



ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

SHRAMAN

SOUTH ASIAN MUSEUM

SHRAMAN FOUNDATION

The Shraman South Asian Museum and Learning Center Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization located in Dallas, TX.

Vision

The Shraman South Asian Museum and Learning Center Foundation promotes a balanced understanding of South Asia and its connection to visitors' lives.

Mission

The purpose of the Shraman South Asian Museum and Learning Center is to inspire people to learn about South Asia's rich culture and history and to encourage exploration of diversity.

Meaning of "Shraman"

Shraman, n.: one who strives (for enlightenment); one who performs acts of mortification or austerity, an ascetic, monk or nun, devotee, religious mendicant; a Buddhist or Jain monk.

The Shraman Museum will be the first museum in North America exclusively dedicated to South Asia.



SHRAMAN FOUNDATION

Museum

The concept for the museum is different than traditional, collection-based art museums. The foundation's museum is idea-based with the objective of raising awareness about and giving an experience of South Asian cultures. To achieve this end, galleries will utilize technology for immersive and virtual realities; interactive maps and timelines; low-tech and kinetic exhibits; an interactive children's area; and everyday objects. There will be galleries that display art and host temporary exhibitions, but these will not necessarily be the primary focus of the museum.

Learning Center

The learning center will offer language classes and classes on history and art, to name a few. There will be workshops, conferences, symposia, and lectures. There will also be a work area for people of all ages to create art. The learning center will be actively connected to the museum but will also keep different hours.

Exhibits & Programs

Ancient to Contemporary Art – Interactive Exhibits – Cultural Exhibits – Language Instruction – Cultural Classes – Dance Performances – Music Recitals – Film Screenings – Public Lectures and Conferences – Yoga Classes – Food and Cooking Classes – Public Cultural Festivals – Outdoor Activities – Art Classes – Summer Camps – Visiting Artists and Scholars – Book Festivals – Professional Development – Educational Outreach – Collaboration with other Institutions

DOWNTOWN LOCATION

Downtown Location

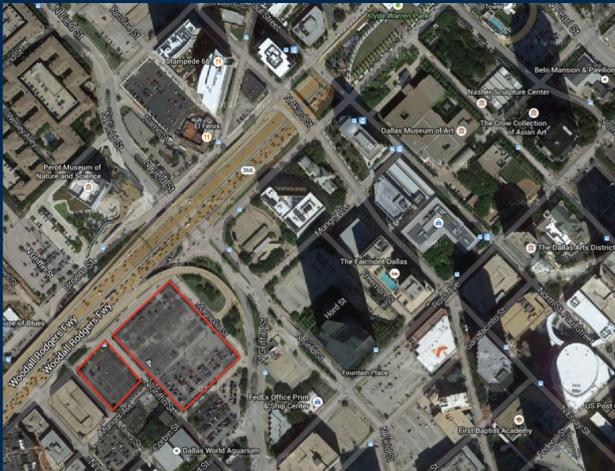
The Shraman Foundation purchased 6 acres of land in the West End Historic District in Downtown Dallas. The facility for the museum and learning center will be located across N. Griffin St. from the Dallas World Aquarium and across Woodall Rodgers Freeway from the Perot Museum of Nature and Science.

Public Green Space

The Shraman Foundation plans on transforming much of its land into a public green space. This sustainable park will help increase Downtown Dallas' vibrancy and livability.

Facility

The health of the planet is perhaps the most important issue facing future generations. The facility will be designed to be environmentally sustainable with the goal of creating as small a carbon footprint as possible.

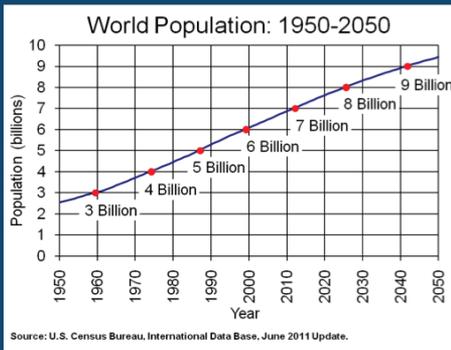


MAP OF SOUTH ASIA



South Asia and Ecology

Today's environmental problems necessitate adopting sustainable models of living that heal and protect the planet. For more than 4,000 years, South Asia has been home to great debates on ethical living. While current ecological crises pose new types of threats, South Asian thought could have a positive impact on healing and protecting the planet.



