

# Ramana's Garden Newsletter



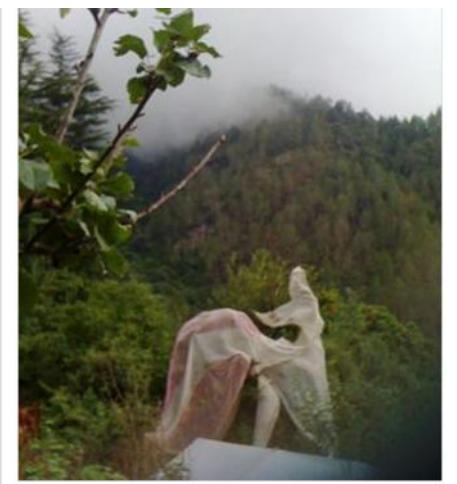
## *The Golden Summer of 2012*

The forest is shrouded in mist as our net phantom princess stands guard over the orchard. A cool breeze is starting to blow down from the snowy peaks turning the pumpkins in the fields orange and the sun kissed apples red on the trees. School bells ring again in the valley. The children's laughter still echoes in the now empty meadow where so many games were played... battles won and kingdoms lost.....



*Mandi, Krishna, Gagan and Ankita*

First came the fluffy white cabbage moths which were captured by the 100s for a toffee but not before they left us with 1000s of caterpillars to search and destroy. When their number crossed 900 in a day we realized we were greatly outnumbered and began to stitch a giant net to cover the whole garden...



*Net Phantom Princess*

Not all our battles were imaginary as we faced many real challenges up here as well.





Mission accomplished..Yeah!

Then came the wild boars who toppled our giant stone wall like Lego blocks and ate ½ our potatoes and broccoli... Dil brought up a couple of his chillum buddies, who armed with a transistor radio blaring Hip-Hop and plenty of pots and pans to bang began their nightly pig patrols sending us all into squeals of laughter as they paraded through the jungle scaring themselves more than the beasts.

### *Eat Your Heart Out Caterpillars*

Just when things were settling a bit 100s of monkeys fled the scorching heat of the plains for a Himalayan holiday. Little armies armed with sling shots and more energy and enthusiasm than the bandits kept them at bay while our crops and orchard flourished. Jamie Grant and Annika flew over from U.S.A. and Paulo rolled up from Brazil to complete the perfect cast for our Midsummer's Day Dream.

We finally surrendered the old king's bungalow back to the forest department, after many years of struggling against corruption to save our magical forest. Everything has its own time and season. It served us well for the past 9 years, providing a cozy home to over 800 visitors as well as summer camps for the kids.



*Commandos Mukul and Lucky*



*Jamie and Annika*



*"Mad-Man Paulo"*

Two years ago Neem Karoli Ashram was renovated and Siddhi Ma gave the children all the many doors, windows, and even the beautiful carved marble from the temple. We transformed this priceless gift into a lovely new meditation hall/dormitory, a new kitchen, and store room. We were privileged to inaugurate it with Tom and Charlie Knolles meditation group last April. This summer it was used as the perfect community hall and girls dorm. The boys were equally delighted with their new 5 star tent, where the



*Meditation Hall*



giggling never stopped...  
Creativity bloomed with the flowers and a play was written and performed to transport the audience to the dreaded Land of Me-Me-me-me for some playful teachings from Buddha.



*The Five Star Tent*

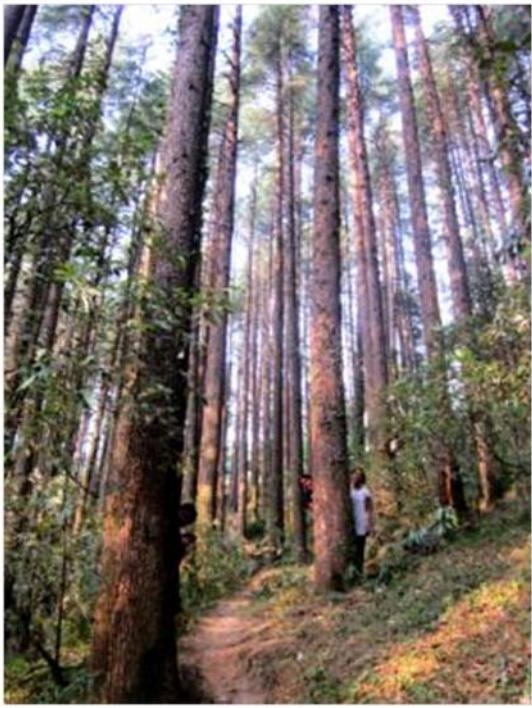
Then on what started out as a sunny Saturday the real danger struck.

