



Spiritual Ecology Movement

Muslim and Hindu Leaders Launch Spiritual Ecology Movement at Historic R20 Gathering in Bali

Mahamahopadhyay Bhadreshdas Swami:

**“Dharma is that which upholds the whole universe.
Similarly, spiritual ecology is that which protects the whole of creation.”**

BALI, Indonesia — On the afternoon of 31 October 2022, religious leaders met to break new ground by launching a global “spiritual ecology movement” to foster balance within nature and society. The event was held at Puja Mandala, a religious complex consisting of five houses of worship built side-by-side, including a Hindu temple, a mosque, Protestant and Catholic churches, and a Buddhist vihara.

The gathering began with a ritual purification ceremony and offerings made by Balinese Hindu priests prior to the planting of twenty trees considered sacred within Hindu cosmology. This ceremony and tree planting are believed to enliven the spiritual unity that connects all of creation and thereby secure harmony and balance between the seen and unseen worlds.

Mahamahopadhyay Bhadreshdas Swami, an ordained Hindu monk of the Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS), flew to Indonesia to participate in the R20 following an African tour. With millions of devotees worldwide, BAPS (est. 1905) has built over 1,100 Hindu temples and 3,400 religious centers on six continents.

“Dharma and ecology are not separate, rather they form a sort of ‘dharmic ecology.’ The sustainability of life on earth is possible if we accept the sanctity of nature and its interconnectedness with humanity,” observed Bhadreshdas Swami in a statement delivered at the tree planting ceremony.

The event was organized by Lesbumi (the Institute of Indonesian Muslim Cultural Artists), an autonomous branch of the world’s largest Muslim organization, Indonesia’s Nahdlatul Ulama, which founded the R20.

The Hindu purification ceremony concluded with a poem recited by Ibu Lellyana of Lesbumi’s Central Board, who coordinated the event with Balinese religious leaders.

From God the Most Merciful, greetings of peace conveyed by trees.

From trees we learn sensitivity

From trees we learn beneficence

Trees are the source of life and impart life to others

*Soil and water unite to produce and nurture trees, which provide humanity with
the breath of life*

Trees never choose who may or may not breathe the life-giving oxygen they produce

Trees never choose who may shelter beneath the shade of their leafy boughs

Trees grow silently, reflecting God's love for His people

By planting trees, we convey the greetings of the earth to the sky above

By planting trees, we communicate with generations not yet born

By planting trees, we speak with God.

Trees bring shade and coolness

Trees restore balance to the earth

Planting trees is planting civilization

Planting trees is planting humanitarianism

Planting trees bestows a legacy of love and peace.

From this place, let us vow

That peace will grow and blossom like the trees we plant here today

*Producing new shoots and flowers that will bear fruit and bless all living creatures
that dwell upon the earth... Amen*

Following the Hindu ceremony, R20 co-chair H.E. Shaykh Mohammad bin Abdul Karim Al-Issa, Secretary General of the Mecca-based Muslim World League, arrived to an enthusiastic welcome by school children, local Muslim leaders, and traditional musicians who had gathered at the Puja Mandala's mosque.

Accompanied by prominent Muslim leaders, Shaykh Al-Issa led the gathering in an Arabic-language prayer prior to planting, with his own hands, one of the 20 sacred trees upon the grounds of the mosque.

After planting a tree within the grounds of the mosque, Shaykh Al-Issa toured the Puja Mandala complex and entered Jagatnatha Temple to greet Balinese Hindu priests. Shaykh Al-Issa and Bhadreshdas Swami then proceeded to the inner court of the temple grounds where, hand-in-hand, they planted another tree while the Indian Hindu leader recited Sanskrit verses. They were accompanied by Hindu high priest Ida Pandita Agung Putra Nata Siliwangi Manuaba, Secretary of Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia.

“The participation of Shaykh Al-Issa and Bhadreshdas Swami in this event represents a significant development in Muslim-Hindu relations, opening the door to further cooperation between two of the world’s great religious communities,” said C. Holland Taylor, Deputy Chairman and CEO of the Center for Shared Civilizational Values, which serves as the Permanent Secretariat of the R20.

“At a time when environmental discourse and related policy discussions are dominated by an overwhelmingly secular perspective,” Mr. Taylor continued, “it is vital that international fora such as the G20 be open to the voices of religious leaders and their communities, who constitute approximately 85% of the world’s population. This event — occurring on the eve of the first annual R20 Summit in Bali — demonstrates that the world’s major religions have both the potential and the will to cooperate in revitalizing indigenous traditions of spiritual ecology, which can help restore balance within nature and human societies worldwide.”