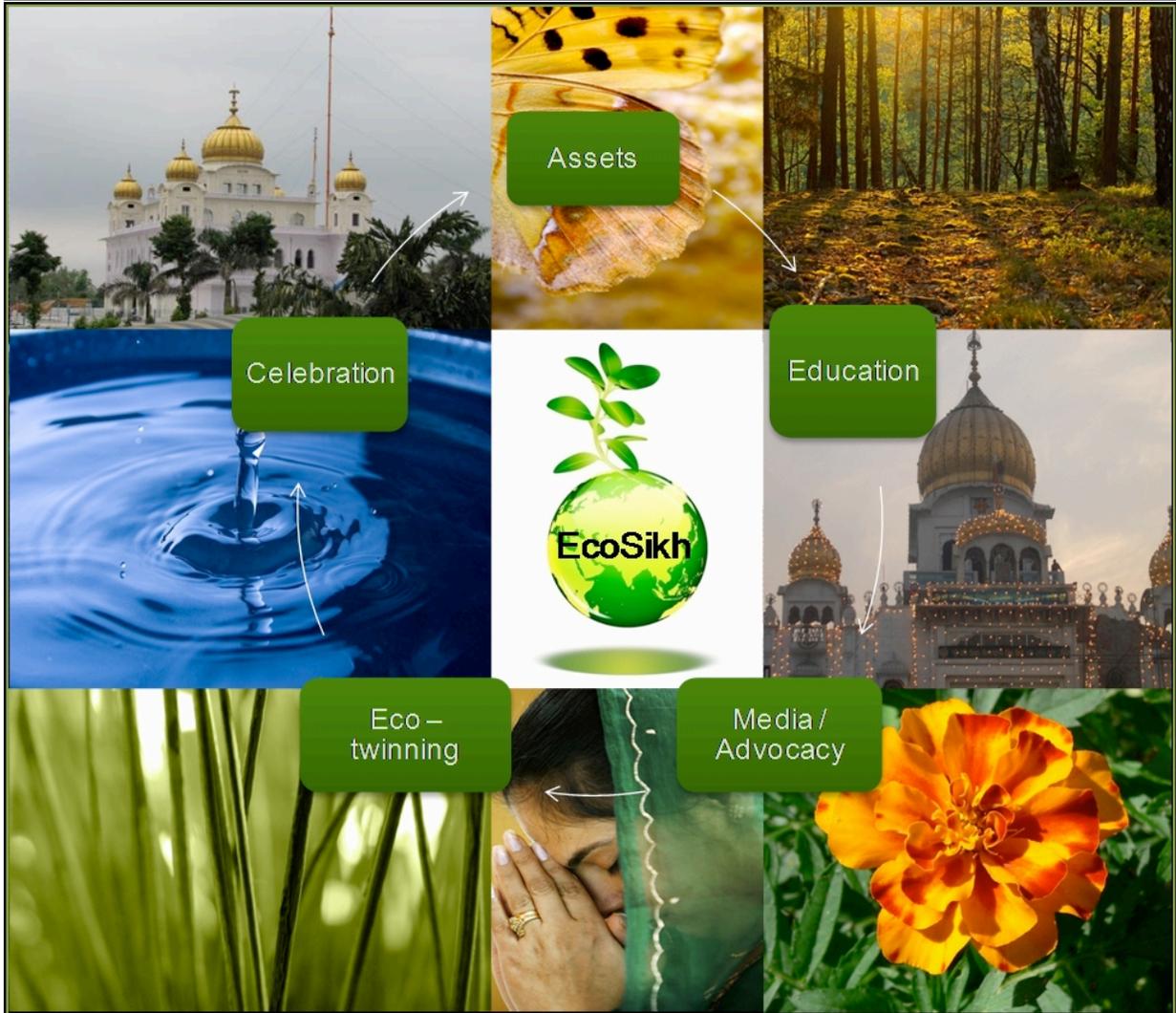


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Introduction

Ten years ago, Sikh communities around the world celebrated the inauguration of the Cycle of Creation. The three hundred year long cycle will be a time for Sikhs to reflect upon and celebrate their relationship with the environment and all that Waheguru has provided. The past ten years have borne witness to remarkable steps taken by Sikhs around the globe. Sikhs are leaders in practicing organic and natural farming, building support for recycling programs, and targeting the socio-economic roots that plague the systemic nature of environmental injustice, among other things. Most, if not all of these efforts, share common inspiration that began with the revelations of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and continued through history up to the launch of Bhagat Puran Singh's environmental awareness campaign over fifty years ago and the continued efforts of today's Sikh eco-pioneers.



EcoSikh is an initiative that aims to build on this history and enable Sikh communities around the world to connect their efforts and work in solidarity with one another. The condition of our planet continues to deteriorate and unsustainable environmental practices are affecting every community worldwide. Punjab is among those areas being hit hardest by unsustainable practices and environmental exploitation, while at the same time hosting some of the best crafted and innovative responses to contemporary ecological crises. We hope that EcoSikh will provide a plan that we can all implement over the next five years to cultivate best practices, inspire on-the-ground activism, address the issues that each of our communities face, and celebrate the ways in which being Sikh is being green.

Our connection to the environment is an integral part of our identity as Sikhs. Thus, EcoSikh is not the project of any one individual, organization, or community, it is something that always has and always will belong to us all. As Sikhs we are called to defend the weak and to uphold justice for all being. We recognize that our natural world is facing new and grave challenges as its resources deplete and we hope that together we may craft a plan to help us answer the call to protect our natural ecology, and to celebrate and prosper as Sikhs through our efforts.

