



Eco Newsletter, June 2025, Issue 14

## **Sustainable living**

### **Editorial**



Photo by [Nick Fewings](#) on [Unsplash](#)

I am part of an Eco Friends team at Global Cooperation House (GCH) in London, UK. GCH is the International Coordinating Office of the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University. My interest in this area began around 2005, when I was managing a community enterprise that was delivering environmental awareness lessons to local schools in Northwest London.

GCH is a large and busy building and there I am involved in managing the recycling and waste management. We found that by separating cardboard and paper from the waste stream we significantly reduced the amount of general waste being generated. Currently we have separate collection systems for:

- plastic, cans and glass go for recycling
- food waste goes to make biogas

- flower waste goes for composting
- used cooking oil goes to make biodiesel
- textiles and electricals

This edition of our Eco Newsletter is looking at aspects of sustainable living. In keeping with the theme of World Environment Day (5th June) we have an article on how GCH is currently addressing the issue of single-use plastics. On a more spiritual theme, Jane Kay, a retired Teaching Fellow, University of Leeds gives us inspiration on living simply and sustainability. Being involved in recycling and waste management, I often feel we should:

REDUCE - our waste thoughts and unhelpful feelings

REUSE – our qualities, virtues, values and powers

RECYCLE – our blessings, good wishes and pure feelings

INCINERATE – any negativity, ill will or self-doubt

The article on Sustainable Fashion looks at reorienting the industry and consumers away from the fast fashion model and toward sustainable practices in sourcing, production, distribution, marketing, and consumption. For over 10 years I have been involved with a humanitarian movement called Emmaus. This organisation utilises reuse and recycling of pre-loved products to fund its activities to help homeless, impoverished and excluded people.

Something that has inspired me to embrace sustainable living is understanding the definition and root of the term 'Ecology'. According to The British Ecology Society the word comes from the Greek oikos meaning 'household,' 'home,' or 'place to live.' Ecology is, therefore, the study of our home – our Planet Earth. This aspect was discussed at a live event, The Sustainability Secret, held at Global Retreat Centre (GRC), Oxfordshire. The discussions ranged around the need for a 'spiritual revolution' whereby humanity moves away from consumerism and selfishness towards generosity and selflessness. It also broached the concept of a 'Planet B': a planet where sustainable living has been achieved.

We need to practise sustainable living now because, to coin a phrase from the 70s 'Good Planets are hard to come by!' I hope you enjoy reading the articles in this edition of the Newsletter and that they inspire you to embrace a broader view of sustainable living.



Michael Spike Hudson has been practising Raja Yoga with the Brahma Kumaris since 1997. For 20 years he ran an employment and training company operating in the social economy sector. Since 2015 he has been an active member of the Emmaus International movement that helps homeless and socially excluded people worldwide.

# Brahma Kumaris UK : Seeking single-use plastics solutions



This year [World Environment Day](#) (5th June) is particularly focused on preventing plastic pollution and is calling on us all to adopt more sustainable solutions. Mount Abu, Rajasthan, India, where the Spiritual Headquarters of the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU) is located, is now a plastic free zone. In the UK, Global Co-operation House, the International Coordinating Office of the Brahma Kumaris in London is also working towards reducing its use of plastics.

In 2023 the UK government said that : “Research shows that people across England use 2.7 billion items of mostly plastic single-use cutlery... every year... If 2.7 billion pieces of cutlery were lined up, they would go round the world more than eight-and-a-half times.” See [here](#).

Global Co-operation House often caters for large events and it now uses plates and bowls made of Bagasse (sugarcane pith fibres that are left after juicing). The soup bowls and hot cups are made from paper lined with plant based plastic; the cutlery is made from corn starch and the water points around the building have paper drinking cones. A less obvious aspect of converting to plant-based plastic use was talking to the waste management companies operating in the area, to make sure they are also able to cleanly manage these materials.

The UK Brahma Kumaris Eco Group has also been encouraging Brahma Kumaris centres and students across the UK to re-think their plastic usage and has created a mini-booklet describing both some of the health and environment hazards of using plastic as well as offering some alternative solutions.

# The simple life



Photo by [Melissa Askew](#) on [Unsplash](#)

“Some like the high road, I like the low road,  
Free from the care and strife  
Sounds corny and seedy, but yes, indeed-y ...  
... Give me the simple life.”

