

Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi

A Life Dedicated to Humanity



Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi stands alone in the history of our search for enlightenment. It is our desire to make known to the world her message and her all-important discovery: Sahaja Yoga Meditation. Above all, it is our desire to introduce her to everyone who did not have the privilege of meeting her in person and hearing her speak or find out about her life.

A life dedicated to humanity.

TO BE A DUST PARTICLE

*I want to be smaller
Like a dust particle
Which moves with the wind
It goes everywhere*

*Can go
Sit on the head of the king
Or can go
And fall at the feet of someone
And it can go
And sit everywhere*

*But I want to be a particle of dust
That is fragrant
That is nourishing
That is enlightening*

*Written by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi
at the age of 7*

A little girl who meditated with Gandhi

The wisdom of an enlightened childhood

From the very beginning, Shri Mataji's family was at the forefront of Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent struggle for India's independence. They supported the movement wholeheartedly and with exemplary dedication. These were figures of a rare moral calibre with exceptional intellectual and personal qualities. Shri Mataji's father, Prasad Rao Salve, was a direct descendant of the royal Satavahana dynasty, which ruled over an area that included the present-day state of Maharashtra for several centuries before and after Christ. He spoke 14 languages fluently and translated the Quran into Hindi.

Mister Salve was a member of the Nagpur Municipal Committee, a close associate of Gandhi, and the only Christian member of the first Parliament in independent India. He took part in the writing of the first Constitution of India. Her mother, Cornelia Jadhav, had a profound understanding of Sanskrit and was the first Indian woman to graduate in mathematics from the prestigious Fergusson College in Pune. Cornelia developed new algebraic calculation methods that are still in use today.

Such an illustrious family lineage could not help but produce an exceptional person: midday on 21 March 1923, the day of the spring equinox, in Chindwara, Maharashtra, in central India, saw the birth of Nirmala Salve, who as an adult would be known throughout the world as Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi. When the experienced midwife, a member of the Salve's family, saw the baby, she said that she was without any blemish and should be called Nirmala ("spotless" in Sanskrit). The parents agreed, and the mother gave her a second name: Daisy.

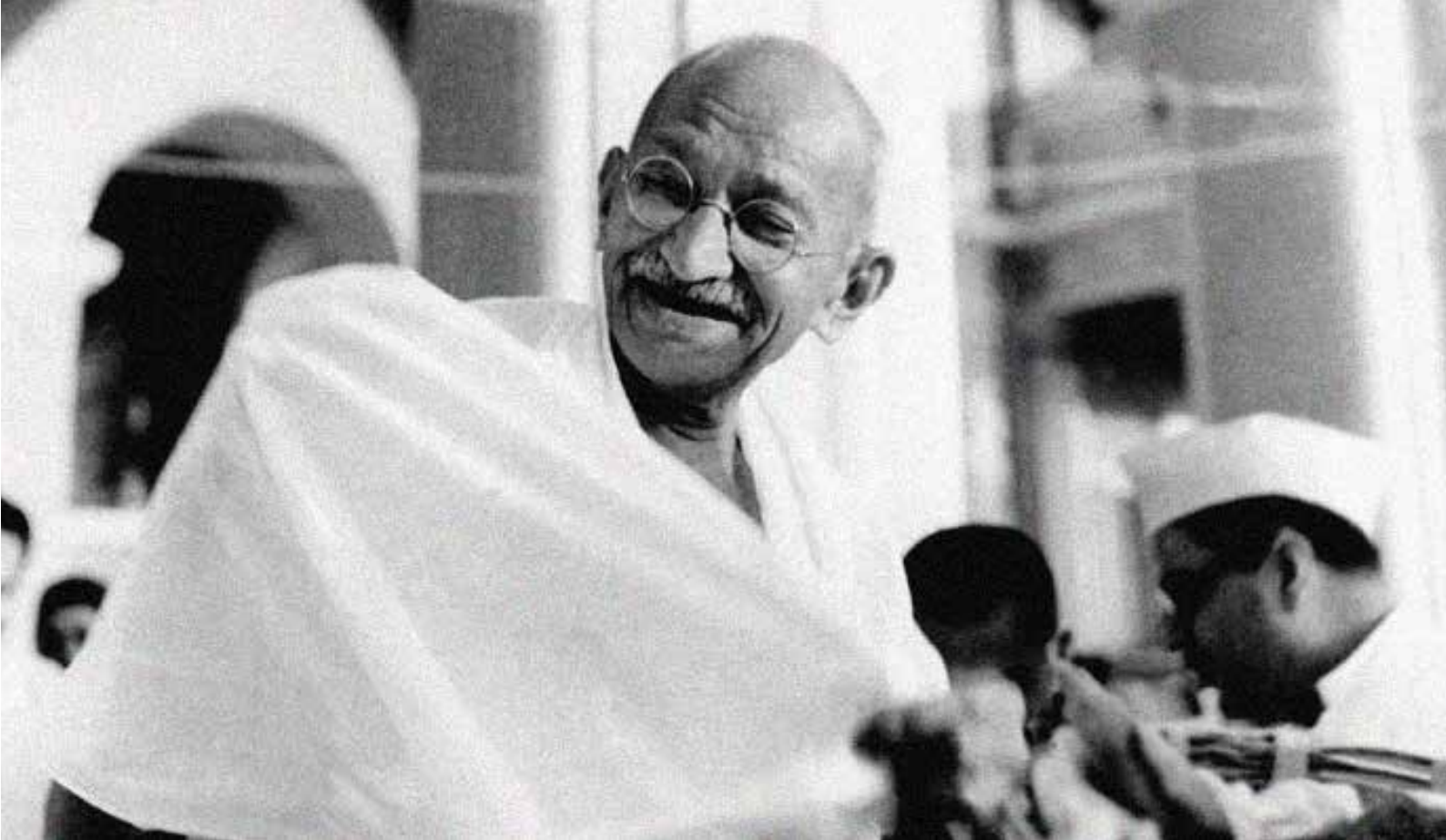
Her brother, H.P. Salve (affectionately known as

Babamama) told how his sister, when she was little, was always very happy and was loved by everyone. With her enthusiasm, she managed to involve friends of all ages in plays, songs, and dances. At other times she could be found alone in some far corner of the house, her face shining with an interior joy, lost in meditation. Gandhi himself was not slow to recognise her worth, and he welcomed her into his ashram when she was just seven years old, impressed by the wisdom that she already displayed at that tender age.



