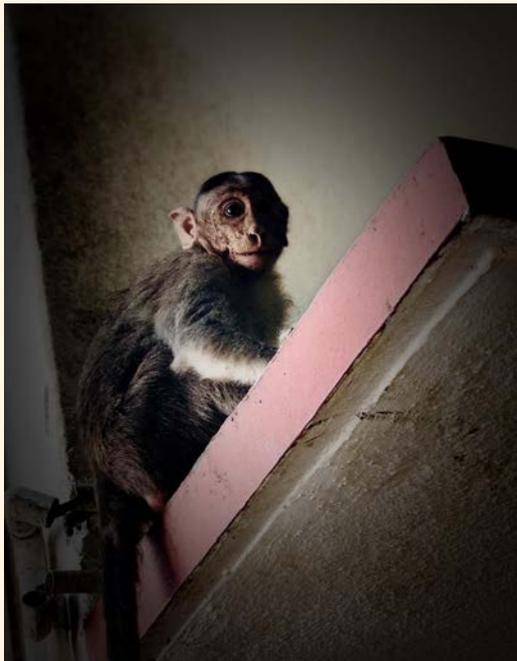


# Saranagati



SARANAGATI  
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

JULY 2018  
VOL. 12, NO. 7



James Nicholls by permission



## Saranagati



JULY 2018  
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IN THIS  
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

June was a relatively quiet month at the Ashram. We celebrated Mahapuja toward the beginning of the month on 7th June (see p. 8) and Cow Lakshmi puja toward the end of the month on 24th June (see p. 6).

This issue contains an article Ella Maillart contributed to the *Golden Jubilee Souvenir* for Advent Day 1946, along with some of her photographs (starting on page 3).

For videos, photos and further news of events, go to <http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org> or write to us at [saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org](mailto:saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org)

In Sri Bhagavan,  
The Editorial Team

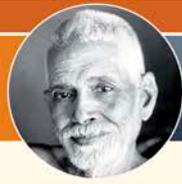
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## Calendar of Upcoming Events

13th July (Fri) Punarvasu  
27th July (Fri) Guru Poornima/Full Moon  
9th August (Thurs) Punarvasu  
25th August (Sat) Full Moon Day  
1st September (Sat) Bhagavan's Advent Day  
6th September (Thurs) Punarvasu  
13th September (Thurs) Ganesh Chaturthi

24th September (Mon) Full Moon Day  
3rd October (Weds) Punarvasu  
9th October (Tues) Navaratri  
18th October (Thurs) Saraswati Puja  
19th October (Fri) Vijaya Dasami  
24th October (Weds) Full Moon Day  
30th October (Tues) Punarvasu





Ella Maillart

## The Sage's Activity is Inactivity by Ella Maillart

— From *The Golden Jubilee*, 1946

*[Editor's note: When returning to Europe, Ella was asked to write an article for the Ashram's upcoming Souvenir in honour of Bhagavan's fifty years at the feet of Arunachala. She sent it to Major Chadwick for editing before submitted the following piece for the collection published on Advent Day, 1946.]*

According to my actual understanding it would be foolishly daring of me to write something about Sri Ramana himself, the mode of life of a sage

being an abysmal mystery except for those who enjoy a similar state of consciousness.

*How and to whom can be described what is experienced within by one who is desireless, whose sorrow is destroyed, and who is contented with repose in the Self?"— (Ashtavakra Gita)*

Neither can I be so bold as to add my gloss to the commentaries that have already been made on the Maharshi's "Forty Verses." Who am I to do it, would it be of any help to any one, and is it not much better to let Sri Ramana, the teacher, comment on them himself, if and when he thinks it could be of any use?

As for descriptions of the life at the Ashram of Tiruvannamalai, I don't think it is within my power to depict the subtle atmosphere which renders the place unique in its setting of dry and hard beauty. Nevertheless, I would like a small token of homage to reach the feet of Sri Ramana from me as a pledge of my gratefulness. And he will perhaps be indulgent enough to accept the following lines about a thought that occurred to me.