The plan that we present here has been prepared by a small group of Sikh environmentalists and leaders from around the world. None of us claim to speak for all Sikhs or to presume that we have the answers. EcoSikh will only grow if it is adopted and used by communities, families, gurdwaras and individuals and if its ideas lead to action. What we humbly submit is a beginning.

We hope that you broadly agree with the spirit of the plan. If there are parts that you feel have been left out, we invite you to add them. If there are parts that you feel should be changed, we invite you to change them. Just as there is no single solution for every community, there is no single incarnation of the EcoSikh Plan that will work for everybody. As you and your community customize and personalize your plan, we invite you to share it with everybody on the EcoSikh website. By doing so, the website will become a space where each customized plan can support and inspire others.

At the end of this document you will find an EcoSikh pledge that we invite you to sign and to share with your community, gurdwara, family, and friends.

Background

EcoSikh is the Sikh community's contribution to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) / Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) Plans for Generational Change Project whose aim is to help the world's major religious traditions create long term plans to improve their relationship with the environment.

Accompanying the EcoSikh Seed Plan presented here is a Plans for Generational Change Guidebook customized for the EcoSikh Plan. The Guidebook explains in detail the Plans for Generational Change Project and is an invaluable tool for brainstorming and thinking about ways in which your community can build upon and individually tailor the EcoSikh Plan to meet you and your community's needs.

The EcoSikh Plan will be presented alongside those of other world religions at a major event at Windsor Castle in November of 2009. This event is scheduled to precede the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference, which is designed to follow-up on the Kyoto Protocol and create a new strategy for tackling global environmental issues. The Windsor event will also provide major global media coverage of the plans and enable the formation of new partnerships to support their implementation.



EcoSikh Seed Plan

About the Plan

The Plan is focused around five key areas: assets, education, media/advocacy, eco-twinning, and celebration. These key areas provide a framework to help create a comprehensive plan of action and an infrastructure to help connect our efforts around the world.



Figure 1: The EcoSikh Seed Plan focuses on five key areas: assets, education, media/advocacy, eco-twinning, and celebration.

Each key area finds its roots in Sikh eco-theology and relies on this theology to enable its fruition. By retaining strong roots in our own theology we see the implementation of the EcoSikh Plan as a continuing expression of our faith.

As such, it is best to understand the Plan presented here as a seed. The Plan provides guidelines and examples for how each of these key areas can contribute to your environmental efforts in consonance with your practice of Sikhism. Perhaps all of these guidelines and examples will resonate with you and your community or perhaps only some of them will. You can use this seed

as a core for customizing your own EcoSikh Plan and can add or subtract parts of it until it becomes a true expression of your faith and is also pertinent to the prominent environmental issues facing your local community.

For gurdwaras and Sikh organizations that are in the formative stages of their environmental practice or wish to renew previous efforts, we recommend that you create an Environmental Council that can lead a community-wide discussion on how the Seed Plan can be used to meet the needs of your community and its surroundings. Accompanying the Seed Plan is an EcoSikh Plans for Generational Change Guidebook to help lead this discussion. You may also wish to consult the EcoSikh website for fresh ideas or to partner with a veteran gurdwara or organization through the eco-twinning program to help things get started. Once you customize your plan, we invite you to share your ideas on the EcoSikh website so they may help inspire others.

For those of you who already have active environmental projects, councils, and initiatives, the Plan will enable you to share your best practices and help lead others through participation on the EcoSikh website and in the eco-twinning program. Additionally, you may wish to participate in our development of an annual EcoSikh holiday season and to organize an annual gathering where people can reflect on the ways in which your eco-practices relate to Sikhism and share these thoughts in the eco-theology forum.

Assets



Theological story: Guru Nanak and Malik Bhago

(adapted from the version on realsikhism.com; <http://www.realsikhism.com/miracles/malik.html>)

Guru Nanak Dev ji traveled to many places, including Saidpur, now known as Eminabad in the province of Punjab, Pakistan. Even before Guru ji had arrived at Saidpur the word had spread throughout the city that a holy man was going to visit.

When Malik Bhago, the chief of the town, heard of the Guru's arrival he started preparing for the holy man to stay at his home. But Malik Bhago was a corrupt person who had amassed wealth through unfair means, charging extra tax to the poor farmers and taking most of their crop, leaving them hungry. And when Guru Nanak reached Saidpur, he did not go straight to the chief's house. Instead he knocked on the door of a poor carpenter named Lalo, asking him for hospitality. Lalo was joyful, and served Guru ji with the little food that he had and Guru ji would eat the simple offering with love.

News reached Malik Bhago that Guru ji was staying with a poor carpenter, so Malik held a big gathering and invited all the holy men. But Guru ji did not accept his invitation. Malik reacted angrily and ordered two guards to go to Lalo's home to force the Guru to accompany them, and the Guru went as asked.

When Guru ji arrived with the guards, Malik Bhago said to him: "O holy man, I have prepared so many delicious dishes for you, but you are staying with a poor carpenter and eating his dry bread. Why?" And the Guru replied: "I cannot eat your food because it has been made with money sucked unfairly from the poor, while Lalo's bread is bought with his own hard-earned efforts."

This made Malik Bhago furious and he asked the Guru to prove his point. Guru ji then sent for a loaf of bread from Lalo's house. In one hand the Guru held Lalo's bread and in the other that of Malik Bhago's, and he squeezed both. Milk dripped from Lalo's bread but from Malik Bhago's bread came blood. Malik Bhago was shaken by guilt and asked for forgiveness. The Guru asked him to distribute his ill-gotten wealth among the poor and live an honest life. Malik Bhago was re-born with the Guru's blessing.