SHRI MATAJI AT THE AGE OF 16.

OPPOSITE PAGE: THE MAHATMA GANDHI.



“He used to call me ‘Nepali’ because my face is a Nepali face. And he used to talk to me as if he is talking to his grandmother sometimes ... with children he was very, very sweet and kind and would try to learn from children lot of things. It was surprising how he understood that there’s lot of wisdom with the children, sometimes more than with the older people.”

*Interview, Santa Cruz, 1983
Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi*

Gandhi always expressed enormous love for children, to the extent that he took their innocence as a constant example: “The law of love could be best understood and learned through little children.” He always insisted on the spiritual basis for non-violent conflict: “The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law, to the strength of the spirit.” There is a vast trove of anecdotes about the relationship between the wise old leader and little Nirmala, whom Gandhi particularly liked to ask for spiritual advice, to the extent of even letting her decide how to lead the morning meditation in the ashram.

Often, with playful wit, the child tried to soften the leader’s great severity, and would suggest, “Bapu, if you want to discipline people, why not give them



a discipline that comes from inside?” Gandhi would always reply that first they would have to achieve freedom from British rule; only after that could they seek spiritual freedom. In 1948, one day before his assassination, Shri Mataji visited the Mahatama again with her daughter. Gandhiji asked her if she was going to start her spiritual work. He invited her to carry out her desire as the country was free then and could focus on the internal transformation of human beings.

This is a mission that Shri Mataji has carried out in full, from the struggle for civil liberties, to the experience of inner freedom, amply fulfilling the vision of innocence and spirituality announced by Gandhi: “If we wish to create a lasting peace we must begin with the children.”

A patriotic family

The discovery of inner freedom

“Gandhi’s main contribution, I think, was to establish balance in people. Balance in people was the main thing. And make them more Indian and to take out all the slavish mentality that had trickled down into us, make us feel our own self-neglect.”

*Radio interview, Hong Kong, 1992
Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi*

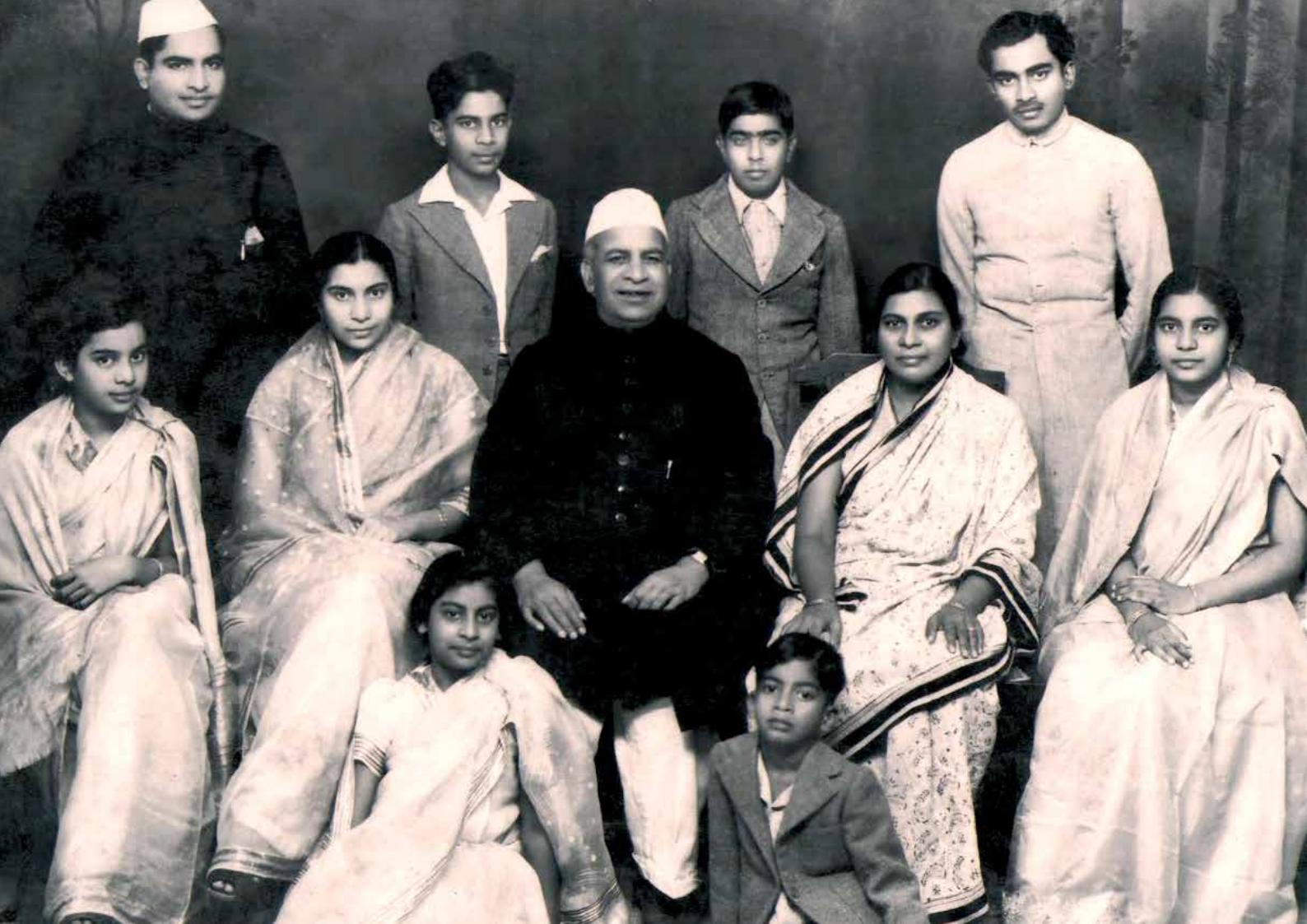
Shri Mataji’s family, like Shri Mataji herself, demonstrated exemplary dedication in the crucial years of India’s struggle for independence from British rule. Her parents were worthy protagonists in an extraordinary period of non-violent resistance who, alongside many other patriots and martyrs of freedom, followed Mahatma Gandhi. They were quite rich people, by every standard. Her father burned all his suits because they were made in England and her mother burned all her saris. They used to spin cloth to make their own clothes.

