



SONOMA ASHRAM

Good News

Quarterly updates about our charitable initiatives in Varanasi, India



Food, Blankets and TLC

Thanks to our seva outreach program, local underserved communities, nearby villages and individuals in need are receiving regular meals, blankets for the cold damp nights and the assurance that someone cares.

Every Saturday morning, the women of Project Shakti and the young men of Bal Ashram prepare huge vats of khichari (lentils, rice and veggies). Later, volunteers dish out generous helpings of perhaps the only meal these men, women and children will have all day.

During Varanasi's winter, our teams find those shivering in the cold and offer them the comfort of a warm blanket. Once a month, they visit rural villages with medical help.

◀ *Children at a migrant camp, which the program has been serving since 2019, are ready to enjoy a healthy meal.*



More than 20% of India's population subsists on less than \$1.90 a day. A simple meal and a heavy blanket are a comfort that many are unable to provide for themselves.

◀ *Volunteers distribute blankets to homeless men who sleep in doorways.*



The program delivers about 600 blankets a month to people in local villages.

◀ *Special khichari with yogurt raita, chutney and salad brings joy during a holiday.*



Fullness Overflowing

It all began in November 2019 during Bal Ashram's annual observance of the Maha Samadhi of Aghoreshwar Bhagwan Ram, which honors the day he left his body. Included in that celebration was a community service project to prepare and distribute a hot meal to migrants living nearby. Every year, they come from the villages for seasonal work in the city, living under tarps in abandoned pipes along the Ganges, just down the street from Bal Ashram.

That first day, we went through two vats of khichari. Today, thanks to the heartfelt desire and hard work of our volunteer team, we are serving almost 200 meals every week to people in need.

In India, 63% of the population lives below the World Bank poverty line, and 234 million are undernourished, according to the Global Hunger Index.

The scope of the program's mission changed and expanded during the Covid lockdown. Open gatherings ceased. We brought dal, rice, oils, flour, potatoes and other basics to people who lost their livelihood and access to food. ▶



Our volunteers created a clean comfortable space for gathering and dining.



During annual floods, our boats loaded with water and food supplies manage to reach those in need. ▶

Your Generosity Changes Lives



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