The story of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the poor carpenter Lalo, and the corrupt chieftain Malik Bhago embodies the principles that may guide our use of assets. Although Malik Bhago is the ruler of Saidpur, Guru Nanak refuses to accept his hospitality because he has amassed his wealth through the exploitation of farmers and their crops. Lalo, on the other hand, is a humble man who earns his money as a carpenter -- a trade that works in harmony with the natural environment and uses its gifts in a sustainable way. Lalo uses his meager assets to provide for Guru Nanak, who is Sikhism's first ecoSikh, and for this he receives the Guru's blessings.

The Plan seeks to define assets in a broad way. Assets can be particular skills, professions and time commitments, in addition to land and monetary investments and other types of fiscal support. A large number of Sikhs, in both the Diaspora and South Asia, are leaders in business,

engineering, farming, education, and many other professional fields. Thus as Sikhs we have access to a great array of resources that we can use to improve our ecological practices.

We include here several suggestions that can be followed by individuals/families, Gurdwaras/Sikh organizations, and the wider community:

Individuals/Families:

- Participate in local recycling programs: many municipalities already have recycling programs in place and you can contact your local government to learn about how you can get involved. For those that don't have recycling programs, you can cut down on harmful waste by using biodegradable and compostable materials
- Participate in local co-op gardening programs: many Sikhs live in urban environments where gardening can be difficult. You might be surprised to learn about the ways you can practice gardening by becoming involved in a local gardening co-op. Examples:
 - West Delhi Friends Co-operative Society
Transit Camp, Raghbir Nagar
Rajouri Garden
Delhi
 - Seattle Urban Farm Company
11550 North Park Ave., N
Seattle, Washington 98133
USA
<http://www.seattleurbanfarmco.com/>
- Buy locally grown and organic foods: this is a great way to support local farming initiatives. Many communities around the world have outdoor markets or farmer's markets where local farmers come to sell their produce. Buy from these places when you can, rather than from stores that import their produce, in order to stay healthy and support the local economy
- Plant herb gardens for home cooking: many herbs can grow in small gardens outside of your house or even in pots that you keep on your window sill or balcony. These plants help to purify the air we breathe and give you immediate access to fresh herbs

Gurdwaras/Sikh Organizations:

- Start rainwater harvesting programs: You can learn more about through the Centre for Science and Environment's Rainwater Harvesting Initiative. The Initiative provides a rainwater harvesting manual and has Raincentres located around India: <http://www.rainwaterharvesting.org>

- Invest in copper storage pots to kill enteric bacteria in water: see Appendix A
- Consult green architects to improve eco-friendliness of gurdwaras
- Invest in solar panels for gurdwaras: Although solar panels may be an expensive upfront cost, the energy saved over time makes it a wise economic decision. You can learn more about solar thermal energy, solar water pumping, and incentives and schemes run by the Indian government through these sites:
<http://www.ireda.in>
<http://mnes.nic.in>
- Purchase reusable plates and cups or materials made out of recycled and compostable material for langar
- Print all materials on recycled paper

Wider Community:

- Support food sustainability initiatives such as farmer's markets
- Help your local community petition for green transportation alternatives: this can be anything from providing tax breaks for fuel efficient cars, supporting public transportation and bicycle sharing, and lobbying for the creation of bike lanes in your city
- Support seed banks and biodiversity initiatives: many organizations in India are combating the negative fallout of the "Green Revolution" and need help to secure the preservation of biodiversity

Education



Theological story: Guru Nanak Dev Ji at Jagannath Puri in Orissa

The shabad composed by Guru Nanak Dev Ji at Jagannath Puri in Orissa embodies the principles that guide our education about the environment. Jagannath Puri is a Hindu temple located in the coastal town of Puri in the state of Orissa. The area is known for its intense religious fervor and festivals even today. Guru Nanak traveled there with Mardana and upon his arrival met a number of worshippers who were using incense and plates and offering flowers as a form of worship. It is here where Guru Nanak composed this shabad that we recite in Sohila Sahib da paat:

ਰਾਗੁ ਧਨਾਸਰੀ ਮਹਲਾ ੧ ॥ ਗਗਨ ਮੈ ਥਾਲੁ ਰਵਿ ਚੰਦੁ ਦੀਪਕ ਬਨੇ ਤਾਰਿਕਾ ਮੰਡਲ ਜਨਕ ਮੋਤੀ ॥ ਧੂਪੁ ਮਲਆਨਲੋ ਪਵਣੁ ਚਵਰੋ
ਕਰੇ ਸਗਲ ਬਨਰਾਇ ਫੁਲੰਤ ਜੋਤੀ ॥੧॥ ਕੈਸੀ ਆਰਤੀ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਭਵ ਖੰਡਨਾ ਤੇਰੀ ਆਰਤੀ ॥ ਅਨਹਤਾ ਸਬਦ ਵਾਜੰਤ ਭੇਰੀ ॥੧॥
ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਸਹਸ ਤਵ ਨੈਨ ਨਨ ਨੈਨ ਹਹਿ ਤੋਹਿ ਕਉ ਸਹਸ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਨਨਾ ਏਕ ਤਛੋਹੀ ॥ ਸਹਸ ਪਦ ਬਿਮਲ ਨਨ ਏਕ ਪਦ ਗੰਧ
ਬਿਨੁ ਸਹਸ ਤਵ ਗੰਧ ਇਵ ਚਲਤ ਮੋਹੀ ॥੨॥ ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਹੈ ਸੋਇ ॥ ਤਿਸ ਦੈ ਚਾਨਣਿ ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਗੁਰ
ਸਾਖੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਪਰਗਟੁ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਜੋ ਤਿਸੁ ਭਾਵੈ ਸੁ ਆਰਤੀ ਹੋਇ ॥੩॥ ਹਰਿ ਚਰਣ ਕਵਲ ਮਕਰੰਦ ਲੋਭਿਤ ਮਨੋ ਅਨਦਿਨੁ ਮੋਹਿ
ਆਹੀ ਪਿਆਸਾ ॥ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਜਲੁ ਦੇਹਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਰਿੰਗ ਕਉ ਹੋਇ ਜਾ ਤੇ ਤੇਰੈ ਨਾਇ ਵਾਸਾ ॥੪॥੩॥ {ਪੰਨਾ 13}

