

Saranagati



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D. Thiagarajan



Saranagati



FEBRUARY 2018
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IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

January was a big month with lots of festival days in Bhagavan's presence, not least of all Ramana Jayanti on 3rd January. Siva Prakasam Pillai Day was celebrated on 12th January followed by Bhogi on 13th and Pongal on 14th. Grahanam took place on the evening of 31st with pujas and parayanas being preponed and concluded by 5pm and dinner cancelled, owing to the evening eclipse. Chinnaswami Day was postponed to the 1st February. Winter crowds have the Ashram operating at full capacity and, even if straining the limits of Ashram resources, bring lots of sincerity and devotion.

Please see the continuation of the life story of Ella Maillart starting on p. 3, as well as photo reports of recent celebrations in the Ashram and those of Maattu Pongal 1946 in Bhagavan's presence.

For videos, go to <http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org>.

In Sri Bhagavan,
The Editorial Team

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

1st February (Thurs) Nirajanananda Swami Day
13th February (Tues) Maha Sivaratri
26th February (Mon) Punarvasu Day
1st March (Thurs) Full Moon
6th March (Tues) Sundaram Iyer Day
16th March (Fri) Sri Vidya Homa
18th March (Sun) Telugu New Year
25th March (Sun) Sri Rama Navami

26th March (Mon) Punarvasu Day
30th March (Fri) Full Moon Day
2nd April (Mon) Jagadish Swami Day
14th April (Sat) Nirvana Room Aradhana/New Year
17th April (Mon) Major Chadwick Day
22nd April (Sun) Punarvasu Day
29th April (Sun) Full Moon
13th May (Sun) Bhagavan's 68th Aradhana





The Long Road to Bhagavan Tracing the Pilgrim Life of Ella Maillart (Part II)

When Ella Maillart arrived at Sri Ramanasramam in late 1940, the South Indian devotees who greeted her might not have been able to appreciate the nature of her pilgrimage, nor that of the other Europeans who had recently come to the Ashram, inspired by Paul Brunton's *In Search of Secret India*.¹ Ashram inmates might not have realised the full significance of what the recent outbreak of war in Europe meant for Ella. They might not have known that her very impressionable teenage years had

1 In a letter to her mother dated 28th October 1940, Ella wrote: "I went to have a look at Pondicherry for two days, and I do not think that I shall settle down there for the present. I prefer to go first to Tiruvannamalai, which is not far from Madras and where there is this great man described in Paul Brunton's book."

coincided with the technologically-sophisticated trench warfare of World War One where artillery shells left five-metre craters, often unearthing the newly-buried. They may not have known how the conflict had left forty million dead or injured as well as a gaping wound in the European psyche.

Ella's South Indian hosts may not have understood how she had been ejected from her childhood home by the hollow narratives and cheap materialism that sought to paper over the existential plight of a culture in crisis, a bankrupt moral order whose religious truths had proven ill-equipped to keep pace with the 'progress' of history, the 'advances' of science and the tools it unleashed on the world. They would not have been able to fathom that her many years of pilgrimage had been an exercise in blind trust, a going forth with no particular goal in mind beyond finding something else:

*I know I must turn away from the outside world which is not the ultimate reality, and listen to the strength which is hidden [within] me. I know that we have in us a spark of energy which cannot die. If we knew how to kindle it instead of unwittingly smashing it, we could create bonds linking all of us so strongly together that we could not hate or kill each other anymore.*²

As Nazism spread its violence across Europe, Ella was still reeling from the tragedy of war from her childhood: "The last war sent me down to the clean life of the seas, forever rid of illusions about our civilisation," she wrote. "This war compels me to search for 'the meaning of all this', for the common denominator in all of us, the basis on which to live anew."³

Ella fled a realm not only racked by armed conflict but one that seemed to have lost its way with no lasting peace in sight, a people leaning desperately on blind gestures and temporary relief from the symptoms of a severe malaise:

*The 'war to end war' [brought] in its train compromise, artificial ideals, and palavers that failed to establish a real peace.*⁴ I am concerned that the majority of my fellowmen are busy with things that are not essential. They seek happiness where they cannot find it. Happiness is inside us but we seek for it in external things.⁵

2 *Gypsy Afloat*, London, William Heinemann, 1942, p. 240.

