

Know Thyself

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To all the Seekers of Truth

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muse, and soulmate.

Foreword

Gnothi Seauton – Know Thyself – was inscribed on the facade of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, and has been attributed by many to the Greek sage and philosopher Socrates.

These words beg the fundamental question: Who am I? Who is this higher Self that needs to be known? And how is that knowledge to be acquired?

Consciously or unconsciously, every human being seeks the answer to this question. The quest for self-knowledge has been paralleled with the search for the Divine or the search for the lost paradise – the paradise not as a place but rather as a state – a steady state of joy, peace, health, balance, and harmony with ourselves and with the world. In each of us there is an innate desire to become better human beings, and to attain a higher state of consciousness.

Throughout history, many sages and spiritual personalities have come at different times and geographical places to guide humanity and shed light on this dilemma of the human existence. These highly evolved souls were often misunderstood by the people in charge of interpreting and creating movements after the image of their teachings, decades or centuries after their advent on the earth.

All great spiritual paths, Yoga systems, Zen and other ancient traditions talked about attaining the knowledge of the Self, not by reading scriptures or through mental analysis, but by attaining a higher state of awareness. However, without a direct experience of this state, we have not been adequately equipped to comprehend it. Philosophers and writers used their logic and imagination in an attempt to approximate it in innumerable systems of thought that failed to provide a real answer. Those few souls who attained such elevated states tried to describe the indescribable as best they could, often using poetry and parables, but they could not impart their experience to others. The question remained – what about the rest of

us? Is there a way for humanity to achieve this higher state at a mass level?

This book, though yet another act of writing, attempts to shed some light on this profound question, as well as show a way by which an initial experience of this state can be concretely felt, marking the initial step of a journey that you, dear reader, can embark on.

The knowledge presented in this book is ancient, though it was kept secret for millennia, transmitted from guru (spiritual master) to disciple. Recently, it was revealed and placed in a new light by Dr. Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, founder of Sahaja Yoga Meditation, Nobel Peace Prize nominee, and acclaimed by many as one of today's most significant voices on spirituality, peace and global integration. Hundreds of thousands in over one hundred countries have felt the remarkable benefits of this system of meditation, a practice that goes a long way towards bridging the gap between science and spirituality. The author of this book is one such person among these hundreds of thousands, who was able to gain insight into the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of the human being based on his practice of this meditation method over more than two decades.

The times we live in show all the signs of being special. The exponential nature of our evolutionary curve seems to indicate that today we may be on the brink of an inner revolution, a transformation that will take our awareness to a dramatically new level, forever altering the future course of our lives.

The complete answer to this matter can only be a journey to the essence of what we are. It is something that only our own direct experience will show.

Chapter 1. The Quest

“You cannot know the meaning of your life
until you are connected to the power that created you.”
-- *Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi*

The search for the subtle truth is as old as human civilization. It is hard to say whether this search begins with the seeker who, fed up with going around in the circles of mundane duality (pleasure and pain, happiness and unhappiness), begins to thirst after the truth; or whether it is a higher power that beckons the seeker. The rules of the cosmic game have been set since the beginning of creation: the human being, the most highly evolved creature on the planet, has been given a precious gift called free will.

There are events in our lives that are out of our control, managed by an all-pervading power that does everything in the universe. We need not worry about those since no one could orchestrate them better anyway – they are all arranged in our path for us to learn from them and turn us towards the truth to which we aspire. Then there are events that depend entirely on us, on our free will – and this is where each individual must choose their own path, making everyday decisions that ultimately shape our lives.

The first category of events which are beyond our control guide us and ensure that each of us gets a full chance to reach the destination of our journey. The events of the second type are those we must figure out ourselves, first by knowing what the right choices are, and secondly by having the sincerity and courage to make those choices and ignore the wrong ones.

Seeking takes many forms and there are many questions we ask ourselves in trying to find the truth. I remember as a young child thinking that one thing that appeared fishy to me somehow was the fact that we all appeared to be separate individuals. This cannot be, I

told myself, we must be one and the same being. Why I could not feel pain when someone else cut their finger was beyond my understanding. However, I had a strong feeling that someday I would encounter something or someone that would answer these questions. My instinct told me this was going to happen in my thirties. As it happened, after many years of seeking, I was fortunate to discover at the age of twenty-two a meditation practice that changed my life.

What makes life possible? What is the power or agent that makes our heart beat and our breathing and digestion take place without our intervention? The doctors will say it is the autonomous nervous system. But who is this auto? In every automobile there has to be a driver. Science has its own limitations, and this is one of the questions it is unable to answer conclusively.

We return to the fundamental question man asked himself since the beginning of civilization: who am I?

Through analysis we can also see what the Self is not: we are not the body, which is rather the physical vessel of the Self but not the Self itself; we are not our thoughts, for we can stop our thoughts, even if for a brief moment, and still continue to exist; similarly we are not the emotions, and so on. Perhaps if we continue removing that which we are not, we will be left with what we truly are – something pure and eternal called the Self or Spirit, which many spiritual paths affirm is of a divine nature.

The Self is the one who provides the life force, the “driver” in our automobile. This is the greatest truth about ourselves, though it needs to be experienced rather than simply talked about.

In reality, the Spirit is in a perpetual state of complete peace, knowledge and joy. The problem is that through the development of our ego and conditionings and by going away from Nature, we have distanced ourselves from our Spirit, identifying ourselves with other aspects of our being such as the body or the mind.

The second fundamental truth, which is also alluded to in many spiritual writings and scriptures, is that there is an all-pervading power of divine love that does all living work, whether we call it Mother Nature, universal force or divine power. It is this power that makes seeds sprout, flowers bloom and trees grow, according to its own laws.

A rose bush will always produce roses and never daffodils, and trees will grow only up to a certain height. Our eyes are designed like a very delicate camera, and our brain is the most complex computer. All these grow with amazing precision from a tiny cell which, due to some unknown intelligence, is not thrown out of the uterus immediately but it is nourished for nine months and then expelled at the right time.

I remember once talking to a fellow student at Purdue University, otherwise a remarkably skilled Indian flute player, who firmly believed that life and the universe as we know it are the results of pure chance. He thought that all the harmonious organization of nature, in its minute detail, was a complete accident. I thought he was crazy.

Scientists have determined that if certain constants of the laws of physics such as the speed of light and the gravitational constant had been slightly different than what they are, life would have not been possible on earth. There has to be some sort of intelligent power that organizes and sustains the evolutionary processes in the universe. In fact, one of the most rewarding and fascinating discussions on science I've ever had was with a top Romanian scientist was precisely on the topic of science trying to confirm or disconfirm the existence of the divine power.

Dr. Dumitru Constantin-Dulcan has more qualifications than you can name in a single breath. He is a retired neurosurgeon, professor, army general, and former CEO of Romania's largest military hospital. But above all, he is a scientist of the highest level, and a

man of deep spirituality. As an adolescent in my native Romania, I had read his seminal book *The Intelligence of Matter* which greatly accelerated my seeking and curiosity for a higher truth beyond the mundane world. Dr. Constantin became my childhood hero.

Then, in January 1997, many years after I had moved to the United States, by pure accident (and here my flute-playing friend from Purdue may have had it right) I had the chance of meeting Dr. Constantin in India, at a Sahaja Health Research Center near Mumbai. The center was remarkable in that one could not find there even a stethoscope or any medical machinery, as all diagnosis and treatment was administered on the basis of the subtle awareness and curative powers given by the practice of meditation.

Dr. Constantin had been invited to the center by Shri Mataji. He had met her in Bucharest for only a few minutes and had felt moved and intrigued by the meeting, desiring to find out more about the health benefits of Sahaja method of meditation. As for me, I happened to be visiting the research center for a few weeks during the same period of time. As he did not speak English fluently and I was the only other Romanian there, I was happy to serve as a translator in his conversations with Dr. U. C. Rai, then head of the Sahaja Health Center, who was another remarkable long-time scientist and medical practitioner. Needless to say, I was completely fascinated by the conversations that took place between these two scientific giants.

During the evenings, Dr. Constantin and I would spend a lot of leisurely time shooting the breeze, discussing various subjects that astounded me. Imagine the delight of meeting face to face one of your childhood heroes and getting to spend hours, even days, talking to him about the most fascinating subjects!

During one of those conversations he told me how in his youth he was a fervent atheist, and he wanted to get scientific proof that God didn't exist. He jumped at an opportunity that presented itself when a scientist from Europe wrote a thesis, as part of his application for the Nobel Prize in physics, which addressed that precise topic. Dr.

Constantin immersed himself in studying these writings, but the more he read, the more he realized that the thesis, while trying to scientifically disprove the existence of God, ended up indicating that a higher power did in fact exist! It was then that his seeking for a the ultimate truth began. He also realized pretty quickly that he could not satisfy his quest through reading or mental analysis only, but that experimentation was needed.

Many seekers of truth realize at some point on their journey that the many types of approaches tried so far have failed to give an answer to the problematic aspect of human existence. Otherwise, after hundreds and thousands of years of trying these myriad solutions, by now the issues plaguing humankind would have been resolved on a global level. On the contrary, it seems that the human crisis is deepening all around the planet. After the unsuccessful attempts to remedy this multi-faceted problem through religious, scientific, social and economic reforms, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the true solution must be based on an inner transformation, as opposed to all external efforts attempted so far. For example, peace is not an abstract concept to be strived for at a global level, tackled only through diplomatic efforts. Peace has to be achieved first within each individual before it can manifest at the collective level.

How is this inner transformation to be achieved?

Some seekers search on their own, but the path is long and arduous, and there are many dead ends. Others are fortunate enough to find a spiritual teacher, a guru. But there are pitfalls here as well. False masters abound these days, in their greedy search for gullible seekers who will innocently open their purses hoping for a secret formula that will give them salvation – only to end up broke and sick.

True gurus are few, and many of them keep out of the limelight. Becoming a disciple of an authentic master is not easy. First of all, the selection itself is a grueling process and very few are chosen. A guru might have only one disciple, or perhaps a handful. Even if

selected by the guru, the disciple has to pass through many difficult tests as he or she strives towards the distant goal of enlightenment. Very few are the ones who eventually achieve it, and even if they do, they do not know how to pass it on to others.

A real master will never live on the earnings of his or her disciples. A person who lives on the income of others can be called a parasite, but not a guru. If we weed out all so-called masters and “spiritual institutions” that charge money or “love donations” for their services, no matter how big or small the amount, we will have eliminated the vast majority of such movements mushrooming in the marketplace.

I remember how in the Spring of 1990, right after the fall of communism in Romania and before I had discovered Sahaja Yoga Meditation, I went with a few of my seeking friends to attend a yoga program where several local “masters”, who had been outlawed during the communist times, were going to give a public presentation.

I had been seeking for a number of years, had tried several techniques, had read a ton of books spanning the world’s religions, yoga systems, Zen, and many other spiritual paths, and had finally arrived at the conclusion that trying to mash the common truths of all these paths in my head was not going to give me what I sought. I needed something more: an actual experience.

All I could remember from that program was how the self-styled gurus were fighting for the microphone and not being very friendly among themselves or with the people in the audience who were asking questions. These horrible so-called masters were clearly trying to divide the “market” of seekers between themselves. I left disgusted and vowed to not go to any such meetings again.

Fortunately, several months later I came across a friend whom I trusted, who told me that he had been practicing a form of meditation called Sahaja for a month or two, and he had already felt

a big difference in his life. He said that this was different from the other movements out there, and it was about the connection with your inner Self. I decided to give it a try, and went to the program with my parents. I received my Self realization on August 1, 1990, and that evening changed my life. Everything that happened afterwards confirmed the gut feeling I had that evening that “This Is It.”

Chapter 2. The Beginning



Figure 2.1

In the early morning hours on the 5th of May in the year 1970 something extraordinary happened. A spiritual personage of the highest caliber opened the path towards the collective achievement of a new dimension of awareness called Self realization.

Shri Mataji Nirjala Devi was born on March 21, 1923 to a Christian family descending from the Indian Shalivahana royal dynasty. Her birth, precisely at noon on the spring equinox, and at the geographical center of India, was marked by an extraordinary planetary alignment. She knew from a very young age that she had a unique gift that was to be made available to all who seek it.

Shri Mataji and her family played a key role in the movement of India's liberation from under the British rule. A youth leader in the struggle for her country's independence, she grew up in Mahatma Gandhi's ashram. Gandhi recognized her profundity even at her

young age, and sometimes consulted with her on matters of spirituality. Shri Mataji's father, Prasad K. Salve, a renowned scholar and master of fourteen languages, was a distinguished lawyer and the only Christian member of India's Constituent Assembly. Her mother, Cornelia Salve, was the first woman in India to receive an honors degree in mathematics.

Shri Mataji's parents knew that she had a special spiritual task to achieve, and as she was growing up they helped her understand the deep and manifold problems facing humankind.

Shri Mataji pursued medical studies in Lahore and shortly after India's independence she married Sir C. P. Srivastava, one of India's living legends, who became the Joint Secretary to India's Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, the successor of Jawaharlal Nehru. Later on, Mr. Srivastava served for sixteen years as the Secretary General of the United Nations International Maritime Organization. He became the Founding Chancellor Emeritus of the World Maritime Organization, was knighted by the Queen of England for his remarkable achievements, and received numerous international awards and recognitions.



Figure 2.2

In 1970, after seeing her children reach adulthood and having fulfilled her responsibilities as a mother and a householder, Shri Mataji embarked on her life's true mission – the spiritual emancipation of individuals and of society through Sahaja Yoga meditation.

Sahaja (*saha* = with, *ja* = born) means spontaneous, built-in, or inborn. Sahaja meditation effortlessly establishes the connection of the individual to the all-pervading power through the phenomenon of Self realization. Self realization, or the actualization of our inner Self, takes place through the awakening of a subtle spiritual energy residing in every human being called *Kundalini* – we shall learn more about this energy and its remarkable qualities in later chapters.

The word *yoga* in Sanskrit means “union” – union of the individual consciousness with the collective consciousness – even though in the West the term has been commercialized and now *yoga* loosely refers to a set of physical exercises and breathing techniques. As a result, in the United States many people who saw advertisements about Sahaja Yoga used to show up with exercise mats and wearing gym clothes. Therefore, it was decided to use the name “Sahaja Meditation” instead so that newcomers could get a clearer understanding of what to expect. Henceforth we will use the terms Sahaja Yoga and Sahaja Meditation interchangeably.

Shri Mataji started Sahaja Yoga in 1970 by first giving individual Self realization to a few eager seekers of truth in India. En-masse Self realization started when the first group of twelve seekers received their Kundalini awakening simultaneously. Sahaja Yoga spread very quickly in the small villages of India, where innocent, simple people were ready to receive this spiritual gift with an open heart. Shortly afterwards, Shri Mataji's husband was appointed as the Secretary General of the U.N. Maritime Organization and London became their home. The first group of seven Western seekers of truth received their Self realization and became Sahaja

Yogis (practitioners of Sahaja Yoga meditation).

Initially Sahaja Yoga spread across Europe and in North America. Shri Mataji was very eager to save the American seekers from the clutches of the false gurus who had invaded the United States and were looting people in the name of spirituality. In 1972 she sold her golden jewelry to fund a tour of America and set sail across the Atlantic. In hall after hall she held programs, but her message fell on deaf ears, as the seekers of those times were too naive to realize that truth could be obtained without paying fabulous sums of money.

In 1989, after the Iron Curtain fell, Sahaja Yoga spread in Russia and the Eastern Block countries, where thousands filled stadiums and large halls to listen to Shri Mataji's lectures and receive their Self realization.

I first met Shri Mataji in October 1990, two and a half months after receiving my Self realization at a public program. All of us Sahaja Yogis had gathered at the Otopeni airport in Bucharest to receive her on her first visit to Romania, and we were all excited like little children. She melted our hearts when she appeared with a beaming smile, wearing a scarf that was tied around her head in a traditional Romanian style. Each of us in turn offered her flowers, and the moment I offered mine is a moment I will never forget. Even today I can just see her radiant face, looking at me with motherly love as she received the little flower I offered from my heart.

Until she reached the age of eighty, Shri Mataji traveled the world giving free public programs. Thousands experienced their Self realization effortlessly in her presence. She has never charged any money for her selfless work, insisting that you cannot pay for the knowledge of truth, nor for a living process which takes place within us: the growth of our awareness. Today, Sahaja Yoga is established on all continents and is coming with full force into the attention of the scientific, political, ecological and spiritual spheres as a way to solve today's crises from within.

