

Saranagathi



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This Issue

Dear Sri Bhagavan Devotees,

According to the Tamil calendar this is the year of 'Sarvadhari', which occurs every 60 years. Devotees will be reminded of Sri Bhagavan's composition in June 1948, mentioning 'Sarvadhari' as the year Cow Lakshmi attained 'mukti' and had the epitaph inscribed on her samadhi.

At the ashram, on 18th June there was a celebration at Cow Lakshmi's samadhi observing the 60th anniversary of her 'liberation' and devotees participated in the function to receive her blessings.

This issue's main focus is on Cow Lakshmi. We have included reminiscences of Smt. Suri Nagamma from *Letters from & Recollections of*

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Sri Ramanasramam to cover three letters that chronicle Cow Lakshmi's biography, liberation and burial.

We look forward to hearing from you, about your satsangs and experiences. Please send your emails to us at saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org.

Ever Truly In Sri Bhagavan,

Editorial Team.

The Essence of Instruction

*Action yields fruit,
For so the Lord ordains it.
How can action be the Lord?
It is insentient.*

– Upadesa Saram by Sri Bhagavan (Verse 1)

Cow Lakshmi

An extract from [Letters from & Recollections of Sri Ramanasramam](#) by Smt. Suri Nagamma

The History of Lakshmi the Cow. (195)

24th June, 1948.*

At 4 O'clock yesterday afternoon, a Tamil youth came into the hall. On seeing him, a devotee said that the youth was the grandson of the man who had presented Lakshmi the cow to the Ashram. "I see," said Bhagavan. "Does he know that Lakshmi passed away?" That youth said, "I have just heard it, Swami. When I went to the cowshed to see Lakshmi I was informed of it. I have come here after seeing the tomb."

On enquiry, the youth said, "I belong to a village called Kannamangalam. It is about forty miles from here. My grandfather Arunachalam Pillai wanted to present a good milch cow to Bhagavan and so, in 1926, he brought Lakshmi here along with her mother. Lakshmi was then barely six months old. I also came along with them. I was quite young then. From that time onwards I always look up Lakshmi whenever I come to this place on business. I have now heard this sad news." After he left, Bhagavan told us the following story: "You know what happened when they came here with the cow and the calf. 'Why all this for us?' I asked. Arunachalam Pillai replied saying, 'I have for a long time been thinking of presenting Bhagavan with a cow. I am now in a position to do so. I have brought it after a good deal of trouble on boat and rail. Please keep it, Swami.' I said, 'You have done your duty in presenting it to us. Who is there to look after it? Please keep it with you on our behalf.' The owner of the cow replied, 'I will not take it away even if you cut my throat.'

"Hearing this Ramanatha Brahmachari was piqued and said with great zest that he himself would look after the cow. 'All right. Hang it round your neck!' I said. As the calf came to us on a Friday, we named her Lakshmi. Ramanatha somehow tended the cow and the calf for two or three months. Lakshmi was very playful, jumping about as she pleased and, while so doing, she ruined all the vegetable plants we were growing. If anyone chided her, she used to come to me for protection. I used to tell the Asramites that if they so desired, they could put up a fence to protect their plants. Poor chap! Ramanatha could not put up with all these troubles from the other inmates of the Ashram and so handed over the cow and the calf to a keeper of cattle in the town with some stipulations. I do not remember his name."

A devotee said, "His name is Pasupati. He is a Kannadiga (from the state of Karnataka). Lakshmi's mother passed away after a short time. The arrangement was that if Lakshmi gave birth to a male calf, it should be given to the Ashram and if it were a female calf he should retain it." Bhagavan said, "That might be so. About a year after that, he came here with Lakshmi and her calf for a bath on an eclipse day. He saw me first, had a bath in the Pali Tank along with the cow and its calf and then they went home together. At that time Lakshmi saw the whole of this Ashram. Remembering the route carefully she began coming here everyday. She used to come in the morning and go away in the evening. She used to lie down by the side of my couch. She insisted that I myself should give her fruit. She would not take any other than the hill plantain." Someone said, "Before leaving every evening she used to go round the hall, it seems?"