3 *The Cruel Way: Switzerland to Afghanistan in a Ford, 1939*. University of Chicago Press, 1947, p. 204.

4 *Cruises and Caravans*, London, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1942, p. 28-29.

5 *La métaphysique d'Ella Maillart*, RTS Religion, Babel, 17 September 2017, trans. Savitri Poornima.





Raw intuition steered her, and with the passing years her wandering led to deeper questioning till it found its voice:

*The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only a page... You do not travel if you are afraid of the unknown; you travel for the unknown that reveals you [to] yourself.*⁶

But in 1939 during her year-long overland trip to India, Ella began to identify a compulsive pattern in her life of travel. As long as she was on the road and moving, she was peaceful and happy. But as soon as she returned home, the former dissatisfaction set in, a gnawing discontent that could only be placated by further plans and fresh adventures. She began to see the unsustainability of such a strategy, subject as it invariably was to the law of diminishing returns, an approach she knew would eventually fail her. It was not enough to run away—there should be some purpose, some reason for living, some service to humanity beyond writing entertaining books. She began to take her wandering more seriously, started to recognise that while she had conquered the world, she had not conquered herself.

Arrival at Sri Ramanasramam

Dressed in trousers and possessed of an independent demeanour atypical for women in mid-twentieth century South India, Ella would have felt a little out of place upon her arrival at Sri Ramanasramam in November 1940. There was nothing in her background that could have prepared her for the orthodox customs of a religious community. Her awkwardness would have been in full view. Having rejected religion at an early age, she had never lived among people of faith and did not know their language:

⁶ Ella Maillart, <www.inspiringquotes.us>.

*At seventeen I had followed a course of religious instruction. The pastor had brought the problems of God, life, and death under the light of the Gospel. But because I listened with the mind only, as if it were a school lesson—whereas such teaching ought to reach deeper and subtler regions—the result was negative. We became a debating society where many moral questions were raised, but we never understood the real meaning of what [this] fine man was saying. I decided that religions were not helpful, and that I had to find by myself why we were on earth.*⁷

Ella's initial clumsiness in adjusting to life among Ramana devotees would have obscured the mastery she otherwise demonstrated in less populated surroundings such as the barren reaches of the Gobi Desert, the high altitude wastelands of the Tibetan plateau, the mountain landscapes of the Chinese Pamirs, the twisting valleys of the Hindu Kush or under sail beneath the night-time sky in the vast expanse of the Atlantic Ocean. But she soon adapted:

*I wake up at 6:30, drink some buttermilk from my thermos, wash my face, brush my teeth, hunt fleas or do small repairs. Then a walk of 20 minutes (it rains every day now that the monsoon blows from the east), accompanied by the children who make the quest, pretty, bronzed, naked. Then I arrive in our small colony where we even have a post office, and Raja the postman is the friend who takes care of me. He is shaved with the exception of a bun on the back of his head, and his eyes are full of sweetness and kindness. His torso is naked except for a string that the Brahmins always wear; he is dressed in a sort of sheet wrapped around his hips, and he is barefoot. Raja also works in the kitchen, helping prepare meals for more than 50 people. On approaching our colony, I see the stonecutters engaged in pounding blocks for the construction of a sanctuary above the tomb of the Sage's mother.*⁸

⁷ The Spiritual Daughters of Herman Hesse, Fanny Guex, University of Lausanne, August 2015.

⁸ *This Reality That I've Been Chasing*, Paris, Payot, 2013, pp. 188-190.

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Nochur Sri Venkataraman Discourses



On 5th January 2018, Nochur Sri Venkataraman resumed his annual series of discourses on Bhagavan's *Aksharamanamalai* in English. The Granthalaya Auditorium was filled to capacity for the seven days of reflections on Bhagavan's 108 verses, accented with stories and anecdotes from the lives of the great saints from *Srimad Bhagavatam* and other Puranas. The final discourse concluded with v. 40. —





Her awkwardness implied no disrespect; rather she invited instruction and guidance in proper comportment in the presence of the guru. Yet all such concerns faded into insignificance once the encounter took place, and she found herself face to face with the one figure whom, until then, she did not know she had been looking for:

His extraordinarily bright eyes expressed such kindness and peace. The silence between us was so rich that it gave me something like a cracked valve in my heart. It created emptiness, a total blank. My call to Reality, represented by this man, was so intense that I knew the answer I was looking for was to be found in his surroundings. The purpose of my expeditions was to bring me to the brink of knowledge that gives meaning to life. Only the inner journey is real.⁹