As the world population increases, the planet's resources will decrease, and South Asian ideas can help protect and conserve the planet.

“Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed.” - *Mahatma Gandhi*

Ayurveda and the 5 Great Elements

In traditional medicine or Ayurveda (“life-knowledge”), the natural environment is an inseparable and interconnected part of human existence, not a commodity. Five great elements make up the physical world and promote, heal, and rehabilitate life.



Space



Air



Fire

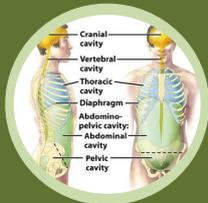


Water



Earth

These 5 great elements also constitute the human body.



Space = Body's Cavities & Consciousness



Air = Motion & Power behind Thought



Fire = Transformation & Intelligence



Water = Body's Liquids & Emotions of Love and Compassion



Earth = Physical Body & Mental Stability

Greed and Pride prevent realization of this interconnection and threaten the planet.

Hindu Views on the Earth

The planet and all creatures are often regarded as God's body.

“Ether, air, fire, water, earth, planets, all creatures, directions, trees and plants, rivers, and seas, they all are organs of God's body; remembering this, a devotee respects all species.”

– *Bhagavata Purana*



Bronze statue of Mother Earth (LACMA M.70.5.3).



Illustrated manuscript folio from the *Bhagavata Purana*.

The earth is also praised as a protective mother.

“Mother Earth—where people belong to different races, follow separate faiths and religions and speak numerous languages—cares for them in many ways. May that Mother Earth, like a Cosmic Cow, give us the thousand-fold prosperity without any hesitation, without being outraged by our destructive actions.”

–“Hymn to Mother Earth” in the Atharva Veda

Jainism and the Nature of Nature

A central belief in Jainism is that all life-forms in the world are interconnected and that all actions impact this network of relationships. To avoid disrupting the chain of life, Jains encourage cultivating compassion for all living things and adopting a simple, moderate lifestyle.



The white robes of Jain nuns symbolize purity of thought and action, and their mouths are covered to prevent accidental injury to life-forms.



Statue of a Jain religious figure in meditation.

Jains believe that vegetarianism is one remedy for the current ecological crisis. If meat consumption decreased by 50%, the available grain would solve the world's hunger and malnutrition problems.

Ahimsa: Non-violence

Non-violence or ahimsa is the highest religious duty and basis of all morality in Jainism. It is based on the belief that the world is permeated with visible and invisible life-forms and that nothing wants to suffer. Actions that are careless or motivated by pride, greed, jealousy, and selfishness are violent and do significant harm to the world and to oneself.



Illustrated manuscript folio of a Jain monk teaching.

Jain Guidelines to Protect the Planet

1. Do not kill: always protect life.
2. Always speak truthfully.
3. Try to resolve all conflicts peacefully.
4. Do not make wealth the aim of life.
5. There is no absolute truth.
6. Practice nonattachment to views: remain open to others' viewpoints.
7. Remain aware of the existence of suffering.
8. Do not maintain anger and hatred.



Jain symbol for ahimsa.

The concept of *aparigraha* or non-possessiveness dictates living simply, without clutter, to sustain the health of all existence.

Buddhism and the Earth

Buddhism was founded in India in the 5th century BCE and spread throughout Asia and the western world. From a Buddhist perspective, the earth is the “throne of enlightenment,” the location where Siddhartha Gautama meditated for 49 days and became the Buddha or the “Awakened One.” As earth is the place where the quest for enlightenment occurs, humans have a responsibility for its health, harmony, and well-being.

The current ecological crisis is a result of the “3 poisons:” mental confusion, destructive attractions, and hatred. These prevent discipline, imagination, compassion, and awareness.



Relief depicting
Siddhartha Gautama's
enlightenment.



Seated Buddha
(1st-2nd century
CE), Tokyo National
Museum.

“...in order to succeed in the protection, conservation and preservation of the natural environment, first of all, I think, it is also important to bring about internal balance within human beings themselves.” – Dalai Lama

Sikhism and the Environment

“Air is the Guru, Water the Father, and the Earth is the Great Mother.”
– Guru Nanak

Sikhism, a monotheistic religion founded in the Punjab region in the 15th century by Guru Nanak, holds that Creator and Creation are One, not distinct. The divine permeates the earth and any harm committed to the environment is in violation of Sikh ideals. The sanctity of the earth is affirmed as the place where union with the divine occurs, and living a spiritually exalted life means caring deeply for creation.