Shri Mataji’s father, Prasad Rao Salve, sacrificed everything, every pie that he had, for the freedom struggle.

In early 1942, Gandhiji decided to launch the movement, “Quit India”. He called on all members of Congress to intensify non-cooperation and disobedience to British law. At that time, Shri Mataji’s father was a public prosecutor, and his first decision was to resign from his post. A British flag was at the top of the Supreme Court; as a worthy supporter of Gandhiji, he climbed onto the roof of the building and destroyed the British flag. He then asked people to sing the hymn, “Vande Mataram”

(whose title means “Hail, O Mother Motherland”), which was adopted as the anthem of Gandhi’s campaign. It was a strong political symbol of resistance to the occupier. Then an English soldier shot him and hit him at the temple. He began to bleed profusely, but nevertheless managed to hoist the tricolor flag of the disobedience. He waited for it to float freely in the wind and then sang “Vande Mataram” while saluting the flag. He still sang “Vande Mataram” while standing on the vehicle that was to take him to prison. This time, he was joined by the voices of a spontaneous procession, as the population of Nagpur took to the streets as a sign of their solidarity with the patriot. Young Nirmala had every bit as much courage and dedication to the cause as her father.

Shri Mataji had until then often been discriminated against by her teachers at school because she was a Christian. At 19 years old, Shri Mataji was expelled from her college for her subversive activities. One day, she organised a picket and lay down in the middle of the road to prevent a school bus from getting the students into the school.



A RARE PHOTO OF SHRI MATAJI'S FAMILY. |

Then she stood with the Indian flag shouting anti-British slogans without fearing the rifles of the British soldiers. They forcibly took her to their command post, where she was tortured with electric shocks and ice patches. When they threatened to put her in jail, Nirmala replied that the Indians were already imprisoned because they did not have any freedom and, therefore, the fact that she was inside or outside the jail made no difference.

With her father in prison, she lived clandestinely in order to be able to continue the struggle for freedom. It could be said that the courage and dignity of the civil disobedience fighters of that time have given a great example of selflessness and courage. Their qualities inspired the vision of Shri Mataji who then wanted to give humanity the keys to inner liberation.



FIRST NATIONAL FLAG HOISTED ATOP KASHMIRI GATE, RED FORD DELHI ON 18 AUGUST 1947.

The birth of Sahaja Yoga

The discovery of inner freedom

“My father felt that I would do something great in this life. I don’t know why, but I don’t know if he dreamt or he understood it, but all the time if I remember when he talked to me, he used to say that, ‘You have to find out a way of giving en masse Realization,’ all the time.”

*Interview, Vienna, 1986
Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi*

Just a few months before India’s Declaration of Independence, Shri Mataji married the young diplomat, Mr. Chandrika Prasad (C.P.) Srivastava, on 7 April 1947. He was already a distinguished member of the Indian Civil Service, and his worth was recognised by the Indian Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, who invited him to become his secretary.

Shri Mataji dedicated herself to her family, fulfilling the role of an ideal wife in traditional Indian culture. However, even from the beginning of her marriage, she took an active part in the promotion of numerous social, cultural and humanitarian activities. The young couple had two daughters, Kalpana and Sadhana.

She sponsored the creation and operation of a house of lepers. In Mumbai, she organised social activities for the disabled, especially the blind.





THIS PHOTO SHOWS SHRI MATAJI IN LONDON WITH THE FIRST SEEKERS IN THE EARLY 70S. **BELOW:** A SMALL PHOTO OF SHRI MATAJI WHERE SHE EXPLAINS THE TECHNIQUES OF SAHAJA YOGA IN A MEETING IN THE EARLY 70S. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** SHRI MATAJI WITH HER HUSBAND SIR C.P. SRIVASTAVA AND THEIR TWO DAUGHTERS KALPANA AND SADHANA.



She was also the muse of the “Society of Children’s Cinema” and the “Theater in Hindi” to promote cinema as an art form for the masses and transmit the important values of India’s spiritual tradition. She always showed a keen interest in all cultural activities, especially in classical music, dance, theatre and painting.

She studied Western medicine, comparing it to the ancient yogic science to best understand the correlation between the human nervous system and the subtle body.

In 1970, once her daughters were married and had established their own peaceful, independent

lives, Shri Mataji attended a seminar and discovered that yoga culture was being presented in a way that seemed to be wrong and inappropriate. Troubled by this discovery, she spent a whole night in deep meditation. She had always wanted to find a method of giving en masse Self-realisation, something that had previously been the preserve of a small handful of seekers willing to dedicate their lives to austere penance and practices.

On the beach of Nargol in Gujarat, on 5 May 1970, Shri Mataji spent a night meditating deeply. At dawn, she felt an enormous energy which flooded her with joy and made her feel that the time had come to share her connection to the universal energy with as many people as possible, in a real and tangible way, so as to create a world of peace and integration.

Shri Mataji created a simple practice, based on the experience of a state of thoughtless awareness, which is known as Sahaja Yoga Meditation. She always had profound respect for the intelligence and free will of her audience, and always presented her revolutionary proposal as a scientific hypothesis to be tested.