Following this first meeting with Bhagavan, the tone of her diary reflections changed markedly and her entries are henceforth couched in an ecstatic language of the divine:

Where [did] I belong? Everywhere I found myself. I do not belong ... at home where no one shared my thoughts [...] Thus I belong where my heart is alive. Shall I one day belong to India? My heart wants to go home ... It is no self-pity, I see it at once. Yes, a home for my heart ... Where? With God, a spiritual home. And God is nowhere but in me. How simple, [how] ridiculously simple. I never lived it so clearly.¹⁰

Setting Up House

Owing to the fact that in those days, women were not allowed to stay overnight in the Ashram, Ella rented a flat for five rupees per month in Anakati Theru—what she calls ‘Dancing-Girls Street’—just south of Arunachaleswarar Temple. She writes to her mother of settling into her new home:

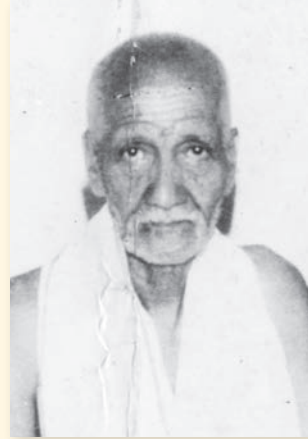
On my wooden bed, my tote is unrolled. I sleep in the flea bag you made me, wrapped in the vicuna blanket when the wind blows. I bought three soapboxes for my table, chair, and dressing table, and a paraffin lamp to light when I write on the [typewriter]. From my tiny terrace I have a wide view of the sacred Hill nearby.¹¹

Early on she befriended Viswanatha Swami, son of the first cousin of Bhagavan who in his youth had

⁹ *Two Swiss Travellers in India*, Fanny Guex, Workshop May 2014, Ella Maillart fonds — Ms. Fr. 7127/C, “A chacun sa raison de vivre...”, article sans date en français (ma traduction).

¹⁰ Ibid, Ella Maillart fonds – Ms. Fr. 7111, B/4 feuillet 66.

¹¹ *This Reality That I've Been Chasing*, Paris, Payot, 2013, pp. 187-188.



Postmaster Raja Iyer
in the Post Office



Viswanatha Swami, ca. 1941,
(photo by Ella)

been a sympathiser of Gandhi’s freedom movement when he came to stay permanently with Bhagavan. The expat community who, like Ella, had journeyed to Tiruvannamalai to live and be near the Maharshi, came to her aid as well. Alan Chadwick, the British Army major who had come in 1935, took a liking to Ella from the start. She wrote of him:

I go to him often because he has a rocking chair on which I can stretch my legs, because he sometimes gives me a biscuit, because we tease each other about our meditation hours and discuss the war.¹²

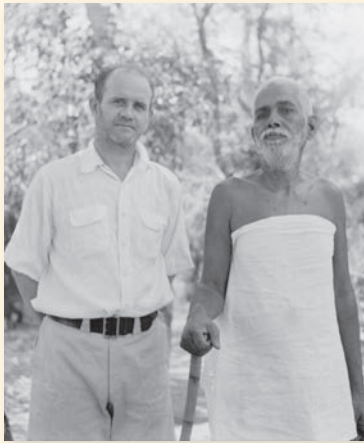
She also got to know Guy Hague, the California geologist who spent two years in the Ashram in the 1940s and Lewis Thompson, the British sannyasin-poet who became one of her best friends and with whom she maintained constant correspondence until his untimely death at Benares in 1949.

Ethel Merston, the kind-hearted Englishwoman who lived in town and made it her habit to assist newly-arrived devotees, made herself available to Ella.

S.S. Cohen, the Iraqi Jew who had delved in Theosophy prior to his arrival from Bombay in 1936, accompanied Ella to Uma Devi, the Polish author and translator. Cohen confided in Ella his unrealistic expectations upon arriving at the Ashram four years earlier with how he had hoped to be transformed in his first encounter with Bhagavan but had been so disappointed that it didn’t happen as he expected that he ‘went behind the Ashram to cry’, only later realising that liberation was a prolonged endeavour.

¹² Letter to her mother, 12th December, 1940.