For her universal vision of a unified humanity and her extraordinary global work, Shri Mataji has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. She was recognized and honored by governments of many nations for her unique contributions which continue to improve the lives of hundreds of thousands on a daily basis.

Shri Mataji's profound wisdom and insights have been a source of inspiration to many political and spiritual leaders. Lal Bahadur Shastri, India's second Prime Minister after Jawaharlal Nehru, had tremendous respect for her and often sought her guidance on economical and political matters. In 1997, separate tributes were paid to Shri Mataji by Claes Nobel (Chairman of United Earth and grandnephew of Alfred Nobel, creator of the Nobel Foundation), and Ayatollah Rouhani (leader of the Shiia Muslim faith in Europe) at the Royal Albert Hall in London.

In addition to founding Sahaja Yoga meditation, Shri Mataji has distinguished herself as a great humanitarian by creating a number of non-governmental organizations, including:

- An international Sahaja Health Research Center in Mumbai, India, dedicated to alleviating illnesses through Sahaja Yoga meditation techniques.
- An international Academy of the Arts in Vaitarna, India.
- A charitable organization in New Delhi to provide shelter to destitute and homeless people.
- An international theater company – the Theater of Eternal Values – whose international cast and crew has successfully toured throughout Europe, Australia, Israel, India and the United States. Its mission is to produce performances that promote the universal values of a global culture.

Within the sphere of medicine, significant findings attributing Sahaja Yoga meditation to a reduction in asthmatic incidents have been published in scientific journals by a reputed Australian physician, Dr. Ramesh Manocha. In addition, Manocha's work with Sahaja Yoga has shown positive results in managing Attention

Deficit Disorder. Dr. Manocha joins the ranks of numerous medical professionals around the world researching the positive impact of Sahaja Yoga on diseases such as cancer, epilepsy, high blood pressure, asthma, and others. In India, Russia and Australia there are health centers which exclusively employ Sahaja methods for curative purposes.

In August 1995, I went with my wife Barbara to Bucharest when I heard that Shri Mataji was going to visit Romania anew. During that visit, the Ecological University of Bucharest invited Shri Mataji to speak at a conference organized specifically for Sahaja Yoga meditation, where several prominent Romanian academicians were present. The room was full beyond capacity, and many Sahaja Yogis had to wait outside. I remember how spellbound everyone was after Shri Mataji spoke, and at the end, the President of the University excused himself and left the room. He returned shortly with a diploma for a Doctorate degree in Cognitive Sciences, which Shri Mataji graciously accepted. This was not an honorary diploma, but an actual degree, awarded based on the extraordinary knowledge of the field of Cognitive Sciences that Shri Mataji demonstrated.

Also in 1995, Shri Mataji was an official guest of the Chinese government invited to speak to the people of China at the Women's International Conference in Beijing. This was another historic moment that highlighted the important role of women in spirituality, peace, and global integration.

In the United States, Shri Mataji's unique contributions have been recognized and honored by the United States Congress. She has spoken at the United Nations on four occasions, between 1989 and 1994, on ways to achieve world peace. Sahaja Meditation is also offered in Washington D.C. at the National Institutes of Health which, in addition to offering ongoing weekly programs in Sahaja Meditation, has hosted two seminars on the health benefits of this meditation system which were attended by over five hundred medical professionals. Sahaja Meditation programs and workshops are offered weekly in over fifty cities in the United States in public,

private and governmental institutions including community and state colleges, libraries, corporations, prisons, drug rehabilitation centers, and hospitals. Sahaja Meditation instruction is always free of charge, as a community service, offered through by the local chapters of the Sahaja Yoga meditation non-profit organization.

Through the daily practice of Sahaja Meditation, Self realization brings about a deep, positive transformation on all levels of the individual: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

Self realization is the enlightenment that connects us with the Spirit residing in our heart. The main difference between the Sahaja style and other spiritual practices is that in Sahaja Meditation, Self realization is achieved on day one, without any prior preparation, while traditional practices involve an arduous journey until the point of Self realization is reached. All saints and sages of the past underwent such long preparations before achieving their Self realization. For example, Buddha meditated and undertook severe penances for several years before he sat one day under a banyan tree and achieved a state of total Self realization.

Because we achieve our Self realization from day one, without going through prior purifications of our subtle system, this connection is not complete from the beginning. Due to our hectic lifestyle, environment, and many other factors that have constricted our subtle system, very few strands of the Kundalini energy pass through our energy centers and emerge through the fontanel bone area at the top of the head. Qualitatively it is the same experience that Buddha and other enlightened sages achieved – and fortunately for us in these special modern times it can be achieved effortlessly – but quantitatively there is still a lot of work we need to do in order to reach our full potential.

Fortunately, after Self realization and the awakening of our Kundalini energy, our subtle work of inner purification and spiritual evolution becomes much easier. Before we become connected with our Self, trying to improve our inner being is like trying to clean a

room in the dark. We stumble around, knocking over furniture, missing dusty corners and doing a lackluster job. After we achieve our connection through Self realization, it is as if a little light has been lit and we begin to see where the major problem areas are inside ourselves. We now have the power to correct them by using the energy of this lamp that has been lit within. Moreover, as the room becomes cleaner, the light increases, significantly accelerating the process of growth and self-improvement.

The connection we achieve through Self realization needs to be nourished and strengthened through our attention, introspection and regular meditation. As this connection with our Self grows, our inner being becomes more and more enlightened and as a result all human qualities that are innate within us start manifesting spontaneously in our lives. It is a living process like the sprouting of a seed that gradually grows into a tree – the tree of our enlightened awareness. We only need to have patience with ourselves to allow this living process to unfold.

Nourished by our daily meditation through this process we effortlessly become moral, forgiving, compassionate, dynamic, confident, open-hearted, humble, innocent, pure, child-like, creative, having a good attention, pure knowledge, and expressing all the qualities of the Self or Spirit. Moreover, we achieve balance in all the aspects of our life. These are all qualities of the Spirit and they always existed within us, some more manifest and some more dormant. The ultimate goal is the achievement of a state of total Self realization, in which the union with the all-pervading power is complete and fully manifested in our lives.

When this transformation occurs at the collective level, society will be transformed. First, one becomes aware of the root cause of problems which can always be found in one form or another in the energy centers, and such problems get corrected through regular meditation, introspection, and through Sahaja Meditation techniques.

Once our Self realization is established, our collective consciousness develops. We become aware of the subtle causes of the problems of our fellow human beings and of our society as a whole. Our desire to help our communities and the environment we live in develops spontaneously. We start giving this gift of Self realization to others and we become vehicles of the all-pervading power that flows through us. It is only through the transformation of each individual that our society can be healed and transformed, and this transformation has to start from within. The first step is raising our awareness to a new level through the awakening of our Kundalini energy.

Sahaja Meditation is not yet another mental concept or philosophy, but first and foremost a living, direct experience of the divinity within and around us. It is a journey to the roots of what we are – the pure, eternal Spirit.

In the next chapter we will explore the subtle, quintessential mechanism that the Divine has placed within us for our spiritual evolution and ultimately for our union with the power that created us.

Chapter 3. The Mechanism

“The most difficult part is to convince a human being that in the entire creation, he is the most highly evolved being; that he is capable of becoming a glorious personality, a beautiful, peaceful angel.”
-- *Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi*¹

What is the subtle mechanism that controls our body, mind, emotions, and in general manages our existence?

Inside every human being there is a network of nerves and sensory organs that interprets the outside physical world. At the same time, within us resides a subtle system of channels (*nadis*) and centers of energy (*chakras*) that parallels the nervous system, looking after our physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual life.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, in the triangular bone called *sacrum* (Figure 3.1) located at the base of the spine resides the Kundalini energy. Perhaps the sacrum bone owes its name to the fact that the ancient civilizations knew about this motherly and soothing spiritual energy.



Figure 3.1

The Kundalini is a feminine energy that is dormant in most people.

¹ Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, *Meta Modern Era*, Ritana Books, New Delhi, revised third edition 1997 (p. 2).

Self realization is the awakening of the Kundalini through the central channel, piercing through the six chakras above it (the first chakra is below the sacrum bone) and emerging at the top of the head (fontanel bone area) as a gentle “fountain” of coolness. The word fontanel itself means “little fountain” which shows again the ancient knowledge about this phenomenon of Self realization.

The Kundalini also represents the power of pure desire within us. We have many desires which, in accordance with the laws of economics, are in general not satiable. Today we want a house, after we get the house we want a swimming pool, after that perhaps a helicopter. The list never ends. However, as psychologist Abraham Maslow noted, once our basic desires are fulfilled, we gradually start desiring subtler things that belong to the intellectual and emotional realms, and ultimately lead to our seeking of the spiritual realm. There is however one desire, which is the purest and, if fulfilled, can sate all our other desires because it gives us complete satisfaction: the pure desire to become one with our Spirit. The fulfillment of this desire starts with our achievement of Self realization. The Kundalini is the power of that pure desire, which we feel as a subtle urge to grow spiritually and achieve our destiny as human beings.

Though it was extremely difficult to attain in the past, Self realization has been described, often through metaphors and parables, in all major spiritual traditions of the world. Now, through Sahaja Meditation, it can be achieved spontaneously and effortlessly. In Shri Mataji’s words: “Kundalini cures you, she improves you, she bestows all the blissful things upon you. She takes you away from the worries of the grosser level.”

“Actually, Kundalini is everybody’s individual Mother. She has tape-recorded all the information about our past and about our inspirations, also our aspirations. [...] When this power [...] rises and passes through six centers, it nourishes these centers which are meant for our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual

requirements. The centers reflect their new state on the genes.”¹

We are made like a divine computer with everything built-in – yet before Self realization we are not yet connected to the power source. Self realization is the connection to the mains, which opens a new, spiritual dimension to our awareness. It is an entirely natural and effortless process, just like the sprouting of a seed. It is not a mental concept or a system of thought, rather an actual experience that has to take place within us.

The manifestation of the Kundalini energy is called *vibrations*, which do not refer to the mechanical or physical meaning of the word, but rather to the manifestation of Kundalini as a gentle cool breeze coming out of the top of our head and from our palms after we experience our Self realization.

¹ Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, *Meta Modern Era*, Ritana Books, New Delhi, revised third edition 1997 (p. 201).

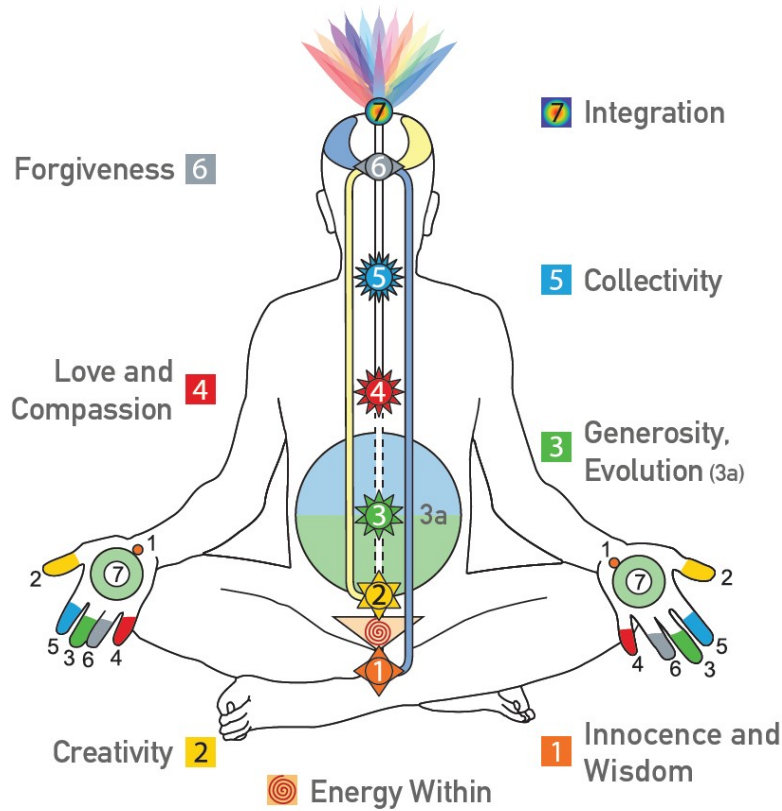


Figure 3.2
Subtle centers

Our seven subtle centers, the chakras, govern all the aspects of our life, from the physical to the mental, emotional and spiritual levels of our being. A physical or mental illness or an emotional disorder is the result of a prolonged imbalance in one or more of the chakras or left and right energy channels (which will henceforth be called as the left and right sides). If we can feel the state of our subtle system and detect such imbalances early on when they are triggered, and if we can cure the imbalance at the energetic and spiritual level, we can prevent many physical and mental problems in our being. This ability to diagnose and alleviate problems at their root cause becomes possible after Self realization.

Each of the seven chakras has several qualities, such as wisdom, creativity, peace, confidence, love, forgiveness, etc., which will be discussed in detail in the following chapters. These qualities are intact within us, and even though they might not always be manifest, they can never be destroyed. When the Kundalini energy is awakened through Self realization, these qualities start manifesting spontaneously and express themselves in our life. Thus, through regular meditation, we automatically become very dynamic, creative, confident, and at the same time humble, loving and compassionate. It is a process that starts to develop by itself when the Kundalini rises and begins to enlighten our chakras.

What is meditation?

Contemporary dictionaries tend to use definitions centered around the concept of thought. Classical definitions point to meditation being a state of silence, or absence of thought. The state of meditation achieved in Sahaja Yoga is that of mental silence, when one is fully aware, yet without any thought – a state called “thoughtless awareness.” Normally this is very difficult to accomplish, which is perhaps why today there are so many other meanings attributed to the word “meditation” such as concentration on an image or thought, contemplation, musing about a subject, or simply relaxing and letting your mind wander freely.

Nevertheless, thoughtless awareness can be achieved spontaneously (Sahaja) when the Kundalini passes through the sixth center located in the center of the head. Even if in the beginning we are able to achieve this mental silence for just a split second, this state can be gradually established and expanded through regular meditation. However, Self realization (the rising of the Kundalini energy through the top of the head) needs to be first achieved.

Our mind keeps us away from reality through the continuous chatter of thoughts coming from the ego (left brain, responsible with thoughts about the future) and superego (right brain, producing

thoughts about the past). Throughout the day, our attention oscillates between the past (“I remember this happening when ...”) and the future (“I’m going to meet this person and tell him this,” “next year I am planning to do this”) but we are rarely, if ever, in the present moment.

Think about it: if right now we are thinking about what will happen in five minutes, and after five minutes we start thinking about now (which will then become “five minutes ago”), when have we truly lived? Doesn’t it look like that those who always live either in the past or the future are those who have never actually lived?

In the state of meditation we go beyond the thoughts and the mind, and are automatically in the present moment because there is no thought. We observe everything like a witness, but we do not react. The silent witness in us is the Spirit, with which we become connected through Self realization. Meditation is a special state, because we are relaxed and alert at the same time.

Studies comparing experienced meditators compared to controls or short-term meditators have demonstrated physiological changes during meditation suggestive of a wakeful hypometabolic state that is characterized by decreased sympathetic nervous activity, important for fight and flight mechanisms, and increased parasympathetic activity, important for relaxation and rest. This wakeful hypometabolic state with parasympathetic dominance has been shown to be qualitatively and quantitatively different from simple rest or sleep.

