VISIT THE VAJRA ACADEMY – ECO SCHOOL

SAGARMATHA SAMBAAD EXCURSION – 18 MAY 2025

EXCURSION PROGRAMME

14.00 h departure from Hotel The Soaltee
14.45 h Vajra Academy drama: *Eco-Ramayana*
15.15 h visit school compound and eco-facilities
15.45 h vegan snacks | interaction
16.15 h departure
17.00 h return at Hotel The Soaltee

VISIT NEPAL'S MODEL GREEN SCHOOL ON CONFERENCE DAY 3

FREE EXCURSION QR REGISTRATION

जननी जन्मभूमिश्च स्वर्गादपि गरीयसी

SAGARMATHA SAMBAAD वादे वादे जायते तत्त्वबोधः *The Global Dialogue Forum in Nepal*

THE VAJRA ACADEMY: A MODEL 'GREEN' SCHOOL

Already in 2007, the Vajra Academy was established as Nepal's first green and ecofriendly school.

Later, the Vajra Academy was internationally recognised by the Ashoka Foundation as Nepal's first Changemaker School, among only 300 comparable quality schools worldwide.

The Vajra Academy is cooperating directly with the Nepalese government in order to spread ecological, 'green' education to the different provinces of Nepal, with the Vajra Academy serving as Nepal's inspiring 'model green school'.

CHANGEMAKER SCHOOL

VAJRA'S ECOLOGICAL FEATURES

Independent research from Kathmandu University:
"Among students of the Vajra Academy: extraordinary knowledge of green living."

Healthy green environment
Our spacious compound is lined with trees in a healthy green environment, without dust and pollution from distant downtown Kathmandu.

Solar steam kitchen
Vajra's own 'solar kitchen' allows for preparation of school meals with steam heat gained from solar radiation.

Biogas
On days without sunshine, biogas is produced with dung from our cow farm. Flush water from school toilets flows to the biogas tank. For this reason, no chemicals are used in these toilets.

Cow farm
The cow farm produces milk for school meals and dung for the biogas plant.

Organic vegetable and herbal gardens
Vegetables for school meals are grown partly in our own organic garden, where no fertilisers and poisons are used.

Beehives
Students harvest honey from bee hives.

Rainwater harvesting
To save tap water, the school collects rainwater in tanks under the school.

Healthy school menu
Meals prepared in the school are nutritious and partly organic. The cooks produce soya-bean milk and seitan, a wheat-based substitute for poultry and meat.

Waste management
Students embrace the school's policy 'refuse, reduce, reuse and recycle', avoiding plastic altogether, separating waste and composting organic waste.

'Green', ecological curriculum
Vajra's green curriculum makes students understand nature and environment, which we all depend upon. Some classes are held outside, such as on 'bookless Fridays'. Students learn to think in solutions rather than in problems. Sustainable, ecological development UN goals are taught.

Student eco-actions
Students tend a nearby municipal garden and perform clean-up actions. Supervised by the academy, ten schools have conducted an 'eco action', collecting huge amounts of plastic waste, weaving it into a kilometre-long cord and tying it around Vajra Barahi's temple complex. Motto:
TIE THE TRASH – BEFORE THE TRASH TIES US!

Eco Club
The Academy has established the Eco Club, allowing students to participate in eco-entrepreneurial activities.

THE VAJRA ACADEMY INCORPORATES ALL SEVENTEEN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AS PROMOTED BY THE UNITED NATIONS