* The letters have been rearranged in the order of events to cover Cow Lakshmi's biography, liberation and burial.

Bhagavan replied, “That is the thing. We had no bell in the dining hall then. We do not know how she did it but everyday exactly at the appointed time for meals she used to come and stand before me. We used to look at the clock and find that that was just the time for meals. Her coming was the signal for us. She used to return to town daily most reluctantly.”

On further enquiry, I came to know that Lakshmi came away permanently to the Ashram in 1930, that she had three calves by then — all males — and that, as per agreement, all the calves had been given to the Ashram. When she was pregnant for the third time, one evening she was unwilling to leave Bhagavan and go home, like Nandini¹ of Vasishta; she was shedding tears and lay close to the couch. Bhagavan was visibly affected and softly passing his hand on her face said, “What! You say you can’t go away, and want to stay here alone? What am I to do?” and, looking at the others, said, “Look, Lakshmi is weeping saying she cannot go away. She is pregnant and may have confinement any moment. She must go a long distance and again come here in the morning. She cannot refrain from coming here. What is she to do?” At last Bhagavan somehow coaxed her and sent her away. That very night she delivered. About the same time Pasupati had some domestic difficulties. Unable to bear the burden of this Lakshmi with all her vagaries, he brought her and her three calves and presented them to Bhagavan. Lakshmi lay at Bhagavan’s feet and would not rise. Placing his right hand on her head and pressing it, he asked if she would like to stay here permanently. She closed her eyes and lay still as in a trance. Noticing that, Bhagavan pointed out to the others that she appeared as though her responsibility for her calves were over, for they had been placed in Bhagavan’s charge.

When I narrated this story to Bhagavan he agreed. “Yes,” he said, “that was so. After Mother came to stay with me, regular cooking and meals started, and after

Lakshmi came, cattle and dairying became established. Subsequently, for three or four years Lakshmi was presenting us with a calf every year on the Jayanthi day. Afterwards, that practice stopped. Altogether she had nine deliveries. After Lakshmi came here to stay, cows from different places were brought by devotees and left here. So the cattle shed grew in size. In the beginning, they were tied up here and there under a thatched shed. When Salem Sundaram Chetty (Judge) came here, he decided to construct a Gosala (cowshed) and fixed an auspicious time for the laying of the foundation stone. Half-an-hour before appointed time, when everything was being got ready, Lakshmi broke loose from her tether and came to me running as though to tell me that a house was being constructed for her and that I should be there. When I got up, she led me to the spot. She did the same for her housewarming ceremony also. Somehow she used to understand everything. Very smart indeed!”

The Deliverance of Lakshmi the Cow. (193)

20th June, 1948.*

In my letter to you under the caption “Worship of the Cow,” I described to you the grandeur of Lakshmi, the queen of the cows, and the amount of love Bhagavan had for her. To that queen, as for his own mother, Bhagavan on Friday the 18th of June gave Videha Mukti (liberation). That morning when I went to the Ashram, I was told that Lakshmi was seriously ill and would not survive the day. So I went straight to the cow shed, without seeing Bhagavan even. The room built for the calves was vacated, cleaned and Lakshmi was given a bed of straw to lie down upon. As it was Friday, she was as usual decorated with turmeric paste, vermilion mark on the forehead and a garland of flowers round the neck and horns. Venkataratnam was sitting by the side fanning her. Lakshmi was lying down with her majestic look spreading lustre all round. She reminded me of Kamadhenu going to

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¹ Nandini was the wish fulfilling cow who lived with the Sage Vasishta.

Kailas to do abhishekam with milk over the great Lord Siva.

When I went to Bhagavan and prostrated before him and got up, he looked at me with a divine look. Taking it as an order, I said I would go and stay with Lakshmi. He nodded his head in assent and I went immediately. Venkataratnam gave me the fan and left. Sitting in that place I began repeating Ramana Dwadasakshari (twelve letters of Ramana Mantram), Ashtotharam (108 names of Ramana), etc. and Lakshmi appeared to hear them attentively.