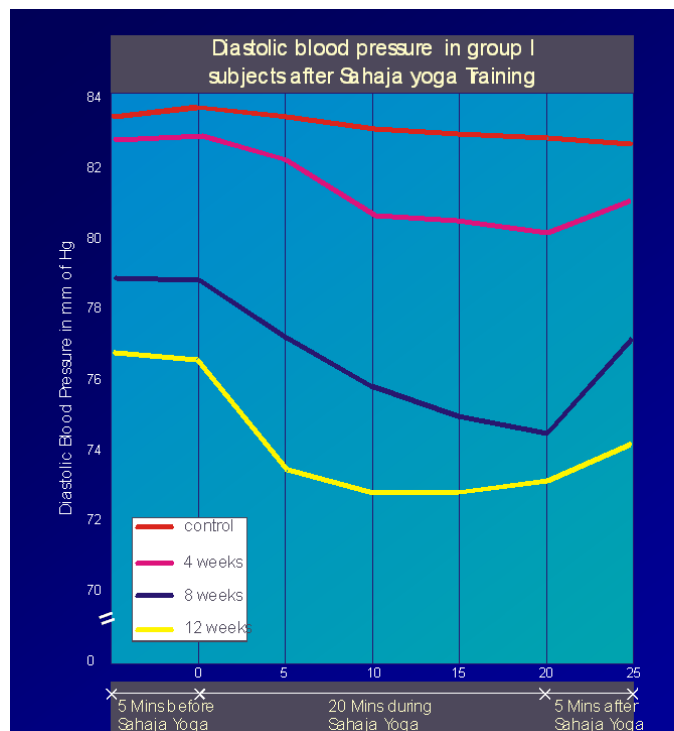
A series of studies conducted by Prof. U. C. Rai from the Department of Physiology at the University of Delhi have shown that Sahaja Meditation when compared to another (control) form of meditation elicits a reduction in stress-related physiological parameters than indicate an increase of the parasympathetic nervous system, important for rest and relaxation¹. This included a reduction

¹ Rai, U.C., Seti, S., Singh, S.H., 1988. Some effects of Sahaja Yoga and its role in the prevention of stress disorders. *Journal of International Medical Sciences*, 19-

in heart, respiratory and pulse rates, of systolic blood pressure, and oxygen metabolism, and of urinary vanilly-mandelic acid (VMA) and increases skin resistance.

These physiological alterations are indicators of deep parasympathetic activation and therefore physiological relaxation that have been related to stress relief and may have a role in the prevention of stress-related illness, such as respiratory, hypertensive or cardiovascular disease.

In fact, the same physiological effects achieved with Sahaja Meditation in healthy individuals, could also be achieved in patients with epilepsy and with asthma and hypertension after 4 weeks of meditation training, which furthermore were related to the significant reduction of asthma/epilepsy attacks.



23.

Figure 3.3

A study conducted in Australia by Dr. Ramesh Manocha and colleagues showed that long-term Sahaja meditators compared to a group of subjects who practiced simple relaxation showed a reduction in the temperature of their hands during the meditation (shown in the down-sloping curve in the figure below; the slightly upward-sloping curve shows the relatively stable skin temperature of the control group). This correlates with the subjective feelings of coolness in the hands and on top of the brain that is experienced by Sahaja meditators and has been related to an activation of the parasympathetic-limbic pathway.

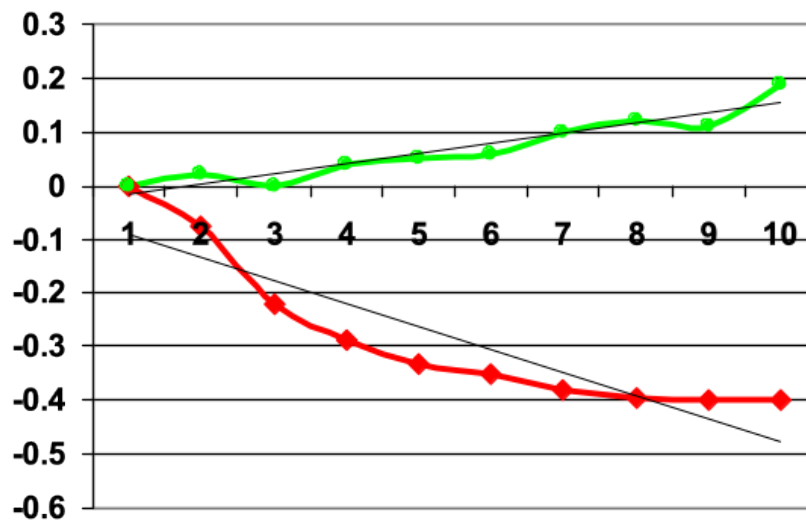


Figure 3.4

Another study conducted at McMaster's University in Toronto¹ showed that Sahaja Meditation elicited significant increases in beta-endorphins for both male and female subjects (in male subjects, these neurochemicals that are related to the feeling of happiness and

¹ Mishra R, Barlas C, Barone D. (1993): Plasma beta endorphin levels in humans: effect of Sahaja Yoga, Toronto, Canada. Also presented at the "Medical Aspects of Sahaja Yoga" conference in New Delhi, India, 1993.

euphoria increased by 70%). Beta-endorphins are also released during high-performance sports and when people are in love. They are thought to play an important role in homeostatic mechanisms, pain reduction and may even affect the immune system, which could explain why practitioners of Sahaja Meditation experience improvement in severe illnesses such as asthma, high blood pressure, epilepsy and others (more on this in subsequent chapters).

In a speech given on July 10, 1984 at Chiswick Town Hall in London, Shri Mataji explained: “So the attention has to be purified, but that you don’t have to do – your Kundalini itself purifies your attention. [...] Now how do you remove the thought from your mind is the problem. Thoughts are all the time in your mind. [...] A thought rises and falls off, and another thought rises and falls off. But when the Kundalini rises, then what happens is that these thoughts become elongated and that starts some work inside. And there is a gap in between and this gap is the place of our peace.

If you achieve that peace, the world peace can be achieved. By just taking placards, by shouting for peace, you cannot establish peace. Peace has to come from the hearts of human beings. In the hearts of human beings peace can be only established when you establish the Spirit within its core, where it manifests the bliss of peace. When you start enjoying the bliss of peace you don't want wars, you don't think of a war and that is the state where now the human beings have to rise and go to.”

The next chapters go into greater depth to discuss the seven centers and three channels of energy, their causes of blockage and methods by which they can be purified and brought back into balance.

Chapter 4. Mooladhara

The first chakra named Mooladhara (*moola* = root, *dhara* = support) is placed below the base of the spine (in men its location corresponds to the prostate gland). This energy center looks like a lotus with four petals which symbolize its sterling qualities of innocence, purity, wisdom and joy. The principle this center stands for is that of the eternal childhood which is always present in us. The child in us may be covered by the clouds of cunningness, impure desires or perversions, but it can never be destroyed or tarnished. No matter how much a person goes against it, this principle of eternal childhood can always be reawakened and enlightened through Self realization.

Childlike innocence cannot be described. It is best felt in the state of thoughtless awareness – it is innocence that puts children always in the present moment, as they like to simply play no matter where they are, without thinking of the past or the future like the adults get into the habit of doing. Innocence is the basis of the love between mother and child. It is the pure state of a child who enjoys thoroughly the present moment. It is simplicity and spontaneity devoid of any artificial behavior or ulterior motives. People who have innocence are automatically joyous and satisfied in life.

Wisdom can be found in the qualities of innocence and purity. That is why we can sometimes see the innate wisdom shining in little children, who don't have any time, inclination or energy to waste on being cunning. Their wisdom guides them spontaneously, and innocent people have a built-in capacity to guide themselves and distinguish what is good from what is bad for them.

On the physical level, the center of Mooladhara corresponds to the pelvic plexus and controls the reproduction system as well as all functions of excretion. It is notable that this chakra is placed below the Kundalini, which is indicative of the fact that sex has nothing to do with spirituality. In fact, when the Kundalini rises, all excretion

stops. So-called spiritual practices that advocate the attainment of Self realization through sexual practices can seriously damage our chances of ascent by throwing this first center deeply out of balance.

Sexual activity is a natural, spontaneous happening that is best manifested in the balance of married life, which is a union that is sanctified and sanctioned collectively by the society. Any excesses in this aspect or thinking about sex can lead to an imbalance in the left side which can ultimately lead to the so-called secret diseases. Complete abstinence is another form of abnormal behavior which is at the other extreme that should be avoided as it can lead to imbalances in the right side of the Mooladhara chakra, making one's personality very dry. Having a normal married life is the best way to keep this center in balance.

Too much interest in sex through our mind or eyes has the effect of reducing its spontaneity and can ultimately result in impotency. This is an activity that cannot be performed with the brain, and involving the brain in it can spoil and pervert it, especially if started early in life. School education about sexuality, which is widespread in most Western countries, has the unfortunate effect of awakening a premature interest in this subject at an age when children should be left to fully develop the strength of their innocence that will help them tremendously throughout their life. Also, the bombardment of pornography in all forms of mass media is responsible for inciting unhealthy interest which can ultimately cause physical problems in men and mental disorders in women.

Innocence is magnetic. Children are magnetic in that their sweetness and purity attract us naturally and give us happiness. The company of an innocent person will always be sought after, because it is so joy giving. This magnetism is also present in the Mother Earth as well as in animals, especially birds, who can find their way by using their innate magnetic sense. However, in our modern times the magnetism of the Mooladhara is sometimes used in a wrong way by women who try to attract men and men who are looking at women in an impure way, which in the long term can seriously affect the

balance and cleanliness of our subtle energetic system.

Innocence is at the basis of all spirituality. A master who lacks innocence cannot be an authentic teacher but can become a horrid personality, because the essence of the principle of the guru is innocence. Innocent people may be cheated by cunning persons, but in the end innocence always prevails because it is in and of itself such a powerful force. This quality can be seen in children who always forget the people who hurt them, while remembering only the people who love them. Unlike adults who are experts at making themselves feel miserable, children appear to not want to remember bad things, and this is what keeps them in a perpetual state of joy.

The element corresponding to the Mooladhara chakra is earth. There are certain mountains and rock formations that came out of the Mother Earth which emit vibrations, such as Mount Uluru in Australia and Mount Matterhorn in Switzerland, shown below.



Figure 4.1
Mount Uluru, Australia



Figure 4.2
Mount Matterhorn, Switzerland

The four-petalled Mooladhara chakra corresponds to the tetravalent carbon atom, which is the basis of all life. All living organisms have built-in wisdom coming from the principle of the Mooladhara that guides them in their evolution. For example, at the tip of each root there is a little cell that has intelligence which guides it around the rocks it encounters on its path in such a way that eventually the root surrounds the rocks and encroaches itself on them.

This innate wisdom also exists in human beings, guiding us through our life. By being innocent, we can instinctively see what is good and what is bad for our Spirit and we get the strength to always follow the path of goodness. If on the other hand we cloud our

Mooladhara chakra's power of innocence and wisdom through artificial or cunning behavior, our life can become confused and we may without realizing it steer towards disaster.

Within every being or object there are also certain innate limits or laws of behavior. For example, steel will not break but glass will, wood will float on the water, and so on, because these materials have built-in within themselves the qualities to act that way. Flowers always bloom in the same season and following the same pattern. A tiger will never behave like a snake and a snake will never behave like a tiger.

In the same way, human beings have built-in within themselves certain boundaries and taboos. For example, we have a sense of shame and self-awareness that animals don't have. A dog may pass through a very dirty street without being bothered by it, but a human being may not. One of the differences between human beings and animals is that due to our free will, we can cross our innate limits and go to any extremes of unnatural, aberrant behavior. Animals cannot do that as they are bound by the laws of nature, and therefore are innocent. Only human beings have ego and can transgress their own inner laws.

A wise and innocent person will automatically stay within their natural boundaries. For example, such a person will never be interested in nudity or impure things due to their built-in sense of shame and modesty, which somehow alerts them that this is wrong. In fact, such behavior goes against the Mooladhara and in the long run can result in some of the incurable diseases related to this center.

Innocence is such a powerful force which in and of itself protects children and childlike, innocent people. Some years ago, we were neighbors with another family of Sahaja Yogis who had a child barely out of his toddler years. One day, the boy fell out of their balcony and, despite the fact that he fell a couple stories, he was miraculously completely unharmed.

There are several ways we can help cleanse our Mooladhara chakra. One is sitting on the earth, which absorbs all negativity from our subtle system and especially from the Mooladhara. Keeping the hands on the Mother Earth also helps clear the chakras, since they are all represented on our palms, which are like maps of our subtle system.

The health benefits of Sahaja Meditation are far-reaching and multi-faceted, an example being a study conducted at the Sydney Menopause Centre, Royal Hospital for Women, Australia, showed that Sahaja Meditation is effective as treatment for menopausal symptoms¹.

Sahaja Meditation was taught for 8 weeks, twice-weekly, in a group of women with menopausal symptoms, instead of providing them with the more traditional treatment of hormone replacement therapy for the management of menopausal hot flushes.

Improvements were observed in the frequency of hot flushes, which were reduced to 67% below the baseline frequency rate. At follow up, it was still 57% below baseline (a reduction in hot flashes frequency of 50% is considered an improvement). Significant improvements also occurred in a Climacteric Scale, the Menopause Quality of Life Questionnaire, and both State and Trait Anxiety subscales. Sahaja Meditation was shown to be an attractive option for women with menopausal symptoms because they prefer non-pharmacological treatments, thereby avoiding the risks and side effects of hormone replacement therapy.

The region on the hand corresponding to this first center of Mooladhara is the heel of the palm, near the wrist. The region of the head corresponding to the Mooladhara is at the back of the head (which also corresponds to the back of the sixth chakra called Agnya), which is the area of the brain where images seen with our

¹ Manocha, M, Semmar B (2007) A Preliminary Study of Efficacy and Safety of Sahaja Yoga Meditation as a Treatment for Hot Flushes and Other Symptoms of the Perimenopause. *Journal of Clinical Psychology in Medical Settings*, 14, 266-273.

eyes are “projected.” Due to the strong connection between these two centers, impure images we see or impure thoughts we have can affect the back of the Agnya chakra, and the negativity thus absorbed can lodge itself onto the Mooladhara. Watching the sky and green grass can help the back Agnya as well as the Mooladhara. The innocence of Mother Nature can be absorbed and used to cleanse the impurities in our subtle system.

Shri Mataji on Mooladhara¹: “There have been stories that children who have fallen from a very great height were completely saved, nothing happened to them. Their innocence is such a powerful thing that it doesn’t harm anyone who is not to be harmed. It has all the wisdom of the world, all the understanding of the world. [...]

You can see in your own lives around you, when anybody tries to trouble children – all of the them, whoever they are, whatever may be their nationality – they all jump, all jump to safeguard that child. What is it? What is it within us that makes us so very conscious to protect the innocence?

It’s really a shame, a great shame for us, when we find in this world that innocence is under attack. Anything else can be tolerated. Innocent people who have done nothing wrong, those who have no malice, who are living like little children, I should say, if they are attacked by anyone – not that the whole world reacts to that – but everyone of them cannot bear any innocent person or innocent being, being harmed.

We don’t realize that, within us, there is the ocean of love and ocean of understanding for children. Why? Why should it be? Why should we feel like that, especially for children? Especially for innocence? There are people who are always attacking innocent people, innocent children - there are, but no one wants to support them. No one thinks that it’s proper to ill-treat children. And those who have done this have to suffer. They all suffer as a reaction.”

¹ Talk given by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi in Italy, September 2001.

Chapter 5. Swadhishthan

The second chakra, Swadhishthan, is located in the lower abdomen, a couple of inches under the navel. It is the center of creation, arts and learning. Each chakra has three sides – one on the left, one on the right, and one in the center, expressing different qualities and looking after different organs. On the left side, the quality of Swadhishthan is pure knowledge, on the right side it is pure attention, and in the center it is pure creativity.

On the physical level, the Swadhishthan corresponds to the aortic plexus. It governs the intestines and many organs in our abdomen such as part of the liver, intestines, kidneys, uterus, and as such can cause many diseases if it goes out of balance. To understand how these diseases are triggered at the subtle level, we need to first understand the role this center plays in our mental processes.

Besides looking after the lower abdomen, the Swadhishthan breaks down the fat cells in our abdomen and supplies the resulting energy to the brain for our thinking. If we think too much, this chakra is forced to neglect nourishing the organs in the abdomen in favor of giving energy to the brain. Such imbalances can cause a host of ailments such as diabetes, kidney disorders, liver problems, colon diseases and so on.

For example, it is well known that diabetes can be triggered by mental and emotional strain. Actually, through the knowledge and practice of Sahaja Meditation we arrive at the realization that it is our thinking that often causes diabetes, and not the sugar we eat. In developing countries like as India, people eat large quantities of sugar but because they lead a more balanced and stress-free life and they don't think as much as in the West, diabetes is a much less frequent occurrence than in Western countries.

