Dear Devotees,

July brought moderate weather with lots of cloudy days and cool breezes stemming from the very robust Southwest monsoon that has brought appreciable precipitation on West coast of the subcontinent and in some southern districts of Tamil Nadu.

V. Ganesan continues his discourses four days per week in the Ashram Archive Auditorium with sizeable turnout. Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays (from 9.45-11am), devotees can hear talks on the lives and stories told by various devotees who lived with the Master. All are invited.

From 23-26th July, the entire Ribhu Gita was chanted in Tamil by a regular gathering of about thirty devotees.

For videos, photos and further news of events, go to http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org or write to us at saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org

In Sri Bhagavan,
The Editorial Team
The Long Road to Bhagavan
Tracing the Pilgrim Life of Ella Maillart (Part V)

(As we have seen in earlier chapters, Ella Maillart was not in the habit of doing things by halves. She was an expert in initiative and jumping straight in, and going to the core. Robustness of character was a gift from her Danish mother, but Ella took her mother’s independence to new levels and refined her longing for ongoing adventure to uncover a deep desire to transform her life. If in her youth she had reverenced the verse from John 8, *Know the truth, and the truth will set you free*, she began to see that the freedom it implied was not in any way related to book knowledge or any newly acquired information or, for that matter, even some formula for Absolute Truth. As it turns out, Absolute Truth is not born of content, not something to be gleaned from outside but is intimate and experiential. Non-duality’s privileging of wisdom over acquired knowledge and its de-emphasis of knowledge for knowledge’s sake found ample compensation in the one insight, the one intuition, the one fresh way of seeing that would change everything.

For Ella, discovering Bhagavan Ramana had not been a chance occurrence. If the ‘free will of today creates the fate of tomorrow’, as Ella once wrote, her relentless years of exploration found fulfilment in something that gave finality to the search, something by which all further searching would be rendered superfluous. Ella’s life of travel since her youth had been premised on the yearning for just that something, even if till then she had no context for discovering what it might be:

*From the beginning, I wanted to live my own life, and patiently I shored up that desire against wind and tide … [But] the wideness of the horizon has to be inside us, cannot be anywhere but inside us, otherwise what we speak about is geographic distances … Only when one is able to grasp wideness can one possess it … I do not expect anything from the outside. I have patience. I possess my bearings to follow the path that leads to the immutable centre, to the One without a second, that which is the first and last word of life.*

This path eventually brought Ella to Arunachala, an interior journey she documented in ‘notes later written in Europe for [the] possible purpose of a publication which did not take place’:

*I propose to write down a few reminiscences concerning my days at Tiruvannamalai in answer to those who ask me “Tell me about your life in India.” My work will be difficult: What, to me, was most important, remains unexplainable.*

1 Ella Maillart, <www.inspiringquotes.us>.
3 Ella Maillart fonds, Ms. fr. 7111 B/2 feuillet 1.
Approaching the Holy Hill with eager anticipation, Ella abandoned herself to what she knows not:

Give me courage to carry on my search towards something really satisfactory, no longer disappointing ... humility, since I am still on the material (gross) plane, without a glimpse of higher understanding ... and purity of heart so that true Reality might enter ... make me devoid of vanity so as not to exploit that new study like some writers I know. The greatest realities I know, skiing, sailing are rotten, attacked by fear or desire: they cannot last. Blackwood put it well: "It's like a wall behind which, still invisible, is Reality." I no longer know what to do with my life. Always running around without reason. Can I find the direction, the meaning? I am without desires: I give up travelling, book-writing, name [and fame]. It does not bring what I need.

Yet, arriving in the Old Hall, Ella struggled with her motivations, contradictions and delusions. Her stark self-honesty is both refreshing and reassuring for devotees who recognise in her vulnerability their own ambivalences:

Is it the ego fighting as not to be eliminated, who makes me think: I am once more acting a part? If so, it will be possible to defeat him. As usual, I am lazy. I wish the sage would do it all for me now that I have made this effort to come so far. He does not care ... It is for me to decide. I rather like the idea as I imagine I would resent every move of mine ordered by a guru. Of course, one in a million succeeds. But it is the search that counts. Even if I die half-way, it doesn't matter. [...] More than once I said to myself: when growing older, unmarried women go off the rail, become arty, or talk of religion. Is it simply because I [have] become less attractive that I turn towards God, towards something more solid than the game of life? Well, I laugh at what people might say. I'll be true to my way. If it is a mistaken one, I'll find out. The main point is to be sincere.