1 *No poverty* | Vajra provides scholarships to underprivileged students
2 *Zero hunger* | *achieve food security and improved nutrition* | *promote sustainable agriculture* | Vajra students are involved in growing organic crops | nutritious school meals, replacing animal proteins with vegetable proteins (e.g. soya milk, seitan), reducing carbon footprint
3 *Good health and well-being* | healthy food is provided, decreasing risk of diabetes, obesity and heart diseases
4 *Inclusive and equitable quality education, promoting lifelong learning opportunities* | Vajra provides quality education (high marks and high pass rate for the final exam) | sustainable development is promoted through education for ecological development and lifestyles | scholarships are provided to underprivileged students | capacity of teachers is enhanced through knowledge exchange and international cooperation
5 *Gender equality, empowering girls and women* | when providing scholarships Vajra prioritizes female students
6 *Ensure availability and sustainable management of clean water and sanitation* Vajra harvests rainwater for treatment into safe drinking water, thus saving on tap water | extensive sanitation projects have been implemented in Nepal in cooperation with Vajra Foundation | Vajra purifies its sewage water in its own biogas plant, turning it into useful biogas for the school's kitchen stoves
7 *Access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and clean energy* | Vajra prepares cooked meals in school kitchen with solar steam | produces biogas for days without sunshine | LED lights throughout the school | solar water heaters | photovoltaic (PV) electricity planned for 2025 | electric busses in past years, to be replaced by new ones in near future
8 *Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work* | in cooperation with Vajra Foundation, a successful cooperative has been developed for underprivileged people with no access to banks | Vajra assisted in setting up an educational eco resort as an example for green entrepreneurship and a place for internship for Vajra students
9 *Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation* | in cooperation with Vajra Foundation a successful cooperative has been developed for underprivileged people with no access to banks | Vajra assisted in setting up an educational eco resort as an example

for green entrepreneurship and a place for internship for Vajra students

10 *Reduce inequality within and among countries* | Vajra provides scholarships prioritizing underprivileged students from low-caste families

11 *Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*
Vajra combats climate change by implementing facilities and practises such as a solar steam kitchen | biogas installation | solar water heaters | photovoltaic (PV) panels | electric busses | LED lights | waste & plastic policy 'refuse, reduce, reuse and recycle' | separating waste | separating organic waste | largely banning plastic from compound

12 *Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns* | Vajra makes students grow their organic food plants on the compound | for reducing the carbon footprint, animal proteins are increasingly replaced with vegetable proteins, like soya milk and seitan | left-overs from school meals go to the biogas plant or the cows | waste & plastic policy 'refuse, reduce, reuse and recycle' | separating waste | separating organic waste | largely banning plastic from compound

13 *Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts* | Vajra plants plentiful of trees and plants on the school's compound | Vajra has assisted in realising a nearby community park in cooperation with Vajra Foundation | in order to combat climate change, Vajra has implemented actions listed under the UN sustainable, ecological development goals 7, 11 and 12

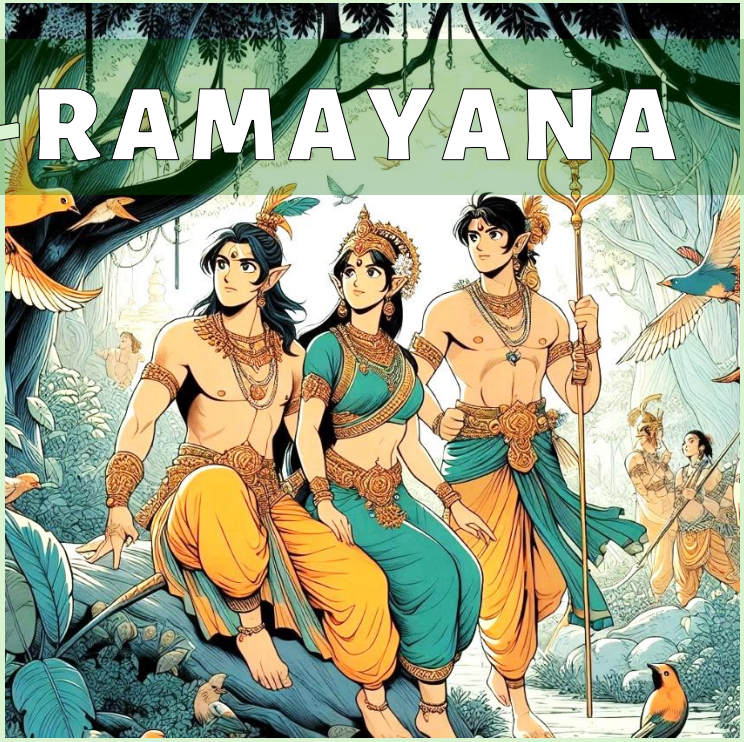
14 *Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable, green development* | Vajra teaches students about oceanic 'plastic soup', with plastics ending up in the ocean also through Nepal's rivers – a motivational reason for banning plastic largely from the school's compound

