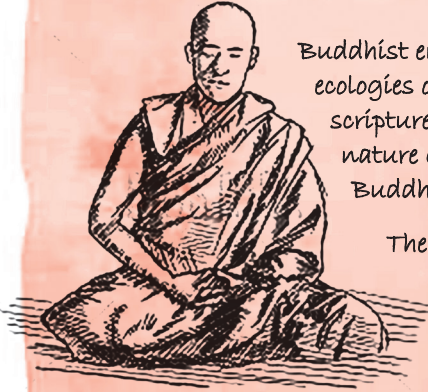


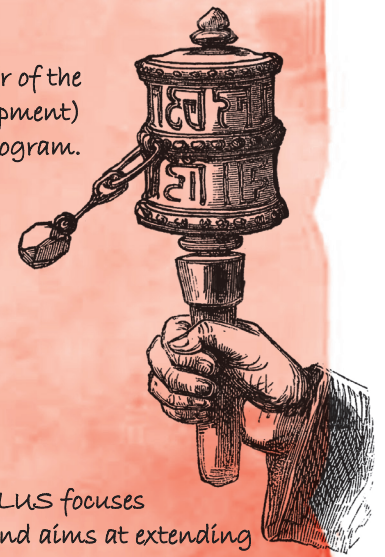
Monks for Forests



Buddhist environmental ethics are rooted in an arboreal culture that has been formative of sacred ecologies over the centuries. The protection of trees and forests is enshrined within Buddhist scriptures and practice. Early Buddhist literature (the Jataka stories) convey a message of nature conservation, and prominent Buddhist texts portray intimate associations between the Buddha and particular tree species during major events in his life.

The Buddhist sangha (monastic order) has historically played a vital role in the preservation and transmission of the dharma (Buddhist values and teachings), key tenets of which include a fundamental interdependence, balance, and harmony between humans and nature, right thinking, and right action. As living embodiment of the dharma, monks serve as a role model within their communities, imparting advice and guiding community action. In contemporary times, their social roles have been highlighted, and there are several examples of social and environmental initiatives across the world, notably in Thailand, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and India.

“Monks for Climate” is one such initiative launched in Sikkim, India, as a joint endeavor of the Rumtek Dharma Chakra Centre, USAID (United States Agency for International Development) and MoEFCC’s (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change) Forest-PLUS program. Building on existing monastery-led initiatives to conserve forests in the state, the program was aimed at spreading awareness and actions to mitigate climate change. Under this program, monks led efforts to promote public awareness and developed tree plantations and water harvesting structures around the Rumtek monastery.



Forest-PLUS 2.0, the successor program of Forest-PLUS focuses thematically on “forests for water and prosperity,” and aims at extending the partnership with monks through planned environmental initiatives in Bodhi Gaya, Bihar, which is a focal site on the Buddhist pilgrimage map. Monks will be involved in collaborative endeavors on nature conservation and promotion of the cultural and spiritual aspects of ecosystem services of forest management. They will also participate in the “smriti van” initiative, encouraging visitors to pledge contributions for trees planted in the memory of loved ones.

Plant Trees, Plant the Future

Forest-PLUS 2.0
forest for water and prosperity