One of the most important organs governed by the right side of the Swadhishthan (together with the third chakra) is the liver, which is

the main organ of the right side. On the gross level, the liver performs various functions that include neutralizing the toxins in our body. On the subtle level, this organ sustains our attention. If we think, organize and plan too much, if we live too much in the future instead of the present moment, our restless attention drains the energy of the liver which starts neglecting its other functions. The Swadhishtan is now busy supplying energy to the brain to cater to our thinking instead of being able to look after the organs in the abdomen that it normally supplies with energy. As the liver becomes loaded with toxins, it starts to heat up. Heat is the sign of parts of our organism being in trouble, as exemplified by the phenomenon of fever. The heat trapped inside the liver can cause many diseases, but can also escape and rise up the right side to the right side of the Heart chakra, where it can cause asthma, or cross to the left side of the Heart chakra and cause heart problems.

A heated liver is also the sign of an angry, frustrated, even aggressive and violent personality. The heat of the liver can also travel up the right side all the way to the head, where it can bloat the ego causing such people to think no end of themselves. Perhaps that is why such a person is called a “hothead,” as opposed to a balanced, detached person, who is “cool.” In fact, the cool vibrations of the Kundalini neutralize the heat in the body of a realized soul (person who has their Self realization) and bring him or her into a state of peace, calm and balance.

A person with a hot liver will also have difficulty in concentrating or being in the state of meditation (thoughtless awareness) due to too many thoughts passing at high speed through his or her mind. For the same reason, such overactive people may also have difficulty in sleeping at night. A hot liver is the main cause of a person being “on the right side” i.e. futuristic, hot-tempered and overactive. Through simple Sahaja Meditation techniques, the right side and all the problems it generates can be cured and brought back into balance.

One of today’s widespread conditions which is the result of imbalances in the Swadhishtan chakra is ADHD (Attention Deficit

Hyperactivity Disorder). ADHD is a disorder that develops in childhood and is characterized by problems of attention, impulsiveness and hyperactivity.

A study conducted in Australia, at the Natural Therapies Research Unit of the Royal Hospital for Women in Sydney, and in collaboration with the Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London, UK, showed that Sahaja Meditation yields significant improvement of the symptoms of ADHD¹.

The treatment of choice in ADHD is the administration of stimulant medication. However, there are side effects, there is concern about the unknown long-term effects of stimulants on brain development and there is evidence for limited effectiveness that wanes after a few years. For these reasons parents prefer non-pharmacological treatment and there is a search for effective alternative non-pharmacological treatment options.

26 children with ADHD, aged between 4 and 12, were treated for 6 weeks with Sahaja Meditation adjunctive to their usual treatment (i.e. some of them were receiving stimulant medication) and then compared to a waiting list control group who received no treatment.

Children with ADHD who learned how to meditate compared to the waiting list control group showed a significant reduction of the main symptoms of hyperactivity, impulsiveness and inattention. Other secondary benefits were an improved child-parent relationship and enhanced self-esteem in children. Furthermore, of the children who were treated with stimulant medication, over 50% either discontinued or reduced their stimulant medication but still improved in their symptoms. The study also showed that the meditating children improved significantly in their behavior at home and at school.

¹ Harrison, L., Rubia, K., Manocha, R. (2003) Sahaja Yoga Meditation as a Family Treatment Program for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Children. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 9 (4), 479-497.

This pioneering study suggests that Sahaja Meditation is clearly a promising non-pharmacological treatment option for children with ADHD that needs to be further explored.

In addition with being responsible with our attention, concentration and learning, the Swadhishtan is also the center of creativity. Artists have this second chakra well developed, as they use its energy for their artistic expressions. However, this center can be drained if creativity is forced through mental effort, and artists who try to squeeze their creative energy instead of letting it inspire them freely may suffer from the above mentioned physical problems.

On the other hand, realized souls create eternal works of art that emit vibrations, meaning that they have a certain coefficient of vibrations that is in tune with the Divine. For example, geniuses such as Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci were in fact realized souls whose masterpieces have transcended ages. The music of Bach and Handel has the same divine coefficient, while Mozart's exuberant, spontaneous joy literally creates vibrations. Indian classical music, whether vocal or instrumental, is based on the primordial sound or vibration called AUM, and is very conducive to meditation. Meditating on such music can help us enter the state of thoughtless awareness, as opposed to some of the modern music that can take us to the right side (like rock music) or to the left side (music that tugs at our emotions and makes us feel sad).

However, not all classical music has good vibrations, as not all great composers were realized souls. For example, Wagner's music actually has bad vibrations. On the other hand, there is also modern music with good vibrations – it all depends on the vibrations of the musician playing it. Such differences can only be identified after Self realization, when one can feel the vibrations in one's palms. Thus, some of the songs of Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, Paul McCartney, to name a few – emit cool vibrations since these musicians were born realized souls (their Kundalini was in an awakened state since their birth emitting a gentle cool breeze above their head, whether they were aware of it or not).

The same differentiation applies to all forms of artistic expression including paintings, sculpture, poetry, literature and movies. Unfortunately, the modern times have given way to artistic manifestations that belong more to the domain of the grotesque rather than that of beauty, and which hurt the fine sensitivities of the Swadhishtan chakra. Perhaps it is the critics who cannot draw a single line or utter a musical note who have killed the artists, and maybe what we are seeing now is a reaction, a rebellion against the traditional values of aesthetics that are hard to be found today.

The vibrations we get from our Kundalini energy after Self realization can awaken many artistic qualities in us and manifest our creativity in a pure way which can sometimes be surprising. My father, who was a chemical engineer and had never written any non-technical books, wrote after starting to practice Sahaja Yoga a scholarly book in two volumes totaling over 1000 pages about the history of spirituality, yoga and meditation, a shorter book about Sahaja Yoga meditation, and a novel in the thriller genre.

With the help of the vibrations of the Kundalini energy, people who could not sing start singing beautifully, people who could not write start writing beautiful poems and prose, people who could not paint start creating beautiful paintings. I am also one such person.

I used to be proverbially bad at painting. My father told me that as a small child I painted a few nice pieces, but after I started first grade any talent I may have had was lost, likely due to the rigid structure of art classes at the time that did not encourage creativity. Any attempts at painting I made later in life were ridiculously bad, even after starting to practice Sahaja Meditation. I knew I could do a decent job playing music, singing, writing poems and prose and making short movies, but always figured that painting was an art that was just not for me – not for this lifetime anyway.

Until the spring of 2007 when, during a trip to India to attend the festivities of Shri Mataji's birthday celebration, I had the chance to

visit for two weeks a Music and Arts Academy a few hours away from Mumbai. I went there to briefly study a subject called Music Therapy, which uses musical notes and ragas (traditional Indian classical music pieces) to balance the inner subtle system and purify the chakras. I was impressed by the science behind it and the effects, and one day my music teacher, Dr. Arun Apte, a world class musician and music professor from whom I had the chance to take lessons, suggested that in my spare time I should try painting which was being taught in the next room. After several insinsences on his part, I walked in the adjacent room. When the painting teacher learned that I had not done any structured painting before and had only three days left before my departure, he shook his head, pulled out a simple lotus drawing and asked me to duplicate it. When I insisted that I had much loftier plans and wanted to paint four girls dancing in a forest with mountains in the background, he shook his head further still but allowed me to proceed. With a bit of help from him and a fellow student, I managed to my surprise to finish the artwork in less than three days and it did not look bad. The teacher looked at it and said “you’ve got potential. You’ve progressed in three days more than an average student would progress in six months.” Addressed to me, the hopelessly bad painter, these words were nothing short of miraculous. I then understood that it was the unique vibrations of that place, on a frequency imbued with artistic qualities, that had allowed me to make that quantum leap in such an incredible short time.

If the central part of the Swadhishtan gives us pure creativity, the left Swadhishtan gives us pure knowledge that is not the result of reading a lot of books, but rather a direct perception of the subtle reality. Such pure knowledge is only possible after Self realization, which is our connection to this ocean of information. Before Self realization, our only cognitive instruments are the mind and the senses, which cannot help us perceive the subtle reality.

The senses are absolute (everyone will tell you that fire is hot, no difference of opinion there) because they are connected to the central nervous system, however they are limited because just with

the five senses one can only perceive the gross world. On the other hand, the mind can deal with subtler aspects which are beyond the senses, but it is relative (everyone has a different opinion about the world, spirituality, etc.) What we need is a “sense,” or cognitive faculty, which is absolute (related to the central nervous system) and at the same time can perceive the subtle reality. This is precisely what Sahaja Meditation gives the practitioner after Self realization.

By reading a lot of books one can become confused if the books are not written by enlightened (realized) people. Unfortunately, most of the books written by the great souls of the past such as Socrates, Lao-tse, Confucius, Gyaneshwara, Kabir, William Blake, Shakespeare, and even the Bible, Koran and Gita, are written in parables the subtle truth of which is hard to grasp. In turn, the present book market has been invaded by books that are written either by authors driven by money and fame, or by well meaning writers who unfortunately do not possess a first hand experience of the subtle knowledge they propound.

Many of the problems of the world are caused by the fact that we have a relative mind, having contradictory ideas that can cause misunderstanding, conflict and even war. Such problems can be solved if everyone reaches the same level of understanding, which is based on the absolute truth rather than relative individual ideas.

Self realization provides a breakthrough solution towards this end, because it enables us to feel the absolute knowledge on our central nervous system. By feeling the cool breeze or the sensations of catches in our palms and fingers, we first get to know ourselves at an essential level, and then, by developing this vibrational awareness, we can get to know the subtle truth about the world around us. For example, we become able to discern a true master from an impostor, or a book that has true knowledge from one that doesn't.

On the right side of the chakra, the Swadhishtan gives us the pure attention which is devoid of thought. As discussed earlier, the organ

that nourishes the attention is the liver. Good attention is essential for achieving the state of thoughtless awareness and feeling the joy of the Spirit. Such an attention is effortless and detached, but at the same time is very effective when called into action.

Modern times seem to correspond to a chaotic condition because they give us so many ways we can waste our attention and energy. Between television, the Internet, huge shopping places filled with thousands of articles and many other distractions, our awareness is drawn into many directions and pulled away from the Spirit. It is very rare that we can find a moment to be with ourselves – and by that I don't mean watching TV or solving crosswords, but having our attention inside, in silence, in a word just “being” and enjoying the present moment.

“Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, and today is a gift – that's why it is called “present.” This saying is well known and appreciated, yet how often do we get to practice it with our attention. This very state of the present is experienced in meditation, once we get our Self realization, and that is why spending some time every day in this state of silence, of thoughtless awareness, is very important. It is about enlightening ourselves every day, a process without which the light inside can go out and be lost.

The element of Swadhishtan is fire, corresponding to the fire of creation and creativity. There are specific techniques to cleanse the Swadhishtan which we will not cover in detail in this introductory book (they are best explained face-to-face at Sahaja Meditation programs which are held throughout the world free of charge), though we would like to mention a few ways to cool off the liver, which is one of the most important aspects of this second chakra.

One way to break the heat is to drink a lot of water. Also, there are certain types of food that can be avoided since they are of “heating” type¹: fatty and oily foods, beef and red meat in general, alcohol in

¹ In countries with millenary traditions, the various types of food have been identified grouped into “heating” and “cooling.”. Examples of cooling foods are

any form and quantity is highly detrimental to the liver, caffeine and other excitants, eggs, and certain fruits like mangoes and bananas. Eating sugar will also help a heated liver cool down. But by far the most important and efficient way to cleanse the liver and relieve a drained Swadhishtan is to stop unnecessary thinking (and a lot of it is unnecessary), especially reducing the constant activities of planning and thinking about a future that does not yet exist. Shri Mataji explains that a fact that seems to be ignored by medical science is that sugar is actually the food of the liver. In rural India, diabetes has extremely low rates despite the fact that villagers drink plenty of sugar cane juice. Diabetes comes from thinking, not from sugar, she explains.

It is also worth mentioning that in certain cases, a person may also suffer from a cold liver. There are certain techniques to be applied for a cold liver, though this is not a frequently encountered imbalance.

Shri Mataji on the Swadhishtan chakra¹: “This is the color of the bile within us and this Swadhishtan chakra which is for our creativity is directly connected to that ego there, and [...] starts rotating round the Void, and going to the various parts of the Void. The Void is the green circle within us where physically we have the uterus, we have the kidneys. It's a complete viscera, all the intestines, ascending, transverse and descending colon, the liver – it's more the upper part of liver – then also pancreas and the spleen. So all the problems of these organs are collected by this chakra which moves. [The Swadhishtan] comes out of the Nabhi chakra, and moves round and round and round, and collects all the problems.

It nourishes and gives power, the vital power, to these organs and also it generates necessary power for our creative action. It also collects the fat cells of the Void and converts them into the power cells for the brain for its use - for the grey matter. All this work it

yoghurt, white rice, blueberries, and radish leaf infusion.

¹ Talk given by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi on October 22, 1979.

has to do – one chakra. It manifests the aortic plexus outside – on the physical level. We call it as *aortic plexus* and it has got six sub-plexuses which look after all these organs.

This [chakra] is meant for our action. When we go into action this chakra starts working. By the first power which is on the left hand side, we desire, but by the second one, we go into action [...]. Now when this action starts within us it produces the byproducts or we can say all the problems of these organs, which are to be deposited somewhere and they are all deposited in the brain as ego.

All the problems that we have out of this, this creativity, and the action of all these organs are to be counter balanced and as a counter balance the ego develops.”

In another talk, Shri Mataji further explains about this center¹: “Especially in England I have seen, also in the west I would say, everywhere, people get very easily tired. On the television also you find people will come [and say], “haaaahhh.” Young people!! They'll walk ten yards then they'll say, “haaahhh.” Why are we so tired? Because we think too much!

All energy is wasted in thinking, so no energy left to enjoy anything whatsoever! For example, you have to have people for dinner, you think ‘what to bring?’, ‘how to make it formal? what to do?’. So agitated, so nervous about the whole thing [that] when the guests come they feel like running away because so much of tension.

Thinking, thinking, thinking, planning, planning, planning, planning, running. Ultimately the whole joy has disappeared. So the second center [...] does a very miraculous thing to provide the grey cells in our brain when we are using it for thinking and also it looks after your liver, your pancreas, your spleen, your kidneys and part of your abdomen. Instead of doing that, poor thing is busy only sending grey cells to your brain, because of thinking, thinking, thinking like mad,

¹ Talk given by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi in Porchester Hall, London, August 1, 1989.

so you develop all other diseases [like] liver trouble, which is very common.

Then you develop diabetes – very common, yesterday at least, there were ten people who said we have diabetes. Now, diabetes you do not develop by taking too much sugar - take it from me. In India if you go to a village you will see that [a villager] takes sugar in such [a] manner that in the cup the spoon must stand at a right angle otherwise he won't take [it] and he never gets diabetes! The reason is he doesn't think of tomorrow, he just works hard, eats his food and sleeps off nicely. He doesn't take sleeping pills either. So this diabetes comes by over thinking and can be easily cured if you can take to Sahaja Yoga.”

Chapter 6. Nabhi

The Nabhi or Manipur chakra is the third situated behind the navel. The element that corresponds to it is water. The Nabhi is the center of balance, growth and evolution within the limits of the inner laws that govern our life (*Dharma*, in Sanskrit language). Dharma can also be translated as the path of righteousness, which when followed leads to spiritual evolution and general well-being. This chakra is also the center of inner peace, contentment and satisfaction.

On the physical level, the central part of the Nabhi corresponds to the solar plexus and looks after the stomach, intestines, as well as the digestion. The right Nabhi looks after the liver together with the right Swadhishtan as discussed in the previous chapter. The left Nabhi looks after the spleen, which is the “speedometer” of our body. If we are always on the run, with a sandwich in one hand and driving the car while talking on the cell phone, the left Nabhi goes out of order. We feel stressed out, impatient, and spleen and pancreas disorders can ensue. One of the most serious manifestations of left Nabhi imbalances is blood cancer.

Slowing down, being calm and enjoying the contentment of the Spirit soothes this chakra and brings us peace and balance. In this balance and while observing the Dharma, the boundaries of our inner natural laws, we can grow spiritually and eventually achieve our Self realization. The Nabhi chakra has ten petals which correspond to the ten “valences” or sterling qualities of a human being. They are not just social norms that help us live with each other, but inner laws that when discarded can cut our chances of ascent, and when respected create in our Nabhi chakra the balance needed for our nourishment and evolution.