\* \* \*

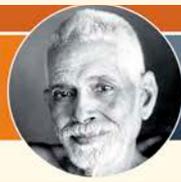
Sooner or later, Westerners who come to know the Maharshi feel constrained to say how puzzled they are by the inactivity of the Sage. "Why doesn't he help the world? Preach? Travel? Condemn this? Advise that? Humanity is committing suicide: surely it is urgent to do something about it?"

We come from a continent where six months of beastly cold weather might partly explain that particular genius which forces us to be physically active, to be on the move all the time, to shape things with our hands, our will altering the aspects as well as the dimensions of the earth.

The Maharshi has already met such reiterated remarks with many a wise and witty answer. Slowly, the Westerner might have learned a few things, among them the truth that thought precedes action. One must first of all learn to think properly and having done so one can hope for right action to follow.

Even when we go to the East in search of its wisdom we remain at the level of understanding of the hurried visitor who, having identified himself with his body, is convinced that one has to be visibly





active. It is perhaps unnecessary to explain to him that inactivity is the basis of its corollary, activity; that the useful wheel could not exist or work without a motionless centre; it is unnecessary to comment upon the verse of the *Bhagavad Gita* about seeing activity in inactivity and inactivity in activity, which proves that one can eventually be established beyond such a pair of opposites.

But with reference to the standpoint of the common man I would like to make a remark that might interest a few of my friends at home. That remark is borne out by what I felt strongly at Tiruvannamalai.

Even supposing that such great ones as the Maharshi could be really inactive, that they simply sat among us but were otherwise lost to our world, neither meditating, praying, nor receiving the respects of their devotees, even were such an impossible case possible, I say their activity is tremendous; they are the salt of the earth, their influence spreads out far away and is unconsciously felt even by workers hardly ever giving a thought to such sages. Something intangible emanates from these realised ones; rather, what they stand for permeates the land they inhabit. *Odeur de saintete...* they sanctify the place through their presence. A kind of equilibrium is brought into being in the mind of the people. Whatever happens — good or bad — in the daily life of these men, everything seems to be in order because the Sage is there.

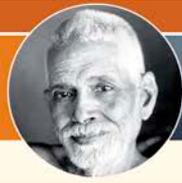
The Westerner may say that such a faith is possible only among Indian peasants. No, I think that in most cases the position assigned to a sage has little to do with faith. Such a Master has lived for ten, twenty, forty years on the same spot. Those who come to know of him slowly become sure that he is totally 'other' than they; he has attained a certitude which makes him free from restlessness, free from fear, desire and doubt, — he can do things none of them can do, because he is egoless. Also, something else had taken place which was more important from the point of view of the layman's understanding. One day the saintly recluse had been questioned about truth, about the aims of life, or about the nature of ultimate Reality. And, though he had studied or read nothing



Bhagavan at the Ashram Post Office, ca. 1942 (Ella Maillart)

about such subjects, his answers corroborated the teachings of the sacred books: he could even explain obscure passages of these books. His words created a deep, lasting emotion; and what was more important from the point of view of the earnest enquirer was the fact that he got a firm conviction about the object of his enquiry, a conviction he never had from the study of scriptures. Here was the man, declared one by one the enquiring savants, who was living what he described. He spoke with authority. It does not mean that he was fully understood. But in those who had lived near him grew the conviction that here was a man who knew what he was talking about, who knew the 'why and how' of what had been harassing them. They stopped worrying continually about problems they were never meant to solve. They resumed their daily tasks and they felt for the first time at peace: there was a living one who knew the ultimate answers. He had proved that, so far, things had to be as they were. As for the future, the only way out was to start loving one's neighbour as oneself because he had shown how in Truth we are all the same Self. And the nature of Self is Love. The ultimate object of quest is this Self of Love. So then, to make the object of quest, namely, the Self, synchronize with the highest ideal of moral conduct, namely, Love, — thereby making that Love the Love without the "otherness" — and to inculcate, through one's own life and realisation, that selfless Love for the Self Universal, is a mighty





achievement, which none perhaps but Jesus Christ and Lord Buddha achieved in the annals of history.

