

# Saranagati



SARANAGATI  
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

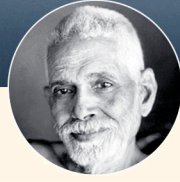
OCTOBER 2018  
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D. Thiyagarajan



## Saranagati



OCTOBER 2018  
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IN THIS  
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

The month began with Advent celebrations on the 1st September. We celebrated Ganesh Chaturthi on 13th September and Muruganar's Day on 17th September with chanting of his verses throughout the morning.

In this issue, we take up the final chapter of Ella Maillart's life and are privy to the correspondence she had with her friends and dignitaries in India after the war.

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

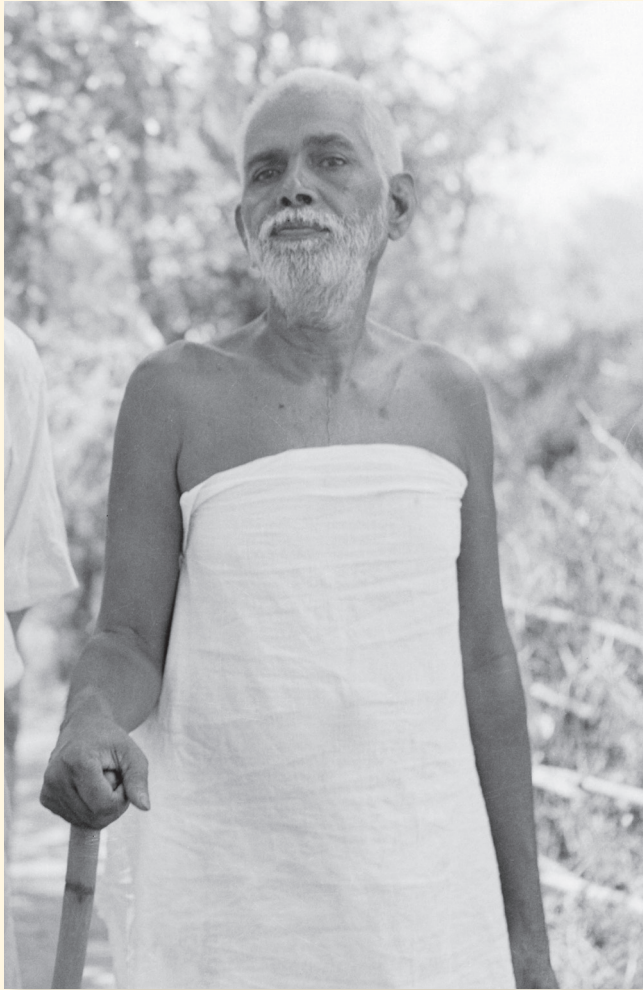
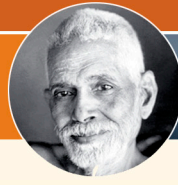
<i>The Long Road to Bhagavan: Part VI: Conclusion</i>	3
<i>Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Who Am I? Hall</i>	11
<i>Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Muruganar Aradhana/Mutrudal</i>	11
<i>Announcements: Ashram YouTube Channel</i>	11

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

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

30th October (Tues) Punarvasu  
6th November (Tues) Deepavali  
14th November (Weds) Kartigai Festival Flag-raising  
23rd November (Tues) Kartigai Deepam  
24th December (Mon) Bhagavan's 139th Jayanti





## The Long Road to Bhagavan Tracing the Pilgrim Life of Ella Maillart (Part VII: Conclusion)

During her time in Tiruvannamalai, Ella maintained a steady correspondence with her mother who had been tracking her daughter's explorations throughout the war years. It was as though she too was benefiting from Ella's progress. In time Ella could write to her in spiritual shorthand, no longer needing to append her insights with lengthy explanations. Ella now felt herself at liberty to make recommendations for her mother's spiritual welfare and channelled those words of Bhagavan that had already become her own:

*You have heard the ultimate truth [but], noblesse oblige [i.e. privilege entails responsibility], you have to remember it. You are at the stage when you must put all emphasis on the pure 'I'-principle, the subject, the changeless, so as to establish your being in lasting happiness.<sup>1</sup>*

Such admonitions were timely as Ella's mother was alone, having lost her husband some seven years earlier and now facing health issues to boot, and that too in the middle of a cataclysmic armed conflict.

