

MOST URGENT

HH.Jayapataka Swami Ji
Guru- GBC and Mayapur Co-Director
ISKCON Mayapur
Chandrodaya Mandir
Sri Mayapur Dham, Nadia
West Bengal - 741313

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Via post and e-mail: jayapataka.swami@pamho.net,
jpsofficemanager@gmail.com; Acintya.Caitanya.JPS@pamho.net,
info@mayapur.com

Re: Request for ISKCON Mayapur to use realistic mechanical elephants for rituals and other ceremonies to ensure the safety of elephants and humans

Dear Swami ji:

I am writing from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India deeply saddened by the recent disturbing incident at ISKCON Mayapur in West Bengal, in which an elephant named Bishnupriya turned violent and killed a mahout. The media reported that Bishnupriya is chained, kept in an enclosure, used for rituals, and carries people on her back. All these things are completely unnatural – and therefore often anxiety-inducing – for the animal. Elephants are known to lash out after becoming frustrated by the enslavement of captivity.

To avoid further risk to human life, we request that you encourage ISKCON Mayapur to use lifelike mechanical elephants instead of real ones. A mechanical elephant – which can shake its head, move its ears, swish its tail, and lift its trunk – would help the temple ensure human safety while providing a humane way to conduct rituals. The only costs involved in maintaining the “elephant” would be for electricity and for staff to accompany it during public interactions.

Pictures of the proposed mechanical elephant are enclosed as **Annexure 1**. PETA India has already donated three life-size mechanical elephants – Irinjadappilly Raman (**Annexure 2**) to the Irinjadappilly Sree Krishna Temple in Thrissur and Mahadevan (**Annexure 3**) to the Thrikkayil Mahadeva Temple in Kochi and Shiva to Sri Veerasimhasana Mahasamsthana Mutt in Mysuru (**Annexure 4**) – in recognition of both temples’ decision never to own or hire live elephants. PETA India would be pleased to discuss donating mechanical elephants to ISKCON temples that wish to replace the use of animals. Irinjadappilly Raman, Mahadevan, and Shiva are now used to conduct ceremonies at these temples in a safe and cruelty-free manner, helping real elephants stay with their families in the jungle. These temples also rent out mechanical elephants for rituals, wedding processions, and other occasions.

Affiliates:

- PETA Asia
- PETA Australia
- PETA Foundation (UK)
- PETA France
- PETA Germany
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA US

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Elephants are highly intelligent, active, and social animals, and captivity denies them the vital activities and interactions that are important to their health and happiness. These activities and interactions include foraging for food, being on the move for various reasons (including for the prevention of foot and leg problems), taking dust baths, swimming, and – most importantly – socialising with their families and other elephants in accordance with their nature.

The frustration of captivity leads many elephants to develop and display abnormal behaviour. At their wits' end, frustrated elephants often lash out, which may appear sudden to us but is an outcome of their frustration with being denied a more natural life. According to figures compiled by the Heritage Animal Task Force, captive elephants killed 526 people in Kerala in a 15-year period.

We understand that ISKCON Mayapur is duty-bound to ensure the health and safety of devotees and other humans and to protect the welfare of elephants, as we Hindus worship Lord Ganesha. Because of the high risk to human health and safety – and for the sake of elephants' well-being – PETA India requests that you encourage ISKCON Mayapur to introduce mechanical elephants in rituals and processions and to relinquish both elephants Bishnupriya and Lakshmipriya to a sanctuary – such as the Radhe Krishna Temple Elephant Welfare Trust or Wildlife SOS – where the animals can live chain-free and recover from their captivity-induced mental trauma.

I can be contacted on 9910397382 or at KhushbooG@petaindia.org.