Dil and all the others had gone down for supplies leaving me alone with the kids and a small staff. By noon huge winds came up carrying a raging forest fire 14 kilometers till by evening we were surrounded by flames on 3 sides. The Forest Dept. didn't send help and the existing 3 foresters declared it was too big to control and advised us to get out of the forest.

Gagan and I climbed up to the ridge above the fire to survey the situation. I didn't have my full strength back yet and went clamoring up on all 4's like a geriatric crab. We looked down on a sea of flames leaping from one tree to the next coming closer by the minute to our scared forest and home.

*The 'Me-Me-Me' Play:  
Devious King Oinak,  
Dare-Devil Jyoti and  
Saultry Safina (formerly Lalita)*

I sent Gagan ahead to go down and tell the others we had no chance but to try to get out. By the time I got down to the forest edge 4 of our ancient elders were already burning. This is the last and oldest, 300yr+, conifer forest left in our Himalayan range. I grabbed a broken branch and made a pathetic attempt to snuff the flames on the nearest old tree. Flames roared over my head sending me back with singed hair and no eyelashes. My heart was breaking.



### *Our Forest*

was quiet for a moment then the wind returned even stronger, but blowing the fire back onto itself.

I don't even really know what happened next. We were everywhere, beating, digging, throwing dirt...

I have an image of Babaloo, one of the "Pig Wallas", who from that moment holds a permanent position in Ramana's staff, with his shirt tied over his head like Lawrence of Arabia, literally leaping over the cliff into the flames using his jacket to beat them out.

And we did! How I don't know, but within 1 hr. the fire was under control and our beloved forest safe!

In the morning the winds came up again and we returned with all the kids to keep it under control. I assume you all can imagine how challenging it can be to fight forest fires with 5 yr. olds?

The Forest Dept. claimed "they" contained the fire with 30 men. Okay????

This precious forest we'd fought so hard over the years to save, even risking our lives, was going to disappear and maybe take us with it as I saw no way to get all of us, the kids, and the animals out in time. The fire was moving too fast. I collapsed sobbing in utter helplessness.

The others came and found me there raving like a mad woman. When I saw Gagan I suddenly remembered a few years ago when he suffered a serious O.C.D. Siddhi Ma gave him a mantra to Hannuman that healed him... She told him Hannuman was son of the wind and would always protect him.

"Do you remember your Hannuman mantra? Sing it!" I screamed at him.

"Now?" he asked, thinking I was really gone mad.

"Yes now! Everyone sit in a circle and chant!"

And as we sat there chanting suddenly the wind stopped. A deathly silence fell over the forest. Even the roar of the fire



*The Fire Brigade!*

*Mother Ganga's  
Blessings...*

*Right: Lokjon and Durga  
Below: Radhika, Sushila  
and Simmi*



Then came the rains...and more rain caused a lot of destruction upriver but we are grateful Mother Ganga only blessed us with a lot of wood to keep the home fires burning all winter...

A few days later the kids returned to Ramana's Garden to start school again.

23 study outside in private schools between 9-12 class this year. They all raised most of their

fees themselves this year working in the café, dancing, and making their fabulous jewelry.

Lokjon and Ramita are finally able to start toward their dreams off to college in Dehradun studying Micro-Biology...

So many thanks again to Dariane Pictet, Kuldip Singh, and Mr & Mrs Amel Al Aseeri for making it possible for our Miri Piri Academy kids: Indra, Krishna, and Gagan to complete their graduation this year.

Special thanks to Marie Badarani for never giving up on getting Sunita over to U.S.A. to do fundraising. She won a 4 yr. scholastic award scholarship that when it was due to be paid the Govt. said, "sorry the money is finished." So she flew to U.S. and raised her own

tuition...YEAH! She's back home, pockets full, ready to complete her college education starting again tomorrow.