raag dhanaasaree mehalaa 1 ||

*gagan mai thhaal rav cha(n)dh dheepak banae thaarikaa ma(n)ddal janak mothee ||
dhhoop malaaanalo pavan chavaro karae sagal banaraae foola(n)th jothee ||1|| kaisee aarathae hoe || bhav
kha(n)ddanaa thaereae aarathae || anehathaa sabadh vaaja(n)th bhaereae ||1|| rehaao || sehas thav nain nan
nain hehi thohi ko sehas moorath nanaa eaek thuohee || sehas padh bimal nan eaek padh ga(n)dhh bin
sehas thav ga(n)dhh eiv chalath mohee ||2|| sabh mehi joth joth hai soe || this dhai chaanan sabh mehi
chaanan hoe || gur saakhee joth paragatt hoe || jo this bhaavai s aarathae hoe ||3|| har charan kaval
makara(n)dh lobhith mano anadhinuo mohi aahee piaasaa || kirapaa jal dhaehi naanak saari(n)g ko hoe jaa
thae thaerai naae vaasaa ||4||3||*

Raag Dhanaasaree, First Mehla:

Upon that cosmic plate of the sky, the sun and the moon are the lamps. The stars and their orbs are the studded pearls. The fragrance of sandalwood in the air is the temple incense, and the wind is the fan. All the plants of the world are the altar flowers in offering to You, O Luminous Lord. ||1|| What a beautiful Aartee, lamp-lit worship service this is! O Destroyer of Fear, this is Your Ceremony of Light. The Unstruck Sound-

current of the Shabad is the vibration of the temple drums. ||1||Pause||You have thousands of eyes, and yet You have no eyes. You have thousands of forms, and yet You do not have even one. You have thousands of Lotus Feet, and yet You do not have even one foot. You have no nose, but you have thousands of noses. This Play of Yours entrances me. ||2|| Amongst all is the Light-You are that Light. By this Illumination, that Light is radiant within all. Through the Guru's Teachings, the Light shines forth. That which is pleasing to Him is the lamp-lit worship service. ||3||My mind is enticed by the honey-sweet Lotus Feet of the Lord. Day and night, I thirst for them. Bestow the Water of Your Mercy upon Nanak, the thirsty song-bird, so that he may come to dwell in Your Name. ||4||3||

Our rich history of eco-theology should serve as the backbone to the development of our educational curricula. The Sikh community already has numerous teachers with knowledge of environmental issues. We should collate their materials and make them available to all communities by linking to sites that detail their curricula or by providing the materials directly through the EcoSikh website.

Our granthis and gurdwara leaders should also be learned in Gurbani environmental teachings. We should standardize a curriculum that can be incorporated into their training. We can commit to achieving this goal by 2015, the end of the five year period in which we will implement the EcoSikh Plan.

To help achieve our educational goals, leading Sikh organizations and institutions should work together to create teams of highly trained leaders who can travel to different Sikh communities and conduct seminars and training sessions.

The EcoSikh website will be compiling theological reflections written by those who participate in EcoSikh in an eco-theology forum. This forum will provide an excellent resource for renewing and evaluating the success of our educational curricula.

The Gurus encouraged us to develop our relationship with Waheguru by engaging in the world around us. By connecting with our local environment, spending time on nature walks, and embracing our surroundings, we can learn more about our Guru's connection with the natural world.

We include here several suggestions that can be followed by individuals/families, Gurdwaras / Sikh organizations, and the wider community:

Individuals/families:

- Learn about the impact of your food choices on the global ecosystem.
- Learn about the impact of your transportation choices

- Learn about the energy efficiency of your home and commit to reducing your energy consumption by 10 per cent each year

Gurdwaras / Organizations:

- Hold seminars on composting, gardening, and energy efficiency
- Create a space to post weekly eco-tips at the gurdwara: tips will be made available on the EcoSikh website
- Learn about and support eco-initiatives at other gurdwaras through the eco-twinning program
- Incorporate classes that celebrate Sikh eco-theology
- Host “open gurdwaras” (like “open houses”) to invite people from the wider community to visit your gurdwara and educate them on how to use your greening practices as a model

Wider Community:

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

Media / Advocacy



Theological story: Guru Nanak and Wali Qandhari
(adapted from the version on sikhwiki.org;
http://www.sikhwiki.org/index.php/Guru_Nanak_and_Wali_Qandhari)

After travelling through Arabia and many other countries in the summer of 1521, Guru Nanak and a small party of followers reached a hilly place called Hasan Abdal - which today is in Pakistan, some fifty kilometres from Rawalpindi. Under a shady tree, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana started reciting Kirtan, as was their normal practice. Slowly, local devotees began to gather around the Guru, and soon large crowds were gathering regularly. He talked to them about God and the true path of the holy. He told them the greatness of God and His creations. More and more people began to gather every day.

But on the top of a nearby hill, beside a natural spring, there lived a Muslim priest called Bawa Wali Qandhari. Some time before he had established a dera, or holy place, at this hill, from which came water that flowed down to the town, where the people used it for all their needs. There was no other source of fresh water nearby. Wali Qandhari used this dera to assist people who followed his faith; and also to punish those who did not.

When he saw people gathering around Guru Nanak instead of him, he became jealous, and he diverted the spring water and stopped it from flowing down to the town. Down in the town the people became frustrated. How could they and their cattle live without water? A group of them went to Wali Qandhari and begged him to let the water flow down as before. But the priest replied: "Go to your Guru, the one you visit everyday now and ask him for water." So the people did, and the Guru reassured them: "Don't lose heart. Trust in God. He will not let you die of thirst".