Rube Bloom (music) and Harry Ruby (lyrics) 1945

The idea of living simply, without any complications is so appealing. It evokes a kind of nostalgia; the making of our own bread, the growing of our own vegetables, perhaps even the spinning of our own cloth. It sounds or feels so good – but the lives we lead in reality, apart from the ‘lucky’ few, are far from simple. We have been carefully taught to want more. We have been bombarded by the ‘new’ the ‘latest’ the ‘buy now before there are none left’! Consumerism is always accompanied by an underlying stress, tension or discomfort. True, there may be momentary delight at the new and latest, but it quickly fades. There is a kind of deep awareness, that this is not the right way to live, and yet what pressures we are under! The ultimate question is: Does living like this bring happiness? If the answer is no, then why do we continue to consume at breakneck speed? There are many answers to that question, and not all of them are to do with greed or lack of understanding, but too many for this short article to cover. The point is, what does the alternative, the simplicity of living, look like – and how does it make us feel?

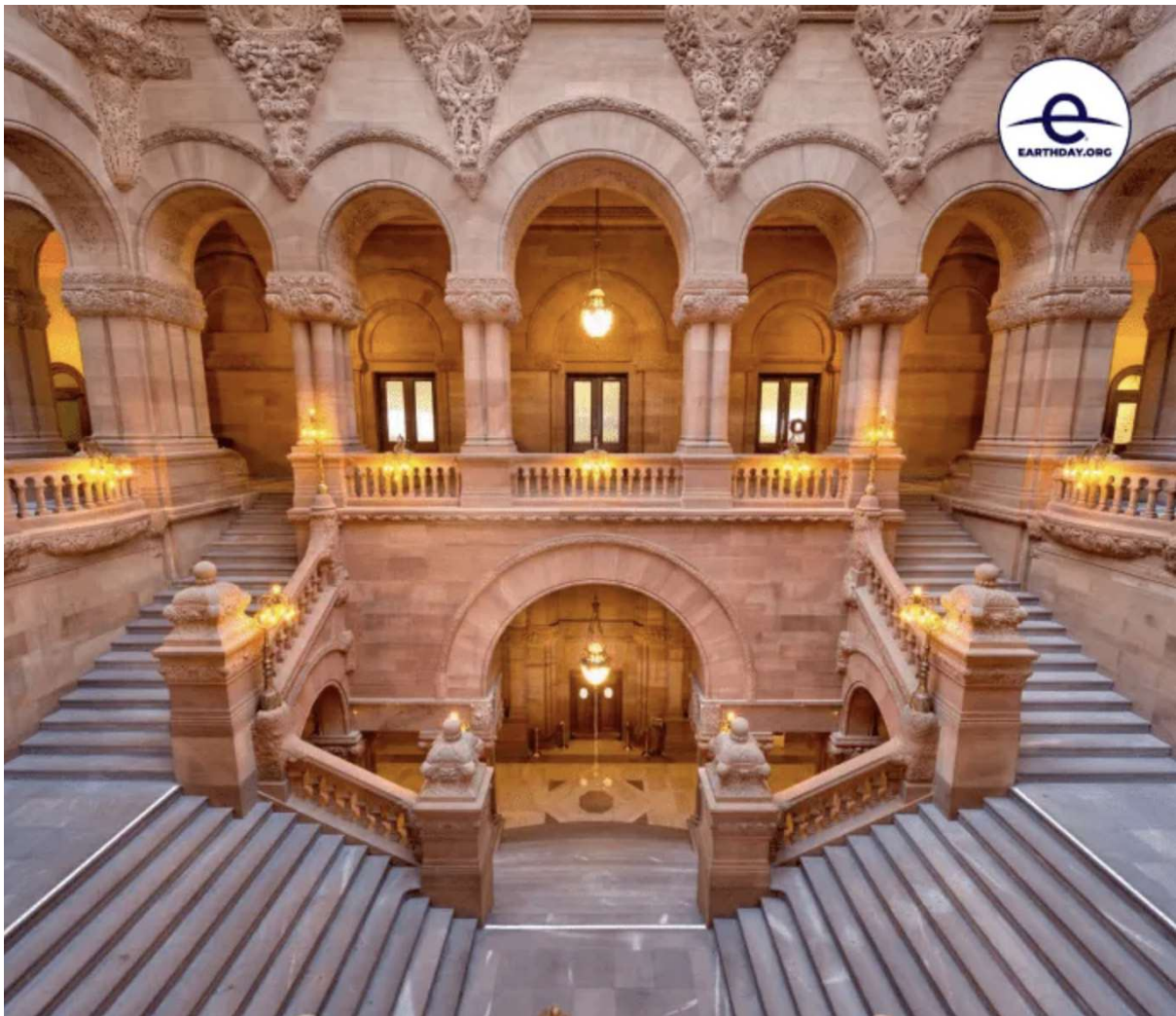
Imagine not buying what we want, but only what we need. Not necessarily top of the range, but neither the cheapest we can find. Somewhere in the middle, is where simplicity lies. If things are less expensive, there is less anxiety or worry, of loss or theft. When we live with the mindset of simplicity, we think carefully and quietly about what to spend our money on. We have more disposable income for things that really matter, or for a rainy day. We have less clutter, that in itself brings a sense of calm. We pay more attention to the now, and are able to prioritise, and therefore get what we need to do, done - in a more resourceful or in an enjoyable way.

