



SRI SARVESHWARI SAMOOH, USA
SonoMa Ashram

News from Bal Ashram

Varanasi, 28 February 2009

Dear Friends,

I'd like share the good news of a very generous donation by a beloved friend of the Ashram that has allowed us to purchase two plots of land adjacent to the Bal Ashram compound. As soon as the deal was final, we started knocking down the brick walls and cleaning the grounds, and have brought in more than 30 huge truckloads of dirt. With last years amazing success and response to our new Anjali School, we will move the school here and add a few more classrooms and proper playground. Shifting of the school will also create a more peaceful and quiet environment for the Ashram.



New Land



Left: Amit and Suraj cleaning the bricks from the old wall.

This project is inspiring for all, staff and children alike. After school lets out, the children can't wait to change into their play clothes and join the team, participating in whatever way they can.



Teamwork of the children, helping with the bricks.

Samyak

Here is the new land after two weeks of effort—clean level, and ready for construction. Notice the beginnings of the classrooms in the upper left hand corner.



Nap Time: (left to right) Kashi, Bhanu, Bharat, Vijay



View of Bal Ashram from River Ganges. Along the river banks we are growing all kinds of vegetables which we harvest and use daily for meals. Beautiful beds of flowers and flat grassy areas create a peaceful place to sit by the Holy River.



The children's morning routine includes time for yoga and meditation. Here they are in the Ashram's meditation hall which overlooks the sunrise and River Ganges.

Our two new arrivals, **Vidya** and **Indra**, have been here for about 1 month now and are doing so well. They have become part of the Bal Ashram family, and are loved dearly by all.



Right: Santosh and Bhanu with Indra and his walker. He loves to be in it and his legs have become much stronger. When he arrived, he couldn't even crawl—now he moves around by himself and is almost able to stand on his own.

Left: Indra with Suraj, Samyak and Seema (the woman who has been caring for him).



Right: Taking a spin around the block: Vidya leading the way, with Kashi, Ravi and Suraj in the rear.



Top: Vidya surprised us all with her eagerness and ability to hand wash her clothes.



Vidya continues to look after Indra with utmost care—here she is sharing her water with him.



My little brother is learning to walk!



Babaji has traveled outside of the Ashram a number of times, giving talks to various groups of students.

Babaji addresses valedictory students - speaking on the topic of water conservation.



Babaji addresses students of Jalan Eco Park - speaking about cleanliness of inner and outer environments.



Finally, I leave you with some more good news—Bal Ashram has been nominated for the Rajiv Gandhi Award for excellence in social service. This award is given to only one organization in the entire country. A group of reporters visited Bal Ashram, interviewed and videotaped Babaji and many of the staff and volunteers.

Babaji sends his love and blessings to you.

Namasté,
Shivani



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