The fundamental characteristic of Sahaja Yoga is that it should be a profoundly concrete experience. Millions of people around the world have experienced the positive impact of Sahaja Yoga on their lives, at every level – physical, emotional, mental and existential. A key feature of this method is the scientific approach that Shri Mataji always used: “You don’t have to believe me,” she always said. “You have to see for yourself.” This invitation is based on her pure intellectual honesty.



1986: SHRI MATAJI ARRIVING AT
TERMINI STATION IN ROME FOR ONE
OF HER CONFERENCES

A mother to all

Enveloping the world in love

“We are bound to each other by love. It is the love that is for our benevolence, for our ascent. You just start enjoying everyone. You do not think about your race or nationality. You become a universal being. The whole thing is for the joy of others.”

*Talk, Chianciano Terme, 1991
Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi*

In 1974, Sir C.P. Srivastava was appointed Secretary General of the United Nations International Maritime Organization (IMO), a position he occupied for four successive four-year terms, the longest served by any Secretary-General of a United Nations agency. During and following this post, he was awarded with honours from 17 different nations and was made an Honorary Knight Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George by Queen Elizabeth II.

The Srivastavas lived in the United Kingdom for many years, as the IMO's headquarters, where Mr Srivastava worked, are in London. For Shri Mataji, this transfer to London created a bridge between the East and the West. For over forty years, as the founder of Sahaja Yoga, Shri Mataji travelled tirelessly around the world giving thousands of talks on spirituality, world peace, and how nations can live together in harmony. She spoke out against dogmatic fanaticism and racism, revealing the subtle connection between the different religions and cultures.

To all who showed a sincere interest, Shri Mataji not only offered her deep understanding of the human spirit but also imparted the unique

experience of Sahaja Yoga Meditation. Above all, Shri Mataji perfectly manifested the ideal of the poetic vision she had had as a child: she met with the seekers of the world with the ease and lightness of the dust particle she had wanted to be like, and offered her message and her discovery to people from every walk of life.



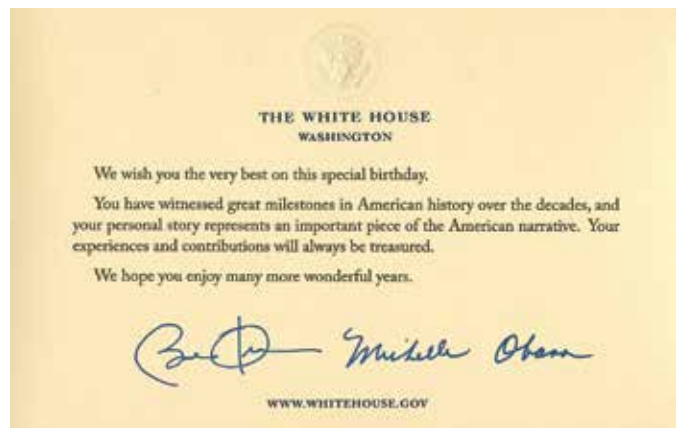
1984: SHRI MATAJI AT VIENNA AIRPORT GETTING READY TO BOARD ON ONE OF HER COUNTLESS TRIPS TO SPREAD SAHAJA YOGA.

She passed on her gift with the same natural grace, whether participating in gala evenings in the presence of kings and queens or saving drug addicts on the streets; as an official guest of the United Nations at the World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 or as the founder of the Vishwa Nirmal Prem Ashram in Noida (a home for destitute women and orphan children). Shri Mataji's dedication to the mission of en masse Self-realisation was truly impressive.

From the 1980s, she travelled far and wide across all five continents, taking every conceivable mode of transport and often holding public meetings in different cities, sometimes even in different countries, on the same day, giving thousands of people the opportunity to experience Sahaja Yoga. Following Gorbachev's policies of Glasnost and Perestroika, and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the thirst for spirituality in the former communist countries gave Shri Mataji the opportunity to organise very large meditation meetings, sometimes filling entire stadiums. After C.P. Srivastava's retirement from IMO, Shri Mataji and her husband lived at various times in India and Italy.

The immense lifetime commitment shown by Shri Mataji to her constant voluntary endeavours and work on social inclusion, coupled with the recognised medical and scientific evidence of the benefits of Sahaja Yoga Meditation, garnered her a number of international honours of the highest level, including two nominations for the Nobel Peace Prize. Throughout the world, Shri Mataji was given honours of every possible kind by governments, dignitaries and humanitarian associations: peace medals (United Nations), honorary degrees (Romania), awards for Personality of the Year and honorary citizenship (Italy), welcoming and congratulatory letters (United States), presentation of the keys to the city (Brasilia), dedication days (United States), medical and scientific acknowledgements (Russia), official government invitations (China) and roads named after her (India).

Among the people who have paid public homage to the founder of Sahaja Yoga, there are secular figures such as the humanitarian activist Claes Nobel, and mystics such as Gagangiri Maharaj; United States presidents from divergent political parties such as George W. Bush and Barack Obama; scientists from the University of California, Berkeley; and philosophers such as Wayne Walter Dyer. Uniting differing views in the desire for a better world is an excellent practical example of the etymological meaning of the word Yoga: union, integration, connection.





OPPOSITE PAGE FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: LONDON 1981: SHRI MATAJI SHAKES HANDS WITH QUEEN ELIZABETH II AT AN OFFICIAL EVENT - LETTER OF CONGRATULATIONS FROM PRESIDENT OBAMA - SHRI MATAJI AFTER A CONFERENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST - SHRI MATAJI TALKS ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF SAHAJA YOGA IN AN INTERVIEW ON AUSTRALIAN TELEVISION.



ON THIS PAGE FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: SHRI MATAJI BEING WELCOMED UPON HER ARRIVAL IN COLOMBIA FOR ONE OF HER CONFERENCES - SHRI MATAJI, AS AN OFFICIAL GUEST OF THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT FOR THE "FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN" - CLAES NOBEL FOUNDATION GIVING AN AWARD OF RECOGNITION TO SHRI MATAJI - THE ACADEMY OF PETROVSKAYA MAKES SHRI MATAJI AN HONORARY MEMBER.

