



# Namasté from Bal Ashram

Varanasi, India  
20 January 2010

Sonoma Ashram Foundation  
PO Box 950  
Sonoma, CA 95476  
[sonomaashram.org](http://sonomaashram.org)  
[info@sonomaashram.org](mailto:info@sonomaashram.org)

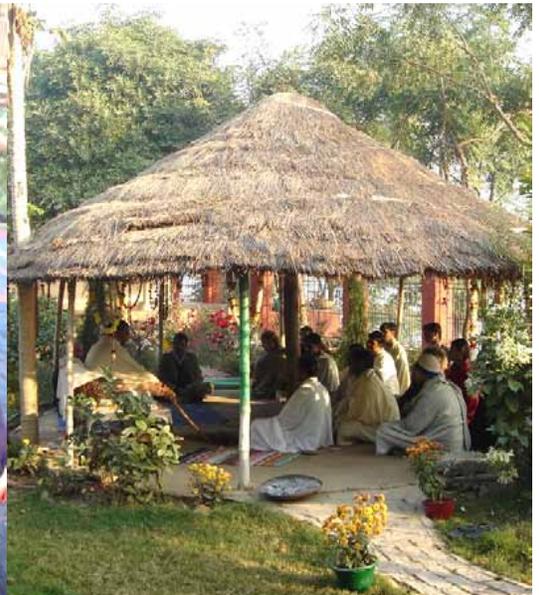
Dear Friends,  
Despite the severe cold here in Varanasi ever since the first of the year, we are continuing with the various projects in the compound, as well as across the river on our eco-center land. The children are

thriving, enjoying an extended holiday since schools are closed due to the inclement weather. Babaji sends you his love and blessings.

Namasté,

*Shivani*

[Please click here to help further this work](#)



*Babaji spends most of his day in the darshan hut receiving visitors, as well as finding time to be with children and staff.*

*We are drilling a new well thanks to Michael and Dorothy of Guilford, Connecticut.*



# Amrit Sagar Eco-Center: Progress Update

*Amrit Sagar is all about creating a model for best environmental practices, as well as sustainable farming. Although we have acquired only a small portion the total land area, we are moving ahead with a multi-phased master plan. Phase one will establish a small functioning center, with the goal to make Bal Ashram self-sufficient through products grown on site.*



Suraj and Deepak



Older children at work

*True to its name, Amrit Sagar, which means “Ocean of Nectar,” will be home to thousands of bees whose honey will be one of our first products. They’ll love the mustard already in bloom.*

## Bring in the pregnant cows

The process of self-sufficiency begins with cows. Rightly so, as in India, the cow is called Mother. Cows will provide us with milk, of course, but at the same time, we will be able to convert their dung into methane fuel for cooking and lighting and use excess waste to fertilize high quality organic vegetables.



*A pregnant cow doesn’t cost extra, so we’re planning to grow our population the natural way.*

## How can I help?

We are so glad you asked! To get the center to a point of producing income, we will require close to \$50,000 in seed money. Here are some ways to contribute towards our current needs:

[Please click here to make a donation](#)

• <b>Purchase 10 cows</b>	<b>\$900 each</b>
• <b>Construct a cow shed</b> This two-story structure will house cows on the first floor, store cow feed on the second and provide shelter for gathering and sleeping on the rooftop.	<b>\$15,000</b>
• <b>Install strong perimeter fencing</b> This will ensure safety from intruders (people and animals) and create a free-range pasture.	<b>\$5,000</b>
• <b>Plant 30 trees</b> We will place a plaque with your name or that of a loved one by your donated tree. The trees will line the road leading to the center.	<b>\$101/tree and its care</b>
• <b>Fund project manager and staff salaries</b>	<b>\$10,000/year</b>
• <b>Build bio-gas plant</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>

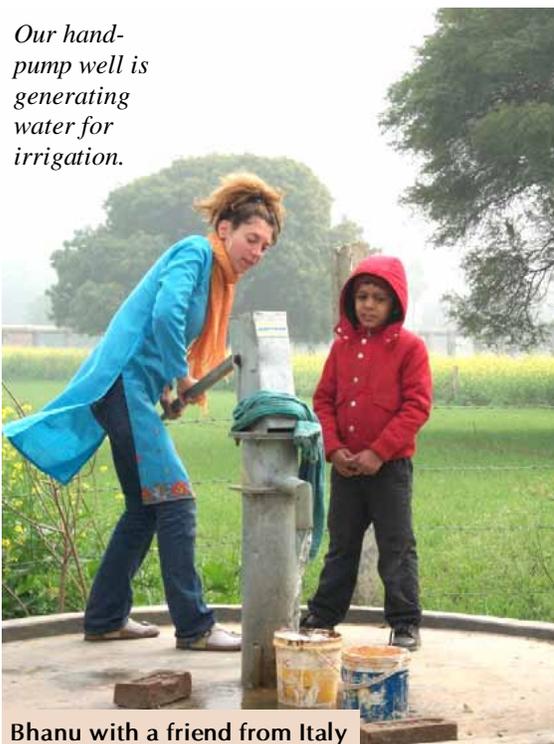


Sudhanshu

### Starting to produce

Milk and vegetables to feed more than two dozen growing children and staff at Bal Ashram total about \$8,000 per year. That will change as early as this summer when we expect to start offsetting our food costs with produce from Amrit Sagar, toward reaching self-sufficiency within two years.

*Our hand-pump well is generating water for irrigation.*



Bhanu with a friend from Italy

### BHU expert

Dr. Saket Kushwaha, professor and head of agricultural economics at Benares Hindu University (BHU), is very inspired by what we want to achieve at Amrit Sagar. He has volunteered to create a multi-phased master plan that draws on his experience with similar projects in Africa and South America. His department and students will actively participate in developing the Eco-Center.



Project manager Girish with Dr. Kushwaha



Shiva

Vishwanath

### Fullness overflowing

Our goal is to produce not only enough milk and vegetables to provide for Bal Ashram, but also to sell our surplus to the community. We intend to generate a revenue stream from a micro-business that the older children can run.

*Keeping a watchful eye on the premises will be Hira and Moti, two Great Danes recently donated by a well-wisher from BHU.*



Moti

Hira