The Guru then asked Bhai Mardana to appeal to Wali Qandhari to release the water, but as soon as Bhai Mardana reached the top of the hill, Wali Qandhari began shouting. "Go back to your Guru and ask him to give water to the people. I will not give you any water."

Guru ji asked Bhai Mardana to try again, but all he got was harsh words and angry comments. He tried a third time: the same story. The people became more worried, but the Guru said again: "Don't lose heart. God is great and merciful. He can make springs flow from wherever He likes. Let us all pray to Him." They all prayed. Then Guru Nanak Dev Ji lifted a stone. And at once, a stream of cool, clean water began to flow from that place.

At the same time, Bawa Wali Qandhari's spring dried up. He was so angry that he pushed a large rock towards the Guru from the top of his hill. For a moment it looked as if the rock would crush the Guru but then the Guru quietly raised his hand and the rock stopped. The Guru's hand was imprinted on the rock. And Bawa Wali Qandhari came down and fell at the Guru's feet. The Guru said to him, "Rise my friend. Live as lovers of God should live. Be kind to all."

The rock with the imprint of the Guru's palm still exists. There is a beautiful Gurdwara at that place called the Panja Sahib Panja means "hand print". Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa, after conquering the Sindh province during the Sikh rule, had the beautiful huge Gurdwara and Sarovar pool built at the site. Many people visit the site and during the hot summer many bathe in the cool waters that God revealed to the Guru and his followers on that day.

The story of Guru Nanak Dev Ji's encounter with Wali Qandhari at Hassan Abdal embodies the principles that may guide our media and advocacy work. As we seek to reach out to others and to form partnerships that will enable us to better our ecological practices we may occasionally be met by resistance, like that demonstrated by Wali Qandhari. However, if our work is true, humble, and in line with Sikh teachings, our message will prevail. Through persistence, patience and love, Guru Nanak was able to change the hearts of the incredulous. We must aspire to live up to this ethic with our outreach efforts.

The EcoSikh website serves as the hub of our media and advocacy efforts. Because our mission is to connect the work that is already being done; to facilitate the ways in which individuals and communities can adopt and customize their own EcoSikh Plan; and to inspire people and communities with ideas from participants around the world, the website will become a robust place for sharing and creativity.

Part of the official launch of the EcoSikh website will be an online contest to choose an EcoSikh logo for the website's masthead. The contest will invite Sikhs from around the world to create a logo and to describe it in 150 words or less. The logos and their descriptions will be posted on the website and users will be able to register on the site and vote for their favorite. The winning logo will be adopted by the website and used as its official logo. The other logos can be posted with their respective community's customized ecoSikh plan.

In order to attract interest and keep people abreast of the developments of the EcoSikh initiative, the website will host profiles of model green gurdwaras and EcoSikh leaders, a master EcoSikh Grid, news stories, a forum for eco-theological reflection, an eco-twinning directory, Sikh-specific eco-tips, and postings of customized EcoSikh Plans.

- Profiles:
 - Model green gurdwaras -- We will begin by profiling two or three model green gurdwaras. At least one of these will be in the Diaspora and at least one will be in South Asia. This will enable other gurdwaras to see a model that broadly relates to the ecological issues they may be facing.
 - EcoSikh leaders – We will profile eco-leaders from Sikh communities around the world each month. This will enable leaders to be in touch with one another and to learn more about the developments in particular locations. We intend for each profiled leader to spend their honorary month participating in or creating an initiative to help build momentum and publicity for the EcoSikh

initiative. The leader from the previous month will nominate a leader for the following month

- Master EcoSikh Grid:
 - The EcoSikh Grid can be found at the end of this document. It is a 3x3 grid that provides concrete suggestions on how to best use assets, education, and celebration at three different levels: individual/family, Gurdwara/organization, and wider-community. A master grid is posted on the EcoSikh website. Participants from across the world can share their suggestions in an EcoSikh forum and these will subsequently be added into the Grid. Each suggestion will be hyperlinked to a page where the idea can be explained in full and instructions provided if required. The master grid will enable everyone to see and post new ideas for the assets, education, and celebration components of the plan
- News Stories
 - We will be posting news stories and press releases from participating communities as they become available
- Forum for eco-theological reflection
 - We will be posting eco-theology reflections written by participants
- Eco-twinning Directory
 - The directory will provide listings of gurdwaras interested in finding an eco-twin
- Sikh specific eco-tips
 - We will post Sikh-specific eco-tips, which provide simple pointers for how we can make a gurdwara greener, etc.
- Postings of customized EcoSikh Plans
 - As mentioned before, we hope that the ideas presented in the EcoSikh Seed Plan can inspire communities to adopt the Plan and customize it to meet the needs of their community. We encourage every participating individual or community share their customized EcoSikh Plan on the EcoSikh website. Each of these customized plans represent a tree in the EcoSikh forest. By posting them side-by-side we enable the plans to support and inspire one another and to contribute in solidarity to the collective effort

Naturally, all of this requires a lot of work but by maintaining this infrastructure, we believe the plan will be able to succeed in its goal of attaining true communal ownership. A timeline should be set for the completion of each of the aspects of the website and determine how to secure the required support. We should also aim to have the entire website translated into Punjabi.

Eco - twinning



Theological story: Guru Nanak Dev Ji and Bhai Mardana

(adapted from the version on sikhee.com; <http://www.sikhee.com/Guru-Nanak-Dev-Ji-and-Mardana.htm>)

Guru ji and Mardana were very close to each other. Most of the time, he did kirtan with Mardana and his rabarb. There are two stories I would like to share with you:

I am sure everyone heard the story of when Guru Ji disappeared in a river, to meet God. Well, not many people heard about the conversation between Guru Nanak Dev Ji and Bhai Mardana the morning after he reappeared:

Bhai Mardana Ji: You don't love me!

