



“There can
be no peace
in the world
until there is
peace within

1923 to 1970 – The first 47 years

Born on March 21, 1923 in Chindwara, India, to a Christian family, Nirmala Salve emerged from the womb absolutely clean, without a trace of blood upon her tiny infant body. She was given the name Nirmala, which means immaculate, by her parents Prasad and Cornelia Salve, direct descendants of the royal Shalivahana dynasty and personal friends of Mahatma Gandhi.

Nirmala, or Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi as she later came to be known, possessed exceptional wisdom and compassion from an early age. She and her family were residents of Gandhi's ashram for several years of her childhood, and Gandhi recognized the unique spiritual gifts within her. Though she was just a child, he consulted her on many matters, including how to pray and the best order for daily prayers in the ashram.

Shri Mataji fully embraced her gift for leadership during adolescence, acting as a youth leader of Gandhi's movement for India's liberation from British rule. At the age of 19, she joined the Quit India Movement, which led to her eventual arrest, imprisonment and torture. She remained strong, steadfast and dedicated to the cause. Her father had been jailed many times during India's struggle for independence, and he taught Shri Mataji that no sacrifice was too great for the freedom of their country. Prasad Salve later became a member of the Constituent Assembly of India and helped to write India's first constitution.

Nirmala Srivastava, better known as Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, once said, “There can be no peace in the world until there is peace within.” She was born with peace within and spent her long and influential life sharing it with others. While she experienced and achieved more in her first 47 years than many of us do in an entire lifetime, it is the achievements of her final 40 years that cause many to regard her as the most significant spiritual figure of our time.

Though February 23, 2011 marked the end of the physical life of Shri Mataji, she will live on forever within the hearts and minds of the followers of Sahaja Meditation as well as the countless others throughout the world whose lives have been improved through contact with her.

He was an academic and a scholar, and he translated the Koran into the Marathi language so that Hindus could read it for themselves.



As a young adult, Shri Mataji studied medicine and psychology at colleges in Ludhiana and Lahore. Then, in 1947, she married Chandrika Prasad Srivastava, a high-ranking civil servant. The couple had two daughters, and Shri Mataji spent many years as a homemaker, raising her children and supporting her husband in roles such as Managing Director of the Shipping Corporation of India, a speechwriter, and principal private secretary to Lal Bahadur Shastri, the second Prime Minister of the Republic of India. Shastri had tremendous respect for Shri Mataji and on occasion sought her guidance on economical and political matters.

Though Shri Mataji knew she had been born with a unique spiritual gift, and was destined to share that gift on a global level, she remained a devoted wife and mother, caring for her daughters until they themselves were married and settled. It was only then, at the age of 47, that Shri Mataji was free to begin the second, perhaps most important, stage of her life.

1970 to 2011 – Bringing peace to the world

In May 1970, on a lonely beach in Nargol, India, Shri Mataji, while meditating, discovered how to give en masse self-realization. She founded Sahaja Meditation the same year, building the practice upon a simple technique that enables one to tap into one's inner energy in order to become balanced and connected emotionally, spiritually and physically. Through Sahaja Meditation, those seeking enlightenment could now achieve a powerful state of thoughtless awareness quickly and effortlessly.

Shri Mataji wanted to share the benefits of Sahaja Meditation with the world. She envisioned a spiritually aware society embracing inner peace, balance and personal growth. She determined that there would be no charge for the teaching of her unique technique, insisting that it should be available –free– to all who desired to learn it.



Shri Mataji began spreading Sahaja Meditation to the rest of the world, starting with the United States of America, a country and its people that held a special place in her heart. To finance her first visit in 1972, she sold her jewels to obtain the funds necessary for travel. She was to visit many times over the years, giving free lectures in many cities. She eventually designed and built a house in New Jersey as well as purchased land in upstate New York, subsequently donated to her U.S. followers.

In 1974, Shri Mataji and her husband moved to London after he was elected Secretary General of the International Maritime Organization. Chandrika served in England for 16 consecutive years, eventually receiving a knighthood from the Queen. During their time in England, Shri Mataji continued teaching the principles of Sahaja Meditation to others, travelling throughout the country to give lectures on its practice. Once her husband retired in 1990, the scope of her travels widened and the pace of her schedule increased.

She began to journey around the world, giving thousands of lectures throughout the U.S., France, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, Russia and the Ukraine. She also spoke in cities and villages across her native India.

Throughout the world, influential people in power began to take notice of both the woman and the movement she'd created. She was invited to speak at the Beijing International Women's Conference in 1995, and presented her thoughts on ways to achieve world peace at the United Nations in New York on four occasions.