MAIN AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS OF SHRI MATAJI

Italy, 1986

Declared Personality of the Year by the Italian Government.

Moscow, Russia, 1989

Following Shri Mataji's meeting with the Minister of Health, Sahaja Yoga was granted full government sponsorship, including funding for scientific research.

New York, 1990-1994

Invited by the United Nations for four consecutive years to speak about the ways and means to achieve world peace.

St. Petersburg, Russia, 1993

Appointed as Honorary Member of the Petrovskaya Academy of Art and Science. In the history of the Academy only twelve people have been granted this honour, Einstein being one of them. Shri Mataji inaugurated the first International Conference on Medicine and Self-Knowledge, which became an annual event at the Academy thereafter.

Brazil, 1994

The mayor of Brasilia welcomed Shri Mataji at the airport, presented her with the key to the city and sponsored all of her programs.

British Columbia, Canada, 1994

A Letter of Welcome was proffered by the Premier of the Province of British Columbia, Mr. Mike Harcourt, on behalf of the people of Canada.

Romania, 1995

Awarded Honorary Doctorate in Cognitive Science.

China, 1995

Official guest of the Chinese Government to speak at the United Nations International Women's Conference.

USA, 1997 and 2000

105th and 106th Congress, honorarium read into Congressional Record by Congressman, Eliot Engle, commending Shri Mataji for her dedicated and tireless work for humanity.

Cabella Ligure, Italy, 2006

Shri Mataji was awarded honorary Italian citizenship, which was followed by the unveiling of the foundation stone for the "Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi World Foundation of Sahaja Yoga". This Foundation has its home in Cabella Ligure.





The meditation

The gift of thoughtless awareness

“Within us lies the peace, the beauty, the glory of our being. There is an ocean of all that. We cannot seek it outside, we have to go within. In the present the eternal stays, the rest all drops out.”

*Talk, Sydney, 1983
Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi*

The words of Shri Mataji in the quotation invite us to search within ourselves to be in the present, the only truly eternal moment. Shri Mataji gave us the method to achieve this: Sahaja Yoga Meditation.

But what do we mean by meditation?

What is it that makes Sahaja Yoga unique? What is the particular importance of Shri Mataji's discovery? What is meant by Self-realisation? Even though meditation is an experience that takes us beyond words and thoughts, we believe it is only right that we first explain the meaning of the terms and expressions we use in attempting to define this indefinable dimension.

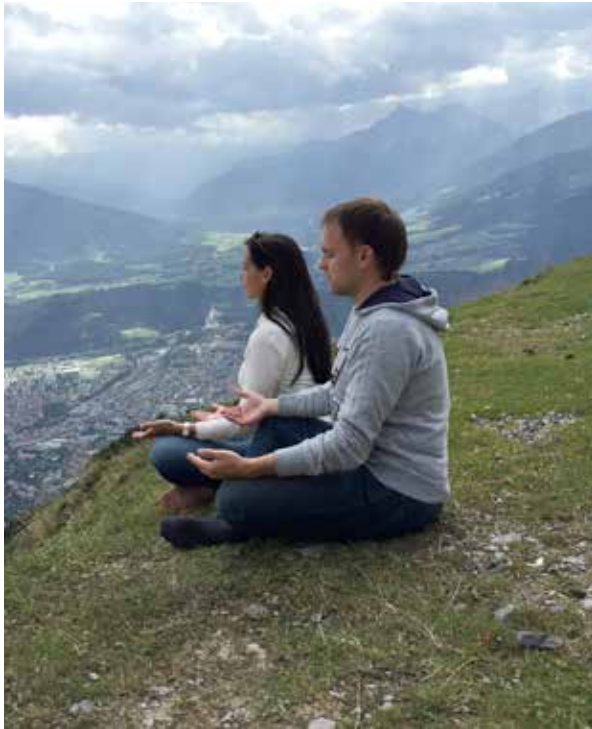
Firstly, what does Sahaja Yoga mean?

Let us start with the literal meaning of the word, “yoga”. Contrary to belief, the word, “yoga”, does not only refer to a doctrine, a discipline, a series of exercises. “Yoga” indicates a state of being, a connection with the Universal Energy. Etymologically, the term means “union”. “Sahaj”, often translated as “spontaneous”, literally means “born with”. The reference is therefore to a spontaneous union which represents the fulfilment of our greatest potential as human beings.

But a union of what?

It is the union of an innate subtle energy, called Kundalini, with the energy that surrounds us. The name, “Kundalini”, comes from Kundal, which means coiled, while the suffix, “ini”, indicates that the word is feminine. It is a dormant maternal energy that resides in a spiral at the base of the spine.

The mystics and poets of old, such as Gyaneshwara and Kabir, have described this feminine energy which resides in the sacrum bone (the name is no coincidence) and how, once awakened, it travels up the spine, through seven centres known as “chakras”, the main points of our energy system, which coincide with the plexuses of our nervous system. Finally, the Kundalini reaches and moves beyond the fontanelle area (another name that is no coincidence), pouring out of it as a fountain. Awakening the Kundalini has been the ultimate aim, in various guises, of all the esoteric traditions and the different schools of Yoga, and of all the Eastern and Western meditation methods, where it is often referred to as Self-realisation.



become completely enlightened, but we activate the subtle energy that can guide us towards the complete realisation of our Self through a journey of introspection and understanding.

So how can we define meditation in the end?

