

FRIENDS OF RAMANA'S GARDEN

6930 Carroll Ave, Suite 100

Takoma Park, MD 20912

www.friendsramanasgarden.org

November 14, 2008

Greetings, Friends,

Have you ever stood in the center of a circle of 60 children as they sang Happy Birthday to you at the top of their lungs? Last December I had that unique privilege at the end of one evening satsang with the children of Ramana's Garden in Laxman Jhula on the banks of the Ganges River in northern India. The bright eyes and guileless enthusiasm of the kids brought joy to my heart and tears to my eyes.

I was in India for a two-week yoga retreat at a modest resort, which just happened to be a three-minute walk from the front gate of Ramana's Garden. The proximity was no coincidence. It was my third visit to that beautiful corner of India since 2004. The last two were planned so that I could also visit the school and orphanage founded more than a decade ago by a remarkable American woman, Dr. Deva Dwabha – or Prabhavati, as she is better known.

You may have heard Prabhavati tell her own story during one of her annual tours to the West to raise critical funds, or during your own inspiring visit to Ramana's Garden. Or, you may have seen the video on our website created by The Annenberg Foundation, which provided modest, one-time support to Ramana's Garden this past year. Prabhavati's service arose from her own spiritual quest for the deepest truths of life, first sought in ashrams and at the feet of holy men and women. After years on this path, circumstances and her heart led her to a path of seva, selfless sacrifice. Touched by the simplicity and need of orphan or abandoned children with no other place to turn, she began taking them in and providing support and basic education. The results have been remarkable.

Today, more than ten years after opening its doors, Ramana's Garden is home to nearly 70 resident children. There are an additional 190 children from nearby impoverished families, many with a single parent, who come into school each day. This past July, the school expanded one more grade to 8th level and now there are nine classes from kindergarten through 8th level. Eleven paid professional teachers lead a curriculum of core classes, including Math, Science, English, and Hindi. The school has eight donated computers so that each child from 3rd level on can learn basic computer skills. Those kids who have grown past the grade levels at Ramana's Garden are doing very well in local high schools.

There is also a seamstress, teaching the girls how to make their own clothes, and a dance teacher, teaching both girls and boys classical Indian dance. The dance troupe is so accomplished that it has been invited to give regular performances at the Ananda Resort, a five-star hotel and spa high in the hills above neighboring Rishikesh. This past summer, a small troupe was sponsored to visit England where they danced for many, from poor schoolchildren like themselves to crowds at large festival. This was an experience that could hardly have been imagined for kids from their backgrounds. You can read more about this incredible trip and see photos of it on our website.

Whether dancing in a foreign land or being accepted in a film school in New Delhi – the recent good fortune of one of the boys – the children are constantly encouraged to dream large dreams. The education they receive is on par with that of private schools for children of the affluent, so their dreams are possible. Prabhavati fervently believes that some of Ramana's kids will have infinite possibilities in University, whether to be teachers, doctors, engineers, or pilots.

For those whose education will go no further, dreams for a better life are still possible. Everyone learns trades and skills which will allow them to earn a decent living. Through the Café at Ramana's Garden, they learn every aspect of the hospitality services, from

growing the organic foods, baking, cooking, serving, and food management. They also learn computer skills, jewelry making, stitching, and masonry.

Ramana's Garden receives no government support in India or elsewhere. All of the funds needed to operate and expand services come from the generous donations of people all over the world whose hearts have been touched by these children and by Prabhavati's dedication. Costs are rising. Energy costs alone have increased 350%, from 8,000 rupees per month to 28,000 rupees (nearly \$600) per month. Solar hot water heaters are on Prabhavati's wish list.

Many of you have been generous supporters of our U.S. charity, Friends of Ramana's Garden, Inc. in the past. As you review your plans for charitable giving at the end of 2008, please remember the children. A few dollars here goes a long way in Ramana's Garden.

How can you help?

There are two easy ways to make a donation:

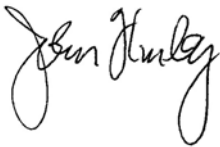
1. Mail a check to Friends of Ramana's Garden, Inc., at our address listed above.
2. Visit our website, www.friendsramanagarden.org. Click on "Make A Donation" to make a secure contribution through PayPal.

To make the holidays (or any gift-giving occasion) even more special, you may donate to Friends of Ramana's Garden, Inc. on behalf of a friend or loved one. We have free cards and envelopes to memorialize such a donation – please see the enclosed samples. The cards are intended to be mailed to those in whose name you are making the gift donation. These free cards are available at Willow Street Yoga Centers in Takoma Park and Silver Spring, MD. Or, to receive them by mail, just send an email inquiry through our website with (a) the number of cards and envelopes desired and

(b) your name and mailing address. They will be sent promptly, free of charge, by first class mail.

Because we are a totally volunteer organization and have structured things so that we have no monthly overhead, over 98% of donated funds go directly to support the children. As you know, Friends of Ramana's Garden is an IRS-approved 501(c)(3) organization, so your donations should be tax-deductible. All donors will receive a letter acknowledging their donation, which is a suitable receipt for claiming an IRS-approved donation on your income tax return.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Hurley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping tail.

John Hurley
President

Ramana's Garden Gift Cards

selection of card fronts



A Gift
to
Brighten
a Child's Day

1



A Gift
to Brighten
a Child's Day

2



A Gift
to Brighten
a Child's Day

3



A Gift to Brighten
a Child's Day

4



A Gift to
Brighten
a Child's Day

5



A Gift to
Brighten
a Child's Day

6



Friends of Ramana's Garden, Inc. is an IRS-approved 501(c)(3) charity. Your donation will help a very special group of kids in India, and will be lovingly used for housing, food, education, and medical care for these formerly homeless, destitute, or abused children. Through your kind generosity, these children may continue their studies and creating a positive future for themselves. Donations may be sent to: Friends of Ramana's Garden, Inc., 6930 Carroll Ave., Suite 100, Takoma Park, MD 20912, or made online at www.friendsramanagarden.org.

back of all cards



inside of all cards

(plus a blank page for your personal message)