Guru Ji: Why, O loved one. I love you the most. Why do you think so?

Bhai Mardana Ji: Because you yourself went to meet God. If you had loved me, you would've taken me WITH you!

Guru Ji: Well, i didn't take you on purpose. Basically, if I let you come with me to meet God, He would've told us to sing His praises. And after doing so, he would love ur music so much that he'll keep you, and leave me behind in the world. Tell me, how could I have lived longer without you?

This is how much Guru Ji loved his rabarbi.

One day, Guru Ji was singing praises of the Almighty, while Mardana was playing his rabarb, as usual. But then, Bhai Mardana Ji played such a musical note in such a way, Guru Ji went into "smadhi" state. This lasted for 22 days with no food and no drink.

After the 22nd day, Bhai Mardana Ji grabbed Guru ji's feet and Guru Ji asked why did you stop playing the rabarb?? Bhai Mardana Ji replied: "Baba Ji, you were feeding on my music and keertan, but what about me? You left me hungry".

"You were reading Banni," Guru Ji said "How could you be hungry?"

"But Guru Ji, i remained hungry for your soft priceless bachans which touch my ears. Glve me a blessing so I can have darshan of your open eyes. Give me one of your pricelss bachans and then I will carry on with the kirtan as long as you like"

The relationship between Bhai Mardana Ji and Guru Nanak Dev Ji was immense! No other example in the world can equal to this.

The relationship between Guru Nanak Dev Ji and Bhai Mardana embodies the principles that guide our eco-twinning program. The sounds of Bhai Mardana's rabarb helped Guru Ji enter states of bliss with Waheguru just as Guru Ji's bachans nourished the soul of Bhai Mardana. They developed a long-lasting relationship of deep respect whose fruits helped share Sikhism with the world.

Eco-twinning provides a way for gurdwaras and organizations around the world to connect and support one another in their EcoSikh Plans. The EcoSikh website will create a directory of gurdwaras interested in participating.

Eco-twinning enables the development of long-lasting relationships of mutual benefit between communities in two distinct places. We believe this practice will function especially well between gurdwaras in the Diaspora and those in South Asia. The educational exchanges that can occur from such connections provide invaluable ways for people to learn about the different environmental issues that communities are facing in very different parts of the world. Schools in both places would be encouraged to tailor their environmental lessons around what they learn from each other's communities and their environmental concerns and passions.

The partnerships will provide an easy way to strengthen Diaspora youth's ties to cultural traditions in India. For those in India, the connection may help a gurdwara secure the resources it needs to take the next steps in its eco-plan.

Other possibilities include a summer youth exchange and a sharing of best practices.

Ultimately, the nature of the relationship can be determined by the Environmental Councils that we encourage each institution to establish. Each relationship will have unique features and if required, the leadership council from the EcoSikh initiative can assist in establishing the structure of the relationship.

Celebration



Theological story: Baba Har Rai Sahib Ji and the Trampled Rose

(as told on sikhee.com; <http://www.sikhee.com/Baba-Har-Rai-Sahib-Ji-And-The-Trampled-Rose.htm>)

Satguru Sri Guru Har Gobind Sahib Ji Maharaj, maintained an excellent garden with rare medicinal herbs planted in it. He also had a rare passion for collecting birds and animals that could be tamed and trained. Baba Har Rai Sahib Ji was having his morning stroll in the garden one day, he was reciting Waheguru with each breath he took.

Guru Har Gobind Sahib Ji was also walking in the garden and was coming from the opposite direction to the one Baba Har Rai Sahib Ji was walking on. Seeing a beautiful flower on the ground, Guru Sahib, bent down and picked it up. He then asked, "Who plucked this lovely rose and left it to be trampled on the ground?"

"It was my fault dear grandfather" said Baba Har Rai Sahib Ji. "My robes got entangled in the plant, and while loosening it, the flower fell on the ground. I should have picked up the flower, I am really sorry grandfather."

"Today", said Satguru Ji, "your robes have caused injury to this tender and beautiful plant out of carelessness, and left it to be trampled under people's feet; someday your paraphernalia, if not kept under restraint and control, may cause injury to innocent people, and in your heedlessness leave them to their fate. Yours Oh dear Grandson are not the robes of coercive authority which can afford to disregard the feelings of others, particularly those who suffer and live silently.

Yours are the robes of a dervish, a holy saint, which must shed love, light, compassion, not only on human beings, but even on animals and plants. The more tender and weak a creature of Akaal Purakh, the more love, sympathy and compassion he deserves."

Baba Har Rai Sahib Ji fell at the feet of his beloved Guru and grandfather and sought his forgiveness.

Baba Har Rai Sahib Ji promised his grandfather, that he would in the future never show the slightest heedlessness in his responsibilities towards man, animals and plants. Restraint and self control boundless compassion and charity, were reflected in all his actions and dealings with others through Baba Har Rai Sahib Ji's life.

The story of Guru Har Rai Ji and the Trampled Rose expresses a profound call to ecological consciousness. When Guru Har Gobind Ji explains to Baba Har Rai Ji that the Sikhs must come to the defense of all that is vulnerable and protect the well being of plants and animals, he plants the seeds in Baba Har Rai Ji that would lead him to become an eternal defender and caretaker of our natural world. The beauty of this moment and the importance of these teachings may inspire us to celebrate our own relationship with the environment.