In 1943, Ella intuitively resisted her mother's request to return to Geneva, not alone because of the risk of traveling to Europe in the middle of a war, but also for the prospect of having to leave off the important work under the care and guidance of Sri Bhagavan. On the other hand, she was in doubt about her filial responsibilities. Could she justifiably stay and leave her aging mother alone? She consulted the Maharshi about the longings of her ego and, after a long silence, he said, "There is no ego." Ella countered, "But does the teaching not say, 'We must kill the ego?' How to kill what does not exist?" She rephrased her questions 'very concretely' and got right to the point: "Should I leave? Should I stay here?" This time, Bhagavan did not take long to respond, "There is no here and there is no Geneva. All these notions are relative."<sup>2</sup>

Ella recalled how Guy Hague had been in a similar situation a year before, though his mother was in a more serious condition. In parting, Hague questioned Bhagavan: "How do I regard my relation to you?" Bhagavan replied, "Same as to God, or to your Self if you have advanced so far that you know that you are God." Later, Bhagavan assured Hague, "Don't be sad to go. I shall be with you all the way."

After the encounter, Ella asked Hague: "Did you ask Bhagavan how to help your mother if she suffers?" "Yes. I can only help by [endeavouring to remain] in the Self."<sup>3</sup>

### Leaving India

In time, Ella followed Hague's lead and began the long journey back to Europe. She took leave of the

<sup>1</sup> Ella Maillart fonds, Ms. fr. 7098, feuillet 62-205, Letter to her mother, 7 September 1950.

<sup>2</sup> Henri Hartung, L'Eclair de la Transcendance, 'Voyage Vers le Réel', Geneve, Olizane, 1983, p.179, freely translated.

<sup>3</sup> Ella Maillart fonds, Ms. fr. 7107/2-8, Carnets I à VII.





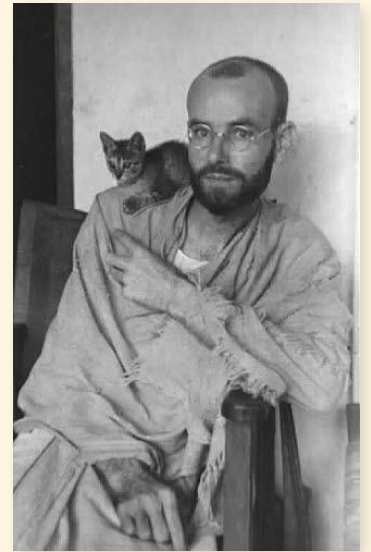
Ashram in February 1945 and made her way up to Kalimpong via Madras and Calcutta. As usual, she traveled third class, preferring to be in the company of Indians whom she saw as her sisters and brothers, rather than only mixing with the wives of British Raj officers and officials who peopled the first and second class compartments. In March, she went to Gangtok (Sikkim) and entered Tibet, following the Treaty Road to Phari Dzong. In April, she returned to India and made her way to Benares to visit her close friend, Lewis Thompson, the British sannyasin-poet who had left Ramanasramam in 1942 and moved to Courtallam to be in the company of Krishna Menon (Atmananda). Ella had visited Courtallam with Thompson, an intellectual who found Menon's erudite English-language teachings engaging. Instead of the abiding silences he received from Bhagavan Ramana, Thompson was pleased to get long verbal answers to his many inquiries. By 1943 however, Menon and Thompson had had a falling out over a theological issue, and Thompson, hurt and disappointed, beat a retreat to Benares and took refuge in the solitude of his books. There, Ella sought his help in editing *The Cruel Way*, which she had written in English. Thompson, very much the wordsmith who laboured over phrases striving for poetic precision, gave harsh criticism to her casualness, even admonishing her for writing in that language at all since she 'never learned English well'. More than that, he disparaged her writing style altogether, "Your method of work is curious: you don't seem to have the artist's joy in elegantly colouring a problem; you seem to haul your stuff out like yards of entrails! I think because it comes from the instinctive part of you."<sup>4</sup>

Ever the poet, Thompson was not able to fully appreciate Ella's earthy, matter-of-fact approach to writing. Nevertheless, Ella admired Thompson. She wrote him: 'For your fighting spirit, for your indomitableness, I have nothing but envious admiration and love, whatever your development.'<sup>5</sup> Ella felt he had offered great insights and useful