Guy Hague and Bhagavan, Palakotthu, ca. 1942

Ethyl Merston

Ella met many like-minded Westerners, all of whom came with the hope of learning what was needed from the Sage and thus gaining their freedom. However, many had come and gone rather quickly, operating under the misconception that the spiritual process was immediate. Ella's case was different. She harboured no illusions and knew from the start that hers was no brief or casual visit. She says, "The Sage used to say about the Europeans who came here, 'I explain something to them and they reply "Oh yes, we understand", and then they go away.'" Ella then adds:

*We must become what we understand so that it moves from the domain of intellect to the domain of being or of the fundamental essence of Being. I stayed three months instead of eight days like other people because I doubted myself horribly. At the end of three months I really knew that this Sage was what he taught and it was then that I decided to stay on. And the more I advanced the more I wanted to stay and try to transform myself and find out this truth which was within us.*¹³

Ella's life changed dramatically. She was no longer planning new adventures but took stock of her life and began to reflect on her years of travelling. She had as her employment the discipline of writing books in English,

¹³ *La Metaphysique d'Ella Maillart*, RTS Religion, Babel, 17 September 2017, trans. Savitri Poornima.

mainly to support herself and ensure the possibility of being able to stay on. She established a rhythm.

"My days were spent at the Sage's Ashram (about a mile out of town), eating the midday meal near him in a great dining-hall. There also I had my daily bath, returning in the evening."¹⁴ Elsewhere, she wrote:

*I wanted to prolong my stay near the sage Ramana Maharshi. His life was public. Anyone could approach him, ask him questions and enjoy the benefits of his presence that radiated goodness, distinction and immutable peace. And there each one of us was free to do whatever they wanted, because, with the exception of meals, there was no set of rules for community life. I got into the routine of staying for two hours each morning and each evening in the hall where around twenty people of both sexes were seated on the ground, legs crossed in silent meditation. I read the little brochures where the main responses of the sage had been collected over the course of some thirty years. His function was to inform seekers about the nature of the ultimate reality. And I tried to see if his replies corresponded with something I felt in myself.*¹⁵

Life in the Hall

All this was marvellously new for Ella but she took to it like a duck in water, careful to observe all that transpired before and around her:

I was continuously distracted by the spectacle around me that was so new and so different. Apart from the servants (who were taking care of the garden, the refectory, the kitchen and the stable) and the ashram inmates (around twenty or so Hindu disciples and four or five Europeans), there was also an incessant (flow) of poor, Tamilian peasants, both men and women, accompanied by their children, coming to bow before the Maharshi who was reclining on his sofa – the men, almost naked, lying flat on the floor in full prostration, the women kneeling, draped in their saris, their heads touching the ground; they offered the master either a few fruits or some sweets. An attendant would then return part of the consecrated offering to them. While reading his mail or the newspapers, correcting proofs, fanning himself or meditating, the Maharshi would sometimes look at us or would smile at the astonished children who stood there frozen in front of him. He would often give nuts to the agile

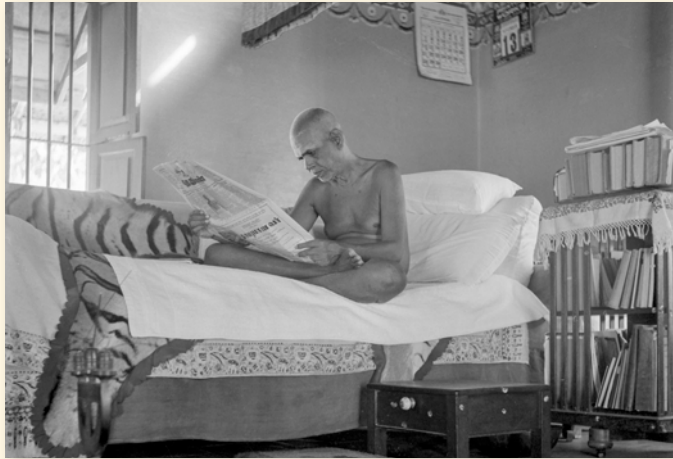
¹⁴ *Ti-Puss*, William Heinemann, London, 1951, p. 14.

¹⁵ *Croisieres et Caravanes*, Chap. XIV, 'South India', (French ed., 1951), trans. Marye Tonnaire, p. 225.