The left Nabhi also has to do with our household environment, with the peace and harmony in our family and home. The most important role for achieving this balance is played by the wife, who can soothe all conflicts between family members and restore the feeling of

tranquility and contentment. On the other hand, if the wife is angry, dominating or complaining all the time, it can have a very bad effect on the left Nabhi principle of the whole family. In the long run, this can affect the health of both the wife and the husband.

Sahaja Meditation has been shown to be notably effective in reducing stress. Stress is commonplace in all professions, even in the medical field. A survey conducted in Australia showed that 60% of GPs (General Practitioners) wanted educational material to help in the management of stress and that 28% of those seeking education were experiencing significant levels of stress¹. Also, one in eight GPs had scores indicative of severe psychiatric disturbance, 50% had considered leaving their current practice, and 53% had considered abandoning general practice because of occupational stress².

A study was conducted at the Royal Hospital for Women in Sydney, Australia³ using quantitative feedback based on the standardized K10 questionnaire (Kessler Psychological Distress Scale – 10) collected before and after a not-for-profit workshop administered to 299 attending physicians who were taught Sahaja Meditation over a period of two weeks. The results indicated Sahaja Meditation as an “effective mental health promotion and prevention strategy.” Among the various metrics collected, the overwhelming majority of participants (over 93%) indicated improvements in various degrees due to the practice of Sahaja Meditation in all areas surveyed: mental silence, calm and peacefulness, and relief from stress, tension and anxiety.

The principal quality of the right Nabhi is royal dignity, which is the principle governing the kings, queens and all the leaders. However,

¹ Holt J, Mar CD. Psychological Stress Among GPs. Australian Family Physician, vol. 34, 2005.

² Schattner P, Coman G. The Stress of Metropolitan General Practice Medical Journal of Australia 1998 169:133-37.

³ Manocha R, Gordon A, Black D, Malhi G. Using meditation for less stress and better wellbeing – a seminar for GPs. Australian Family Physician Vol. 38, No. 6, June 2009.

there are some leaders in modern times who seem to have replaced royal dignity and looking after the benevolence of others by a shocking interest in money and personal glory.

The principle of royal dignity is present in each one of us and can be re-awakened even if temporarily put to sleep. It is very evident in small children, whose dignity and self-respect cannot be taken away by anything. This innate dignity goes away when we drink alcohol. In fact, drinking alcohol in any quantity inflicts damage to the Nabhi chakra. While doctors are divided between the opinion that a bit of alcohol is good for you and the view that in the long run it produces a weak heart and poor circulation, anyone who has tried meditation in the true sense of the word (thoughtless awareness) knows that alcohol is poison for the awareness. It is in fact poison for our liver as well, which is the organ that nourishes and sustains our attention.

Under the influence of alcohol, perception becomes skewed. I heard of someone confessing that after drinking he saw his sister not as his sister, but as his beloved. Since under such circumstances the awareness becomes confused, people use alcohol to “take courage” to perform actions that are later regretted, which could not be carried out in a normal state of consciousness where restraint and dignity govern our behavior. Many acts of violence are committed under the influence of alcohol.

Wellbeing, including financial stability, is one of the byproducts of a good Nabhi chakra in a person or family. However, it is important that money and material objects be taken in the proper perspective. While prosperity can contribute to a certain extent to an enjoyable and stable life, its exclusive pursuit can turn into materialism that negatively affects the Nabhi. The blessing of financial wellbeing can become a curse that ruins the very happiness it was supposed to bestow. People with limited financial resources can be happy if they are satisfied with what they have, while extremely rich people are rarely satisfied since they are either avid for more or worried about their possessions. As is the case with everything, the best is to achieve balance in financial matters as well.

If lust is the enemy of the Mooladhara and anger is the enemy of Swadhishtan, greed is the main enemy of the Nabhi chakra. The best way to overcome this plague is to be extremely generous and in general detached about money. The best use of matter is to give it as a gift, which will give joy both to the receiver and to the giver. Every action, word or thought that opens our heart brings us closer to the Spirit, because the Spirit is the collective being within us.

Nabhi is also the chakra of seeking. The first seeking was for food, and then for satisfying the various needs of life including the need for love, friendship, professional satisfaction, and so on. Once such needs are satisfied, the seeking for spirituality starts. However, as we will see in the following chapter, while walking on the path of seeking it is often difficult to discern between the genuine spiritual masters and the fake ones.

In order to keep the Nabhi chakra balanced, it is best to avoid extremes in our diet, and also to avoid alcohol consumption in any quantity. Any types of recreational drugs including marijuana are very damaging to the Nabhi. And as for any chakra, respecting the sterling qualities of the Nabhi chakra such as generosity, peace, contentment, and above all our innate sense of morality, is of great importance for maintaining this center in a good, balanced state.

Shri Mataji discusses the Nabhi chakra¹: “So at the Nabhi chakra, one has to know that one should not hanker after money too much. Now those who hanker too much after money may develop their right side better. They may have money, no doubt, but they miss their left side. [...] They are very hectic people, they run about. They run the rat-race, they get heart attacks. If not heart attacks they will get leukemia, they will get diabetes, liver problems – all such diseases.

[...] Attachment to money, attachment to people, attachment to this,

¹ Talk given by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi in Porchester Hall, London, August 1, 1989.

is nothing but a hook which hooks you to baser levels. You have to rise above and then you really enjoy the beauty of richness. As I told you the other day, I see all beautiful things, it's nice that I don't possess them.

See now these carpets are spread here. If they were mine I should worry 'Oh God, I hope they are not going to be spoiled, I hope nobody sits on them, I hope they are insured and nobody runs away with them.' But when they don't belong to me I am enjoying them better – other people's things, [it's] a better idea." (Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, Delhi, 1983).

"Now this Nahbi itself, or we can call it the solar plexus, or we can say the navel chakra, gives us, as soon as the Kundalini rises, she awakens this. I don't have to tell you anything - you just become. I don't have to say that you don't take drugs - you just don't take it!

Overnight I have seen people have given up drugs. Overnight [they have given up] alcoholism, overnight everything! And they enjoy their virtues, that's the best part of it. Some people think 'Oh then what is the fun.' What is this that you take something in the pub and next day you have a hangover? Here you take something and next day you're much better off. It never comes down. It never gives you a reaction. It's not artificial, it's not intoxicating, it is from your nerves, it's bubbling out. So this is the center which is very important in us because most of us have a problem with this center. And here we have a capacity, by this center, that we enjoy our generosity.

[...] The aesthetics of matter are that you can give it to others, suggesting your love. I think that's the only thing matter can do and in a very special way you can express that love. For example somebody likes a particular thing and you go all the way to get it and give that small thing, very small thing to the person – and the joy, not out of the money that you have spent, but the feelings you have expressed, of knowing what that person would love and this kind of a depth develops within you. Such a lovable, beautiful

society you enter into, and you don't need anything because everybody is looking after your needs.”

Chapter 7. Void

The Swadhishthan chakra moves in a clockwise circular motion around the Nabhi thereby creating the Void – a large circular area around the navel that encompasses the whole abdomen. The Void owes its name to the lack of nervous terminations in the abdominal region, and its spiritual significance is that of the “ocean of illusions” that we have to cross in life to find the truth.

The Void is governed by the *guru principle*, or the principle of mastery within us. It is said that the guru is the boat that takes us across the ocean of illusions of worldly existence. The guru is there to guide us but cannot force our evolution – the desire has to come from us. However, the guru also needs to be an authentic master, which means that at the minimum he or she needs to be a realized soul.

Unfortunately, in these modern times, many impostors are taking advantage of the seekers who are genuinely trying to find the truth. Anybody who may have come from a disreputable place can don a saffron robe, set up shop (often in a Western country) and call themselves a guru. Such false masters are interested in power and money, and often destroy the lives of their disciples and their chances of ascent. They all become ultimately exposed through their own greed and bad deeds, but there are a few questions one can ask in order to test the authenticity of a guru or spiritual group:

- Is money charged at any time, whether at the opening program or at follow-ups? None of the great masters, prophets and divine incarnations charged any money for their compassionate teachings. After all, the Divine does not understand money, only love and compassion. Truth cannot be bought, sold, or organized into a business.
- Do they talk about Self realization at a minimum? If this is not even mentioned, if all they talk about are mumbo-jumbo mixtures taken from various religions and spiritual currents, you

may be better off steering clear from it.

- What does one achieve from this spiritual practice? If certain spiritual powers are gained, are those really one's own, or do they only manifest in the presence of or in conjunction with the "guru"? Or is there a vague promise that one day one could belong to an "elite" circle of initiates (possibly by opening the purse a bit more)?
- What is the lifestyle of the guru and their disciples – are they genuinely selfless and compassionate? Do people become knowledgeable after following that practice, or subdued cabbages or recluses? In Self realization one becomes a master, not a slave.

When the Kundalini rises, it restores the path of the central channel of energy through the Void area that is interrupted before Self realization. This passing of the Kundalini through the Void signifies the crossing of the ocean of illusions, when we become our own guru.

The main quality of the left side of the Void is that of being our own master: we can eat anything, or we may not eat at all; we can sleep anywhere, or we may not sleep at all. We are not dominated by anything, nor enslaved by any habits. We cannot become a guru if we are not our own masters first. In a deeper sense, after Self realization we also become our own guide, since we know through the pure knowledge of the left Swadhishtan what is lacking in us and we can face it and correct it. After the Kundalini is awakened and well established through regular meditation, we don't need a guru to tell us every day what chakra to meditate on or what we need to cleanse in our subtle system – we have this knowledge ourselves hence we become in fact our own guide.

On the right side of the Void, the guru principle helps us surrender to the Divine by recognizing it as our supreme guru or teacher. We cannot become a guru if we are not obedient to our ultimate guru who is the divine power. Once the qualities of the left and right sides of the Void are established, we can also help others in their spiritual evolution.

I remember a deeply beautiful story about Mahatma Gandhi, where a mother brought her son to him, and told him that her son was eating too much sugar, and asked him to tell her son to stop doing it. Mahatma Gandhi remained silent, and the woman left with her child. A week later, the mother came back with her child and repeated her request to Gandhi to ask her son to stop eating too much sugar. Again, Mahatma Gandhi was silent. Finally, after another week, the lady came back with her child, and this time Mahatma Gandhi asked the boy to stop eating too much sugar, and the boy listened to him. Many weeks later, the woman came alone to see Gandhi, and told him that her son had stopped eating too much

sugar and that she was very grateful. Then she asked Gandhi why he had not told her son about eating too much sugar during the first two weeks when she had visited him. Mahatma Gandhi replied “because at that time, I too was eating too much sugar.”

What impressed me about this story was not only the fact that the Mahatma showed that you cannot influence someone on something you have not mastered yourself first, but also the fact that he actually reduced his sugar intake for two weeks just to get to the point of self-mastery where this small self-sacrifice made him effective in talking to the child. It’s not how you try to say it, but it’s what is within you when you say it that will influence how you actually say it and the outcome of you saying it.

The various correspondences for the Void are the same as for the Nabhi chakra, except for the corresponding area on the hand which is the circle surrounding the center of the palm. The main element of the Void, like for the Nabhi, is water. Salt also helps to strengthen the guru principle. To cleanse the Void, the best is to try to become one’s own master by leading a disciplined life. However, this should not be taken to an extreme as it may cause an imbalance on the right side: people who are too austere develop a lot of heat in their body and become usually very dry, self-important persons. A true guru is strict with himself or herself and gentle with others, but keeps a sense of balance in everything. Another sign of a guru is that of creativity, of being able to do a lot with very few and simple things at hand. And the greatest act of creativity is helping others become spiritual beings by enabling them to get their Self realization and establish it.

The Void, as much as the Nabhi chakra, is particularly affected by drug abuse and other strong toxins. A study conducted at the University of Vienna¹ showed the highly significant effects of Sahaja Meditation on alleviating the effects of drug abuse.

¹ Hackl, W. The effect of Sahaja Yoga on drug consumption. Die Auswirkungen von Sahaja Yoga auf das Drogenkonsumverhalten. Doctoral thesis submitted to the University in Vienna, 1995.

The study used a retrospective questionnaire in 501 practitioners of Sahaja Meditation of which 268 people had used drugs before starting with the meditative practice. A reduction in drug consumption was observed both for heavy and light drug users. The questionnaire showed that 97% of chronic drug consumers stopped taking drugs, most of them at the beginning of the meditation practice, specifically 42% after the first week of meditation, 32% after the first months. Also, in 93% of the cases studied the duration of abstinence could be assessed to last for several years.

Shri Mataji on the Void¹: “Any time a realized soul will come, he will say the same thing. That’s why there is so much similarity, I should say the unity. In all these people, whether it is Lao Tse, whether it is Mohammed Sahib or whether it is Raja Janaka or Nanaka - they said the same thing. Now where is the difference that comes in? Also we see very clearly, when the truth is your own, the difference comes [in the fact] that these incarnations came for a different type of a job. Like Moses came to establish the Void, as we say, here in the center. [...] All these people who were Primordial masters came on this Earth to establish the balance and that’s why whatever they have said, all have said the same thing. [...]

So you must understand that – the truth when it comes to a person like that – not only that he knows but he can make others also know. This is what William Blake has said [that people like you] will become prophets and will have powers to make others prophets. So people sometimes say ‘why didn't it happen earlier?’ No, that was not the time. Now the blossom time has come, so it is happening.”

¹ Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, Chiswick Town Hall, London, July 10, 1984.

Chapter 8. Heart

The Heart chakra, like all other centers, has three sides: left, right and center, even though the physical heart is located on the left side. In the left heart resides the Spirit, which is what we truly are: the eternal Self that cannot die or be destroyed. As it is explained in the world's spiritual traditions, it is only the body and its composing elements like earth, water, etc. that perish, but the Spirit never dies.

However, the fact that we are the pure Spirit or Self is not to be taken as a mental idea but needs to be experienced through the connection to our Self, which happens through Kundalini awakening. To know the Spirit is to be the Spirit. This happens when the other identifications with our ego, conditionings, body, thoughts, emotions, etc. recede.

The Spirit is like a pure light shining in our heart, witnessing all our good and bad actions, unperturbed in its continuous bliss. It is us who are away from it, thinking either of the future (ego) or the past (superego). Once we receive our Self realization, in the silence of meditation, we can feel the presence of the Spirit where all fears, pains and contradictions are absorbed and dissolved.

“The Spirit, which is the reflection of God Almighty, is the source of absolute truth and joy. But this Spirit does not shine in our awareness when it is in the human state. Only after Self realization does our awareness get enlightened by the Spirit. Thus, to find pure love, peace and joy of absolute truth, one has to become the Spirit.”¹

The Spirit is the collective being within us, because it is the same reflection of the Divine residing in every being. That is the reason why our heart feels joy every time we do something good to another person, maybe even more than the beneficiary of our good deed. The Spirit is existence itself, beyond thought or emotions. It is the ocean

¹ Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, *Meta Modern Era*, Ritana Books, New Delhi, revised third edition 1997 (p. 200).

of love, compassion, truth and joy, and it is awareness in its purest form. It is the guiding force which enables life, as well as the manifestation of the qualities of the other centers.

The love of the Spirit is unattached and boundless. It is like a river flowing to everyone equally, without any attachment to a certain person, family or group of people. As Shri Mataji often says, it is similar to the sap in the tree that rises and goes to nourish all the branches and leaves. If it were attached to one leaf, the tree would die and eventually that leaf would die as well. Detached love simply loves, without expecting anything in return. Attachment and possessiveness are in fact the death of love, and are the main enemies of this center.

On the physical level, the left Heart chakra looks after our blood vessels and circulation and its gross manifestation is the thymus gland and the cardiac plexus.

The left Heart also represents our relationship with our biological mother, so any strain on this relationship will affect this chakra. Also, lack of interest in the Spirit and attachment to matter as well as extreme physical exertion can affect this chakra and can ultimately result in a heart attack. The Spirit is extremely innocent and detached. If our attention gets entangled in materialistic pursuits, we go away from the Self and there is no end in trying to satisfy our desires.

Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi explains that our desires are relative and as such never satiable, as is well known in economics: once a desire is fulfilled, another one arises, and so on. However, there is a pure desire within us which when satisfied gives us complete contentment and the fulfillment of all desires, and that is the aspiration to become one with our Spirit. The Kundalini is the power of that pure desire within us, and Self realization is the goal that we consciously or unconsciously seek. Shri Mataji says: “You cannot know the meaning of your life until you are connected to the power that created you.”