4 Margaret E. McColley, 'The Epistolary Self' (unpublished thesis), 2006, p.164.

5 Ibid, p. 166.

suggestions for the book. The renowned author, Arnaud Desjardins later noted Ella's appreciation for Thompson to whom she dedicated *Ti-Puss* in 1951 following his untimely death two years earlier: "Ella told me, 'He is one of the most extraordinary men I've ever met.' And God knows Ella has met extraordinary men!"<sup>6</sup>



Lewis Thompson with Ti-Puss at Ramanasramam

On 10 June 1945, six years since seeing her native Switzerland, Ella hastened home, not by any urgency on the part of her mother's health, but on that of her brother Albert, who had fallen seriously ill and was to pass away in December the following year at the age of 48.

### Chandolin

Upon her return, Ella found that her reputation had preceded her and she was called on to give interviews, talks and participate in conferences, spending time with her mother in between. When Ella subsequently met an old artist-friend in 1946, he commented on her depleted appearance. She later told an acquaintance, "Edmond Bille said to me: 'You are so pale, Ella! I am going to lend you my chalet in Chandolin, at two thousand metres, and in three months, you will be back to your old self.'" Ella later commented, "That's exactly what happened."<sup>7</sup> She spent that entire summer in the Valais, with periodic visits to her mother in nearby Geneva. She loved this mountain refuge so much that she scraped together funds to buy a small plot of land in the same village with the hope of being able to establish herself there.

6 Arnaud Desjardins, *Un Chemin De Pèlerin*, 'Voyage Vers Le Réel', Geneve, Olizane, 1983, pp. 170-71, freely translated. Thompson's literary estate was bequeathed to Ella following his demise in 1949 and came in the form of crates of letters, journals and notebooks. She eventually handed them over to a mutual friend, Richard Lannoy, who edited them for publication.

7 Anne Deriaz, 'Chere Ella', Actes Sud, 1998, p. 104.





Ella at Chandolin



Atchala



Library Window

## Atchala

In 1948 Ella built a small chalet in her newly-found Chandolin, one of the highest villages in the Pennine Alps. Facing upward through the Val d'Anniviers toward the 4,357-metre Dent Blanche, one of the highest peaks in the Alps, she resolved to lay down her roots and spend at least six months a year there: 'from the last to the first snows'. She named her hermitage 'Atchala' in honour of the Holy Hill under whose wing she had found shelter and sustenance for the soul, while resting in the capable hands of Sri Ramana. The irony was not lost on her: the perpetual wanderer finally settling into the life of the one 'unmoving' (*achala* in Sanskrit), a striking divergence from her previous life of incessant travel. But now she had found that which was indeed immovable, dwelling within her. She waxed lyrical about her new high-altitude home: 'inundated with sun and silence, festooned with larch trees,<sup>8</sup> its vast and varied horizon a source of ever-renewed joy.'<sup>9</sup> She adorned the interior of her *kuti* with three portraits of Sri Ramana and arranged it as if she were at sea, still underway, voyaging through inner landscapes. Its contents were, as a friend put it, 'fastidiously placed and ordered, a precision that recalled her years as a sailor and the need to use small places well, surrounded by her books and reminders of her voyages, of her wanderings, thus reuniting her past and present.'<sup>10</sup>

8 Large deciduous trees with short needles and cones.

9 'Ella Maillart: Travel as a Way of Life', Swiss Review, November 2015, p. 20.

10 Sara Steinert-Borella, 'The Travel Narratives of Ella Maillart: (En)Gendering the Quest', Peter Lang, 2006, p. 121.

## Two Strands

After settling-in at Chandolin, the twin aspects of her life — a highly developed interiority, on the one hand, and a vibrant charismatic public appeal, on the other — stood in stark contrast to one another. Her interiority communed in silence with the stars, the sky and the flowers that adorned the veranda of her mountain retreat. She traced the contemplative thread that strung together long years in solitude on the road in remote regions of the world, including the secluded expanses of her own heart traversed through intimate encounters with a sage in South India. But now back in the West, she was no longer anonymous, no longer among a people versed in silence, and she discovered that the privilege of having found peace brought with it responsibilities. For some, the attraction to her was only for her novelty; for others, her notoriety; for the timid in her midst, it was a longing to live out their dreams of adventure vicariously by listening to her many gripping tales. Among others, there was an unconscious recognition that Ella had something they lacked. Women, for instance, were drawn to her as one who had overcome the identity crisis European women were facing in general. As a woman Ella was an ideal, a living example of one who had redefined herself, who had learned to participate fully in the world. Her admirers may not have been able to appreciate how autonomy and self-reliance had for long decades been part and parcel of the cultural heritage Ella inherited from her Danish mother.