Announcements: Ashram YouTube Channel

Sri Ramanasramam has its own YouTube channel and is regularly posting videos of events. Please visit the channel at:
<<https://www.youtube.com/c/sriramanasramam>>





squirrels perched on the top of his sofa, or else his favourite cow would drop in to ask for a banana. Morning and evening a group of Brahmins chanted the holy scriptures. At a fixed time, the sage would take a short walk in the surrounding area, and it was on these occasions that we could speak to him in private. At eleven o'clock we would all eat in his presence, curry-rice served on banana leaves spread out on the red-tiled floor. The right hand alone was used to carry the food up to the mouth. According to the rules of caste, the Brahmins ate apart, separated by a screen. The Maharshi was seated so as to see everyone; he had been born a Brahmin but, because he was a sage, 'liberated while alive' as they say in India, he was beyond caste observances.¹⁶

Cruises and Caravans

When in 1942 her autobiography *Cruises and Caravans* was published, Ella presented it to Bhagavan with the following inscription:

Dear Bhagavan, here is the book you helped me to write during the summer before last. Once more I form the deep wish that after so many years spent in dealing with the external world—as you may see by

¹⁶ *Croisieres et Caravanes*, Chap. XIV, 'South India', (French Ed., 1951), trans. Marye Tonnaire. p. 225-226.

gleaning through my autobiography—I shall make swift progress in discovering the inner life leading to You. — Yours, Ella.¹⁷

The memoir was an effort at making sense of all that had happened to her, a form of self-understanding, as clarity began to emerge within her while living in Bhagavan's presence. Her narrative began:

Now that I can already look back upon half my life, I could easily link up its main episodes into a logical story. [...] Such clear-cut biographies I have read; but they don't ring true: they give the feeling that the hero knew too soon the meaning of his life. In reality, things don't seem to happen logically. You grope blindly towards the unknown, and your energy is sapped by the torture of suspense. A few men seem to have known since childhood what they wanted to be —poet, soldier, sculptor, doctor, musician, explorer. Though they probably fought and suffered to reach their goal, I have always envied them: they did not know the anguish of hesitation.¹⁸

In one way of seeing, Ella's arrival at Ramanasramam was anti-climactic—no more high-altitude mountain passes to traverse or raging river rope-bridges to negotiate. The outward impulse had given way to an inner exploration of the heart as Ella began to discover parts of herself she had not known. Elsewhere she recorded beginning to let go of everything that once formed her identity, to let go of her former life:

I have some difficulty—a heart pinch—when I say that never, never again will skis be fastened, clasped under my feet. But after all, I have had everything, so my giving it up is easy, especially when I know how bittersweet all that fun has been.¹⁹

¹⁷ Sri Ramanasramam library, pasted in the 1942 English edition of *Cruises and Caravans* that Ella presented to Bhagavan.

¹⁸ *Cruises and Caravans*, 1942, Chapter 1, p. 1.

¹⁹ *Ella Maillart fonds – Ms. Fr. 7111, Extraits de notes "Five Years in India", B/4 feuillet 48.*

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Ramaswami Pillai Day



Sri Ramaswami Pillai Day was observed at his samadhi with puja and the distribution of prasad on Sankranti Pongal Day, 14th January. —





But now the savour of sports and the outdoor had been surpassed by something unexpected and Ella found that her heart could be content on its own without needing any external incentive or distant motivation. Peace had been modelled for her in a most remarkable way by a simple glance:

What counted above and beyond everything else were the eyes of the Maharshi when he looked at me, a look so noble and so magnificent that one had to ask oneself what he was seeing.²⁰ [I saw now that] I had come to Tiruvannamalai in order to live near a Sage who embodied the essence of Hindu wisdom; and whereas a course for beginners would have suited me best, I found myself... listening all at once to the highest metaphysical teaching.²¹

Finally, replying in 1942 to friends and family who had asked: “Well, why did you do all that?” she replied:

Three riddles confront us: the world, ourselves, and God. By its loveable beauty and its wonders, the world attracts us long before we come to feel it has a hidden meaning: we start out to study and conquer it, demanding what response it can give to our deepest desires. But the world with its countless aspects

20 *Croisieres et Caravanes*, Chap. XIV, (French Ed., 1951), trans. Marye Tonnaire.

