

Sacred rituals, sustainable choices: Demand for clean and ethical pooja products poised for strong growth

TG and AP with their deep-rooted tradition of elaborate temple rituals and ceremonies present ideal conditions for our growth, says Kalyanamm founder Nidhi Sabbarwal

SANTOSH PATNAIK

How do you see the demand for eco-friendly incense and pooja essentials evolving in India's wellness and life-style sectors?

The use of environment-friendly incense and pooja essentials in India is increasing significantly. This shift is noticed because of awareness and a high prioritisation of health and wellness. The desire for more natural, organic, and chemical-free products that integrate more sustainable living behaviors is pushing customers towards finding better alternatives. Incense and pooja materials are also moving away from purely religious practices to daily well-being rituals. There have been some recent developments in charcoal-free products and ethical sourcing. This trend is supported by an increase in direct-to-consumer and e-commerce brands, which make the products easily available.

What are the key factors driving consumers to switch from synthetic incense to natural, sustainable alternatives?

More consumers are waking up to the environmental costs of synthetic varieties of incense that are primarily made of artificial fragrance and chemical binders. Along with that, consumers are influenced by a growing respect for authentic, cultural factors. Natural incense provides a purer, healthier, and more authentic sense of ritual. The social empowerment, sacred provenance, ethical sourcing, and product story all provide unparalleled emotional value. Since sustainability is both an environmental and spiritual decision for consumers, they are trying to reconcile their sustainable awareness and spirituality.

How does Kalyanamm incorporate sustainability into its holy waste recycling process?

Sustainability with Kalyanamm begins with temples. We collect ritual flower waste respectfully without causing any harm to spiritual sentiments and transform it into green products by low-energy means. From manual sorting to natural binding and rolling, the entire process is designed to lower the carbon footprint. Also, by creating circular value from ritual waste, landfill burden and water pollution are reduced to a minimum.

What steps is the company taking to improve the accessibility and affordability of eco-friendly incense products across India?

Affordability and accessibility remain at the forefront of our goal to make sustainable devotion inclusive. Kalyanamm combines localised production, community

Kalyanamm Holy Waste Recycling Pvt. Ltd. is a Noida-based eco-friendly startup established by Nidhi Sabbarwal, who is addressing temple waste with a novel floral recycling initiative. Kalyanamm blends spirituality and sustainability by recycling holy waste into organic, eco-friendly products. The product line of Kalyanamm currently includes incense sticks, dhoop sticks and cones, and havan cups in six natural fragrances: Tea Tree, Tulsi, Sandalwood, Indian Rose, Jasmine, and Lavender. The brand is a D2C company, and its products are easily available on Amazon, Flipkart, and website as well, to appeal to the eco-friendly consumer looking for quality products with ease.



Nidhi Sabbarwal

Nidhi is a visionary entrepreneur who exemplifies a balance between purpose and innovation in her leadership style. She has developed an approach to entrepreneurship that prioritises the well-being of the environment for generations while simultaneously

assuring sustained growth with an ethical and conscious focus. Nidhi's journey is a model for aspiring entrepreneurs today, demonstrating what can happen when you combine tradition and sustainability for impact, resulting in positive change for communities and the planet. In an exclusive interview to *Bizz Buzz* Nidhi said Kalyanamm is a socially conscious brand that presents itself as a catalyst for women's empowerment and sustainable living. In the coming times, Kalyanamm aims to diversify its range of fragrances for havan cups, add new products to its range, build its offline presence, and enter international markets, with its quest to blend tradition, spirituality, and sustainability

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ity, and conscious consumerism. As more spiritual devotees embrace sustainability, the demand for clean, ethical pooja products is set to grow significantly.

engagements, and lean operations to minimise costs while maximising quality. We are also ramping up distribution in tier-2 and tier-3 cities, and especially in temple towns. Further, we are using digital platforms to connect to larger audiences. Working closely with self-help groups and local artisans, we are creating a decentralised model that is economically viable at every level. Our goal is that ecologically sustainable practices are not regarded as luxury alternatives but basic essentials, available in every Indian home practising ritual devotion.

Are there any recent innovations or new product developments in your incense and pooja essentials range that you are particularly excited about?

We are excited to launch two



new fragrances in our highly in-demand havan cups category, in Oudh and Clove, to elevate the spiritual experience with their natural and uplifting aromas.

What are the biggest challenges facing eco-friendly and sustainable incense brands in India?