When Bhagavan came to the cowshed at 9–45 a.m. as usual he came to see Lakshmi. Bhagavan sat on the hay by her side, lifted her head with both his hands, and passing one of his hands lightly over her face and throat, and then placing his left hand on the head and began pressing with the right hand fingers her throat right down to the heart. After pressing like that for about a quarter of an hour he said, addressing Lakshmi, “What do you say, mother? Do you want me to stay here alone? I could stay, but what to do? All people could be around you as in the case of my mother. Even so, why? Shall I go?” Lakshmi remained calm, devoid of all the bonds of this world and of the pains of her body as though she were in samadhi. Bhagavan sat there unwilling to move and with a heart full of compassion. I was overwhelmed at the sight and exclaimed involuntarily, “Oh! Mother Alagamma had the greatest luck. So has Lakshmi now.” Bhagavan looked at me with a smile. Subramaniam came and said, “It seems the doctor will not be coming till 10–30 as there is no immediate danger to Lakshmi.” “All right. So Doctor will not be coming now. Have you brought the medicine for injection?” asked Bhagavan. Turning towards Lakshmi and gently stroking her head and neck, he said, “What do you say? May I go?” Subbulakshmi said, “She will feel happy if Bhagavan is by her side.” “That is so, but what to do?” So saying and looking into the eyes of Lakshmi, Bhagavan said, “What? May I go? Won’t you tell me?” Lakshmi looked at him proudly. What reply

Bhagavan got, we do not know but he got up and went away saying, “See that the flies do not get into the mouth.” I assured him that we would take due care of Lakshmi and Bhagavan left the place very reluctantly.

With the divine touch of Bhagavan, the outer breath of Lakshmi began subsiding and the movement of the body began to decrease. When the doctor came at 10–30 and gave an injection Lakshmi remained unaffected as if the body was not hers. There was no death agony. Her sight was calm and clear. The doctor turned her over into the posture of Nandi, put some medicine on the boils and went away instructing us to keep some support for the head. As it was 11–30 by then, Venkataratnam came back after having his meal. He asked me to hold up the head saying he would bring some more hay. The tongue touched me and it was icy cold; the life of Lakshmi reached the feet of Sri Ramana and was absorbed in Him.

Ten minutes later, Bhagavan came into the shed saying, “Is it all over?” and squatted by her side, took her face in both his hands as though she were a little child, and lifted it and said, “Oh Lakshmi, Lakshmi,” and then, to us, controlling his tears, he said, “Because of her, our family (the Ashram) has grown to this extent.” When all were praising Lakshmi, Bhagavan asked, “I suppose the doctor has not troubled her much, did he? How did her life cease?” We told him all that had happened. “That is all right. Did you notice this? The right ear is uppermost now. Till yesterday she was lying down on her other side. Because of the boil she was turned over to this side. So this ear had to come up. Look, in the case of people who die in Kasi, people say Lord Siva will whisper into the right ear. Lakshmi too has her right ear up,” said Bhagavan, and showed that ear to all people there. By that time, crowds gathered. After a quarter of an hour, Bhagavan got up and said, “Ramakrishna has been saying for the last ten days that a good tomb

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(samadhi) must be built for Lakshmi.” Bhagavan then went away to the hall.

Burial of Lakshmi the Cow (194)

18th June, 1948.*

Thinking of Lakshmi all the time today we had our usual meal and some rest. When at 2–30 p.m. I went to the cowshed Bhagavan was already there. We went and saw the body of Lakshmi. The face did not show any sign of death. We came back to the hall and sat down. Till evening Bhagavan was telling us stories about Lakshmi and was giving instructions to the people concerned about the arrangements for the burial. “It was the same thing in the case of Mother. Until the abhishekam (pouring of the holy water over the body) was done, the lustre of the face did not fade. The body could hardly be seen from under the garlands and camphor that were thrown upon it by people from time to time. There were bhajans, Nagaswaram music, etc. all around. We brought the body down at night and kept it under the pipal tree with the intention of burying it somewhere near the Pali Tank before daybreak. There was, however, some delay in bringing bricks and slaked lime for constructing the tomb. Meanwhile many people gathered round and put up a big show. On the tenth day, even shops were newly opened. Just see what all will happen now.” Always hearing and feeling that Bhagavan was giving undue importance to Lakshmi’s burial, one of the devotees, Govindarajula Subbarao, said, “We see many instances here of animals getting deliverance more often than human beings. Bhagavan has told us several times that they come here to work out the balance of their karma. It looks as if they are better looked after by Bhagavan than ourselves.”