The right Heart corresponds to our relationship with our father. It is the center of responsibility, humility and it marks the boundaries of our good conduct toward others.

The right Heart chakra is responsible with the lungs and breathing, and heat rising from the liver can affect it. Right-sided (aggressive, overactive, agitated) people are prone to developing problems of the right heart such as asthma.

The center Heart chakra, located behind the sternum bone, represents in us the qualities of confidence, security, fearlessness, as well as faith in the divine power and in ourselves. This chakra develops in childhood and is fully formed by the age of twelve. The feeling of motherly protection is embodied by this center. This is the center that produces antibodies and sends them to fight all attacks on our being, both physical and subtle. Fear and self-doubt reduce the power of this chakra and thus affect our immune system. On the other hand, confident and fearless people have a strong immune system and a very positive outlook on life.

Fear is anti-divine, because by being afraid we are doubting or denying the ability of the all-pervading divine power to protect us and save us from all circumstances. After Self realization we realize that there is a higher force that completely protects us, guides us and nourishes us at all moments, that we are now one with it, and that there is nothing left to fear anymore. Absolute faith is one of the most important qualities of a human being and has been exalted in many inspiring books and poems.

The element corresponding to the Heart chakra is air. Besides the subtle techniques that are beyond the scope of this book, there are a few things we can mention for cleansing this chakra, such as taking calm and deep breaths. Regular exercise (but not excessive) will, as it is well known, help the heart and blood circulation. Excessive exercise will on the contrary strain the heart chakra and can result as mentioned above in a heart attack.

As the center Heart is responsible for our feeling of security, clearing this chakra through meditation reduces fear and anxiety and increases our self-confidence. A study conducted at the University of Vienna found a significant beneficial effect of Sahaja Meditation on state (short term) anxiety and trait (long term) anxiety in healthy adults¹.

A group of 37 adults was taught Sahaja Meditation for 8 weeks and compared to a group of 32 adults who received no intervention and a group of 32 adults who had to listen to music of Mozart. The group who practiced meditation showed a significant reduction in their levels of state and of trait anxiety compared to both controls and to the group that listened to Mozart: Sahaja Meditation decreased trait anxiety by 15%, and state anxiety by 40%.

Also, given the effects of Sahaja Mediation on reducing sympathetic activity and respiratory rates, several studies have investigated whether meditation would have an effect on respiratory diseases.

A study conducted at the Natural Therapies Unit of the Royal Hospital for women in Sydney, Australia, showed a significant beneficial effect of Sahaja Yoga on asthma patients who were resistant to steroids².

47 patients with severe asthma were randomly allocated to two groups: one group received Sahaja Yoga treatment (21 patients), the other group received general relaxation treatment (26 patients), both conducted over 4 months and involving a 2 hour session. The Sahaja Yoga group showed a significant reduction in the severity of asthma as measured in airway-hyper-responsiveness in response to chemical challenge (an objective indicator of the severity of asthma)

¹ Hackl, W. (1995) Die Auswirkungen von Sahaja Yoga auf das Drogenkonsumverhalten (The effect of Sahaja Yoga on drug consumption). Doctoral thesis submitted to the University in Vienna, 1995.

² Manocha R, Marks GB, Kennhington P, Peters D, Salome CM. (2002): Sahaia yoga in the management of moderate to severe asthma: a randomised controlled trial. *Thorax* 57(2):110-115.

compared to the control group who received relaxation.

Similar findings were observed in a previous study in India which used the same meditation technique¹.

Shri Mataji on the Heart chakra²: “Now we have the center which we call here as the Heart center, it controls both the left and right heart. So we have a left and right heart in Sahaja Yoga! As you know that this sternum bone creates the antibodies for you and these antibodies fight your diseases, so when this center goes out, this is the center which sends all the messages to these antibodies. Now this is the center of a mother. When your motherhood is challenged you develop breast cancer. Supposing a man is a flirt and his wife is worried... she might get breast cancer, because her motherhood is challenged and her sense of security is very disturbed – as a result of that she gets this problem.

Also if you are too much of a thinker and you think too much and you are very, what we call right-sided, the futuristic plans; I mean people plan for ten years, they plan even their deaths. What dress they’re going to wear and where they’re going to be buried – up to that point! All this futuristic planning creates such tremendous heat in the body because the liver, which is supposed to absorb all the heat, is neglected by this center. As a result that heat travels up [to the right heart] and you develop asthma. Now we had, yesterday at least, five, six people who came with asthma.

Asthma is absolutely curable, but do you know this is the center of a husband, of the father? You should not be shocked because later on you will find it.

Now if you are a bad husband you can get asthma, or if your wife is a shrew you might get asthma, or if you are a very bad father, you might get asthma, or if your father is not kind to you, you might get

¹ Chugh D. (1997): The effects of Sahaja Yoga in bronchial asthma and essential hypertension. *New Delhi Medicos* 13(5):46-47.

² Talk given by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi in Porchester Hall, London, August 1, 1989.

asthma. If you have not forgiven your father, you might get asthma, now can you believe it? Just forgiving your father, you can get out of your asthma permanently. Sahaja Yoga has cured [the] asthma of so many people. Believe it or not, it works.

It looks so funny but our relationships, our parents... I know they are wrong, they're obstinate, they are headstrong, they may be drunkards, whatever they are. But even if you leave them – because so many people leave [their] parents – still, forgive them and forget, otherwise you carry the problems with you.

The left heart is the place of the mother. Now if your mother has been hard with you, if you have had very bad experiences, you will have problems of the left heart. Center heart is very important where your sense of security should be established. You will be surprised [that] in the disease called AIDS it is the center heart which is [blocked].

[...] So you have to have that wisdom which comes to you through Sahaja Yoga. [...] You have to become the Spirit and you have to see in the light of the Spirit what is right and what is wrong.”

Chapter 9. Vishuddhi

The fifth chakra, Vishuddhi, is placed at the base of the throat and corresponds to the cervical plexus and the thyroid gland. It is the chakra of divine diplomacy and detachment. It allows us to be in a witness state, watching and enjoying everything without getting involved, attached or troubled. It is also the chakra of collectivity, which allows us to express our joy through our collective relationships.

The Vishuddhi is the center of sweet and benevolent communication through our words, facial expressions and gestures. Aggressing or dominating others through our words will block the right side of the chakra, while feeling dominated or using sarcastic humor will block its left side. The left Vishuddhi also gets caught up if we don't have self-respect or if we feel guilty.

Guilt is actually a myth that allows us to carry an invisible burden without facing it. The best way to get rid of it is to introspect and face our mistakes, learn from them and stop repeating them. This is how all the problems and negativity we still carry with us can be identified and eradicated. Of course, meditation is important in helping with this process. Feeling guilty instead of facing and correcting our shortcomings can be very detrimental to our evolution as well as our health. If the left Vishuddhi is caught, it can freeze the whole left side by which the heart and the organs of the left side become lethargic. Ultimately, one can develop angina or spondylitis.

The left Vishuddhi also manifests the brother-sister relationship which is extremely pure and can be very powerful. There is something unique in the relationship between a brother and a sister, a concern, support, and also a directness that allows them to correct each other in a loving but straightforward way whenever they are concerned about their sibling.

In countries with millenary traditions like India, if you are a man

then every woman your age who is not your wife is like a sister to you, and similarly if you are a woman than all men except for your husband are your brothers. This maintains a very strong purity of relationships between men and women. Unfortunately in the West it is quite the other way around: many men think of all the women who are not their biological sisters as potential girlfriends, and similarly for women. This attitude ruins the purity of the relationships, and causes a blockage on the left Vishuddhi for both men and women who have such views.

I remember as a young boy having a close friend who was a girl, while not feeling in the least attracted to her. I happened to talk about this friendship with a family friend who was a grown-up, married woman, and she said that pure friendship between a boy and a girl, or a man and a woman, without any attraction between them, is not possible. I did not say anything because she was my elder and my mother's friend, but in my mind I revolted as I wanted to say to her "you are so wrong."

During all subsequent years I continued to prove her assertion wrong, but it was only after starting to practice Sahaja and seeing the pure, flower-like relationships between men and women in the Sahaja groups, that I began to see not just a select few, but all women except my wife as my sisters. It was such a joy, relief and an epiphany for me to realize that I have so many sisters in so many parts of the world, on whom I can rely and who can rely on me at any time, with whom I can communicate freely within the auspicious boundaries of the pure brother-sister relationship.

In India, the brother-sister relationship is celebrated by the sister tying a string called *rakhi* (pronounced rah-key) around the brother's wrist, after which there are sweets and small presents exchanged. A sister can thus make anyone their brother, and the strength of the relationship thus formed, represented by the string, is on many occasions taken quite seriously. It is said that Alexander the Great, in his long march of world conquest, was stopped in India by the king of a relatively small army who took him prisoner. Alexander

had several wives, and one of them who was Indian sent a rakhi tie to the king who had imprisoned Alexander. The king tied the rakhi and then wanted to find out who was his new sister. Upon realizing that it was the wife of Alexander, he immediately exclaimed “Oh my God! What have I done? I have imprisoned my own brother-in-law!” and commanded his immediate release. Alexander the Great was so impressed with this unexplainable behavior that he decided to turn his armies around and leave India, because this was a people beyond his understanding.

Another quality enabled by the Vishuddhi chakra is the witness state, which is a state in which we do not react: we are undisturbed by external events or our own thoughts, but we are able to see everything clearly in the state of thoughtless awareness. This doesn't mean that we are indifferent – on the contrary, in this state we become at the same time compassionate and dynamic, acting in harmony with the divine power.

The witness state is strongly related to the quality of detachment, which is another attribute of the Vishuddhi. An example of how witnessing and being detached helps us be dynamic and effective in our actions, is a fireman taking a child out of a house in flames. If it were for the father of the child to do it, even if the father was a fireman himself, he would be far from being detached. He would be crazed to get his child out and would probably not take the best decisions, and might even get both himself and the child burnt by the fire. A fireman who is not related to the child would however be detached, and because of that would be able to assess things clearly and act in a most precise and effective way to save the child.

Attachments can cloud our judgment, while detachment and witnessing clear it and make us so much more effective and “present” in anything we do.

A study published in the International Journal of Neuroscience was the first to demonstrate that long-term practitioners of Sahaja Meditation develop a positive sense of detachment as they showed

reduced emotional reactivity and increased resilience to stressful events¹.

Twenty-five long-term meditators compared to controls showed reduced psychological, physiological and electrophysiological reactivity to stressful stimuli, providing for the first time neurophysiological data to support the hypothesis that Sahaja Meditation leads to emotional balance and greater emotional resilience to stressful life events.

The meditators were compared to controls in their response to a stressful video-clip that was shown to them. On a psychological scale, the meditators compared to the controls showed reduced subjective ratings of negative emotions (among metrics measured were disgust, sadness, anger, fear) elicited by the movie. They also showed reduced levels of an autonomic indicator of stress (skin potential levels). At the brain level they showed reduced gamma activity over the frontal brain regions compared to the control group (gamma wave activity over frontal regions is reflective of increased focused arousal in relation to the emotional involvement).

These findings provide pioneering neurophysiological evidence for the claim that long-term Sahaja Meditation effects lead to greater emotional stability, reduced emotional reactivity and greater resilience to stressful stimuli.

On the physical level, the Vishuddhi looks after our throat, neck, eyes, ears and hearing, nose, mouth, face, and also shoulders, arms and hands. If we go against the principle of balanced and gentle communication of the Vishuddhi, ultimately it can reflect on the physical level in a variety of ways: the mouth may become dry, the tongue may become constricted or rolled back, we may get frequent colds, runny nose, sore throat and aches in our shoulders or arms.

¹ Aftanas L, Golosheykin S. (2005): Impact of regular meditation practice on EEG activity at rest and during evoked negative emotions. *International Journal of Neuroscience* 115(6): 893-909.

The element associated with this chakra is the Ether, which is the subtle medium of communication and the carrier of the subtle, vital energy.

Singing is a great way to open the Vishuddhi by expressing the beauty of the Spirit in our heart. But singing has to be done in an auspicious way, respecting the Divinity and spirituality that reside in us, and avoiding frivolous or vulgar songs. Classical music, especially Eastern classical music such as Indian ragas, are the best for opening the Vishuddhi since they are in tune with the divine vibrations.

The Vishuddhi is also the starting point of our ego and superego, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Thus the Vishuddhi chakra represents the basis of our consciousness, the inner voice we can sometimes hear guiding us to choose the good and avoid the bad things for our Spirit. This center contains a sub-chakra called Hamsa, located between the eyebrows, which gives us the sense of discrimination.

Our inner sense of discrimination can sometimes easily become befooled by the bombardment of modern media and advertisements. A salient example is the madness of fashions put out by entrepreneurs, which change periodically to the whims of a few individuals. This makes the followers of a fashion look all the same and lose their individuality while emptying their pockets at the same time. Moreover, some of the clothes promoted are ugly, indecent or unhealthy, exposing parts of the body that should be covered. The only purpose served by such fashions is to pamper the ego of those gullible enough to fall in their trap. The presence of an over-developed ego is often the sign of lacking wisdom. On the other hand, traditional countries have found after hundreds and thousands of years of experimenting, styles of clothing that best suit the men and women living in their given climate. Dressing appropriately and in a dignified way is a sign of self-esteem and good discretion that are congenial to the Vishuddhi.

One instance in which I was able to use the quality of diplomacy with immediate and effective results took place in Chicago in the mid nineties. Among my circle of friends at the time were a Bulgarian man and a Russian woman who spent some time every week driving together. The man could not drive due to a medical condition, and the woman used to always help him when he had to go to a Sahaja program. However, the lady was a bit “left-sided” and had a pretty poor attention, which constantly seemed to drive the man (a right-sided person) nuts. The scenes were hilarious at times when seen from outside, but for the two of them the mutual frustration seemed to reach a breaking point. It was a pity to see this happening at the surface, because deep down I could feel that there was a brother-sister relationship between them.

One evening while we were enjoying some food at someone’s house, I took the Russian woman aside and told her how much the Bulgarian man appreciated her, and how despite his manifest frustration, he had such a deep sense of gratitude for her and profound respect and admiration for her qualities as his sister. I then went into the other room, pulled the Bulgarian man aside, and told him similar stories about how much the Russian woman appreciated him in reality, despite the apparent friction, and viewed him as a brother. During each conversation, I could see the surprise and then change in their attitude clearly on their faces. I saw them later on that evening talking and enjoying each other’s company, smiling and joking like a true brother and sister, and after that day the tension between them was gone. It only took a bit of creativity and diplomacy to dissolve the frustration that these people had developed with each other.

The variety of the human races creates beauty, which would have become boredom if everyone looked the same. The same variety is the hallmark of the beauty expressed in the nature. The color of our skin has nothing to do with our personality, character, goodness or spirituality. In India, there is a festival called Holi where people mix colors and throw them at each other in a playful way, to celebrate the variety of races that exist in that country.

The Vishuddhi thus stands for the universality of human culture, transcending all barriers of race, religion, background or social status, like a multicolored cloth through which passes the same common thread of the Spirit.

Between the heart chakra and the Vishuddhi there are two centers called Shri Lalita (on the left) and Shri Chakra (on the right). They control our arms and hands and give them strength, and generally help balance the left and right side. When these centers become imbalanced our arms and hands become weak.

Butter and ghee (clarified butter) are very beneficial for the Vishuddhi. Also massaging the neck and gargling with warm water and salt or honey can help cleanse this center. But as is the case with all the centers, the most important way of keeping it open and in balance is by respecting its qualities, in this case by using kind, auspicious communication and avoiding using strong, insulting or ridiculing language or raising our voice. Our voice should ideally be melodious, as sweet as a river of honey. If the right heart is the inner aspect of our respect towards others, the Vishuddhi is the outer expression of that respect and benevolence.

After Self realization, the Vishuddhi becomes enlightened like all the other centers, and all its qualities can be fully manifested. We get a sense of connection with the entire world, and we start feeling that we are part and parcel of the whole, as if we are a cell in the great universal organism.

Shri Mataji on the Vishuddhi chakra¹: “So then we come to this center which we call as the Vishuddhi. These sixteen petals look after the cervical plexus. Now this is a very, very important center and this is the center for communication. For example, when you talk, you communicate. Through your hands, you shake hands, you touch somebody and you can communicate, even if you cannot talk,

¹ Talk given by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi in Porchester Hall, London, August 1, 1989.

with your hands you can communicate also.