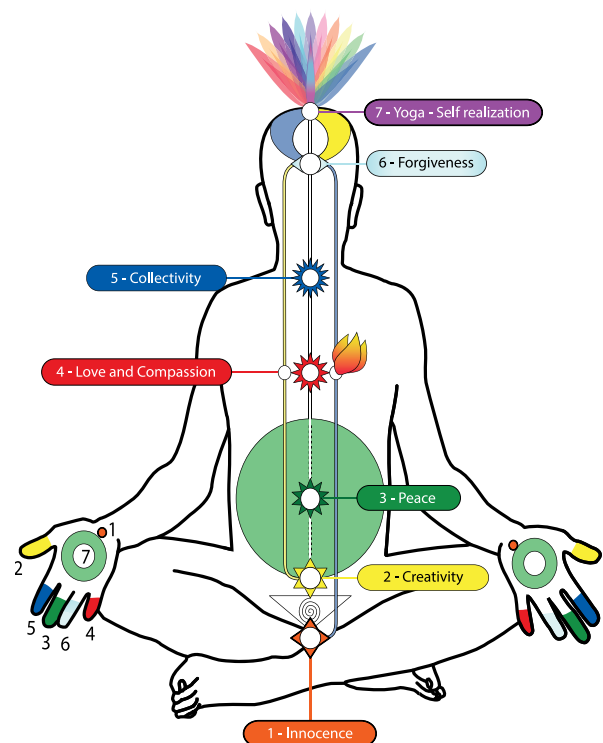
Yogis describe meditation as “thoughtless awareness”, a state of being in which profound mental peace is pervaded by an inner joy, where our awareness is completely immersed in the present. It is not an escape from “reality”, but quite the opposite; it is a powerful instrument that allows us to understand and improve ourselves, so that this personal growth can have a positive impact on society as a whole. This is precisely what Shri Mataji did in her own lifetime and what her thousands of followers continue to do all over the world.

What does this mean?

Self-realisation has a threefold meaning: “realise” in the sense of “make real”, to experience empirically the reality of the Self; “realise” in the sense of “become aware of”, to become conscious of being an integral part of the Whole through one’s own interior dimension; and “realise” in the sense of “accomplish”, to fulfil the entire potential of our being.

But what is the Self?

For the great psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung, the Self represents the unity and totality of one’s personality in its conscious and unconscious parts. Self-realisation, therefore, is the experience that allows us to know ourselves, as the old sages and philosophers used to say and, in the final instance, to become ourselves, as the modern philosophers say. In the age-old history of Yoga, there have been very few “realised”, or enlightened, teachers, that is, ones who were capable of awakening their own Kundalini, often after a life of austerity and penance. Instead, the method revealed by Shri Mataji means that, using the meditation technique she discovered, people can spontaneously awaken the Kundalini through meditation exercises that bring our desire and attention into a state of equilibrium. Obviously, we do not immediately



THE SUBTLE SYSTEM OF ENERGETIC CENTRES AND CHANNELS

Enlightened medicine

Western science and Eastern wisdom

Sahaja Yoga Meditation addresses the symptoms of disease while at the same time acting on the roots of the problems. It is based on the knowledge of the subtle system whose six main centres of energy are located at the level of six nerve plexuses and endocrine glands. They are integrated and controlled by the last and seventh centre, which corresponds to the limbic system, the emotion-regulation centre of our brains.

The state of Thoughtless Awareness is achieved when the subtle energy ascends through the spinal cord. When it reaches the brain it activates the parasympathetic nervous system and the limbic system. The serene state of “Mental Silence” and joy which the practitioner experiences subjectively has actual measurable physiological correlates. Thus, Sahaja Yoga Meditation has been shown to lead to changes in physiological parameters that enhance parasympathetic activity, leading to stress relief and restoration of bodily functions, such as decreases in blood pressure, heart, breathing and pulse rates, oxygen metabolism and stress hormones.

Modern brain imaging studies have shown that the state of Mental Silence leads to increased activity in the limbic brain areas that mediate positive emotions. In addition, there is a release of beta-endorphins, the so-called “happy” mood-stabilising chemicals in the brain that lead to relaxation and enhance the immune system.

Long-term practitioners of Sahaja Yoga Meditation have larger amounts of grey matter in the regions of attention, self-control and emotion control than non-meditators. This enlargement of brain structure due to long-term use of these regions through meditation is thought to reflect a delay in the normal age-related decline in the structure of these regions, suggesting that long-term meditators have younger brains.

Sahaja Yoga Meditation leads to better than average general and mental health, which is directly related to the frequency with which the meditator achieves the state of Mental Silence. Clinical research has furthermore shown that the practice of Sahaja Yoga Meditation has important therapeutic effects on a variety of physiological and mental diseases, including work stress, depression, anxiety, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), drug abuse, hypertension, epilepsy and asthma. Only positive effects and no negative side-effects of Sahaja Yoga Meditation have ever been observed.

Reference

Hernandez SE, Suero J, Barros A, Gonzalez-Mora JL, Rubia K. Increased grey matter associated with long-term Sahaja Yoga Meditation: a voxel-based morphometry study. *Plos One*, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0150757>.



PHOTO: 1993: NEW DELHI INDIA, SHRI MATAJI EXPLAINS THE BENEFITS OF SAHAJA YOGA MEDITATION AT A MEDICAL CONFERENCE.

Enlightened art

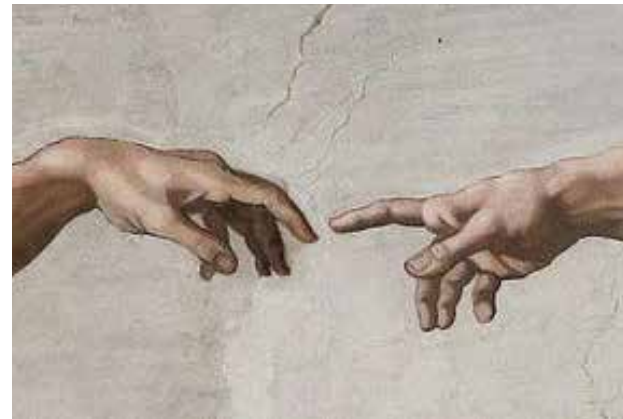
Beauty and truth

Throughout the ages and across all cultures, enlightened artists have borne witness to the eternity of universal values through the splendour of their creations. We are not just talking about the appreciation of beauty that most human beings have for the sublime harmony of Mozart's melodies, the serenity of Raphael's figures, the majesty of the Taj Mahal or the gracefulness of kabuki theatre.