As she established herself and began to find her European feet again, the days, weeks and seasons





alternated. There were occasions sitting alone at home, or one-on-one with a friend over tea in intimate conversation where she felt she could reveal herself completely. By contrast, there were public events where her exploits were the main interest for those with whom she sat. On behalf of the exotic peoples in distant lands she had come to know and love, she took up the challenge and sketched their ways of life, instructing her audience with ethnographic detail, answering the many questions. She openly lamented the misfortunes of 20th-century history: colonialism, westernisation, modernisation and the permanent destruction of cultures, customs, languages and natural habitats. Her public life drew the attention of young adventurers yearning to apprentice themselves to a seasoned sojourner, to learn her art, imbibe the courage and raw intensity of one who had 'dared everything'. One such aspirant was the traveller-writer Nicolas Bouvier who came to understand Ella quite well and summed up her legacy in a few simple words:

*The life of Ella Maillart is traversed by a quest for freedom and independence. She refused the traditional values of Europe, went to India in a search for the meaning of life and then kept practising in private what she had learned.<sup>11</sup>*

But Ella kept her cards close to her chest and only shared the depths of her interior journey with those who 'had a real need to know and a genuine interest in this search'. Isabelle Y Chappuis writes:

*Return journeys are sometimes difficult since one is divided between a critical lucidity concerning what one has found and the tendency towards sentimentality, which is somewhat condescending. This time Ella found a devastated Europe occupied with healing its wounds as well as enjoying the renewed peace. Between a society just emerging from the abyss having seemingly learned very little, and Asia, the land of knowledge which was starting to get affected by the virus of Western superficiality, Chandolin seemed a bridge of sorts. It offered both a reconnection to her roots and the*

11 Fanny Guex, 'Two Swiss Travellers in India: Experiences and Perspectives on Religion in the Mid-20th Century', May 2014.

*possibility of pursuing the inner quest which was the real engine of her rich existence.<sup>12</sup>*

### Untying the Skein

But Ella never fell victim to nostalgia. Hers was a spirit too spry and exuberant to hanker after security in the harbour of by-gone days. For her, each moment was an invitation to the timeless, ever fresh and accessible to a willing heart:

*If we are destined to manifest what we understand of our own nature, it is those who seek, who come out on top. It seems to me that this development, by which we give shape to our deepest tendency, matures on a plane that is beyond ethics ... Thus, I feel that all beings can blossom as soon as they have exhausted and transcended their innate peculiarity. Creatures tormented by our contradictions, we must untie the skein that is in us, overcome our anguish, our cowardice, our patience, our courage and our love for a limited or a single being, to then be able to release the fundamental 'note' from our centre, the same in each of us — this note, this silent sound to which all diversities, all differences that we believe separate us and to which, nevertheless, everything is actually reduced.<sup>13</sup>*

In 1947, she comments on the prospect of having followed her parents' expectations in assisting her father in his fur business, versus a career of pilgrimage that had altered her life and tilted the scales in favour of purpose, solidity and depth:

*I am glad that I left home when I was young and followed the wake of the subtle Ulysses, glad to have lived the sea and the desert instead of helping father to air the silky softness of the deep sealskins, to value the bunches of ruffle-tailed silver foxes or by trying on the latest modèles de Paris, glad I accomplished most of what I set out to do: once and for all I know how short-lived the joys of vanity are. Now, like a spider that has spread its web to the end of the branches, my horizon has been enlarged: as if I had left everywhere something spun out of myself, I am directly stirred by what happens along the far-flung threads of my experience.<sup>14</sup>*

12 Isabelle Y Chappuis, 'Ella Maillart: From The Exotic to the Interior Journey', unpublished thesis, 2008, freely translated.

