

# ASHRAM

## Your Own Spiritual Retreat

The Ashram has its roots in India and Hinduism. Traditionally, it has been a place to go to seek discipline through reflecting, studying, and training. Today, the Ashram concept can be adapted within any culture. It is here that you get in touch with your interior self and matters of truth; life without illusion; profound humanness; or social consciousness. Meditation, contemplation, prayer, or study can be practiced, as well as corporate dialogue aimed at increased awareness, skill development, or action planning. The Ashram can be a place that enables a sharper focus on themes of social responsibility. For example, issues such as unconditional love, forgiveness, non-violence, suffering, and wealth might be explored. Simply put, the Ashram is a spiritual retreat center where you go to help shape your life journey. Below you will find the architectural pieces to use in designing an Ashram for individual or family use, or for sharing with friends and colleagues.

### External Considerations

**Space** — Choose a room or place adequate to accommodate the other design features. When you enter this space, you feel something unique and distinctive.

**Furnishings** — Select a few chairs, tables, audio/video equipment, plants, rug or mat as options. Keep it simple.

**Light** — Experiment with natural and indirect light; and brighter versus lower light levels. Set the mood you want.

**Color** — Include bright, cheerful, warm, or cool colors to stir the senses. Use white to create a clean, pure look.

**Texture** — Create a sense of contrast using multi-dimensional shapes. Objects may be rough, soft, hard, or smooth to the touch. Let texture bring harmony to your surroundings.

**Sound** — Introduce soothing background sounds from environmental, instrumental, new age, and global music. No sound at all can be powerful.

**Smell** — Invite aromas of pine, jasmine, seasonal cut flowers, or the subtle use of incense to create a fresh, clean smell that stimulates the senses.

**Decor** — Decorate with centerpieces, sculpture, wall art, photos, and symbols. Profound verbal sayings bring focus to the theme and mission of your Ashram.

### Internal Considerations

**Library** — Read books, articles, or newspaper clippings featuring "voices" that provoke a higher consciousness and awareness.



**Audio/video** — Be open to documentaries, biographies, instructional, or training audio and video of provocative themes.

**Education** — Learn as a life-long process. Include methods of continuous education, and creative discovery.

**Dialogue** — Discuss current issues, plans for the future, and cares of mind, body, heart, and spirit with friends, colleagues, and others.

**Meditation** — Learn from the voices of all creation. Talk to the

sages, priests, teachers, leaders, friends, and mentors who manifest wisdom.

**Contemplation** — Get in touch with yourself by focusing on the mystery, the unknown, transformation, re-creation, luminous change, and awe-filled possibility.

**Prayer** — Invoke a prelude to action. Decide what is needed or what has never been done before for yourself, for another, or for the world.

**Silence** — Create a quiet and peaceful mood of serenity. Block out any noise which would distract from your purpose of being in the Ashram.

*Whether your Ashram is more mystical, or more secular, you are invited to create a space that will nurture your most inner self—a self that is special and unrepeatable.*

*Grace is yours and Peace.*

Vance Engleman, December 1995





Spirit—a feeling of goodness in oneself, others, and all living things. Not a naive nor simplistic sense of goodness, but a deep and intrinsic valuing for the gift of life. This comes from conquering the darker urges which are often abusive and violent. A spirit person lives out of a higher consciousness of what is good, right, or appropriate. A *spirit infusion* is needed when you don't like yourself; you no longer celebrate your blessings; you lose respect for others; you do mean acts; you are out of focus. These are all symptoms of an emptiness within in search of spirit. As the *spirit infused* person...

**I AM THE TRUE WARRIOR.** I choose to gain mastery of the demons within, and live out of a higher consciousness of good. Inner demons, such as anger, greed, jealousy, maliciousness, will be subdued by tenderness, kindness, respect, truth—a bravery that transforms fear into fearlessness. This is the life of a true warrior.

**I AM WORTHY.** I will sing without ceasing, "I am worthy, I am significant, and I will seek out relationships that honor my inherent worth." Sing it again, and again. Link up with those who will never let you forget who you are.

**I AM THE FOCUSED ONE.** I pause, reflect, meditate, pray, and study on matters that are important. I will be proactive about my personal life mission, values, daily cares, challenges, opportunities. As the meditative one I will seek to subdue negative destructive forces with images of what is possible.

**I AM THE SECULAR SACRED.** I have a custodial responsibility for all the creative forces that nurture and sustain life. These life forces are fragile and require thoughtful care. Together we must detoxify the land, water, and air. The rain forests, ozone layer, oceans, water tables, soil, are all here for a purpose—without these no life can prevail.

**I AM SOMEONE'S HERO.** I pledge to be a role model to someone, and do so at every beckoned opportunity. This is how we all learn. No magic here. Each of us reflects to a large degree the impact, or lack of impact, from positive human interventions which *guarantee* that we are special, and we will make it.

**I AM HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS.** My personal and collaborative efforts will seek to generate real hope for the dispossessed, abandoned, forgotten. They are without leverage to make their situation better. Whether it be nourishment, health care, or employment those of us with resources must lead the hopeless to self sufficiency and dignity.

**I AM FULL OF JOY.** One must never postpone joy. We join with others to dance, celebrate, and name our blessings. I will do whatever it takes to blend laughter, adventure, and fun into my daily regimen. I am eternally grateful for the gifts of time, talent, and a network of family, friends, colleagues. I will celebrate these gifts often, and with great zest.

**I AM SPIRIT CONNECTED.** My life is unequivocally connected to all that is. I have a relationship with my inner self; my family; my friends; all humankind; the animals, and environment; to the mystery of the universe, and infinity. I am connected to a spirit power without boundaries that sustains, and reclaims every precious form of life from birth to death. It is all good.

In this spirit-starved time we all need an infusion of spirit. We need the kind of interior massage that heals, nurtures, and prepares us to do good things with our lives. Select one or more of these eight spirit-filled scenarios and make them happen. You will like yourself better, and others will admire your decision to make a positive impact in peoples' lives, and give the world a promise for a more sustainable future.