Is not this the most important action a person can accomplish: to be the link between what we call the concrete world and the Unmanifest, that obviously contains and regulates all creation, to be the living symbol of that knowledge without which the humanity of today is but a pitiful joke, to implant a lasting peace in the centre of every human heart in spite of all the surface difficulties, whatever they be? Is not this, I ask, the highest achievement in life?

What do we see in the West of today? Every moment adding to the despair of people lost in fruitless researches. Hopelessness gaining ground, each one being obliged to seek a solution along alleys most of which become blind. I could write many more lines on the burden that life has become to most people. We have no 'liberated ones' living among us to tell us what it is all about, what to cling to, and how to cling to it in order to come out of our misery.

I want to make a kind of parallel, though I do not know if it is quite right. (I have no way of making sure of it myself, since I am in what I take to be the highest village of Switzerland, far from libraries and study circles.)

In China, in the days of its living tradition, the emperor was the tangible link that connected heaven and earth. If the emperor had sufficient knowledge, like the real sage, all was well: by his mere presence at the Temple of Heaven all would be kept in order within the four corners of the empire. Everyone knew that there was one who knew, the Son of Heaven was maintaining the connection with the celestial kingdom, everything was kept rightly balanced. (No doubt, a Pope, a Dalai Lama, a Pharaoh should be a similar link.)

*Tao never does;  
Yet through it all things are done.  
If the barons and kings would but possess themselves of it,  
The ten thousand creatures would at once  
be transformed.*

*Tao is eternal, but has no fame (name)....  
If kings and barons would but possess themselves of it,*



Ella at Sri Ramanasramam, ca. 1942

*The ten thousand creatures would flock to do them homage;  
Heaven-and-earth would conspire  
To send Sweet Dew.<sup>1</sup>*

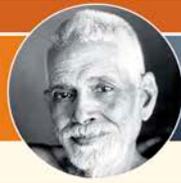
At the pivotal point between heaven and earth the Chinese emperor was mainly dealing with forces of nature whereas the sage of the Vedanta symbolises a link between the unknowable Ultimate and humanity. But, before I finish, I would like to point out that in the *Tao Te Ching* (one of the few books I happen to have with me along with the *Ashtavakra Gita* and the Gospels), when describing a sage, Lao Tzu expresses nearly the same thing I heard the Maharshi explain to me.

*For truly 'Being and Not-being  
grow out of one another;  
Difficult and easy complete one another;  
Long and short test one another;  
High and low determine one another;  
The sounds of instruments and voice  
give harmony to one another;  
Front and back give sequence to one another'.  
Therefore, the Sage relies on actionless activity,  
Carries on wordless teaching,  
But the myriad creatures are worked upon by him:  
he does not disown them.<sup>2</sup> —*

<sup>1</sup> "Sweet dew tastes like barley-sugar or honey; it falls only when a kingdom is at complete peace." Lun Heng, XIX. See *Extracts from the Tao Te Ching*, Ch. XXXII, trans. by A. Waley. Allen & Unwin. London, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Ch. II.





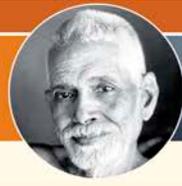
## Cow Lakshmi Samadhi Day

On 18th June, 1948 at 10.30 am, the Ashram veterinarian came to give an injection, but Cow Lakshmi was ready to be absorbed. There was no suffering and her sight was clear and calm. An hour later, she took her last breath, attaining the holy feet of Sri Ramana forever. At Lakshmi's last rites, Bhagavan

was visibly affected when he tossed a last handful of vibhuti over the body as it was being lowered into the burial pit near the Ashram Dining Hall.