When we think we are very responsible this center goes out. [...] Actually, the all-pervading power – which has created us, created this universe, and has brought us to this level of human beings – is doing everything, but we think we are responsible, that we have to do it. But once you become a Sahaja Yogi you just do it but you don't think that you are doing it. You just say 'it's happening', and what a beautiful feeling it is. Then you don't have blood pressures, you don't have headaches, you don't have tensions – no. Because *we* are not doing it, *it's just done* and you find it's all done.”

Chapter 10. Agnya

The sixth center, Agnya chakra, is located in the center of the head at the place where the nerves of the optical chiasm meet. It is also the place where the left and right sides of our subtle system cross, making it a very tight passage for the Kundalini to cross and reach its destination on the top of our head in the Sahasrara (seventh center).



Figure 10.1

The left and right channels cross at the Agya chakra

Both ego and superego start developing since childhood and the pressure they start putting on the top of the head calcifies over time the soft fontanel bone. Thus we become like an egg, with our own individual consciousness, separate from other human beings. When we receive our Self realization, this “shell” is pierced by the Kundalini – we can say metaphorically that from an egg we then become a bird, and our awareness can now take flight into a higher dimension. That is why a realized soul is called “dwi-jaha” in India, which means “twice born,” but also means “bird.” And perhaps this is the reason why in the Christian tradition people crack eggs by knocking them against each other.

The left hemisphere of the brain corresponds to the ego, a subtle energetic “balloon” that gives us the idea that we are separate from (or better than) the rest of the world. The ego thus makes us identify

with it and its whimsical nature, instead of identifying ourselves with the Spirit. Ultimately, we can become self-centered and little concerned with the needs of others. If we grow our ego too much, we can push its boundaries to the point where it connects to the collective supraconscious, an area corresponding to extremely ambitious and dominating personalities like Hitler and Napoleon.

The ego grows from our *reactions* to outside events or to our own thoughts, as well as from planning and having a futuristic attitude. Modern civilization seems to be based a lot on this principle of reaction: “he said this so I will say that,” “I saw this so I will do that,” and so on. People who react a lot can in old age become very forgetful, senile, and can develop illnesses such as Alzheimer’s disease. By contrast, during meditation we are in a witness state which reduces reactions and the likelihood of mental illness later in life. Also, the best way to keep our ego down is through love. Pure love and compassion are the killer of ego, as they put us in touch with the source of joy, the Spirit that resides in our heart.

The superego corresponds to the right hemisphere of the brain and is the place where all our past, memories, habits and conditionings are stored. Ideas that we form over time, whether they correspond to reality or not, become part of the superego and are sometimes hard to dislodge even if they are faced by our own experience which shows that truth is different from what we believe. It is sometimes hard to give up such conditionings but, if we are honest in our quest, we always let truth prevail over our acquired ideas.

Conditionings may take many forms that are acquired by upbringing, education and so on. Examples include racism, nationalism, religious fundamentalism or fanaticism, dogmatism, and other such “isms.” Sometimes conditionings come in the form of groups we feel attracted to – as human beings we can have the tendency to “club” together for whatever reason. At other times, conditionings come from fear, which affects the left side. Conditionings can also take the form of fashions or sophistication: we may feel that something is not right if the fork is on the wrong

side of the table, if the food was not cooked in a certain way, or if something has a color that is different from what our “code” tells us it should be. The superego, like the ego, can ultimately destroy our spontaneity and joy. If we grow our superego too much by become slaves of our habits, lust, greed and all base desires, our superego can connect with the collective subconscious which corresponds to sly, self-indulgent personalities – a dark pit that is very hard to get out of.

Conditionings can manifest in many ways, for example some can come from the religious ideas we have received and developed since our childhood, based on the environment we grew up in, the books we read, the people we came in contact with. For example, religious conditionings can subtly go against the Spirit by making us think that our religion is the best and everyone else is wrong, by becoming ritualistic, or by developing certain concepts that may not reflect reality. Before Self realization these are unfortunately easy pitfalls to fall into, since we cannot yet perceive reality on our central nervous system. However, once the Kundalini is awakened and our consciousness becomes enlightened through sustained meditation, we can see our ego and superego, we can separate ourselves from them and stick to reality.

It took me some time hard work, honesty and courage to weed out some of the conditionings I had accumulated. However, comparing what I had to lose (my own relative opinions, however strong) against what I had to gain (true knowledge based not on ideas but on direct experience), my decision was taken without hesitation. This is not always easy and requires a strong desire to find the truth, and sincerity towards ourselves. One day I was talking to a coworker who had received her Self realization at my workplace and was meditating every day, while also being a very religious person. We were discussing some specific ideas which had become very much ingrained in my coworker’s mind. When we got to the subject of whether, when confronted to a direct and clear experience that contradicted these ideas, she would give them up or ignore the truth, my coworker admitted that she would never give up her ideas even

if they proved false by their experience.

I then realized that in order to grow spiritually, we need a certain dose of courage and sincerity in our quest. Only this can enable us to confront and get past our own ingrained conditionings and ego, and proceed towards reality, based on our own undeniable experience, whatever that truth may turn out to be. Also, if we fail to recognize the truth when it is presented to us, if we deny our own experiences or doubt what we clearly felt, the chance of those experiences and validations may never cross our path again.

Self realization is a living process that works within us gradually to enlighten our awareness, like the sprouting of a seed into a big tree. If we follow our wisdom and honesty, our Kundalini energy will always show us the path, in a gentle way and without putting any pressure, to the truth we are seeking. It is up to us to decide to walk on this path.

The Agnya chakra also equips us with the most powerful weapon we have, which is *forgiveness*. Through forgiveness we can cleanse the Agnya chakra and rise above our mind into the realm of the Sahasrara.

Forgiveness is such a tremendous power, which we are often not even aware of. It was the power to solve problems within us (by healing us and taking us out from the clutches of thoughts that poison our minds) and outside ourselves (by healing others and their relationships with us).

My wife Barbara once had to suffer from one of her bosses who was mistreating her. As she knew from her practice of Sahaja Meditation that forgiveness is a power that solves things by itself, and not forgiving means simply torturing yourself, she tried hard to forgive despite all the difficult circumstances. At one point, she just let go of it and forgave that person completely. A few weeks later, she found out that the man had been moved to a far-off department, demoted, and he found himself in a truly miserable situation. All this

happened after the simple act of forgiving, and nobody, not even Barbara, could have designed a better punishment!

I have been in several situations where by forgiving someone when there were issues between us, they told me later on that I had “grown several notches” in their eyes, and we became much closer friends afterwards. And I have been in other situations where had I not forgiven and had I reacted to something that looked wrong to me, I would have unknowingly made a grave mistake from which my relationship with that person would have probably never recovered, and it would have been my fault entirely. At other times, reacting got me into trouble which took quite some time to repair. And so many times I thanked my stars for not reacting, for just not saying anything but simply waiting, only to see that time has a way to resolve problems, which sometimes proved to be imaginary (but would have become real had I reacted to them).

One of the dangers of becoming too conditioned by allowing our superego to dominate our behavior is that our subconscious can fissure and allow negative entities to enter, which can cause a host of psychosomatic diseases that are largely considered incurable. One such illness is epilepsy. Sahaja Meditation once again proved its effectiveness as a series of studies have showed significant reductions (of up to 86%) of the number of seizures in patients with epilepsy after 6 months of treatment with Sahaja Meditation compared to another type of meditation as a control group.

Sahaja Meditation elicited a reduction in seizures of 65% after 3 months and of 86% after 6 months. The other type of (control) meditation or non-treatment led to no significant changes over 6 months. In addition, there was also a reduction of stress-related physiological indicators only in those patients treated with Sahaja Meditation. Additional results included an increase in skin resistance indicating decreased sympathetic activity (more relaxation), a reduction in blood lactate indicating less anxiety, and a reduction in vanillil mandelic acid (VMA) indicating reduced stress levels¹.

¹ Gupta H, Dudani U, Singh SH, Surange SG, Selvamurthy W. (1991): Sahaja

Shri Mataji provides several explanations about this center, notably why it is not a good idea to put one's attention on the Agnya chakra during meditation (the attention should be instead kept on the top of the head)¹: "Today we are going to understand the center of Agnya, Agnya chakra, which is placed on the crossing of the optic chiasm. The nerves that supply the eyes go backwards in the opposite direction and, wherever they cross, this subtle center is situated.

It has a continuous connection with the other center through the medulla oblongata. This center has got two petals and this subtle center on one side acts through the eyes and at the back of the head where you have some protrusion. This is the physical side of this center.

Now the people who talk of the third eye – this is the third eye. So that we have two eyes with which we see, and there is a third eye which is a subtler eye through which we can see. If you see this eye that means you are away from it. For example, if you can see your eyes, that means you are seeing your reflection, not the reality. If you see anything that means you are looking at it. So those people who say they see an eye, for example people who take LSD and all such things, they start seeing another eye. They just see this eye and they think their third eye has opened. Actually you are very much

Yoga in the management of intractable epileptics. *Journal of Association of Physicians of India* 39(8): 649.

Panjwani U, Gupta H, Singh SH, Selvamurthy W, Rai UC. (1995): Effect of Sahaja Yoga practice on stress management in patients of epilepsy. *Indian Journal of Physiology and Pharmacology* 39:111-116.

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Panjwani U, Selvamurthy W, Singh SH, Gupta HL, Thakur L, Rai UC. (1996): Effect of Sahaja yoga practice on seizure control and EEG changes in patients of epilepsy. *Indian Journal of Medical Research* 103:165-172.

Yardi N. (2001): Yoga for control of epilepsy. *Seizure-European Journal of Epilepsy* 10(1):7-12.

¹ Discourse given by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi in New Delhi, India, in 1983.

away from the eye, that is why you can see it. You go to a supra-conscious level on the right side and on the left side to the subconscious level, you can see the eye.

But in Sahaja Yoga you have to see 'through' that eye. Like a window, you can look at the window, but if you see through the window you cannot look at the window. So this illusion that people have that 'we can see third eye and that is why our Kundalini is awakened' – they are sadly mistaken.

This is a very narrow passage, through which attention cannot pass normally, it is an impossible thing. It is a narrow passage, where the ego and superego fit on to each other and cross each other. And there is no gap in between for the Kundalini to pass through. So this third eye is to be penetrated through, or we have to enter into the third eye, through Kundalini awakening.

But it is such a closed passage which is the door to the limbic area, which is the kingdom of God, that anybody who tries to push their attention through this closed door, either goes to the left or to the right. And this is the beginning of the trouble of the people when they don't understand that whatever is unknown is not God, is not divine. So, when they move on the right side, they go to the supra-conscious area. And they start seeing hallucinations.”

Shri Mataji further describes the witness state and its connection to the Agnya chakra¹: “Now on this center [Agnya] when we come, as I told you, your thinking is controlled by you. You can control. If you want, you can think or you don't think, but in that silence you feel your peace, if there's too much of crowds, too much of problems suddenly you become the witness. You start seeing everything, seeing the problem what it is. Unless and until you can see the problem you cannot solve it. Because you are in the problem you just get upset, but if you are out of the problem you can see it and that's what happens to you when you become thoughtlessly aware.”

¹ Talk given by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi in London, England, in August 1989.

Chapter 11. Sahasrara

The Sahasrara is the seventh and last chakra, the destination of the evolution of our awareness. This center is located on top of the head in the fontanel bone region that was soft in our childhood, which corresponds to the limbic area of the brain. The Sahasrara is the integration of all the chakras. It is represented as a lotus with a thousand petals, and the remarkable fact is that in its cross-section, the human brain shows precisely one thousand nerves in the limbic area, placed like rays radiating from the center of the fontanel area.

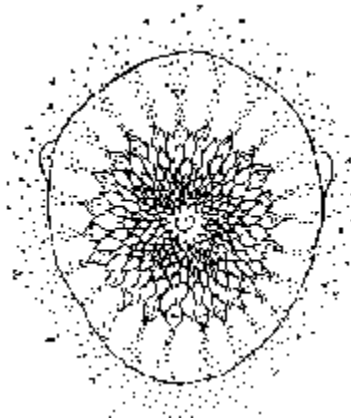


Figure 11.1

View of the limbic area (Sahasrara chakra) from above

It is through this point in the center of the fontanel bone, at the very top of the head, that the Kundalini pierces and opens our Sahasrara when it rises through our central channel. This event is felt as a cool breeze that flows gently at the top of the head and in the center of the palms. Some people can feel this coolness in the fontanel area even without placing their hand above their head, some can feel it in the soles of their feet, and some can feel it in the body (especially along the spine, where the Kundalini rises).

Several EEG studies conducted by Russian scientists between 2001

and 2003¹ compared the brain activation of long-term Sahaja Meditation practitioners to short-term practitioners and found that during the meditation, long-term meditators showed reduced thought activity and more feelings of happiness based on the subject's own ratings. These groundbreaking studies indicated that the alpha as well as the more rare theta waves – associated with the feeling of happiness or positive emotions – increase as mental activity (thinking) decreases, demonstrating the mental benefits of the state of thoughtless awareness (mental silence) that Sahaja Meditation enables.

Another study published in the International Journal of Neuroscience compared 25 Sahaja meditators to a group of 25 control subjects on a range of trait personality measures². The long-term Sahaja meditators scored significantly lower in personality features of anxiety, neuroticism, psychoticism, and depression and scored higher in emotion recognition and expression, suggesting that long-term Sahaja Meditation practice leads to higher psycho-emotional stability and better emotional skills.

The Sahasrara allows us to perceive reality as it is, beyond the relative concepts of our mind. That is why in meditation we put our attention to this chakra, without concentrating or putting an effort (which can cause strain on the Agnya chakra), but in a relaxed way. After Self realization, the Sahasrara becomes the apex of our Yoga, of our connection with the Divine.

The times we are living in are very special, as they correspond to the

¹ Aftanas LI, Golocheikine SA. (2001): Human anterior and frontal midline theta and lower alpha reflect emotionally positive state and internalized attention: high-resolution EEG investigation of meditation. *Neuroscience Letters* 310(1): 57-60.

Aftanas LI, Golocheikine SA. (2002): Non-linear dynamic complexity of the human EEG during meditation. *Neuroscience Letters* 330: 143-146.

Aftanas LI, Golosheikin S.A. (2003): Changes in cortical activity in altered states of consciousness: the study of meditation by high-resolution EEG. *Human Physiology* 29(2): 143-151.

² Aftanas L, Golosheykin S. (2005): Impact of regular meditation practice on EEG activity at rest and during evoked negative emotions. *International Journal of Neuroscience* 115(6):893-909.

Sahasrara chakra. Shri Mataji calls them the Blossom Times, in which humanity can take its rebirth and return to the lost paradise through Self realization. On the 5th of May in 1970, Shri Mataji cleared the path to en-masse Self realization by opening the collective Sahasrara. She described this historical event:

“It is the greatest event of all the spiritual happenings of the universe... Without this happening, there could not have been the possibility of giving en-masse Realization to people. [...]

As soon as the Sahasrara was opened, the whole atmosphere was filled with tremendous Chaitanya [vibrations], and there was tremendous light in the sky, and the whole thing came on this earth, as if a torrential rain or a waterfall, with such tremendous force [...].

The happening was so tremendous and so unexpected, that I was stunned and got totally silent at the grandeur. I saw the primordial Kundalini rising like a big furnace, and the furnace was very silent but a burning appearance it had, as if you heat up a metal, and it has many colors.

In the same way, the Kundalini showed up as a furnace like a tunnel, as you see these plants you have for coal burning, that create electricity: and it stretched like a telescope and came out one after another, shoot! shoot! shoot! just like that. I started seeing all that and got lost in the joy. It was like an artist seeing his own creation, and I felt the joy of great fulfillment.

After coming out of this beautiful experience, I looked around and saw human beings so blind and I became absolutely silent, and desired that I should get the cups to fill the nectar.”

Sahaja Yoga was born. Every human being desiring to attain the connection to their Spirit and with the divine power could now receive their Kundalini awakening, their Self realization.