Nature we see
Nature we hear
Nature we observe with awe, wonder
and joy
Nature in the nether regions
Nature in the skies
Nature in the whole creation
Nature in species, kinds, colors
Nature in life forms
Nature in good deeds
Nature in pride and in ego
Nature in air, water and fire
Nature in the soil of the earth
All nature is yours, O powerful Creator
You command it, observe it
and pervade within it.

- Guru Nanak



Map of the Punjab region situated between Pakistan and India.



The Sikh emblem signifies the responsibility of providing food and protection for the needy and oppressed. This includes environmental justice as well as social justice.



The Golden Temple in Amritsar, India is the most sacred place of worship for the Sikhs.

The Original "Tree Huggers: the Bishnoi of Rajasthan

Bishnoism is an eco-religion founded by Guru Jambheshwarji in 1542 CE. Their philosophy is based on the idea that harming the environment is harming oneself. The 29 tenants of the Bishnoi preserve biodiversity and protect all life forms, including animals and vegetation. In 1730, 363 Bishnoi sacrificed their lives hugging trees that were being felled.



Bishnoi elders caring for animals.

Excerpt from the 29 tenets

- Maintain good character, contentment, and cleanliness.
- Filter water & milk, and use firewood cleansed of insects.
- Speak with sincerity.
- Practice forgiveness.
- Be sympathetic of heart.
- Do not steal.
- Do not condemn or criticize.
- Do not lie.
- Do not indulge in unnecessary argument.
- Be compassionate to all living beings.
- Do not cut green trees.
- Control lust, anger, greed, pride, and attachment.
- Provide shelters for abandoned animals.
- Do not eat meat.

“To lose one’s head is better than to lose a tree.”

- Bishnoi proverb

Henry David Thoreau

“The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges.”



Henry David Thoreau
(1817-1862)

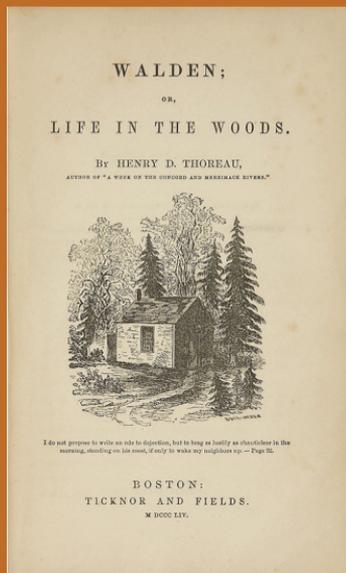
Thoreau was an American author, philosopher, poet, and naturalist. He was greatly influenced by South Asian philosophy and religion. In *Walden*, his memoir on living simply in the Massachusetts woods, Thoreau discusses the impact Hinduism had on his thinking. He was particularly influenced by the belief in the unity of spirit that links the human soul and the divine. This idea influenced Thoreau's view that the transcendent spirit is present in the natural environment.



Replica of Thoreau's cabin at
Walden Pond.

“Many years ago, there lived in America a great man named Henry David Thoreau...Much importance is attached to his writings because Thoreau himself was a man who practised what he preached.”

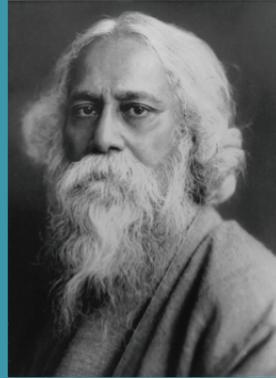
– Mahatma Gandhi



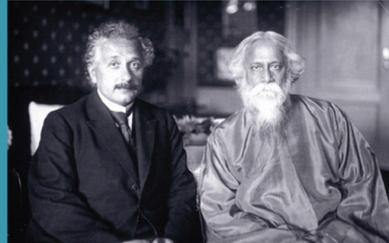
“What's the use of a fine house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to put it on?” – from *Familiar Letters*

Rabindranath Tagore on Nature

Rabindranath Tagore was a poet, author, lyricist, and artist. In 1913, he became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.