On the 24th June, 2018 devotees gathered to sing hymns in honour of Bhagavan's favourite devotee decked in silver sheath and golden anklets, concluding with a newly composed lullabye, followed by final arati. — [For video coverage, see: <<https://www.youtube.com/c/sriramanasramam>>]





## Favourite Stories of Sri Bhagavan: Sakkubai of Pandaripur

*[Sri Bhagavan described the way Lord Panduranga helped the great devotee Sakkubai escape from the drudgery of her household work and visit the Holy Pandaripur. See Talks §83.]*

Sakkubai was born in a village close to the holy pilgrim centre of Pandaripur. She was the only child of Pandit Gangadhar and Kamalabai. Gangadhar was a great devotee firmly enshrined in the traditional vedic practices. Sakkubai, apparently due to virtuous tendencies accumulated over several lives, developed spontaneous devotion to the Lord even as a child. One day while playing with friends, she was constructing a sand house. Saint Sadanandaswami walked by and unwittingly stepped on the sand construction, causing its collapse. The child Sakku cast a pathetic look at the Swami. The Sage patted her head and said:

*My dear, building constructions out of mud is the task of the Grandsire. We, who live in those constructions of mud (physical bodies), should build Divine shrines instead. If jiva resides in the construction of Brahma, the Lord Himself manifests in the divine shrines that we build in our hearts. To this end, we have to be inspired by the transcendental spirit. Let us therefore construct a temple in your heart which is indestructible.*

The saint initiated her with the mystic syllable of the divine incantation for Lord Panduranga. Metaphorically, the saint had stepped on the child's bonds to the physical body, and lit the spark of devotion in her. This spark rapidly grew into an ever-growing flame of devotion to Panduranga and awoke the transcendental spirit in her.

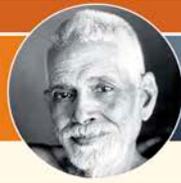
When she was of age, Sakkubai was given in marriage to Mitrankantha. Unfortunately, her mother-in-law was a cruel lady without any devotional inclinations. She subjected Sakkubai to untold suffering and torture. She constantly harangued Sakkubai and seemed to derive sadistic pleasure from it.

Once, Sakkubai was fasting on a particular Ekadasi. Her mother-in-law ordered her to grind a bagful of *jowar* in the hand mill. As Sakkubai began grinding the *jowar* on an empty stomach, she was overcome by a bout of weakness and fainted. The Lord of the Universe, Panduranga Himself took the place of his devotee, carried out the grinding in a trice and disappeared. Instead of recognizing the greatness of Sakkubai's devotion, her mother-in-law developed even greater hatred for her.

One day, Sakkubai chanced upon the Varkaris, a group of devotees on pilgrimage to Pandaripur. The Varkaris collect themselves from several parts of the land and proceed to Pandaripur singing in praise of the Lord. Sakkubai's nascent devotional spark was lit on seeing them and in her ecstasy, she joined them without giving thought to much else. Enraged, her mother-in-law dragged her back home and tied her to a post with ropes.

However, the silent meditation and mental singing continued for Sakkubai without interruption. At midnight, all were sound asleep. Lord Panduranga, who delights Himself and the devotees with His





pranks, took on the form of her mother-in-law, untied her and gave her permission to proceed to Pandaripur with the Varkaris. He tied Himself to the post instead, taking the form of Sakkubai.

Reaching Pandaripur, Sakkubai took her bath in the Holy River Chandrabhaga and arrived at the sanctum

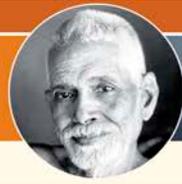
sanctorum of Panduranga with His name on her lips. Standing in His presence, she merged into him. The moment this news reached her in-laws, the impostor Sakkubai disappeared. Her mother-in-law realized, though belatedly, the truth of what had transpired and at last recognized Sakkubai's greatness. —



## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Maha Puja Day

One day in 1916, Mother Alagammal went up the Hill to visit her son but had no intention of coming down again. What started as motherly longing developed into a deep spiritual thirst that initiated an inner journey toward selfhood, culminating in her full release on 19th May, 1922 under her son's active supervision. The first Mahapuja took place the following day at the foot of the Mountain at the site of her samadhi which was, as it turned out, the first construction at Sri Ramanasramam. Mahapuja celebrations have taken place every year since then. This year's celebrations commenced on early morning of 7th June with mahanyasa japa in the Mother's Shrine and concluding with Deeparadhana around 10.30 am. Singers from the *Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning*, Bangalore offered a musical homage in the evening. For Mahapuja video, see: <https://www.youtube.com/c/sriramanasramam>. —