Shabad by Guru Nanak Dev Ji in Raag Maajh on Pannaa 147:

ਸਲੋਕ ਮ ੧ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰੁ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਰੁਖੁ ਧਰਮੁ ਫੁਲੁ ਫਲੁ ਗਿਆਨੁ ॥ ਰਸਿ ਰਸਿਆ ਹਰਿਆ ਸਦਾ ਪਕੈ ਕਰਮਿ ਧਿਆਨਿ ॥
ਪਤਿ ਕੇ ਸਾਦ ਖਾਦਾ ਲਹੈ ਦਾਨਾ ਕੈ ਸਿਰਿ ਦਾਨੁ ॥੧॥ {ਪੰਨਾ 147}

salok ma 1 || naanak gur sa(n)thokh rukh dharam ful fal giaan || ras rasiaa hariaa sadhaa pakai karam dhiaan || path kae saadh khaadhaa lehai dhaanaa kai sir dhaan ||1||

Salok, First Mehlā: O Nanak, the Guru is the tree of contentment, with flowers of faith, and fruits of spiritual wisdom. Watered with the Lord's Love, it remains forever green; through good deeds and meditation, it ripens. Honor is obtained by eating this tasty dish; of all gifts, this is the greatest gift. ||1||

Because environmental activism is an expression of our faith, we understand the entire EcoSikh initiative to be a celebration. Like education, celebration finds its roots in the rich eco-theological tradition of Sikhism. As part of the EcoSikh Plan, we believe we should annually celebrate the deepest parts of this tradition by organizing a series of eco- holidays that focus on the life of Guru Har Rai Ji. Guru Har Rai Ji's legacy provides one of the most inspiring models for our ecological consciousness. To commemorate and celebrate the important points of his life each year, while meditating on our own environmental habits, will be a profound way to gain spiritual renewal.

A celebration of Basant will also provide a powerful way for us to recognize the beauty of renewal and regeneration. A number of shabads extol the relationship between Sikhi and the environment and we can focus on the their message during Basant. Thus, we propose to coordinate an annual EcoSikh holiday season corresponding with Basant. Each week we can focus on a particular eco-tip and encourage ragis to perform environmentally themed shabads. Each community can either create their own theme or follow one suggested by the EcoSikh initiative organized through the website. We hope that whichever path community's choose we can identify particular days where the entire Sikh community can do something together, in solidarity around the world.

Two of these days can be organized around two important events in Guru Har Rai Ji's life, which occur during Basant. The first is Guru Har Rai Ji's Jayanti, February 16. In honor of this day, we propose that all communities participate in a tree planting ceremony. The second day is March 3; the day Guru Har Rai Ji became Guru. To commemorate this event, we propose that all communities participate in a local environmental clean up. We can commit to inaugurating this holiday program in 2010.

Other types of celebration can occur on a day-to-day basis. We include here several suggestions that can be followed by individuals/families, Gurdwaras/Sikh organizations, and the wider community:

Individuals/Families:

- Plant an EcoSikh garden or tree
- Visit your local parks monthly as time for spiritual reflection and renewal

Gurdwaras/Organizations:

- Have the ragis sing more shabads with environmental themes (see appendix; a list of suggested shabads will be created and included)
- Distribute tree saplings
- Participate in EcoSikh holidays

Wider Community:

- Become an active part of Earth Day celebrations
- Join interfaith environmental work camps and celebrations

Next Steps

Creation of EcoSikh Steering Committee and Environmental Councils

Steering Committee

The goal of EcoSikh is to create an environmental initiative that inspires Sikhs around the world, enables coordinated plans of action, and operates in the spirit of true communal ownership. To achieve these goals the initiative needs a Steering Committee that shares this vision and includes diverse representation capable of connecting the plan with various Sikh communities across the globe.

The Steering Committee will serve as the liaison between the EcoSikh initiative and the UN/ARC Plans for Generational Change Project. It will also 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.

The preparer of this document has created a memo with information about infrastructural support and programmatic implementation for the Steering Committee. The memo will be provided to the Committee upon its establishment.

Environmental Councils

We encourage each gurdwara to create an Environmental Council. The Council will be responsible for customizing an EcoSikh Plan to work best with the local community and its needs. To do this, we recommend that the Council organize a daylong workshop with the local community. The EcoSikh Seed Plan provides a starting point and the EcoSikh Plans for Generational Change Guidebook provides helpful brainstorming questions and examples to help build upon the Seed Plan and discover which components resonate best with the local community. If possible, the Council will post its customized Plan on the EcoSikh website.

The Council will also be the primary contact in its respective community for the EcoSikh Steering Committee and for gurdwaras who may want to form an eco-twinning partnership.

EcoSikh Grid and Pledge¹

EcoSikh is a celebration. Our connection to the environment is an integral part of our identity as Sikhs. Thus, EcoSikh is not the project of any one individual, organization, or community, it is something that always has and will always belong to us all. EcoSikh is a way of life and a way of relating to the world upon which we depend. Our unique history exemplifies the ways in which humanity ought best to act in communion with our natural world and it is up to us to once again bring our environmental traditions to life. As Sikhs we are called to defend the weak and to uphold justice for all beings. EcoSikh recognizes that our natural world is facing new and grave challenges as its resources deplete at unsustainable rates. Our plan will help meet today's environmental challenges, to answer our call to protect our natural ecology, and to celebrate and prosper as Sikhs through our efforts.