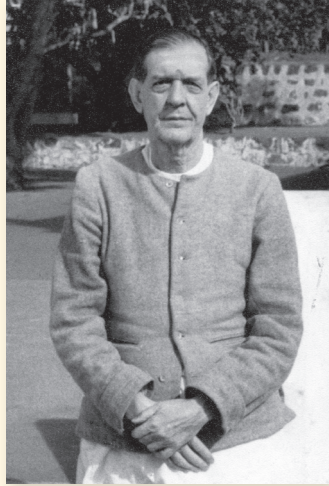
13 Yvette Fatio, *Viva L'Indépendance*, 'Voyage Vers le Réel', Geneve, Olizane, 1983, p.24, freely translated.

14 Ella Maillart, *The Cruel Way*, Heinemann, 1947, University of Chicago Press, reprint, 2013, p.45.





Viswanatha Swami



Major Chadwick

## News from Sri Ramanasramam

Meanwhile, as Ella re-established herself in Switzerland after long years away, she all the while maintained regular contact with Chadwick, Viswanatha Swami and others who were back at the Ashram. Chadwick gave routine news in his letters. In May of 1946, he wrote:

*On 19th, Venkatoo had the thread ceremony of his two eldest boys, the Ashram was like a marriage celebration, lots of people came and he received some thousands of rupees, so you see we are making money. On Saturday we celebrated Mahapuja, so the crowds continue, though a few relations have gone. There is a terrible drought and the summer has been intolerably hot, I really ought to get out but I never do.*

But three years later, reports turned to the Maharshi's declining health. Though concerned, Ella anticipated a full recovery. Needless to say, she was caught off guard by the news of the Maharshi's earthly departure on 14th April 1950. About a year after Bhagavan's Mahanirvana, Viswanatha Swami wrote Ella:

*You will be glad to know that I was one of the dozen persons who stood near Bhagavan during his Maha Nirvana. It was such a thrilling and indelible experience. It was his last teaching and initiation. The finitising agency — the body — lay there insentient. The Lord smiled in silence, "Here I Am — The Immutable One Reality unveiled!" Bhagavan never grumbled against anybody. He submitted to all the treatments only to satisfy his devotees. He himself would have left it to nature. When it was clear that nothing was of any avail he has asked, "Is any more treatment needed?" The previous night he asked the attendants to go away and sleep or meditate, because their services were no*

*longer required. He has been very gracious and considerate throughout. The last few months of Bhagavan's life were the clearest demonstration of His Transcendental Experience even to a non-believer. Bhagavan is the real I in the Heart of all beings.<sup>15</sup>*

Viswanatha Swami, addressing her informed her of the many changes following Bhagavan's 'physical disappearance':

*Most of the resident devotees from other provinces have left. McIver has gone to Bombay with his wife. Mrs. Osborne has built a cottage near the Ashram. Mr. Osborne is [working for] The Indian Express, Madras. Adam and Kitty in England. Chadwick and Mrs. Talyarkhan continue at Tiruvannamalai. Cohen also. The Americans [Rappolds] have gone away. There are not many visitors to the Ashram. The Ashram has to adjust itself to the changed conditions prevailing after Bhagavan's physical disappearance. Whatever the changes outside, let us not forget the eternal message of Bhagavan, the Reality of the Heart.<sup>16</sup>*

And finally he adds:

*There is no higher or lower in that timeless and spaceless realm, no relativity of any kind. This vision of Reality is our sole refuge. That is how we have to put it, so long as we have not transcended the sphere of relativity; as there is no duality there, there is no problem whatsoever. Let me stop here as you yourself know enough of this.<sup>17</sup>*

## Returning to the Subcontinent

Ella returned to the subcontinent in the early spring of 1951, too late, alas, to see Bhagavan once more. Meanwhile *Ti-Puss*, much of which she had written in Tiruvannamalai, was published that spring. *Cruises and Caravans*, the book she had presented to Bhagavan in the Hall in 1943, inscribed with a note saying that he had 'helped her to write it', was re-released in French under the title 'Croisières et Caravanes', with an additional chapter concerning her years at Ramanasramam.<sup>18</sup>

Among the many with whom Ella maintained an ongoing correspondence was Jawaharlal Nehru who while in prison under British rule had read Ella's books with great interest. The two continued to correspond even after Nehru had taken up the demanding

<sup>15</sup> Ella Maillart fonds, Ms. fr. 7094, feuillet 209-212, letter from Visvanathan, 24 August 1950.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

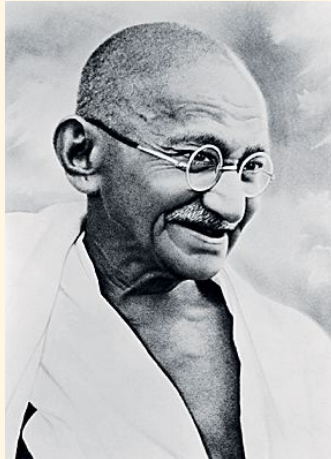
<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> The first English version of this account appears in the May 2018 issue of *Saranagati*, pp. 3-6.





