



Dear Friends,

Summer at the Ashram is in full swing with fullness overflowing in all corners. Friends throughout the country (and world) are coming for visits and personal retreats. The garden is already so plentiful, we have started availing our excess to others in the local community. Tiwariji, beloved music teacher from Varanasi, India, is here sharing his gifts and leading lively chanting every evening.

But by far the highlight of the past two months was demolishing our old barn and building a new one. Land that hadn't breathed for 40 years now is a blank slate for something beautiful to be created. Enclosed are some photos of summer in Sonoma.

Babaji sends his love and blessings to you.

Namasté,
Shivani

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eNewsletter
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Top Left: Old barn

Top Right: Site where old barn stood, with dhuni, lotus temple and pond in background. Everyone who steps foot in the Ashram grounds relates how open and expansive the land feels without the old dilapidated structure — our 2 1/3 acre property feels much bigger now.

Left: The new 20x40 barn sits majestically along the eastern property line and will provide sufficient storage as well as work space for future projects. In the coming weeks, we'll be painting, staining, and organizing its contents. If you're talented in such things, we welcome your participation.

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Nourishing ourselves and others with healthy, home grown food is always a focus for the Ashram. We converted the entire organic garden to raised beds to prevent gophers, amended the soil, tended seedlings in our greenhouse, and now are overjoyed by the results. Every morning after meditation, a group of residents and guests harvest what's needed for the day and always pick a little extra to send home with local friends. The nourishment gained from this spectacular garden goes beyond satisfying our bellies. Gardening is a wonderful metaphor for spiritual practice—daily weeding, watering and beautifying the grounds is like making constant effort to become better human beings. Gardening provides a wonderful stage for practicing mindfulness.



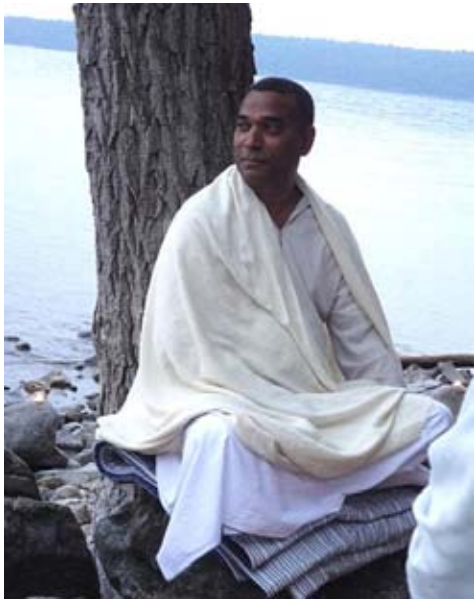
It's been a joy to welcome so many new friends to the Ashram this season. Seeing others benefitting from what the Ashram offers makes it all so meaningful.



We harvested all the garlic that was growing since last fall, and braided it for safe keeping and gradual use throughout the coming months

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Babaji visits Shakti Yoga Center, Staten Island, NY



In June, Shakti Yoga Center on Staten Island, NY, invited Babaji to be in their midst for several days. The visit began with a silent art auction fundraiser for our Bal Ashram in Varanasi, India. Many local artists from the Shakti community donated their work for the event. It was a wonderful day at Shakti that brought the community together to support a worthy cause. The event was well attended by the yogis, and as Richard Humphrey related, it was all about developing a culture of philanthropy.

Following the art auction, Babaji gave satsang at the Center. This talk gave all the friends of Shakti a chance to be in Baba's presence once again before he was escorted to Essex, NY, for a weekend program designed especially for Shakti's yoga teachers and students.



The Essex weekend was another meaningful opportunity for the community to come together, listen to Babaji's teachings, practice meditation and yoga, and be nourished by Dean's healthy meals. Each participant had one-on-one time with Babaji as well as plenty of time with each other. The weekend ended with a full-moon havan "fire ceremony" on the banks of Lake Champlain. Each participant went home rejuvenated and inspired.



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Accomplishments and Aspirations

With the recent close of our fiscal year, we reflected on all that Sonoma Ashram Foundation accomplished over the past 12 months. The generosity of members and friends, combined with countless hours of *seva* (selfless service), is what makes it all possible. Here we share with you an expert from the [membership](#) report distributed at our annual meeting last week.

Sonoma Ashram

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PAST YEAR

We are pleased to report that over the past 12 months we've made major progress toward accomplishing virtually all goals we set for the year, including:

- Established Sonoma Ashram Foundation
- Produced two videos, *Fullness Overflowing & Bal Ashram*
- Started eNewsletter updates
- Initiated new programs:
 - Began Friday night satsangs with Babaji at the Ashram, which have proven very popular
 - Established monthly satsangs with Babaji in the local community (Sonoma and Cotati)
 - Babaji visited the East Coast three times
 - Established weekly meditation classes and monthly Indian cooking classes
 - Hosted yoga, health and music programs with visiting teachers
 - Began making brown bag lunches for distribution to local homeless and migrant workers
- Beautified Ashram grounds and structures
 - Nearing completion of a new barn after demolishing the old dilapidated one
 - Converted the entire organic garden to raised beds to prevent gophers from poaching our produce
 - Began amending the soil after each harvest and used newly donated greenhouse for cultivating seedlings
 - Started producing our own goat milk, yogurt and cheese
 - Nearly completed property-wide irrigation system
 - Upgraded gift shop
 - Improved personal retreat accommodations
 - Purchased used dump truck to replace old malfunctioning one
- Continued reducing mortgage principal

IN THE COMING YEAR, WE INTEND TO:

- Redesign entrance to meditation hall
- Complete new barn
- Create functional parking area
- Install two greywater tanks for irrigation
- Expand porch by main house
- Encourage more personal retreats at the Ashram
- Develop green master plan for the property that encompasses an appropriate temple and a Guru's complex to replace Babaji's aging, unhealthy modular home
- Offer more opportunities for local area residents to participate in the Ashram, and expand ways for those at a distance to stay connected
- Republish Oasis of Stillness and a few other books
- Continue reducing mortgage principal

India Service Projects

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PAST YEAR

- Brought Amrit Sagar Environmental Center to life:
 - Built mini-dairy with large barn to house 20 new cows (10 have already arrived)
 - Began producing organic milk, honey and vegetables toward self-sufficiency for Bal Ashram
 - Engaged the expertise of Benares Hindu University professor who volunteered to develop a strategic plan
- Started Project Shakti vocational training for local underprivileged women in sewing and food prep; began microfinancing program
- Drilled a new well for Bal Ashram
- Instituted computer education classes at Bal Ashram
- Gave away over 1000 eye exams and glasses to local residents through Vision Varanasi
- Added classroom to Anjali School, now serving more than 150 disadvantaged children

LOOKING AHEAD

- Continue to acquire land for Amrit Sagar, funds permitting
- Bring solar power to Amrit Sagar
- Expand the dairy with more cows
- Cultivate more organic vegetables and Ayurvedic herbs
- Enlist the support of business experts to coach the children in entrepreneurial skills
- Expand Project Shakti microfinancing program
- Identify markets in the west for handicrafts the women of Project Shakti create

Note from Varanasi, India

Rains have finally arrived to give a greatly needed break from the extreme heat. Bal Ashram children are back in school. The women of Project Shakti continue their training with enthusiasm and inspiration to better their lives. Anjali School's new session is underway with over 150 children enrolled. Amrit Sagar's dairy and organic vegetable ventures are thriving, and children love participating in it. Since the weather has improved, we'll be increasing the number of cows. Detailed report coming soon ...



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