

What are Temple Elephants?

Temple Elephants are forced to live most of their lives chained up, often alone, as living displays of fortune, prestige, or good luck. During the festival season, these “Gods in Chains” endure chaotic religious processions that often last for days without ceasing, during which many are deprived of food, water, and sleep.

What’s the Problem?

Without having their most basic and humane needs met, a temple elephant’s real life isn’t anything like the revered stories handed down through generations of myth, and they suffer in the name of historical practices.

Ganga spends the majority of her life chained alone at the Gangaramaya Temple in Colombo, Sri Lanka. When not at the temple, she endures crowded parades, chaotic festivals and stressful processions.

Why are the letters for Ganga?

Ganga symbolizes the plight of temple elephants everywhere, and Two Million Letters for Ganga is really two million voices for them all. We’re starting with her specifically because the moment we met her we made her a promise: that we would never turn away until her suffering ceased.

A Sacred Sanctuary is our wish for the future and immediate Compassionate Care our call for the present—for Ganga, and all captive elephants around the world.

Who are the letters going to?

Two million letters, 1000 at a time, will be hand-delivered to the monks of the temple where Ganga is chained. The electronic versions of each letter will be sent to Sri Lanka’s President and to the Deputy Minister of Tourism and Development.

Why not a petition?

In today’s virtual world, handwritten letters – even photos of original handwritten letters– are a powerful physical presence too big to be ignored. It may seem silly to take a picture of your handwritten letter instead of simply signing a petition, but in many places and temples specifically, petitions and form letters never make it to the intended recipient.

What are we asking for?

- **Freedom from hunger and thirst:** access to fresh water and balanced diet
- **Freedom from discomfort:** living in an environment with appropriate shelter, mental/physical stimulation, and privacy
- **Freedom from pain, injury or disease:** access to professional medical care while working to minimize injury and disease
- **Freedom from fear and distress:** working to reduce stress, distress, and to minimize mental suffering
- **Freedom to express normal behavior:** providing sufficient space and terrain, and the company of other elephants

What is the History of the Five Freedoms?

What we’re asking for Ganga are known as the “Five Freedoms for Animals in Captivity”. Used in animal welfare science, in advocacy, and for policy-making tools, these are such basic requirements it’s sometimes hard to believe we have to rally for such needs to be met.

What about a Sanctuary?

You can absolutely encourage the creation of a sanctuary in your letter. Our vision and dream is that no elephant be held captive in a temple, and that all elephants currently in temples be living in excellent sanctuaries. As much as we wish this could happen overnight, there are many pieces of the historical, cultural, political, and financial puzzles that have to be in place, not to mention actually creating sanctuaries where the elephants can go. It is a beautiful vision and a powerful dream we work toward every single day.

Where are they printed?

Letters will be sent electronically to be printed in the city where Ganga lives, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Instead of raising money to pay for postage, we’ll work with small local print shops near Ganga who are willing to help turn the tide.

How can I help pay for printing and delivery?

Please consider making a quick donation in any amount to help cover the cost of printing 2 million letters! Your offering is tax deductible, and is safely processed through our secure site.

www.2MillionLettersForGanga.com