The biggest challenge is how to balance scale with sustainability. Sustainable brands normally experience higher costs of production, diversified sourcing, and low con-

sumer awareness.

How is Kalyanamm navigating supply chain issues, raw material sourcing from temples, and scaling production while maintaining quality?

We have built significant relationships with temple management committees to source floral waste. For quality preservation, each process, right from collection through drying, grinding, and product creation, is strictly regulated by skilled female artisans. The system encourages rural livelihood and ecologically lowers the impact. Technology enables tracking, and grassroots involvement creates a sense of belonging. Scaling with us is not only about size; it's about making our impact more significant, staying true to values, and turning every product into a sign of sacred sustainability.

Does Kalyanamm have any expansion plans, new product categories, or plans for global markets in the coming years?

Kalyanamm is dedicated to continuing to grow and deepen our global footprint while continuing to adhere to our core values of sustainability, heritage, and social responsibility. We are already present in international markets such as Canada, the US, and Mexico, and we're seeing growing interest in our eco-friendly pooja products.

How do you see the incense and sustainable pooja essentials industry evolving over the next 5-10 years, and what role will Kalyanamm play in shaping that future?

The next ten years will see more integration of sustainability, spir-

How is the market in South India, with particular reference to Telangana & Andhra Pradesh?

Telangana and Andhra Pradesh present ideal conditions for our growth, given the region's deep-rooted tradition of elaborate temple rituals and ceremonies. South Indian devotional practices often involve extensive use of flowers, resulting in a significant volume of sacred floral waste. This cultural richness aligns seamlessly with our mission of dignified recycling. The consistent demand for ritual offerings ensures a steady supply chain for our raw materials. For Kalyanamm, South India is not just a geographical market but is a core contributor to our journey to transform sacred waste into sustainable spiritual solutions.

Apple sees strong demand for ‘Made in India’ iPhone 17

THE demand for Apple's new iPhone 17 series is rising fast in India, with industry sources saying pre-orders have been stronger than last year. The surge comes at a time when Apple has been steadily increasing its "Made in India" push, expanding both local manufacturing and retail presence in the country.

Pre-orders for the iPhone 17 and iPhone 17 Pro, which opened on September 12, have seen high interest across Apple's online store, its retail outlets in Mumbai, Delhi, Pune and Bengaluru. Sources said Apple's latest model has managed to create a strong buzz among Indian consumers, with the new iPhone 17 Air also attracting attention for its titanium design that is light, sleek, and durable.

Apple is betting big on India, not just as a market but also as a manufacturing hub. The company has been expanding its retail network to meet growing demand. Earlier this month, it added two new stores in Bengaluru and Pune, timed just before the iPhone 17 launch.



Apple first entered India's retail space in April 2023 with its flagship Mumbai store at Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC), followed by Apple Saket in Delhi. Together, the two stores clocked around Rs 800 crore in revenue in their debut year, making them Apple's top-performing outlets globally.

What stood out was that nearly 60 per cent of this revenue came from the smaller Saket store -- showing the strength of Apple's

growing Indian consumer base. This was despite the company already having a large network of premium resellers and strong online partnerships with Flipkart and Amazon.

The iPhone 17 lineup starts at Rs 82,900 for the base 256 GB model. The new iPhone Air, designed as a slimmer and more premium version, is priced at Rs 1,19,900. The iPhone 17 Pro begins at Rs 1,34,900, while the top-end iPhone 17 Pro Max (256GB) costs

Rs 1,49,900.

This year's launch also marks Apple's first upward revision in entry-level pricing since the iPhone 12 series in 2020. However, the higher price comes with more storage.

The base iPhone 17 now offers 256GB, double the 128GB that came with the iPhone 16. On a storage-to-storage comparison, the iPhone 17 is actually Rs 7,000 cheaper than the iPhone 16's 256GB variant at launch.

When robots are integrated into household spaces, they acquire emotional value

ZHAO ZHAO

SOCIAL companion robots are no longer just science fiction. In classrooms, libraries and homes, these small machines are designed to read stories, play games or offer comfort to children. They promise to support learning and companionship, yet their role in family life often extends beyond their original purpose.

In our recent study of families in Canada and the United States, we found that even after a children's reading robot "retired" or was no longer in active and regular use, most households chose to keep it — treating it less like a gadget and more like a member of the family. Luka is a small, owl-shaped reading robot, designed to scan and read picture books aloud, making storytime more engaging for young children.