21 *Ti-Puss*, William Heinemann, London, 1951, p. 10.

cannot give us the fundamental answer: only God can. And God can be met nowhere but in ourselves. This truth every one must discover for himself. Our deepest demands are alive because of a silent soul within us and they will be answered if we can only release that soul. In so many it has become paralysed through lack of use. The power to cure that paralysis lies in the heart and not in the mind. I don't say this because I have been told so, but because I have found it to be true. Out of all that I have seen and known, this seems to me the most important fact, the sum of my discoveries. Today I feel at home anywhere, and though I live by myself, I can nevermore suffer from loneliness. Here in India I have started on a new journey which I know, will take me further than before towards the perfect life I was instinctively seeking. I began this journey by exploring the unmapped territory of my own mind and now, in the light of what living sages teach today, it takes me forward to a Reality so wonderful that to love and obey it is the greatest adventure and the greatest happiness there is.²² —

(to be continued)

[Editor's note: Please see the three-part series on Ella Maillart that appeared in *The Maharshi* in 2017 in the Mar-Apr, May-Jun and Jul-Aug issues.]

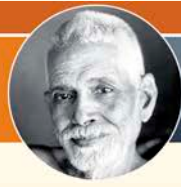
22 *Cruises and Caravans*, London, J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1942, p. 154.

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Sankranthi Pongal



Pongal is a three-day festival and actually begins the day before Makara Sankranti with Bhogi, the last day of Margazhi month when old things in the household are discarded. Pongal means 'overflow' and usually refers to celebration, evoking the feeling of abundance at this harvest time of year. Makara Sankranthi marks the day when the Sun 'crosses over' (*sankramanu*) into Capricorn as the dark days of Margazhi month end. In Thai month, the Sun begins His northern journey with the days growing longer. At the Ashram, Uttaraayana puja to Sun took place in the Mother's Shrine on Sunday 14th January. —





Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Samudram Gosala Puja and Maattu Pongal



Maattu Pongal is a day devoted to cattle and in appreciation of their great service and the sacrifice they make on a daily basis, cows in giving their milk and bulls in plowing the fields. In early times, when Lord Siva asked his bull-devotee Nandi to go to the earth and tell everyone that they should have an oil bath every day and eat once a month, Nandi confused the message and mistakenly instructed everyone to eat daily and have an oil bath once a month. Lord Siva complained that now there would not be enough food and that the bull would have to go and help people in cultivating the land. Thus since that day, Nandi has been ploughing the land as Basava, the bull. During the Sankranti festival, farmers honour Basava by offering worship and giving him a holiday from work.

On Maattu Pongal, Monday 15th January at Samudram Gosala, the Ashram's facility for aging cows, puja was celebrated and sweet pongal given to the cows. Nandi was venerated in puja at Mother's Shrine at 9am followed by a special puja at Cow Lakshmi's Samadhi. The morning culminated with a celebration in the Ashram gosala (see cover insert). —

Muruganar On Pongal

Because of Ramana's blessing, joy overflows in our hearts and spreads everywhere. On this sacred day we praise His Grace. But let this spiritual Pongal festival be celebrated every day and not just once a year.

— Ocean of Grace, vol. 2, p. 516





Maattu Pongal, 16th January 1946

On Maattu Pongal, Cow Lakshmi was led into the middle of the gosala after asking the devotees, who had gathered into a big group, to step aside. Lakshmi stood there, tossing her head in a graceful manner. Bhagavan also got up, came, and stood by the side of Lakshmi, patting her head and body with his left hand, and when he said, “Steady, please, be steady”, Lakshmi slowly closed her eyes and remained absolutely quiet as if she were in samadhi. Ramana then placed his right hand on her back, and with his walking stick in his left, stood in a dignified manner by the side of Lakshmi, when the photographer took two or three photos. One must see that sight to appreciate its grandeur fully.

Another photo was taken when Bhagavan was feeding her with his own hands fruits and sweetmeats. Standing with his body bent slightly to the left, and with his left hand on Lakshmi, and with the walking stick in his right hand, with a sparkling smile on the face, with a compassionate look towards the group of devotees that had gathered along with the herd of cows, Ramana, the embodiment of grace, was the Supreme Lord Himself.