The success of EcoSikh depends on the participation of each of us and your participation will enable our plan to grow in new and dynamic ways. We commit to the following goals and processes and invite you, by signing and supporting this document, to join us:

- a. By the end of Basant in 2015, the fifth anniversary of EcoSikh holidays, we will have developed the collaborations and infrastructure needed to enable both the diaspora Sikh communities and those in South Asia to operate with environmentally sustainable practices and to serve as models for other communities around the world.
- b. We invite every gurdwara to create an Environmental Council. Its first task will be to craft a customized EcoSikh Plan and to establish a firm timeline to meet with the goals of the plan. We encourage the Environmental Council to use the EcoSikh Seed Plan in conjunction with the EcoSikh Plans for Generational Change Guidebook to guide the customization of their own EcoSikh Plan. The Council may post their customized plan on the EcoSikh website and serve as a liaison between the EcoSikh Steering Committee and the larger community.
- c. The EcoSikh Plan is both ambitious and challenging. In order to break the task down into manageable work, we invite individuals and institutions to begin by utilizing this 3x3 grid:

	Assets	Education	Celebration
Individual / family			
Gurdwara / organization			
Wider community			

¹ The US Jewish environmental organisation, 'Hazon', who has drawn up a 7 year plan of environmental action for the Jewish community worldwide, has shared with us its vision of a 3x3 grid and pledge, which allows people to translate a large vision into small practical steps. Their vision has been a great inspiration for the creation of the EcoSikh Grid and Pledge.

The grid focuses on three of the five key areas described in the Seed Plan. These areas are designed to guide all of us – from individual to wider community – to take concrete steps toward the betterment of our ecological practices. Our other two key areas – media/advocacy and eco-twinning – enable us to create partnerships and connections that will help to take these steps together, in solidarity as Sikhs.

Because EcoSikh is a celebration, we believe that it is important to take time working through each of these 9 boxes, to reflect on our efforts, and to discover the joy that comes from working not only for the good of the planet but as an expression of who we are as Sikhs. We invite individuals and communities to take upon themselves a 5-year commitment to work in all 9 boxes – and to start with one or two:

	Assets	Education	Celebration
Individual / family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in local recycling programs Participate in local co-op gardening programs Buy locally grown and organic foods Plant herb gardens for home cooking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 we can save energy Learn how to reduce energy consumption by 10% each year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plant an ecoSikh garden or tree Visit your local parks monthly as time for spiritual reflection and renewal
Gurdwara / organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in solar panels for gurdwaras Start rainwater harvesting programs Invest in copper storage pots to sterilize water Consult green architects to improve eco-friendliness of gurdwaras Purchase reusable plates and cups or materials made out of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 programs Incorporate classes that celebrate Sikh eco-theology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have the ragis sing more shabads with environmental themes Distribute tree saplings Participate in EcoSikh holidays

	<p>recycled and compostable material for langar</p> <p>Print all materials on recycled paper</p>	<p>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</p>	
<p>Wider community</p>	<p>Support food sustainability initiatives</p> <p>Help community advocate for local green transportation, bike lanes, etc.</p> <p>Support seed banks and biodiversity initiatives</p>	<p>Join interfaith environmental advocacy groups</p> <p>Invite elected officials and other advocacy groups to speak at the gurdwara about environmental issues</p>	<p>Become an active part of Earth Day celebrations</p> <p>Join interfaith environmental celebrations</p>

The above examples are recommendations that can help us get started. Undoubtedly, our communities already have other ideas in place and may come up with new recommendations as we move forward. We invite everyone to share their best practices and recommendations on the EcoSikh website (<http://ecosikh.org>). We may find that certain ideas work better or are more appropriate for certain communities, while other ideas resonate deeply with other parts of our communities. We hope that we may collect and share all of these ideas so that they may inspire us to move forward together. In doing so we celebrate not only our efforts, but also our communities from which we are born.

Summary / key resolutions:

YES: I believe that by the end of Basant in 2015, Sikhs and gurdwaras across the globe will be able to operate with environmentally sustainable practices and to serve as models for other communities around the world;

YES: I call on all Sikh communities, small and large, to create an Environmental Council that will craft a customized EcoSikh Plan, no matter how small, and will begin in the next year;

YES: I believe that healthy environmental practices are an integral part to who I am as a Sikh. I commit in the next *month* to learn more about my actions, to change at least one of my behaviors for good, and to share my practices with at least five friends, family members or colleagues.

Sign:

Date:

Acknowledgements

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Chris Byrnes, a consultant working with ARC and SCORE, has helped organize and structure the vision of the EcoSikh initiative. He has also prepared this document.

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Appendix

A: Use of Copper Storage Pots to Kill Enteric Bacteria

The Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions (FRLHT) in Bangalore has undergone systematic testings of the role of copper pots in purification of water – testing e-coli bacteria in copper pots and also (with a view to families who could not afford such pots) in pots in which copper coils had been placed.

The study indicated that E.coli gets completely killed within 12 hours of inoculation into water stored in copper pots. It also demonstrated that the continuous presence of the pot was not necessary to cause the kill, as the water stored for 24 hours in copper pots, by itself was able to kill the organisms. The levels of copper (< 1035 ppb) that had leached into water were within the World Health Organisation (WHO) permissible limits.

Storing water in copper pots offers the benefit of providing drinking water free from E.coli. Its efficacy on the other water-borne organisms could be explored further. Since copper pots may not be affordable to many, viable contraptions using copper may be designed to provide a cost-effective, decentralized purification method to the rural and urban population.

WHO estimates that four million children under the age of five die each year from diarrhoea, mainly in developing countries. Infectious diseases caused by pathogenic bacteria, viruses and protozoa or by parasites are the most common and widespread health risk associated with drinking water. Some of the microorganisms causing waterborne infections are bacteria such as E.coli, Salmonella typhi, Shigella spp., Vibrio cholerae, viruses such as, Enterovirus, Hepatitis A and E virus, Norwalk virus, Rotavirus and protozoa such as Entamoeba histolytica.

<http://www.frlht.org/research.htm>

Resources and Contacts

EcoSikh

Website: www.ecosikh.org <<http://www.ecosikh.org>>

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