More profoundly, these are internal truths that underpin every culture and tradition, archetypes that can be found in symbolic form in the works of the greatest artists of all times. In this way, the paintings of Piero della Francesca reveal symbols that come from Vedic culture, while some of Shakespeare's lines resemble sayings from Confucius.

The same powerful, universal inspiration can be seen in the verses of Dante, Kabir, Rumi and William Blake. In one of the most famous passages of modern literature, from "The Idiot" by the great Russian writer, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Prince Mishkin, a literary icon of the primordial qualities of innocence and purity, is asked: "Is it true, Prince, what you say, that beauty will save the world?"

The life of Shri Mataji gives an affirmative and joyful answer to this question. Shri Mataji has consistently shown how art and music can connect East and West, because beauty meets subtle needs for joy and love that everyone feels. She showed examples of the ideal of ethical and aesthetic perfection that the Greeks summed up in the expression, "Kalos kai agathos": "What is charming has all the virtues." Beauty, harmony and balance have this quality of universal values that are inside as well as outside. Art makes it possible to express this balance between internal truth and external expression.



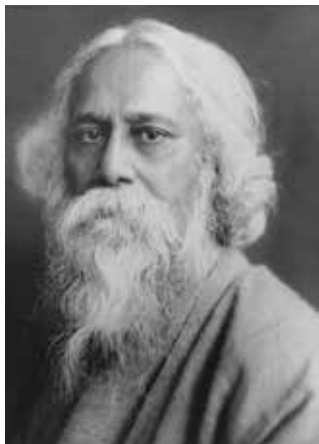


“If it is pure art, then it is in itself, stunning and extremely joy-giving. So much so that when you see or hear such a work of pure art, all thoughts stop and you just start witnessing the beauty of that joy, which the artist is feeling in his own heart. This finer perception of what is real and true is the gift of the realised soul, and it is of an entirely different kind from the products of mere rationality.”

*Meta Modern Era
Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi*

However, Shri Mataji did not only talk about the theory of the relationship between beauty and truth; rather, she tried to make it an experience accessible to all. To this end, Shri Mataji created several major cultural projects of international importance: the International Academy of Music in Nagpur and Vaitarna in India; the Russian Academy in Togliatti; and the Theatre of Eternal Values, a company that for years has been staging the classics from every tradition (from Molière and Goethe through to texts from the various Zen schools).

The last project also involves other activities, including the Festival of the Culture of the Spirit and the Nirmal Arts Academy, which every year bring together dozens of artists and hundreds of spectators from all over the world in Italy and in the United States. These are concrete examples of the profound relationships among art, beauty and love. As Shri Mataji explained with illuminating simplicity: “So the basis of all creativity of Saraswati is love. If there is no love there is no creativity.”



TOP PICTURE: “THE LORD ANSWERING JOB OUT OF THE WHIRLWIND” WILLIAM BLAKE. CENTRE LEFT: MICHELANGELO’S “CREATION OF ADAM”. BOTTOM LEFT: A PHOTO OF THE “TAJ MAHAL”. ON THIS PAGE ABOVE LEFT: A PORTRAIT OF MICHELANGELO. ABOVE RIGHT: A PORTRAIT OF WILLIAM BLAKE. BELOW LEFT: RABINDRANATH TAGORE.

Her legacy

A life dedicated to humanity

“All that is possible. Everything is possible, humanly possible, but to love and to enjoy love is not so easy unless and until you are immersed in it. It’s very gratifying, it is very lovable, to see how people love each other, and then this love spreads. Love begets love. If somebody has love it just spreads. He need not tell anyone, he need not confess it, but it will spread. And this is what one has to learn: how to see that love in the other person.”

*Talk, Cabella Ligure, 2004
Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi*

“I bow to all the seekers of truth ...” It was with these words that Shri Mataji opened her talks during her travels around the world. Her humility, wisdom and loving energy could illuminate, even if only briefly, anyone who met her. Like a beacon in the dark, she was able to ignite the spark in any seeker with the desire to discover and connect with the innate inner truth.

Showing a profound respect for people’s freedom, so fundamental to personal growth, Shri Mataji dedicated her life to the inner evolution of mankind, making the knowledge and techniques of Sahaja Yoga freely available to the millions of people she met during her forty years of travels across the five continents. With the love and gentle patience of a mother, Shri Mataji took care of every aspect and every principle related to the process of inner transformation, starting with innocence, the essential power in all of us.

Shri Mataji placed a lot of importance on

nourishing and preserving this vital energy, particularly in the youngest generations, not only by disseminating Sahaja Yoga far and wide, but also by establishing schools based on the underlying principles of her teachings in various countries around the world. In these schools, children are brought up in the knowledge that they are part and parcel of the whole, that we are all one, and that we can always enjoy collective unity.

The natural development of these principles is ensured, so that they infuse every aspect of the children’s school day, whether it be the academic lessons, creative work, music or meal times. For more than 30 years, children from all over the world have studied and continue to study in these schools: International Sahaja Public School Dharamshala (India), Cabella International Sahaja School (Italy), International Sahaja School Canajoharie (United States), Borotin International Sahaja Camp (Czech Republic), and Devi School (Canada).



From this scholastic environment, many have gone on to become respected and outstanding professionals, teachers, scientists and musicians.

These men and women now live in the world with a profound sense of their worth and, at the same time, are aware of their responsibilities towards their own families, their communities and the entire world.

This inner journey begins individually with meditation and develops collectively; having meeting points where one can find silence, as well as a place for sharing one's experiences, is invaluable, whether it be for an hour, a month or a year.

To this end, in the early 1970s, Shri Mataji began to create Ashrams (places of meditation) around the world, in major cities such as New Delhi, Pune, Mumbai, London, Sydney, Melbourne, Paris, Vienna, Rome, Milan, Geneva, Moscow, Hong Kong, New Jersey, Los Angeles and Brasilia, and many other places internationally.