15 *Protect, restore and promote sustainable, green use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss*
Vajra plants plentiful of trees and plants on the school's compound | Vajra lets students tend their own herbal garden with Nepali species

16 *Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable, green development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions*
Vajra ensures the school is a safe environment without physical punishment

17 *Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development* |
Vajra has a strong partnership with the Dutch NGO Vajra Foundation Holland | generated through this partnership: financial support as well as exchange, focused on education, technology, sustainability and capacity building | the Vajra Academy is affiliated with leading schools in both Indonesia and the Netherlands

ECO-RAMAYANA



Sagarmatha Sambaad – featured theatre play on 18 May 2025 at the Vajra Academy

PERFORMERS students of the Vajra Academy
DIRECTOR Mr. Pravakar Neupane
PLAYSCRIPT Mr. Maarten Olthof, founder of the Vajra Academy

CAST

NARRATOR MRIDUSHA GHIMIRE
the guiding voice of nature and wisdom

RAMA AASUTOSH ACHARAYA
compassionate hero, guardian of the Earth

SITA ANUJA DHAKAL
the gentle muse, whose spirit is intertwined with nature

LAKSHMANA DVYAMSHU ACHARAYA
Rama's loyal brother, ever watchful of Earth's message

SAGE VASISTHA NARESH THAPA
the voice of nature, a wise mentor speaking for the forest

HANUMAN UJJWOL SAPKOTA
vibrant messenger, fierce protector of nature

RAVANA JALAN SUBEDI – *force of exploitation, challenging natural balance*

CHORUS *forest creatures & vanaras, monkeys and other forest dwellers, representing soulful voices of nature*

SYNOPSIS

The *Ramayana*, one of the great Sanskrit epics and traditionally attributed to Valmiki, tells the story of Rama, the ideal prince and an incarnation of Vishnu. The tale unfolds in ancient India and explores the themes of duty, devotion, righteousness and the triumph of good over evil. This epic remains one of the most influential stories in the Hindu tradition. The *Ramayana* contains profound environmental, ecological themes that emphasize the relationship between man and nature – with a story featuring ***four main environmental themes***:

Nature as a sacred force

The story takes place largely in forests, mountains and rivers, where nature not only forms a backdrop, but also plays an active role in the epic's events. From the very beginning, the *Ramayana* presents nature as a living, sacred entity rather than a mere backdrop to human ambition. Lord Rama's exile to the forests is a pivotal moment. In the forest, Sita, Lakshmana and he are living as humble guests of the wilderness, taking only what is necessary and respecting the balance of nature. This contrasts sharply with modern environmental degradation, where resources often are exploited with disregard for sustainability.

The forest as a teacher

During his exile, Rama interacts with sages who observe the ecosystem, noting changes in rivers, migratory patterns of birds and the balance of elements. These observations, nowadays considered vital environmental data, essentially were ancient wisdom. The *Ramayana* teaches that a kingdom's prosperity depends on its respect for nature, ensuring that rituals honour the elements and sustain the land for future generations.

Wildlife and ecological balance

Animals play a vital role in Rama's journey. Hanuman and his Vanara army symbolize the unity between humans and wildlife, while Jatayu, the noble vulture, sacrifices himself to protect Sita. Even small creatures, like squirrels, are allies. This reinforces the concept that each and every being has a role in maintaining an ecological balance and that all organisms in nature are interdependent.

Lessons for today

The *Ramayana's* respect and reverence for nature serves as a timeless reminder of sustainable living and a harmonious society, teaching that humans are not superior to nature, but must coexist with nature. In an era of climate change and environmental crises, these ancient lessons urge us to rethink our relationship with Earth.

PANELLIST
parallel session 4
16 May, 16.30 hrs
conference day 1

Mr. Maarten Olthof | olthof@vajra.nl | +31 6 19400886
M.Sc. Biology/Ecology, founder of Vajra Academy

Ecologist Mr. Olthof is cordially inviting you
to visit the Vajra Academy on 18 May – 14.00-17.00 hrs

FREE ONLINE REGISTRATION

The Vajra Academy
Nepal's first green and eco-friendly school

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