In Bhagavan's eyes, sincerity was like pure gold, the singlemost valuable asset in any genuine spiritual search. On its own, however, it would not be enough. If everything was to be determined by a single shift in focus, a new way of seeing, then the change Ella sought was not quantitative but was born of intuition and wisdom. If the egoic self was an illusion, the Self Bhagavan spoke of must include all the world, God

4 Ella is likely referring to Algernon Henry Blackwood the English novelist, short story writer, journalist and broadcaster.
5 Ella Maillart fonds, Ms. fr. 7111 B/2 feuillet 4.
6 Ibid, feuillet 12.

and the very light of consciousness itself. Bhagavan shed light on her query. He told her:

Unless the illusory perception of the serpent in the rope ceases, the rope [will not be] perceived as such. Unless the illusory perception of the world as an apparent objective reality ceases, the vision of the true nature of the Self (on which the appearance is grounded) [will not] be obtained.

Ella reflected on Bhagavan's statement in her notebook:

Yes, I admit that. But how different, how new to me! During my life I was training myself to feel more intensely the changing appearances of this world. I thought it was the [best] way to describe them in my books. But it was elusive. I was running after changes, never thought there [could be something that was] changeless. [It was] like [I was] living in a dream.

7 Ibid, 7107/2-8, Carnets I à VII, feuillet 10.
8 Ibid, 7111, B/4, feuillet 69.
The changeless had been the missing link in her life, a life which till then had been governed by a hasty inventorying of that which is fleeting. If only she could access this one treasure, she mused, this *pearl of great price*, then the indwelling capacity of the human heart to love unconditionally would break forth in a single burst of power and all the imagined boundaries that separated her from others would drop away once for all. Ella continues:

None of us realised that building a new world meant starting with building a new inner life within. We thought it was the business of others … The only thing we must learn to do is to say fully, ‘Thy will be done’, as our will is not the right thing, Therefore, surrendering to unknown laws is the only true action we can take because cursing, crying, and bargaining are foolish. One has to discriminate all the time between the ego-mind and the Self-Mind. If my lumbago aches, it is probably an indication that every part of me has not surrendered to God, that I still like to talk about my body or arouse pity, or show bravery at not complaining. … But most of what Bhagavan says is so rich of comparisons and subtle that I cannot retain it. It just shows me what a foolish attempt it is for me to grasp through my reason what a simple heart ought to live simply.

As it would turn out, Ella began to suspect non-dual awakening and Christian love are identical, both arising from the deep recognition that all others are our very own self. If her vision had been limited theretofore, it was by virtue of a lifelong apprehension engendered by the presupposition that we are merely this body. But both body and mind, and indeed all clinging to anything whatsoever, should be let go of once and for all:

> Yesterday, I told Bhagavan that I could do no more. I had come so far as to reach his presence, but the rest was hateful darkness. Alone I can do nothing with God I can do everything. No, even that is wrong. I must first disappear in absolute surrender. Then, if you want, you can do everything through me. Silence has taught me much today. The Great Self, the unique Person, has no desires since It is Absolute. Whatever in me is worthy of the name existence must be that Absolute — there could not be something existing outside It. Therefore, the only thing that matters is the conquest of the Self, which, in effect, is the return in me of the conscious focal point of what was never separated. Therefore, I might be here forever. I have killed desires. Nothing will lure me away. And it might take a long time before I have annihilated my feeling of separateness from the only fullness I want.

