

# SHRI MATAJI NIRMALA DEVI

## FOUNDER OF SAHAJA YOGA

### BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi was born on March 21, 1923 to a Christian family in Chhindwara, India. Her parents were Prasad and Cornelia Salve, direct descendants of the royal Shalivahana dynasty. Seeing the beauty of this child who was born with a spotless brilliance, they called her Nirmala, which means "Immaculate."

Her parents played a key role in India's liberation movement (India had been under British rule for 300 years). Her father was a member of the Constituent Assembly of India and helped write the first constitution. He was a renowned scholar, master of 14 languages, and translated the Koran into Marathi. Her mother was the first woman in India to receive an Honors Degree in Mathematics.

As a child, Shri Mataji lived with her parents in the ashram of Mahatma Gandhi. He saw the wisdom of this child and sought her advice on spiritual matters, affectionately calling her Nepali. Shri Mataji showed him how to order his morning prayers according to the order of the chakras.

Shri Mataji knew from her birth that she had a unique gift which had to be made available to all mankind. Her father also recognized the significance of her birth and had her study psychology and medicine (at the Christian Medical College in Lahore) to learn a terminology to explain her ancient knowledge in modern terms.

### FIGHTING FOR INDIA'S FREEDOM

Shri Mataji was a youth leader during the campaign to free India of British rule. In the 1942 Quit India Movement announced by Gandhi, she was arrested and put in jail along with other freedom fighters. Her activities led to expulsion from school. While in jail she was punished by being made to sit on a block of ice.

During the tensions which arose during Partition, when British India split into India and Pakistan, Shri Mataji showed again and again her vision for a world without religious and political fanaticism. She once confronted several British soldiers and her fearlessness made them stop their violence towards her countrymen. She also sheltered refugees and protected them from a gang looking for blood.

### MARRIAGE AND MOTHERHOOD

Shortly before India achieved independence Shri Mataji married C.P. Srivastava, a civil servant. He distinguished himself with his integrity and honesty and moved up the ranks of the civil service, eventually serving as personal secretary to Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri.

His work with the Indian Shipping Corporation led to his election as Secretary General of the United Nations International Maritime Organization for 16 years (1974 to 1989), the longest term so far in its history. The IMO is based in London, and during

this time Shri Mataji, in her role as Mrs. Nirmala Srivastava, was known affectionately by diplomats and heads of state all over the world.

## **SAHAJA YOGA BEGINS**

After fulfilling her familial duty of being a wife and bringing up her two daughters, Shri Mataji embarked on her universal spiritual mission.

On the 5th of May 1970, on a lonely beach of Nargol (about 150 km from Mumbai) Shri Mataji began an historical process of en-masse Self Realization through which thousands of people could get the connection to their Spirit and thereby their inner transformation.

## **SPREADING OF SAHAJA YOGA AROUND THE WORLD**

Shri Mataji tried Sahaja Yoga first on people near to her and noticed they were transformed physically, mentally and spiritually. She invested her own time and money to talk to people and give them the key to their own spiritual power. Those few people who started feeling this spiritual power, which flowed like a cool breeze over their whole body, especially over the palms

of their hands and on top of their head (around the fontanel bone area) were quite astonished that it worked. Under the instructions of Shri Mataji they tried giving this power to others, which really gave them the faith that this was the true spiritual experience that was being prophesized in every religion.

Since 1970, Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi kept a busy schedule, traveling around the world to teach the techniques of Sahaja Yoga meditation. Shri Mataji delivered thousands of lectures and given many television and radio interviews. Amazingly, without any financial support from any person, Shri Mataji neither charged for Her lectures nor for Her gift of Self Realization. She insisted that you cannot pay for your enlightenment and denounced the false, self-proclaimed "gurus" who were more interested in the seekers' money than their spiritual ascent. Her humanitarian work was recognized around the world and she was nominated twice for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi dedicated her life to reclaiming the role of women in the spiritual evolution and to triggering the spiritual ascent of mankind through Self Realization.