Ella and Nehru in Delhi, 1951



Mahatma Gandhi



Maurice Frydman



Nisargadatta

responsibility of leading the country as the Republic's first Prime Minister. In 1951, Ella sent him *Ti-Puss* to which he gave the following reply:

*Your book is rather odd. Because of that, I liked it. It is a curious mixture of your affection for the cat and your search for all manner of things which are difficult to reach. And so, as I read your book, Ti-Puss rather faded away and your personality was more in evidence. I confess I found that more interesting.*

In a letter to her from February 1952, Nehru brought her into the confidence of his experience of public life:

*A great traveller like you in the wild places of the world will of course sniff at my journeys by conventional means in India ... [But] I have travelled about 25,000 miles in about nine weeks with intervals of stay in Delhi. I am told that during this period I addressed personally (not through the radio) nearly 40 million people. The figure may be exaggerated. But it is true that I had colossal audiences everywhere and many times a day. An audience of a hundred thousand was common and once or twice it went up to half a million. However big the audience, it became for me almost like a family gathering.<sup>19</sup>*

In April, with Nehru's help, Ella got a visa and entered newly-opened Nepal, a kingdom that had been off-limits to outsiders for centuries. Her two months in Kathmandu, followed by a trek through the Melamchi Valley to the sacred Gosainkund Lake, formed the substance of her final book, *The Land of the Sherpas* (1955), which celebrated, among other things, her love-affair with Asia.<sup>20</sup>

19 Ella Maillart fonds, Ms. fr. 7094, feuillet 209-212, letters from Nehru.

20 Ella Maillart, *The Land of the Sherpas*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1955, Pilgrims Publishing, 2008, p.13.

## Leading Groups

Following her mother's death in Geneva in March 1957,<sup>21</sup> Ella began to travel more intensively, spending six months a year at her hermitage in Chandolin and the rest of the year in Asia and elsewhere. She returned to India regularly. In the decades that followed, she made trips to Uzbekistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Ladakh, Tibet, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, Java, China, Japan, Korea, Turkey, Yemen, Bora Bora, Mexico and even made a trek to Everest Base Camp in 1965. She led small groups to the countries she knew well and loved most. She couldn't help but be a guide in every way, having the experience they lacked, and often advised them: "Ask yourself unceasingly, 'Who am I?'" And through this constant query you will come to know that you are the Light of Consciousness."<sup>22</sup>

On one of her regular journeys to India, she met up again with Maurice Frydman, whom she had known from the Ashram days. Frydman, soft-spoken and perhaps among the most underrated of Bhagavan Ramana's Western devotees, had befriended Gandhiji upon first coming to India in 1935 at the invitation of the Maharaj of Mysore. Gandhiji made use of Frydman's engineering genius and Frydman designed several new charkhas (spinning wheels), one of which was chosen as the country's standard in the hope

ton, London, 1955, Pilgrims Publishing, 2008, p.13.

21 Marie Dagmar Maillart (Kliim) died on 19 March.

22 'Ella Maillart: Travel as a Way of Life', *Swiss Review*, November 2015, p.20.







that India might regain its self-sufficiency. Gandhiji subsequently dubbed Frydman Bharatananda, an expression of Maurice's love for India. If others mistook Frydman's self-effacing nature as mediocrity, Bhagavan Ramana, Ella narrates, saw the potential beneath the meekness and told him on one of his many visits, "You have absolutely understood everything. Your explanations are perfect, but you must become what you describe."<sup>23</sup>

In 1959, Frydman came to the aid of Prime Minister Nehru when 100,000 Tibetans began to pour into the country, including the Dalai Lama. Maurice single-handedly journeyed up and down India, soliciting lands on behalf of the homeless Tibetans, establishing refugee settlements, among them, Dharamshala and Bylakuppe. By the late 1960s, he had met up with Nisargadatta Maharaj and had compiled, translated and edited the great advaitic classic of the late 20th century, *I Am That*.<sup>24</sup> At his prompting, Ella came to see Nisargadatta and returned three years in a row in 1979, 1980 and 1981, following Maurice's death in 1976. On one of these visits, Nisargadatta told Ella, "Young people today understand faster because they go more directly to the centre". Turning to her, he said: "the old ones have read too much and think too much".<sup>25</sup>