What are we to say of our Lakshmi who appears to have been completely oblivious of this world with her ears hanging down, with her eyes closed and enjoying transcendental bliss caused by the touch of Bhagavan’s hands on her body? It is no exaggeration to say that

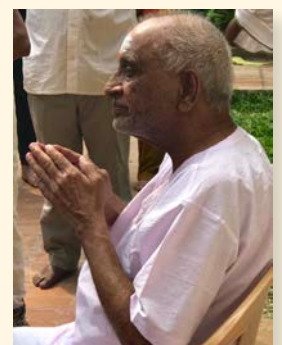


Bhagavan and Cow Lakshmi, Maattu Pongal, 1946

we, with human eyes, saw in that congregation what is beyond human sight; a world of cows, and its overlords, Prakriti and Purusha. You would perhaps laugh at my foolish fantasies but take it from me, that sight was so lovely. Every year this worship of the cow is being performed, but this year Bhagavan gave us this blissful darshan by standing by the side of Lakshmi, because the devotees said that they would take a photo of Lakshmi. What a great day! —

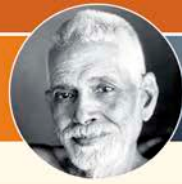
Letters, 16th January, 1946

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Swami Ramanananda Day



Swami Ramanananda Day was celebrated at his Shrine on the morning of 4th January 2018, the day following Bhagavan’s 138th Jayanthi. Ashram President, V.S. Ramanan and devotees were in attendance.—





Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Sri Bhagavan's 138th Jayanti

Bhagavan's 138th Jayanti celebrations commenced on 2nd January with Dhanurmasa Puja and Vishnu Sahasranama followed by Natarajar Abhishekam (Aarudra Darshanam) at Mother's Shrine. Preliminary music programmes on 2nd included Ramana Music by Ramananjali led by Dr. Sarada Natarajan and RMCL from 3-4pm as well as a vocal concert by the renowned Chinmaya Sisters (Ms. Uma & Ms. Radhika) at 8pm. The principal Jayanti celebrations commenced on 3rd with Nadaswaram by Sri T. R. Pichandi followed by Dhanurmasa Puja and a special Tamil parayana. Puja and abhishekam to Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam culminated in Deeparadhana at 10.30am. The afternoon programme included a special abhishekam and puja at Sri Bhagavan's Shrine and Ramana Music by Amritavarshini led by Smt. Sakkubai Srinivasan of Bangalore in the library auditorium at 8pm. Jayanti day lunch and dinner combined offered Bhagavan's prasada to 10,000. Ramana Jayanti 2018 music concluded on the night of 4th with vocal music by renowned Sri. Sriram & Smt. Anuradha Sriram.





Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Annamalai Giripradakshina



Annamalaiyar Giripradakshinam took place on January, 2018. The deities reached the Ashram in the cool of the morning around 5am. Ashram President's brother, V.S. Mani, attended the puja and offered garlands on behalf of the Ashram with devotees in attendance. —

Obituary: Kumari Veeralakshmi



Born on 3rd September 1938 and hailing from Vizianagaram, Andhra Pradesh, Kumari Veeralakshmi was deeply attracted to Sri Ramana Maharshi. Coming first in 1978, after retiring as a Telugu lecturer she spent most of her time at Tiruvannamalai. In 1984, despite resistance from parents opposed to their unmarried daughter settling faraway, she built a house close to Sri Ramanasramam. Demonstrating her great love for spiritual aspirants, she accommodated three to four sadhus in her house on an ongoing basis, many of whom recount her immense care and sacrifice with deep gratitude. Four years back she shifted to Vishakapatnam because of failing health and medical convenience. However, her devotion to Bhagavan was unwavering: her flat was full of Sri Ramana's photos in every direction and she wished only to talk about or listen to spiritual subjects. A few days before the final departure she was admitted to hospital and was brought home after recovery. However, next day, she was not able to get up, was sleeping most

of the time - hardly aware of the external world. Aksharamanamalai and Saranagati - her great favourites - were played throughout. At around 7pm, she woke up and was repeating the name 'Ramana' clearly and loudly. She breathed her last at 7.30pm, December 18th 2017, at the age of 79. She will be remembered by her family members and spiritual aspirants as a great source of inspiration for her life of affection, sacrifice and devotion. —

Best Shot: Samudram Lake Overflow



Samudram lake overflowed following monsoon rains. This would be the first time the lake has reached capacity in more than ten years. Dev Gogoi crafted this nighttime shot of the overflowing spillway in a timed release one night during the days following Kartigai Deepam —