Bhagavan remarked: “Will it be possible to say so in all instances? Is anybody making all these arrangements deliberately? And do we have the money for all that?”

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When the time comes people spontaneously take up the work and all the required articles come in automatically. The work is done in a trice. Sadasiva Iyer came here the day before yesterday; perhaps he has come specially for this purpose. He knows the full details of erecting a tomb. He is there now on the spot, giving all the directions. He says he will go away tomorrow. It is individual luck; what can we do? Were it an ordinary animal, the butcher would drag it away. For this (Lakshmi) the tomb is going to be erected on a scale equal to that of a Mahatma. Look at this white peacock. How many peacocks have come and gone? They are different from this one. This goes about meekly and mixes freely with all people. Where is Baroda and where is Arunachala? It was born there and has come here. Who wanted it?” said Bhagavan.

Towards the hill side and near the dispensary, the tombs of a deer, a crow and a dog were erected long ago. Now a pit was dug near them and the work for the construction of the tomb was begun.

All was ready by 6 p.m. People had come in large numbers. Some of them even sat on the compound wall. The Sarvadhikari brought the body of Lakshmi in a wooden cart. Bhagavan came and sat on a chair. Lakshmi’s body was placed opposite to him. Devotees brought water in pots and poured it over the body of Lakshmi. After that, abhishekam was done with milk, curds, ghee, sugar and rose water. Incense was burnt, a silk cloth was covered over the body, the face was smeared with turmeric powder and vermilion and the body was covered with flower garlands. Sugar candy was offered and arati (waving of lights) was performed. Lakshmi’s face beamed with beauty and charm when she was thus decorated.

By about 7 p.m. devotees lowered the body of

Lakshmi into the grave with cries of “Hara Hara Mahadev.” Bhagavan was visibly affected. After Bhagavan had touched the holy leaves, they were thrown on to Lakshmi by the Sarvadhikari. After that, devotees sprinkled turmeric and vermilion powder, camphor, holy ashes, sandal paste, flowers and salt, and finally, earth was thrown in to fill the grave. After the burial was over, Bhagavan came back to the hall. The Prasad was then distributed. The whole thing ended like a marriage festival. Lakshmi the cow is no longer in the cowshed. She has been freed from the bonds of the body and now is merged in the lustrous Atman of Sri Ramana. In the early morning hours of the night Bhagavan wrote a final epitaph in Tamil on Lakshmi. At our request he wrote it in Telugu and Malayalam also.

It is hereby recorded that Lakshmi the cow was liberated under the star of Visakha, on Friday the twelfth day of the bright half of Jyeshtha, in the year Sarvadhari.

18th June, 2008.

A report from Sri Ramanasramam.

Devotees gathered around Cow Lakshmi's samadhi at Sri Ramanasramam to observe the 60th Death Anniversary of Sri Bhagavan's dear child and foremost of devotees whose 'mukti' was confirmed by Him.

The priests conducted a solemn puja, during which the song composed by Manavasi Ramaswami Iyer about Lakshmi and a song specially composed for the occasion were sung. Both songs highlighted the unique place of Lakshmi among Bhagavan's countless devotees. After arati, prasadam was distributed among those present. Photos from the event are shown to the right.

As per the Hindu calendar, Aradhana celebrations for Cow Lakshmi will be performed at her samadhi on 14th July, 2008.



Cow Lakshmi's samadhi.



Arati being performed after Puja.



Special song commemorating the occasion being sung.



Devotees seeking blessings of Cow Lakshmi.