In 1983, Ella brought a group of twelve from Europe to Sri Ramanasramam. Once back in Tiruvannamalai, she met with V. Ganesan and other devotees she knew from the old days. Chris Quilkey said he met her at Hotel Arunachala, and even at 80 years old, she was "determined, calm, humble, alert". "Strong but not pushy."<sup>26</sup>

In 1986, at age 83, she went to Tibet on her last major expedition.

### Interviews and Accolades

Throughout the post-Ramanasramam years, Ella continued to give lectures around the world, attended numerous conferences on various themes, and was

23 Arnaud Desjardins, *Un Chemin De Pelerin, 'Voyage Vers Le Réel'*, Geneve, Olizane, 1983, pp.170-71, freely translated.

24 For an extended four-part account of the life of Maurice Frydman, see *Saranagati* issues November 2011 through February 2012.

25 Ibid.

26 In private conversation.



Ella with her group in Ramanasramam, 1983

regularly asked to give interviews by media outlets and organisations such as the French service of BBC, Radio Sottens, Radio Suisse Romande, and by established radio hosts and videographers. She was also awarded numerous distinguished achievement awards: 'Prix Schiller, Switzerland' (1953); 'Sir Percy Sykes Memorial Medal of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs, London' (1955); 'Prix Quadriennal de la Ville de Genève' (1987); 'Prix Littéraire Alexandra David-Neel' (1989); 'Grand Prix du Livre Maritime (1991); and 'Prix et Médaille Léon Dewez de la Société de Géographie de Paris' (1994).

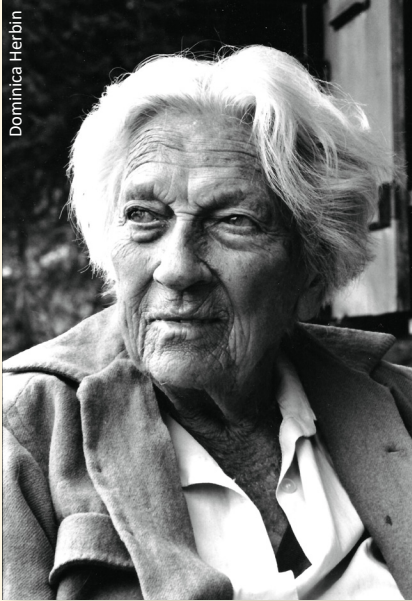
In 1983, as a tribute to Ella on her 80th birthday, 'Voyage Vers Le Réel', (*Journey to the Real*), was published with contributions by Nicolas Bouvier, Govinda Swaminathan, Frédérick Leboyer (the reputed French obstetrician), Deben Bhattacharya, Richard Lannoy, Henri Hartung, Arnaud Desjardins and her childhood friend, Miette Seyrig, among others.

### Final Years

In the last two years of her life, Ella was blessed to be taken care of by Anne Deriaz who, drawn to her by an unseen force, was well-rewarded by the many gifts she received in the form of spiritual insight and life wisdom. Anne recorded her reflections in *Chere Ella* (1998), and later wrote:

*Ramana Maharshi was a central figure in her life, a pillar, a highlight, a lighthouse. Together in Chandolin, we could not spend a single day without her telling me about the*





Ella in Chandolin, 1995

*Maharshi. She told me anecdotes and, above all, described his look of compassion and what had happened at the Ashram. It is difficult for us Westerners to really grasp what the presence of a Master means, and I do not want to venture an explanation. Mewlana Rumi said: The true*

*master is the one who accomplishes the transformation of a disciple without the latter being aware of it, allowing them to realise the Unity without effort, without combat and without service. The true master is the philosopher's stone that transmutes the copper of others. By this alchemy they change copper into gold.<sup>27</sup>*

If as Dizzy Gillespie, the improvisational trumpet virtuoso, once famously said, "It's not how far you go; it's how you bring it home", then Ella's life was a success in every way. Her words in the latter years reveal a continual refinement and deepening of the perfect life she was 'instinctively seeking':