Thanks to Marie France Lasry from FUNDACION ALMAYUDA, YouthVIP, Infinite Earth, Irina Kolbasina and Sandhano, my old Poona buddy, for helping Ramana's Garden School kids keep studying...

And a wonderful visit from Brandon Bays Journey Group...



*Lokjon and Ramita  
off to College*



*Sunita*



### Private School Students

*L-R; Back Row:* Krishna, Joyti, Surendra, Kalpana, Durga, Kulkit, Santoshi, Neesha, Bindia.

*Middle Row:* Moina, Prema, Harikala, Mandi, Naina, Saloni, Shivram, Sandana.

*Front Row:* Basanta, Narendra, Oinak, Neeraj

As many of you who visit us know, Ramana's Garden is *always* under construction. Each time I say, "O.K. it is finally finished." Someone makes it possible to make it even better. So out comes the "magic stick", our only architect, to draw another room in the dirt. This time the girls are getting a new study

hall/bedroom, the cows got a new "Cow Palace", and the chickens got their new "Chooks Grove", thanks to – Arjan Bakker family, Yogis for Peace, Off the Mat Into the World, Satya Jewelry, and SO many others who keep making these miracles materialize.

And they do just keep happening.....

Our struggle with the corrupt bureaucrats began 9 yrs. ago when they took away our Orchard Garden that had been awarded to us for Organic Agriculture and started spraying deadly pesticides everywhere. Nature fought back in fury. All their attempts at chemical cash crops were ravaged by wild boar, monkeys, bears, deer, parrots, landslides, floods, and fire.



### *Sukhandi Devi*

Finally they came to us and humbly said, "Take it back if you want it. We give up!"  
And take it back we have!

The whole mountain staff are camping up there to protect the huge bumper crop of pears, walnuts, and chestnuts that the trees who lay barren for all these years are now bending their branches heavy with fruit to the ground with. They are all in their pioneer element, cooking over open fires and tackling the army of parrots and an occasional bear bandit who want our yummy fruits. There is so much fruit. The kids are already having apples every night and will be able to do so all winter.

Don't miss our famous Apple Crumble in the Café. We have enough to sell some and from the profit we will renovate the old farmhouse so friends can once again come visit us in paradise.

Your visits make such a difference. It means a lot to the kids when someone comes halfway around the world to share with them here.

~ *Some Recent Miracle Workers* ~



*Safina and Tamara*

*Tamara* from Spain, coming back soon to take over the reins so I can finally have time to finish my book...

*Maria Gonzalez* came from Spain bringing her Carnival Spirit...



*Tamara, Kelly, Maria and Esmarelda*

...created beautiful mosaics and the “*Dare To Be Beautiful Parlor*”...



*Even if it's too scary...*

*Bill Jenkins* came back bringing many wonderful instruments and the gift of music...



*Shanky*



*Bill Jenkins*



*Durga and Yamuna*

*Jamon* came from OZ to teach us all the ins and outs of permaculture in our Vegi gardens.

*Premal and Miten* joined *Snatan Kaur* for their first concert ever together here in Ramana's Garden to celebrate the opening of our Meditation Center here in the Garden. One of the most beautiful evenings ever, a longtime dream fulfilled. Since the first brick was laid here 15 yrs ago, I've been saying



*Miten, Premal and Snatan Kaur*



*Jamon*

we will open a meditation center here "soon" where all the Masters who shed their light on our path can be honored.

*Krishna Das* Blessed our Christmas by giving the kids a concert:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4NWCzxc5Qw>

.....And so many other precious friends who brought joy and laughter into our lives this year... Many Thanks to all of you who have walked this path with me through the years...

~ New Arrivals ~



*Monica and Radhika*



*Master Bieber Babbit Rabbit*

Recently Descended Master's teachings:

*"Never stop searching for a way out of your cage; no matter how green the grass is inside".*

*"All comfort zones are relative".*



*"Every step you take should be a prayer. And if every step you take is a prayer, then you will always be walking on sacred ground".*

Love Prabhavati Dwabha and All Ramana's Kids