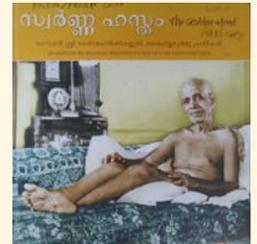


## New Publications: Malayalam Sivabhakta Puranam and Bhagavan's Handwriting



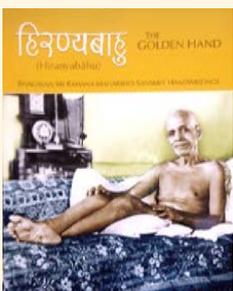
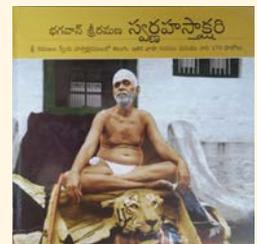
The Tamil canonical poem, *Periya Puranam*, compiled in the 12th century by poet-saint Sekkizhar deals with the lives of the sixty-three Saivaite saints known as Nayanmars. The sixty-three Nayanmars are highly respected and worshipped in all Siva temples in Tamil Nadu even today and the *Periya Puranam*, which gives the account of their lives, is revered as a devotional scripture. The Sanskrit work *Sivabhakta Vilasam*, which is an *upa-puranam* of *Skanda Puranam* also deals with the lives of these sixty-three Saivaite saints. However, the accounts given in *Sivabhakta Vilasam* vary slightly from that of *Periya Puranam*. This Malayalam version of *Sivabhakta Puranam* is a composite based on both *Periya Puranam* and *Sivabhakta Vilasam*, edited and translated by Savitha. 348pp —

Upon arriving in Tiruvannamalai, Bhagavan quickly earned the affection of Palaniswami, his first principal devotee. Bhagavan taught him by reading to him in the devotee's native Malayalam. At Virupaksha Cave, Bhagavan copied out for this devotee a number of ancient works in Malayalam and stitched them into a notebook. As Bhagavan found it easy to render Sanskrit works in the Malayalam script, today we have more than a thousand pages of Bhagavan's handwriting in Malayalam, many of which are reproduced in the present volume with commentary. 467pp + CD —



In his childhood, Bhagavan was found to have the golden touch and was aptly named *Ithangakkai*—‘the one with a golden hand’. His golden touch is evident in all he did. Otherwise, how could he have written thousands of pages in languages he never studied, composing poems unrivalled by native speakers and write them in calligraphic handwriting, cook the most delicious food out of the barest minimal ingredients, bind books to perfection, do expert masonry work and provide counseling in worldly affairs? This volume contains Bhagavan's handwriting in Tamil. 498pp + (free audio recordings on Ashram website) —

Bhagavan's writings in multiple languages are a feast to the eyes and soul. His Telugu handwritings alone grace a thousand pages from which are reproduced about three-hundred pages in the present volume with commentary. One cannot but be amazed at the extent of these works preserved in the Ashram Archives and their purpose comes to full fruition in being made available to all devotees. Bhagavan says in *Who am I?*: “All that one gives to others, one gives to oneself. If this truth is understood who will not give to others?” 520pp (free audio recordings on Ashram website) —



One of Bhagavan's monumental handwriting legacies was copying out the more than 2,000 verses of *Arunachala Mahatmyam* from various sources, such as *Skanda Maha Puranam* and *Siva Maha Puranam*. By Bhagavan's grace, several of these handwritten works have been preserved in the Ashram Archives, thus permitting their reproduction in the present volume. This publication of Bhagavan's Sanskrit manuscripts is aptly entitled *Hiranya Bahu*. Each work is preceded by a synopsis in English. 673pp. — [For a visual presentation of the book, go to <<https://www.youtube.com/c/sriramanasramam>>. For recordings of the chanting of the texts in the above books, see the Ashram's webpage resource centre, 'Audio books' at [www.sriramanamaharshi.org](http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org)]