Opting for a plant based diet is a way of living simply. We may choose to do that for a variety reasons; air miles, health and so on. But ultimately, living without cruelty not only helps the animal kingdom, it also lessens the psychological impact on us, because consciously or not, we are helping the world. By choosing wisely, we use resources mindfully, minimise waste and effectively diminish pollution in all areas of nature.

The real prize though, and a highly valuable prize it is, is that living in this way brings a deep contentment. That does not sound very exciting, but once experienced, returning to the stress and anxiety of before, feels simply unacceptable.

This article was written by Jane Kay, who was formerly a Teaching Fellow at the University of Leeds and has been meditating with the Brahma Kumaris since 1981.

# Fashion for the earth



The fashion industry, particularly the fast fashion sector, has operated with minimal oversight for decades, resulting in a host of environmental damages—ranging from water and air pollution to deforestation, oceanic microplastic contamination, and biodiversity loss. Human rights abuses are rampant across the industry’s supply chains, with labor exploitation and unsafe working conditions.

The consequences of these practices extend beyond local communities, with profound implications for climate change and global sustainability.

With this report, EARTHDAY.ORG hopes to provide a vital resource for tracking legislative developments (in the U.S, Canada and the EU) aiming to achieve meaningful change within the fashion sector. Read [more](#).

## The sustainability secret report



On a recent visit to the Brahma Kumaris Global Retreat Centre in Oxfordshire, Dr Sailesh Rao participated in a conversation with Sister Manda Patel to explore what lies at the heart of a more sustainable lifestyle. The conversation was moderated by John McConnel and at the end there was time for questions and comments from the audience.

It was an interesting and rich discussion bringing in the practical and as well as the more subtle aspects of sustainable living. On a practical level, the significant contribution of animal agriculture to climate change was highlighted, stating that it accounts for 51% of emissions, yet for the majority of people, this remains a blind spot. They also posed fundamental questions about individual consumption: Am I taking more than I need? Eating more than I need? Accumulating more than I need?

Some of the more subtler aspects discussed were the need for a change in attitude from one of consumerism to one of nurturing the earth, and a change in the societal 'game' plan that currently rewards selfishness, greed and apathy. We need to shift to one that rewards selflessness, generosity and activism. We need a spiritual revolution.

Sailesh's new book called 'There is a Planet B' was also discussed. He explained how the foundations of Planet B are being laid now, a process linked to rebalancing the planet's male principles (clarity and planning) and female principles (gentleness and caretaking). We need both of these to come into balance. This balance, they emphasised, is not so much about gender but about integrating these qualities within ourselves. Manda shared about how the Brahma Kumaris was established as a female led movement to help redress this balance on an external level and Sailesh made the point that 80% of vegans are female.

Sailesh also shared about why he left his award winning career as a leading IT engineer (designing the communications infrastructure that is behind our current communications technologies) to become a climate champion 18 years ago. Manda shared too about her

reasons for becoming vegan, how our inner and outer worlds are interconnected and the value of living simply, respectfully and generously.

Dr Sailesh Rao is the Founder and Executive Director of [Climate Healers](#). He has written five books, his latest book being '[There is a Planet B](#).' He has also produced ten films, including, [Cowspiracy](#), [Eating our way to Extinction](#) (with Kate Winslet) and his latest film [I could never go Vegan](#).

Manda Patel is a student and teacher of Raja Yoga meditation with more than 40 years of experience. She plays a key administrative role in [Brahma Kumaris activities in the UK](#) and also as a member of the Coordinating Team of the [Global Retreat Centre](#). She also travels widely as an ambassador of the simple spiritual understandings that lie behind the philosophy of the Brahma Kumaris.

## Meditation



Relax and enjoy this [meditation](#) on Sustainable strength.