*I suddenly understood that heaven and hell are, at every moment, the consequence of the thought that our lack of consciousness suggests to us. And how pitiful we are to let these intellectual projections compose for us a valley of tears. Beauty, sadness and joy are not part of an object, an event, they exist nowhere else but within me. If, then, these latent feelings reside in me in a constant way and depend only incidentally on external circumstances, it is up to me to learn how to bring out from my depth, rather than sadness, unconditional joy. Thus each one of us can succeed in shaping our world.<sup>28</sup>*

27 Anne Deriaz, Conference A St-Pierre De Clage, August 2017, freely translated.

28 Yvette Fatio, *Viva L'Independance*, 'Voyage Vers Le Réel', Geneve, Olizane, 1983, p.24, freely translated.

Ella seemed to experience the divergences of her life fusing together and dovetailing into a harmonious whole, coming to an understanding of their meaning:

*In South India at last, I had time to sum up, to weigh my travels in my heart — and not in the balance of time and space. At the hour of my death what would the meaning of these travels be? They were important to me in so far as they had changed me, brought me nearer to my real centre. Slowly they had led me to what matters most. Only the inward journey is real. I found myself. Which is the same as to say that I found the way to become freed from my preposterous ego. Now I know that there is a way to the unchangeable Centre — that Core which is the same in all of us. And because of It, I can try with sincerity to love my neighbour as much as myself. Feeling no longer divided but concentrated, I can march with patience towards that oneness which we all feel, is the ultimate as well as the first word of life.<sup>29</sup>*

Finally, the mark of perfection at the end of any life is gratitude and compliance:

*Deep gratefulness. I come back to you, perfect pond of my youth, deep blue line of the far horizon. You sent me away to the seas, and to beyond the seas in search of your promise. I have done it. I regret nothing. I feel all is granted. I have no more wish. I am free from myself, don't belong to myself any more. What then is my harvest? Nothing. That necessary oneness is a total Mystery. But I learnt the way to it, [and] I kneel before it.*

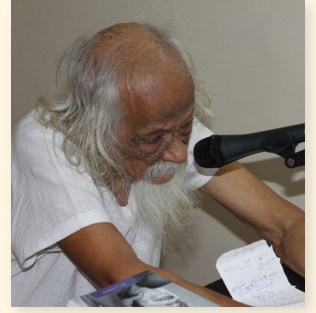
On 27 March 1997, at her hermitage 'Atchala', Ella passed away peacefully at the age of 94. Obituaries appeared in both the *New York Times* and *The Independent*, London, the latter which recorded how she "stayed for some time with Ramana Maharshi in southern India. He cured her of some of her restlessness and she came to the realisation that 'the world with its countless aspects cannot give us the fundamental answer: only God can. And God can be met nowhere but in ourselves.'<sup>30</sup> —

*(series concluded)*

29 'My Philosophy of Travel', *Traveller's Quest: Original Contributions Towards a Philosophy of Travel* (William Hodge, 1950), pp. 114–26.

30 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituary-ella-maillart-1266265.html>.





## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Who Am I? Hall Inauguration, 13 September

On Vinayaka Chaturthi, 13 September 2018, the Ashram's new Satsang Hall was inaugurated by President Sri V.S. Ramanan. Created by joining two rooms of the old Mountain Path Office (in the Ilayaraja Building) the new hall was named the 'Who am I? Hall' in honour of Sri Ramaswamy Pillai (1895-1995). The event began with Smt. Sushila Ramanan singing a song on *Atma Vichara* after which KVS spoke on the specialness of the day, not only because of its connection with Lord Ganesa, but because it was V. Ganesan's 82nd birthday according to the Hindu almanac. In his speech, KVS said Ganesan was a treasure-house of uplifting anecdotes on the lives of old devotees, with whom he had intimate association, and was thus well-qualified to give satsang. Ganesan gave a brief talk explaining the significance of satsang and concluded with fourteen questions asked by Sivaprakasam Pillai together with Bhagavan's answers written on slate and sand. —



## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Muruganar Aradhana and Mutrudal

Following Punarvasu celebrations on 6th September, *mutrudal* chanting of Muruganar's *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* began on the morning of 7th September in the Ashram New Hall and continued right up till the evening of the 8th. On the following morning, devotees gathered at Muruganar's Samadhi to celebrate the annual puja in honour of the great poet-devotee. —

### 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>>