Bhagavan had always insisted that the inquiry, *Who am I?* was the root question before which all other questioning should yield. One time, after awaiting Bhagavan at the foot of the Hill as he went out for his walk, Ella inquired about it. Bhagavan told her:

> If you do not know who you are, you will not understand from where these questions come. If you wear green-tinted glasses, you will see everything as green; if you wear pink-tinted glasses you will see everything as pink. According to what you believe, you are going to deform that which you

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9 Ibid., 7107/2-8, Carnets I à VII, feuillet 61.
10 Ibid., feuillet 11.
11 Ibid., feuillet 40.
12 Ella Maillart fonds, Ms. fr. 7111 B/3, feuillet 29.
The challenge took hold of her, and another day she returned to the same place at the bottom of the Hill, anticipating Bhagavan’s return. She narrates the encounter:

When Bhagavan came back, I asked him: “As long as I have not realised, how can I discriminate between the voice of the ego and the voice of the Self?” (Seeing [him] so near, I noticed [that] his eyes are not [singular] black [globes], but [are] full of golden [beams] and [dewy ringlets] at the exterior):

Ella: “Who is the ego?”
Bhagavan: “It is nothing but the Self.”
Ella: “Yes, but how to know what to do in this particular instance? I [should not] go on rushing about blindly. I want to act only when there is an imperative urge. Might I in the meantime [remain] here for years?”
Bhagavan: “What is here or there? It is just the same whether you are here or in Switzerland.”
Ella: “Therefore, I need only live, asking nothing?”
Bhagavan: “Just Be! [That] is your work—be in Bliss!”

On yet another day, she asked Bhagavan before his walk if it is possible to miss Self-Realisation ‘once one is ripe for it’, or at that point is Self-Realisation inevitable? And, does Self-Realisation come gradually or suddenly? Bhagavan said that it comes gradually, and “then you feel there was never a time when you were not it.” But after his walk, Bhagavan amended his earlier reply:

It is [also] sudden… It is like sunrise; there is daylight long before, but only when the sun appears can you speak of the day being there.11

With deep humility, however, Ella remained open to the possibility that it may not be her destiny to reach the promised land:

Even in my great moments, when I had a tiller in my hand, sailing the open sea, … [or mounted on] fast racing-skis breaking the starting-gate thread, I knew there was something more ‘behind it’ waiting to be seized, to make everything quite Real. I had not been [given] the master-word linking the [fleeting] moment with [enduring time and the timeless].

13 Interview in 1986 about her encounter with Bhagavan.
14 Ella Maillart fonds, 7107/2-8, Carnets I à VII.
15 Ibid.

If such is the rule of the game, I drop all my pursuits in hopes of [becoming] Real. And I go [so] far as to say it is not a bargain: I am even ready to bear that in spite of that renunciation, I might not be fit.16

But S.S. Cohen encouraged Ella with his own advice in respect of getting sidelined by doubts and concerns:

There are so many problems as there are men and nobody can solve them all. When you need a table, you go and buy it without worrying about the tree from which it was made, [or the] ‘where’ and ‘when’ [of its making] … Now, what you want is lasting happiness, peace and stability. Go straight to it by the quickest means [available]. Know yourself! From that conjunct will derive the satisfactory explanation for [all other questions].17

Indeed the singular enquiry that occupied Ella’s years in Tiruvannamalai and which, she says, ‘led her to the golden thread of Ariadne’ was ‘What am I?’:

One-pointedness is needed. They say I only had it in fits: for my club, for a cruise, for a so-called impossible journey. I shall now give up catching hold of diverse aims. […] And all these days, during my painful effort at concentration, the stone-carvers were shouting at me with every exasperating note of their hammers at their pointed irons: I have been the soft pink point taken out of the charcoal being slowly shaped and tempered again and again, before attacking the eternal stone. If they cut into granite, how much more my one-pointedness of mind, tempered by the grace of Reality will be able to loosen my worldly habits whose automatic

16 Ella Maillart fonds,Ms. fr. 7111 B/3, feuillet 31..
17 Ella Maillart fonds, Ms. fr. 7107/2-8, Carnets I à VII, feuillet 21.
conditioning I can detect. This chaos [is] made up of semi-real thought and flesh which can pass out at any moment! 18

If enquiry is the key to cultivating wisdom and compassion, initiated through an experience of oneness at the feet of the Master, then what will need to be given up in order to bring it about? And what if one lacks the strength and courage? Ella wrestles:

We run away from what we don’t understand; the Indians worship it 19... Afraid to plunge into the unknown—I always hated to dive—but for once, might I do it perhaps? I can’t see the water, all is veiled. [I am] afraid of falling flat. [But] why be afraid when I know that with Bhagavan’s help, all is possible. Why not cut through all that [compels me to remain on] the diving board? Why not go straight for eternity? 20... God has put that thirst in me, God must have a way to satisfy it. I must vanish from the scene and let it [do its] work. This thirst is from God of course. (Myself, ordinary, could have no idea of it.) So, God is thirsting to join God. How ridiculous! The purpose? Can I see it, extract the meaning of the past? No, not yet. My understanding is [still confused]. The short-cut is to ‘see’ God, and from [that vantage point, visit] the question anew 21... Then one and a half hours at the feet of the Master—thinking, digging for that internal Reality or rather, sharpening the tools for digging 22... To my difficulty about the Absolute mixed with the conditioned world, Bhagavan says one needs a fuller picture of Lord Ishwara. The shakti is female, the womb, always mixed with the seed, the masculine. The seed came from Brahma, the seed of a world to be ripened through evolution. Therefore, the thirst for Brahma comes from Him. 25

Ella began to see that subject and object are intimately related. The inside of the objective world is awareness while the outside of consciousness are the objects of the world, the two a single Reality. Two horns, one ox, goes an old non-dual phrase. From the conditioned point of view, the two are separate and distinct; from the Absolute point of view, they are a seamless

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Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Gurupooroornima 27th July

On Friday 27th July, Gurupooroornima was celebrated in the Ashram with Mahanasya puja. Devotees gathered to honour Guru Ramana on this auspicious occasion. The Friday evening Sri Chakra puja was moved to the morning hours owing to the evening chandra grahanam which was at maximum occultation at 1.51am early morning of 28th.
Events at Tiruvannamalai: Mahanandi Tirtham Renovation

The wonders of hard work. Mahanandi Tirtham adjacent to the Mahanandi Shrine just west of Yama linga constructed in the Pandya period, had for all intents and purposes been lost to devotees for decades. But the Ashram initiative to restore the ancient site (started on 20th May 2018) was successfully completed on 1st August 2018. An army of workers, artisans and masons worked tirelessly to completely restore the tiers & steps, desilt the tank base and construct a canal from the new culvert to the tirtham. The new culvert across the Chengam road will help to drain the rain water from the Hill and replenish the tank, more so during the Northeast monsoon.

undifferentiated whole. Knowing God is becoming the embodiment of this perfect whole.

Ella began to see that this is the truth by which one is set free — the only true knowing there really is — but less a knowing than a Being It. As she gazes on Sri Ramana’s form, she understands that the point of contact between these two seemingly irreconcilable realms is Silence — both of mind and body — exemplified in the Maharshi by a consummate stillness. Like the stump of a tree, Bhagavan’s motionlessness in thought and in form became for her the portal to perfection, the realm beyond. Ella’s entries in the Hall continue:

Bhagavan, you are my rising light. You are the [proof] that God exists… By being one with God, [only] then can I live in all. Therefore, meeting God is the only answer. By living in all, shall I be limited in this all which is conditioned? … No, because the Absolute is ever present. Therefore, I meet It in [everything] around me. The quickest [way] would be to die and pop up into God directly … [and thus] the ‘I’ would be [left] behind without [the need for] ‘altering it’ through realisation. But die to live! [This is] what Bhagavan did [as a boy] … Once [again] Bhagavan looked at me for a long time. Then, [he] smiled mysteriously at the babies behind me. 26

For Ella, human vulnerability reciprocates and interchanges with the clarity of the abovementioned insights, and she expresses her gratitude for Bhagavan’s kindness and pleads for his further assistance:

26 Ibid., feuillet 28.

I feel [I am] in the position of a lost, lonely child having found a father [for] her heart. Don’t let me be lured away from you. Be [forever] with me! You will have to help me. You look at my tears with half a smile and such a beautiful [gaze]. If God is more marvellous than all on earth, […] then truly He is worth striving for. I must meet [Him]. I must see God. But He is still unknown, [hidden] behind a veil. I know He is in everything. But I want more than this intellectual knowledge. I want to realise Him, be able to recognise Him, if not through sight, smell, voice and vibration, then through a new sense that has yet to [be born] in me. Help me to meet God. 27

If, as was once stated, all noble things are as difficult as they are rare, 28 Ella makes the determined commitment to seek the divine for the remainder of her days, recognising by the ‘short-cut’ of beholding Bhagavan face-to-face that she herself is already the thing she seeks:

Our goal is God, to be one with him and his joy. To manifest him. This can be done at any minute and anywhere without ‘deeds’. I need no [longer] search for a cause worth dying for. Nothing seemed great enough in my past. But to this ever-present Absolute I can surrender. My troubles are at an end. I can forget my ego, don’t need to keep it free, to preserve it savagely for the vaguely foreseen quest. I foresaw there was to be a perfect goal, the only thing [heretofore] before which I would kneel down. God is the end of life. Therefore,

27 Ibid., feuillet 22.
28 Baruch Spinoza.
why not reach the goal as quickly as possible? Look for a short-cut. Yes, that appeals to me. I prefer to search for the short-cut: quick, down through the glades, the avalanche, the brushwood, towards the village, the lights, seen from the top of the mountain; quick, quicker; I am good (and love to play) at short-cuts! 29

As with all his devotees, Bhagavan tried to show Ella that Bhagavan himself is not the goal, but that finding the Bhagavan within, i.e. the Self, is the aim of all inquiry and spiritual undertaking:

29 Ella Maillart fonds, Ms. fr. 7107/2-8, Carnets I à VII, feuillet 21.

Now that I explore a world of spirit eternally real, all becomes different. I am, have ever been, and shall always be. All is mine, mine is all. Therefore, I can never more feel lonely. Such glimpses are still mainly thoughts but one (eventually) becomes what one focuses on, 30 I [no longer feel the] need to go to any Shangri-La to meet [some] mysterious lama to tell me all about life. I have it here with me, in me, all the while. 31 —

(to be continued)

30 Ibid., feuillet 4.
31 Ibid., feuillet 41.

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: H. C. Khanna Day

On Saturday 23rd of July, around 10 am devotees gathered at the decorated samadhi of Sri H.C. Khanna of Kanpur. Aksharamanamalai was chanted, followed by arati and prasadam. Afterwards, Anil Khanna and his wife, Sabby, told stories of their grandfather and the family’s history and devotion to Bhagavan.

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Kavya Khantha Ganapati Muni Day

At the age of 22, Ganapati Muni took part in contests in Sanskrit prose and poetry before an assembly of great Sanskrit scholars in Bengal and the title ‘Kavyakantha’ (‘one with poetry in the throat’) was conferred upon him. He later came to Bhagavan, naming the young Brahmana Swami ‘Sri Ramana Maharshi’. On 25th July, devotees chanted Ganapati Muni’s Sat Darshanam and Ch XVIII of Ramana Gita in celebration of his Anniversary Day.
The eight-volume book *Arunachala’s Ramana: Boundless Ocean of Grace* has been thoroughly revised and updated. It will be offered as a series of seven books entitled *Arunachala Ramana: Eternal Ocean of Grace*. The edition has been restructured under the subtitles: Biography (Book 1); Teachings (Book 2); Devotees (Book 3); Reminiscences (Book 4); Dialogue I (Book 5); Dialogue II (Book 6) and The Guiding Presence (Book 7). The compendium is expected to be released on Advent Day, 1 September, 2018. —

Best Shot: Sri Bhagavan’s Sannidhi at Sundown

The photographer writes: The light on summer solstice eve, June 21, was especially bright and clear. In the afternoon, during Veda parayana, the clouds of fragrant sambrani dramatically highlighted the sunbeams streaming into Bhagavan’s Shrine. It was gladdening as well to witness the dedicated continuation of this old practice of energising the samadhi shrines with sambrani, performed in the past by veteran inmates like Kannan and Reddygaru, and now being carried forward by the younger generation. —