In 2021, my colleague Rhonda McEwen and I set out to explore how 20 families used Luka. We wanted to study not just how families used Luka initially, but how that relationship was built and maintained over time, and what Luka came to mean in the household. Our earlier work laid the foundation for this by showing how families used Luka in daily life and how the bond grew over the first months of use.

When we returned in 2025 to follow up with 19 of those families, we were surprised by what we found. Eighteen households had chosen to keep Luka, even though its reading function was no longer useful to their now-older children. The robot lingered not because it worked better than before, but because it had become meaningful.

A deep, emotional connection

Children often spoke about Luka in affectionate, human-like terms. One called it "my little brother." Another described it as their "only pet." These weren't just throwaway remarks — they reflected the deep emotional place the robot had taken in their everyday lives. Because Luka had been present during important family rituals like bedtime reading, children remembered it as a companion. Parents shared similar feelings. Several explained that Luka felt like "part of our history." For them, the robot had become a symbol of their children's early years, something they could not imagine discarding.

One family even held a small "retirement ceremony" before passing Luka on to a younger cousin, acknowledging



When technologies enter family life, especially around emotionally significant moments like storytime, they can become part of the household in lasting ways. Our research findings also have important implications for design. Should robots come with an end-of-life plan that recognises their emotional value? Should companies design with the expectation that some products will be cherished and repurposed, not just discarded and replaced?

its role in their household. Other families found new, practical uses. Luka was repurposed as a music player, a night light or a display item on a bookshelf next to other keepsakes.

Parents admitted they continued to charge it because it felt like "taking care of" the robot. The device had long outlived its original purpose, yet families found ways to integrate it into daily routines.

'Domesticating' technologies

The way participants treated Luka challenges how we usually think about technology, which is that gadgets are disposable. A new phone replaces an old one, toys break and get thrown away and laptops end up in e-waste bins. But when technologies enter family life, especially around emotionally significant moments like storytime, they can become part of the household in lasting ways.

Our research findings also have important implications for design. Should robots come with an end-of-life plan that recognises their emotional value? Should companies design with the expectation that some products will be cherished and repurposed, not just discarded and replaced?

There are environmental dimensions, too. If families hold on to robots because of attachment, fewer may end up in landfills; this complicates how we think about sustainability and recycling when devices are treated more like keepsakes than tools that may outlive their usefulness. Scholars who study human-computer interaction often use the term "domestication" to describe how technologies become embedded in everyday routines and meanings.

More than machines

Our study extends that idea to what happens when technology retires. Luka was no longer useful in the conventional sense, but families still made space for it emotionally, symbolically and practically. Many of us keep objects for sentimental reasons, long after they have served their original purpose. Luka shows us that robots can become more than machines. Technology is often framed as fast-moving and disposable. But sometimes, as these families revealed, it lingers. A retired robot can stay in the household because it matters.

(Author is from University of Guelph)

No ITC reversal needed on post-sale discounts: CBIC

THE Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has issued a clarification on how secondary or post-sale discounts will be treated under the Goods and Services Tax (GST). The move comes after several representations were received seeking clarity on whether such discounts affect tax liability and Input Tax Credit (ITC).

According to the circular, CBIC said that when a supplier issues financial or commercial credit notes for discounts, the recipient will still be eligible to claim full ITC. "This is because such credit notes do not reduce the original transaction value or the tax liability charged on the supply. Therefore, businesses receiving goods at a discounted rate will not have to

reverse their ITC," CBIC added.

The circular also clarified that post-sale discounts given by manufacturers to dealers should not be treated as additional consideration for the dealer's supply of goods to the end customer.

CBIC explained that the relationship between manufacturers and dealers operates on a principal-to-principal basis, and such discounts are generally meant to push sales through competitive pricing. However, the clarification noted that where a manufacturer has an agreement with an end customer to supply goods at a discounted price, and provides credit notes to the dealer for this purpose, such discounts will be considered part of the overall consideration.

"In these cases, the discount is seen as an inducement for supplying goods at a lower price," as per the circular.

The circular further explained that post-sale discounts offered to dealers should not be treated as payment for promotional services.

Dealers often carry out promotional activities that benefit their own sales, and therefore such discounts simply reduce the sale price of goods. But if dealers are explicitly contracted to carry out activities like advertising, co-branding, or special sales campaigns, GST will apply on such services separately.

The CBIC has asked tax authorities to publicise these clarifications to ensure uniformity in the application of GST law across the country.