While Shri Mataji saw bringing Sahaja Meditation and thoughtless awareness to the world as her destiny, she sought to better the lives of millions in other ways as well. She distinguished herself as a great humanitarian by creating a number of non-governmental organizations including an international cancer research center in Mumbai, India, and a shelter for destitute and homeless people in Delhi, India. Additionally, she founded several hospitals, an international academy of the arts, vocational training schools for disadvantaged students and The Theater of Eternal Values, a multi-national group of artists dedicated to spreading the eternal values of theater across continents.

In 2004, at the age of 81 and after more than thirty years of travelling and teaching, Shri Mataji began to reduce her public lecture schedule to spend more time with her family. Her followers had grown from a handful in India to hundreds of thousands in more than ninety countries.

It is worth noting that Shri Mataji never accepted payment of any kind for her teachings. She instructed her students to do the same. Those who have been helped by the practice of Sahaja Meditation go on to help others. Peaceful self-awareness spreads like one candle lighting another.

U.S. recognition



While she never courted the attention of the rich, powerful or famous, city mayors praised Shri Mataji in proclamations, and state governors thanked her for her work in the U.S. Michael Bloomberg, Mayor of New York, wrote to Shri Mataji on the occasion of her birthday in 2010. He stated, "On behalf of the residents of New York City—many of whom enjoy more peaceful and balanced lives as a result of your lifelong work—I wish you good health and great happiness."

Christopher J. Dodd, a Connecticut Senator, also wrote to Shri Mataji in 2010. He stated, "While your own contributions to the field of health through meditation have changed the lives of millions, your life-long selflessness has touched the hearts of so many more."

As an expression of gratitude for her selfless humanitarian work, the mayors of several major cities in the U.S. have proclaimed special days in her honor. One such mayor, Bill White of Houston, proclaimed March 21, 2008 as Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi Day.

Sahaja Meditation and medicine

The Sahaja Meditation movement is bringing significant benefits to an overworked and spiritually disconnected world, including improvements in the physical and mental health of those who learn it. Sahaja Meditation has been the subject of medical research in India, Europe, Russia and Australia, and clinical tests have shown dramatic health benefits from the technique.

The Russian Ministry of Health granted Sahaja Meditation full government sponsorship, including funding for scientific research, while the University of Bucharest bestowed upon Shri Mataji an honorary PhD degree in Cognitive Sciences.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Washington D.C. have hosted weekly Sahaja Meditation programs for patients and staff since 1998. Additionally, NIH has hosted two international symposiums on Sahaja Meditation and Health.



Sahaja Meditation has also collaborated with HealthCorps, a proactive health movement founded by the eminent cardiologist Dr. Mehmet Oz of the syndicated television programs The Dr. Oz Show and The Oprah Winfrey Show. Through partnership with HealthCorps, Sahaja Meditation is increasing U.S. public high school students' awareness of the importance of their physical and mental health. Early research on this program suggests that 70 percent of students practicing Sahaja Meditation receive significant, direct benefits in terms of both physical health and mental resilience.

Sahaja Meditation in the U.S.

Anyone who desires to tap into his or her inner energy, achieve thoughtless awareness, and explore the significant physical and spiritual benefits of Sahaja Meditation can find a free program in their area by visiting www.sahajameditation.com.

Weekly Sahaja Meditation programs have been offered, free of charge, in many institutions throughout the U.S. These include community colleges in Texas, New Jersey, Ohio and South Florida, as well as universities such as the University of Texas at Arlington, University of Texas at Dallas, Princeton University, Harvard University and UC Berkeley.

Sahaja Meditation has been offered to employees within major U.S. corporations such as American Express, Fox Studios, AT&T, World Bank, Motorola and the United Nations. It has also been used within correctional facilities such as Riker's Island, as well as in senior citizen centers and hospitals.

The United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has partnered with Sahaja Meditation to help translate the UNESCO mission and ideals into programs that will create a new generation of peacemakers. During a two-week summer program held in Washington, D.C., young people from diverse countries around the world are encouraged to build a peaceful future through education, science, culture, communication and Sahaja Meditation.



She will be remembered

All who had the great fortune to know Shri Mataji personally were touched by her wisdom, her infectious laughter and her great sense of humor.

Throughout her notable life, she was known for her eloquence, pragmatism and compassion. She will be remembered for her great concern for humanity, and for the genuine seekers of truth.

Her generosity, both spiritually and materially, knew no bounds.

It is through that generosity that she lives on.