Rabindranath
Tagore
(1861-1941)

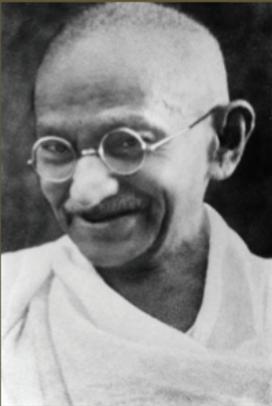


Albert Einstein with Tagore (1926)

“India’s best ideas have come where man was in communion with trees and rivers and lakes, away from the crowds. The peace of the forest has helped the intellectual evolution of man. The culture of the forest has fueled the culture of Indian society. The culture that has arisen from the forest has been influenced by the diverse processes of renewal of life, which are always at play in the forest, varying from species to species, from season to season, in sight and sound and smell. The unifying principle of life in diversity, of democratic pluralism, thus became the principle of Indian civilization.” - Rabindranath Tagore

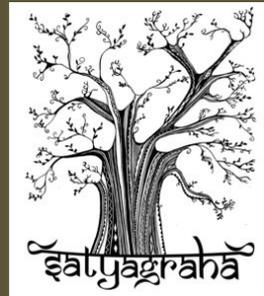
Mahatma Gandhi and Environmentalism

“Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need, but not every man’s greed.”



Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948)

Gandhi’s ethical principles led many to describe him as the father of the Indian environmental movement. His counsel to practice austerity, cultivate contentment, introspect on the self, learn self-reliance, only possess what is needed, and protect the interests of the poor and weak inspired generations of environmentalists not only in India but around the world.



Gandhi was inspired by the Jain principle of non-violence or ahimsa. Non-violence was the foundation for satyagraha (“truth force”), the noncooperation movement against the British empire. In addition to influencing modern environmentalists, Gandhi’s non-violent disobedience also influenced civil rights leaders, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, and Cesar Chavez.

God is Truth
The way to Truth
lies through ahimsa
(non violence,
saharmani
13/27 MKGandhi

Chipko Movement: "Tree-huggers" of the Himalayas

The chipko movement started in the 1970s to stop deforestation in the Himalaya mountains and soon spread to other regions of India. Firmly rooted in Gandhi's principles, the term chipko means "to embrace" and describes the non-violent protest of hugging a tree to prevent it from being felled.

In many villages in rural India, women are responsible for collecting firewood, gathering water, and preparing food. This allowed women to recognize the harmful effects of deforestation on essential natural resources. Women emerged as the voice of the Chipko Movement, demanding recognition not only from commercial logging companies and the Indian government, but also from men in their communities, many of whom supported the deforestation project. They inspired women globally to organize around issues impacting their lives.



Dr. Vandana Shiva and Biodiversity



Dr. Vandana Shiva is an internationally renowned environmental activist, author, and champion for the preservation of biodiversity and indigenous knowledge. Her involvement in environmental issues started in the 1970s with the Chipko Movement's fight against deforestation. Dr. Shiva adheres to Gandhi's principles as a means to help change the practice of agriculture and food. She believes that organic farming can feed the world and works against genetically engineered seeds and crops.



Dr. Shiva started Navdanya ("Nine Seeds"), a non-governmental organization, in 1984 to promote biodiversity, organic farming, the rights of farmers, and seed saving. They have opened 111 seed banks and trained over 500,000 farmers in India.

Rizwana Hasan and Shipbreaking

Rizwana Hasan is an attorney from Bangladesh whose focus on the environmental and human impact of the shipbreaking industry has led to greater awareness and government regulation. In 2009, Hasan was awarded the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize for her efforts.



Rizwana Hasan



Satellite image by Digital Globe
A maritime graveyard.



Dismantled ships in Bangladesh.

Decommissioned ships from around the world—most from developed nations—are sent to Bangladesh and dismantled by hand on the beaches. Most ships contain asbestos, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), lead, arsenic, and other substances. This results in toxic contamination of the coastal waters and health hazards for the unskilled workers who work for less than one dollar per day.

Save the Narmada River Movement

Narmada Bachao Andolan, or Save the Narmada Movement, began in the 1980s in central India in response to the Narmada Development Project, a World Bank funded effort to build 30 large dams and thousands of smaller dams along the Narmada River. The dams would inflict damage on the riverine ecosystem, submerge thousands of acres of forest and agricultural land, and displace close to a million people whose lives are dependent on the river. The Indian government claimed that the economic benefits of this project would outweigh the human and environmental costs.