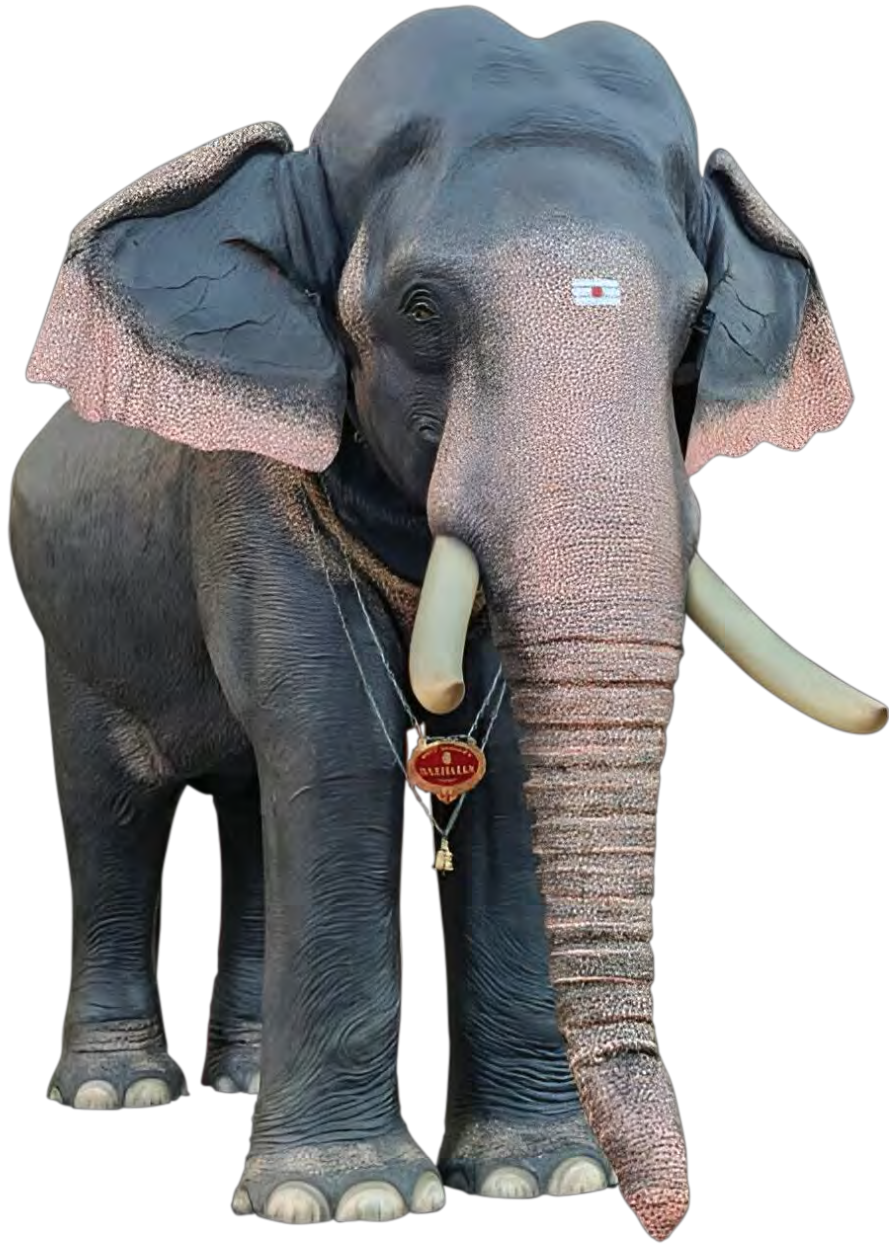
I look forward to your reply. Thank you for your attention.

Kind regards,



Khushboo Gupta
Director of Advocacy Projects
PETA India

Annexure 1 - Proposed mechanical elephant.



Annexure 2 - Raman donated to Irinjadappilly Sree Krishna Temple in Thrissur.



Annexure 3 - Mahadevan donated to the Thrikkayil Mahadeva Temple in Kochi.



Annexure 3 - Shiva donated to the Suttur Math near Mysore in Karnataka.