FACING PAGE: PALAZZO DORIA PALLAVICINO SPINOLA. PHOTO ABOVE: INTERNATIONAL MEDITATION SAHAJA YOGA CENTRE IN CABELLA LIGURE.

It was Shri Mataji's desire that, wherever she lived or stayed, seekers could find a place where they could experience her presence, meditate and feel welcome.

This is why you will find hundreds of weekly meetings in every corner of the world that, thanks to volunteers who have been practising this meditation for some years, offer anyone who desires it the opportunity to experience Sahaja Yoga.

The most important centres associated with Shri Mataji's life, which allow us to retrace her history and enjoy deep meditations, are, of course, in India: Chindwara, Nirmal Nagari Ganapatipule, Pratishtan, and Nirmal Dham in New Delhi. Her maternal sensibilities led her, in 2003, to secure a future for abandoned mothers with children, with the building of Vishwa Nirmala Prem Ashram in Noida, near Delhi.

Here, those mothers and children find a safe, welcoming refuge where they receive healthcare and education, and the women are trained in a profession, so that they can again fulfil their roles as mothers with strength and dignity.





TOP PHOTO: NIRMAL DHAM IN INDIA, ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT SAHAJA YOGA ASHRAMS. FACING PAGE - ON THE LEFT: INTERNATIONAL SAHAJA SCHOOL IN CABELLA FIGURE. ON THE RIGHT: BOROTIN INTERNATIONAL SAHAJA CAMP IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC. BELOW LEFT: CANAJOHARIE INTERNATIONAL SAHAJA SCHOOL IN THE UNITED STATES. BELOW RIGHT: THE DEVI INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN CANADA. ABOVE: DHARAMSALA INTERNATIONAL SAHAJA PUBLIC SCHOOL IN INDIA.

In addition to disseminating her teachings, Shri Mataji founded a hospital in India to care for the health and wellbeing of seekers.

The International Sahaja Yoga Health and Research Centre in Belapur, near Mumbai, has been in operation since 1996, and that of Noida since 2011. A combination of homoeopathic and ayurvedic treatments are used, along with Sahaja Yoga techniques, to address imbalances in the patient's subtle/energetic state, based on the premise that illness is generated by that imbalance, which then manifests on a physical or psychological level. The patient follows a course of treatments aimed at rebalancing the subtle body to bring about a natural recovery. People from all over the world have taken advantage of the Sahaja Yoga Health and Research Centre to recover from illnesses or to have medical treatment.

Throughout Shri Mataji's constant travels, two main international points of reference developed, further consolidating this connection between East and West: in India, her original home country; and in Italy. Shri Mataji chose Italy as her second home when, in 1991, she bought Palazzo Doria (formerly Spinola Pallavicino) in Cabella Ligure, in the province of Alessandria.

She transformed the old palace, which was in a bad state of disrepair, into a beautiful residence and bought more land in the surrounding areas to erect constructions for international events attended by hundreds, sometimes thousands of people. In 2006, she set up the Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi Sahaja Yoga World Foundation in Cabella Ligure, to which she donated Palazzo Doria and all her other properties in the area. This is her legacy but, more than that, her legacy is the love she spread far and wide, like candles that can enlighten other candles. This is Sahaja Yoga, where a person whose own inner energy has been awakened can awaken that of others, in a revolution of love that can go on forever, improving us and consequently improving everything around us.

During her travels around the world, Shri Mataji visited the North and South Americas more than fifteen times. The Ashram in New Jersey, United States, is one of the few places in America where she resided. Her house in New Jersey represents a concrete expression of her desire and inspiration, as she designed every nuance and detail of this place, and it was built by Sahaja Yoga artisans from all over the world.



TOP PHOTO: THE NEW JERSEY ASHRAM, WHERE SHRI MATAJI RESIDED IN AMERICA. ABOVE: AERIAL VIEW OF NIRMAL NAGARI, CANAJOHARIE.

Nirmal Nagari (“Canajoharie”) is the place chosen by Shri Mataji to establish the International Meditation Sahaja Center in America. It is on land located in New York state, United States, near the village of Canajoharie. This area is connected to the International Sahaja School in Canajoharie and was once a village of the Mohawk nation, a tribe of the Iroquois confederation.

“They were simple and innocent people and they were, I think, very spiritual people, because they worshipped the Mother. They always worship the Mother.” Shri Mataji

Every year since 1999, people from all over the world gather here to meditate, participate in international events and enjoy collectivity.



TOP PHOTO: CHINDWARA, THE BIRTHPLACE OF SHRI MATAJI. CENTER LEFT: VAITARNA INTERNATIONAL MUSIC ACADEMY. BOTTOM LEFT: PRATISHTHAN, ONE OF SHRI MATAJI'S RESIDENCES. TOP RIGHT: VISHWA NIRMALA PREM ASHRAM, A CENTRE FOR ABANDONED MOTHERS. CENTRE RIGHT: BELAPUR, AN INTERNATIONAL SAHAJA YOGA HEALTH AND RESEARCH CENTRE. BOTTOM RIGHT: NIRMAL NAGARI, GANAPATIPULE, ANOTHER OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CENTRES OF SAHAJA YOGA.

The mountain

*I see a mountain from my window
Standing like an ancient sage
Desireless, full of love.*

*So many trees and so many flowers
They plunder the mountain all the time.
Its attention is not disturbed.*

*And when the rain pours like
Many pitchers of clouds bursting
And it fills the mountain with greenery.*

*The storms may come soaring,
Filling the lake with compassion
And the rivers flow running down
Towards the calling sea.*

*The sun will create clouds and
Wind carries on its feathery wings
The rain on to the mountain.
This is the eternal play
The mountain sees
Without desires.*

Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi



We simply wish to say THANK YOU
and offer our deepest gratitude to
Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, whose particles
of dust constantly move with the wind to reach
every person and place, giving fragrance,
nourishment and light and wrapping
the world in innocence.