Medha Patkar



Nonviolent protest against the construction of dams on the Narmada River.

Medha Patkar initiated the Narmada Bachao Andolan. Using Mahatma Gandhi's principles of nonviolence, Patkar led large protests and sit-ins to raise awareness about the impact of the dams. The World Bank withdrew from the project in 1993, but the construction continues and more than 300,000 people have been displaced without just compensation or resettlement.

DID YOU KNOW...?

FUN FACTS ABOUT SOUTH ASIA AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- South Asia is home to 1/5th of the world's population.
- The Himalayan mountains are the northern border and the sea is the southern border of South Asia.
- To the east, 3 major rivers converge and flow toward the Bay of Bengal, creating the world's largest delta.
- Nepal is home to Mount Everest, the world's highest mountain at 29,029 feet above sea level.
- The wettest place on earth is Mawsynram, located in Meghalaya, India, as it records an average rainfall of 467 inches per year.
- Bangladesh is called “the playground of seasons” because it has 6— not 4 —separate seasons: summer, rainy, autumn, cool, winter, and spring.
- Sri Lanka has so many waterfalls that most of its electricity comes from hydro-powered energy.
- Bhutan is called “Druk Yul,” which means “Land of Thunder Dragons,” because of the very powerful storms that constantly roar in from the Himalaya mountains
- Rising ocean levels are threatening the Maldives, an island nation in South Asia. In order to call attention to this issue, the former President had government officials scuba dive to the bottom of the sea for a cabinet meeting.

GOING GREEN

10 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP YOUR ENVIRONMENT

1. **Get a group of friends together and help clean up trash in area of your community** - this could be your school, a local park, a nearby river, or any place that is important to you.
2. **Save power!** Take the stairs instead of using the elevator (added bonus: exercise).
3. **Save water!** Try turning off the water when you're washing your hair or brushing your teeth.
4. **Get a reusable water bottle.** Not only does this help reduce plastic pollution, but you can decorate your reusable water bottle with stickers, labels, and other cool designs unique to you.
5. **Plant a tree!** Trees help absorb carbon dioxide on the earth's atmosphere (not to mention they provide some cool shade from the sweltering Texas sun).
6. **Flip the switch!** Before you leave a room, make sure all of the lights not being used are turned off.
7. **Hit the road with your bike instead of a car.**
8. **Try the veggie burger in place of the hamburger.** Raising cows produces heat-trapping and water-polluting gases, and requires enormous amounts of water and land space.
9. **Cut out Styrofoam, completely.** Styrofoam is non-biodegradable, meaning that it does not naturally break down and will last forever. Also, Styrofoam is made up of carcinogenic materials that are hazardous to human health.
10. **Turn your trash into cash!** Many recycling centers will pay you money for your recycling. Contact your local recycling company to find out if they offer this program.

NOW, YOUR TURN!

Take a vow: Write your own EcoPledge! What's one thing you pledge to do to help your environment?

Example: I pledge to cut down my showers by five minutes in the morning.

Get creative. What are five fun things you can do with an old jelly jar?

Example: Make it a vase by filling it with freshly picked flowers.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

SHRAMAN

SOUTH ASIAN MUSEUM

The purpose of the Shraman South Asian Museum and Learning Center Foundation is to collect, preserve, display, interpret, and facilitate the study and discussion of South Asian culture and history.

This mission will be fulfilled through the creation of a museum, learning center, and library, and through ongoing collaboration with members of academic, artistic, and cultural communities.

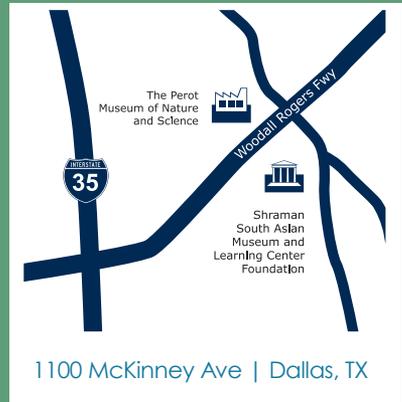
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Future Location



Learn more at
SHRAMAN.ORG