When the Kundalini energy is established in the Sahasrara, the

beauty and bliss of the Spirit can be felt in the silence of meditation. We transcend the limitations of our ego and conditionings. This is the spiritual realm described in many ancient scriptures as the Kingdom of Heavens, Kiyamah, Nirvana, Moksha or Satori. As we meditate with our attention in the Sahasrara, our brain gradually becomes enlightened and is guided by our Spirit rather than by the whims of our ego and superego. Shri Mataji describes this elevated state of consciousness:

“The limited capacity of the brain becomes unlimited in its capacity to realize God. If you are the sun and the sunlight, if you are the moon and the moonlight, where is duality? Only when there is separation there is duality, and because of that separation you feel attachment... a distance between you and yours; that’s why you get attached to it. Everything is we, who is the other? When the brain has lost its identity, the so-called limited brain becomes the unlimited Spirit.”

Atheism, doubt in God, and anti-God activities go against the principle of Sahasrara and may close this chakra or put pressure on it. This may be felt as tingling or a sensation of heaviness at the top of the head. The best way to keep our Sahasrara open is to meditate with our attention on this center, which is the destination of our spiritual journey, and also to keep our ego and superego from developing. It is the thoughts we have and the pressure from these two entities of ego and superego that closes the Sahasrara and cuts our connection with the Divine.

As human awareness is united to the Divine when the Kundalini emerges through the Sahasrara, we become vehicles of the all-pervading power and begin to experience a subtler level of communication – *collective consciousness*. This form of awareness allows us to perceive ourselves and others directly on our central nervous system, rather than merely through external perceptions limited by the five senses. This is the vibratory awareness that allows us to feel in our palms or even in our body, where the problem is, within us or outside of us, and clear it with the power of the Kundalini.

We become like a barometer, feeling the subtle state of our being and of our environment or anything we put our attention to, and we automatically neutralize the negativity we come in contact with. We also learn to appreciate the real depth and beauty of another person through the vibrations we feel, rather than based on superficial appearances. This is the true knowledge of the absolute, perceived through the Sahasrara after our Self realization.

We all have a powerful radar up there, in the Sahasrara, that can guide us in our life towards the good and help us avoid the evil. Inside us there is a built-in divine computer ready to function with a precision that is superior to our limited thought, just as all living processes work spontaneously without the involvement of the mind. It is just a matter of connecting it to the mains through our Self realization.

Shri Mataji on the Sahasrara chakra¹:

“Last but not least, is the center of limbic area which is very important. Now I do not know if it has been discovered or not, but will be very soon discovered, that very strong things like crack [cocaine] and [everything that has] got sulphuric acid in it – that doesn't go anywhere in the body but just rushes into [the] limbic

¹ Excerpt from a speech given by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi in London, England, on August 1st, 1989.

area. Now this limbic area is a hollow place which has got all [the] cells which are very sensitive to joy, happiness, but they become numb, so numb that [even] ordinary music you cannot hear.

Somebody has to scream at you, has to shout at you, has to jump on it, otherwise you cannot enjoy.

Then it has to be worse and worse and worse and worse. I don't know now with crack, later they might develop something more poisonous, because it has to excite this limbic area which is such an important thing. But as soon as the Kundalini enters into that area, limbic area, she soothes it and it opens and then the Kundalini emerges out of your fontanel bone area and gets connected to the all-pervading power.

Then you start feeling the cool breeze in your hand. You can feel it all over. Some people, who in the beginning felt the cool breeze, could not believe it so they closed doors, everything, and then they sat down to see. Still they were feeling it! But it works, works in the sense that you get empowered. You become peaceful, you become the witness. You become empowered that you can give realization to others. You can raise their Kundalini like this and you can establish that connection. You can do it and this is what is your right to have it, this is what will give you meaning. Otherwise, so far, whatever we have been doing is very frustrating.”

On another occasion, Shri Mataji describes the unique characteristics of the Sahasrara chakra : “Today is a very great day, I must say, to celebrate Sahasrara [...]. It's a very unique thing that has happened that your Sahasraras were opened out.

There were some very few people in this whole world – there were some Sufis, there were some saints, some other people also in China I know, but very few. Very few got their Sahasrara opened. So whatever they said or was written was never understood by the people. They actually tortured them, they crucified them and did all kinds of horrible things because they couldn't bear somebody

getting this realization.

So it's a very great day because collectively this Sahasrara has been opened. Every one of you has got it. Also all over the world you have many people who have got their Sahasraras open. [...] Some have grown very much after getting their realizations, very much. They have understood Sahaja Yoga very well and they have developed their depth and their consciousness is really a great awareness of oneness with the Divine.

To be one with the Divine is the greatest blessing for human beings. [...] Like that in Sahaja Yoga so many people have come whose Sahasrara was completely opened and they felt their depth. First you must feel your depth. If you don't feel your depth, and you are not one with your personality which is so deep, then you cannot enjoy the Self realization.

First of all you should understand yourself. If you don't understand yourself, how can you understand other people? You cannot. So first this Sahasrara should be opened out fully. Fully means complete oneness with the Divine. That is not difficult. Only you have to meditate a little bit and then it will work out. It has worked out in many people. I am very happy to see and meet such people in Sahaja Yoga, who have achieved such a lot of collectivity and also the awareness of a realized soul.

Ego is the greatest hurdle for your ascent. You see, that ego is at a place where you have to just cross to go to Sahasrara, and to break Sahasrara is very easy otherwise. But if there is ego, you are already lost in that ego.

So against all this one has to understand that 'watch yourself'. Am I egoistical? Ego is very limited. It makes you limited and you don't see the purpose of your life. [...] But if you have [...] an ego-less temperament then you are very effective – the whole power works.”

Chapter 12. The Three Channels of Energy

The left, right and central channels of energy correspond to the three basic tendencies that drive our existence. The left channel corresponds to our power of desire, emotions, feelings, and our past. Our desires are essential for action, since without their impetus we would have nothing to act upon.

The left channel is the feminine side of the lunar energy, called as *Yin* in the Chinese tradition. It starts from the Mooladhara chakra and runs up the left side of the body, crossing the Agnya chakra to the right side of the head where its termination is the superego.

The greatest quality of the left side is to give us joy, which is the steady condition of the Spirit. No matter what we may go through, this joy of the Spirit is ever present, though we may not always feel it. This feeling is evident in little children who quickly recover from anything that disturbs them and resume their state of joy, perhaps because their greater sensitivity to their Spirit. Love and devotion are also associated with the left side because they come from the heart.

The heart, in which the Spirit resides, is the main organ of the left side. However, the emotions of the heart need to be kept in proper balance, in tune with the Spirit. People who go too much towards the left side become lethargic, over-emotional, and depressed, finding no purpose for their life. They tend to oversleep and can also become self-indulgent and cunning, led by their desires and attractions. They have a tendency to dwell in their past and daydream about their worries and miseries.

Even though they may suffer from insecurity or an inferiority complex, left-sided people may aggress others in a subtle way by complaining all the time or, if the superego is very bloated, by gossiping, backstabbing and scheming against other people. On the physical level the left side can trigger a host of illnesses, for

example depression, heart problems and cancer. All the problems of the left side can be overcome if the imbalance in this channel is corrected.

A study conducted at the University of Exeter, UK, showed that Sahaja Yoga has a beneficial therapeutic effect on the symptoms of patients with depression and anxiety¹.

Twenty-four patients with depression and anxiety were divided into three groups: a group receiving Sahaja Meditation over 6 weeks, a group receiving the conventional behavioural treatment for depression i.e. CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy), and a control group who received no treatment.

The group treated with Sahaja Meditation compared to the non-treated group showed a statistically significant reduction in the symptoms of anxiety, depression and an improvement in general mental health. At a trend level the Sahaja Meditation group also showed improvements compared to the group treated with CBT.

The study shows that Sahaja meditation has a visible effect on improving the symptoms of depression and anxiety, which was significantly more pronounced than the conventional behavioral treatment for the disorder.

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The right channel of energy corresponds to action, to physical and mental activity. It corresponds to the future and is the hot side of solar energy within us, called as *Yang* by the Chinese. It starts from the Swadhishtan chakra and runs up the right side of the body, crossing the Agnya chakra to the left side of the brain where its termination is the ego.

¹ Morgan A. (2001): Sahaja Yoga: An ancient path to modern mental health? Transpersonal Psychology. Transpersonal Psychology Review 4:41-49.

People who are on the right side can become overactive, restless, aggressive, and even violent. They typically have a hot liver that makes their thoughts race in their head and causes them to have a dry, quick-tempered personality. They may suffer from insomnia since even though they keep themselves extremely busy during the day, they cannot still themselves at night.

Right-sided people tend to develop ego due to the heat that rises through their right channel up to the Agnya chakra. Under the influence and control of their ego, they can justify any of their actions with a firm belief that they are “necessary” and “logical.” Such people think no end of themselves and consider that they own the world, having a right to put others down. Hitler and Napoleon were extreme examples of such right-sided behavior. Going too much to the right side can also cause many diseases, a few examples of which are paralysis, heart disorders and Alzheimer’s disease.

It is hard to maintain balance in today’s fast paced environment, created by materialism and greed that manifest in the cutthroat competition environment of modern corporate culture. However, through Sahaja Meditation techniques, all imbalances in the left and right sides can be corrected in a natural way, without any side effects.

The proper action results when one is detached from the fruits of one’s activities and realizes that we are not the doer – rather, it is the divine power that is doing everything while we just go with its flow.

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The central channel is the path of our spiritual evolution. It is through this channel that the Kundalini rises at the time of our Self realization. The power of this channel sustains our spiritual ascent and keeps us from going to the extremes of the left and right sides. It corresponds to the path of knowledge – *Gyana Yoga*.

While the left and right channels of energy correspond to the left and right sides of our sympathetic nervous system, the central channel corresponds to the parasympathetic nervous system. The right side can be thought of as our accelerator, and the left side is like our break. While these two channels can put tension in our being by pulling the chakras to one side or another, the central channel relaxes us by activating the parasympathetic.

People who are in the center are concerned about their physical, mental and emotional balance and are generally interested in their spiritual growth. However, even these noble tendencies can fall into ritualism and fanaticism before the Kundalini is awakened, which is the only way we can get out of our limited “shell” of the ego and superego, where we can become dominated by the tendencies corresponding to the three channels of energy.

After Self realization, we transcend these tendencies and gradually become a very spontaneous person, who is detached and not bothered by small things, but at the same time extremely loving and compassionate towards other people. We become a free personality as we are guided by the divine power in our decisions. Freedom is now manifested not as abandonment to our desires, but as the ultimate freedom of the Spirit where we are not enslaved or dominated by anything, and are free from the bonds of our own ego and superego which are the cause of all our unhappiness. This ultimate freedom is the blessing of collective consciousness, expressing itself as peace and joy.

Chapter 13. Miracles of the Divine Power

Once we become connected to the all-pervading divine power through Self realization and continue to establish this initial connection through regular meditation, the notion of miracle starts to gradually lose its meaning as we see this power at work in our daily life. We realize that this divine power does everything in the universe and its ability to act goes beyond our limited understanding.

The all-pervading power organizes, acts, and above all, it loves us. We have never known that we are loved by this divine power, but after Self realization we can feel its loving protection looking after us at every step.

I was once involved in an accident where the car that my wife and I were in went off the highway and onto the grassy area between the inbound and outbound lanes. It flipped over and slid on its roof for several seconds that felt like an eternity – at 70 miles an hour. Then it flipped again and landed on its four wheels. A few cars pulled over and people came to us to ask us if we needed an ambulance. To their stupefaction, my wife and I thanked them but declined, got out of the car and walked away. Our brand new car was totaled, but we didn't have a single scratch. I had only a tiny bump on my head, the kind that hurts only when you press on it. Years later, remembering this event I could only relate it to the movie "Unbreakable" by M. Night Shyamalan. I wonder if Mr. Shyamalan is aware that in a way, people similar to his movie character do exist (and in larger numbers than he would presume).

The all-pervading power even protects us from physical aggression, from attacks by other people. I was once in a Sahaja camp in India together with thousands of Sahaja Yogis from around the world. These are occasions for tremendous spiritual growth, very powerful vibrations, and at the same time lots of joyous moments spent in the collectivity of Yogis. However, that particular year a quite unusual

problem arose when our blissful camp was infiltrated by a madman posing as a Sahaja Yogi who was looking to cause nothing but trouble. Everyone could see that he was not acting as a Sahaja Yogi but decided to leave him alone.

He came to the door of one of the barracks where twenty-some Sahaja Yogi men, including myself, had our sleeping quarters. He had a big, thick stick in his hand, and was cursing at everyone from just outside the door of the barrack. I was meditating at the time, but it was so surreal to hear such words in the pure atmosphere of the camp, that I turned around to see what was going on. He spotted me, asked me what was my name, and asked me to come outside. I remembered for a split second the all-pervading power and got up. Even though the madman was brandishing his big stick, it never even crossed my mind that he was really getting ready to hit me with it.

I was fearlessly walking towards the door and came right on the threshold, in the door frame. One more step and I would have been outside where he would have hit me so fast I could not have even seen the blow, causing serious injury (I later on learned that he was a martial arts expert – these people are fast). But not as fast as the divine power. During that split second when I found myself in the frame of the door, a very tall and well-built Russian Sahaja Yogi who was sharing the same barrack, bolted like a flash of lightning past me through the door, landed on the crazy martial artist who was preoccupied with me, wrestled the stick out of his hands and put him on the run. As I learned on that day, nothing, absolutely nothing, is faster, or stronger, or wiser, or more capable than the divine power and its miraculous ways of solving problems.

For those interested to find out what happened to the madman, he was able to escape from the wrath of the Russian Yogi only to fall into the arms of a strong English Yogi who meant business. He locked the madman in an iron grip, they wrestled a little bit and came to the edge of an 8-foot tall drop-off. They fell off and the madman landed with his back on some big rocks, while the English

Yogi (weighing over 200 pounds) fell on top of him. Who arranged for that to happen? (it could obviously had been the other way around, with the madman on top). I will let you guess the answer.

No one knows if the crazy fellow broke any bones in that fall, but one thing is for sure: after that, he was quiet and soft like a baby. The English Yogi was literally leading him by the hand. The madman was dispatched in a taxi with a Sahaja Yogi who put him on a plane back to his native country. Our Sahaja camp resumed its usual activities and state of peace, joy and pure vibrations.

The whole universe, weather, wind and atmosphere moves under the direction of the all-pervading power. All you have to do is become one with it, through Self realization. Once, as I was giving a Sahaja public program on the Purdue University campus in Indiana, the tornado warning siren got activated. I had never heard one before and since I didn't know what it was, I ignored it and went on. In the meantime, the people in the room started to get a bit restless and some even got up and started to make it for the door, looking for shelter. As I came to understand what this was about, I just felt that I didn't want to interrupt the session, and calmly said "why should we let this tornado interrupt our class?" I was not going anywhere, so I invited everyone to sit back down.

Less than thirty seconds later, the siren stopped and we continued our class undisturbed. The next day I found out what had really happened from a friend of mine, corroborating the sequence of events based on when the siren went off and subsequently stopped. Apparently, two tornadoes had been sighted close to the campus that afternoon. One had touched down two miles away from the campus, and another was forming right above us and was preparing to touch down. Then, unexpectedly, the first tornado lifted off the ground and went away, while the second one dissolved in the sky before touching down. We had once more enjoyed the full protection of the power that we had become connected to.

The next day I received an email from a Sahaja Yogi friend of mine

in New Jersey. Among other things he asked: “what about those tornadoes?” I feigned ignorance in my reply: “which tornadoes?” He then emailed me back saying that the night we had the public program there had been a very intense tornado activity throughout the state of Indiana. What had also made news was the fact that on that particular night the number of emergency calls associated with tornadoes was 33% less than the average, and none of the experts could find any logical explanation for this.

One may think that such occurrences are pure coincidences – when they happen the first time, the second time, maybe even the tenth time. But as they keep on happening, as if because the divine power wants to convince us that we are indeed connected to it, after a while we get used to such happenings that become part of our daily life. Interestingly enough, sometimes things get resolved in a different way from what we had envisioned, but they always get solved in the best possible way. For example, we may desire and put our attention on moving to a different place, but it may not work out. Later we can realize that it was better to stay where we were, and thank the divine power for creating “obstacles” to our move. As the Rolling Stones song says, you don’t always get what you want, but you get what you need.

One of the ladies who were in the class that evening told me later on that using vibrations she was able to help a relative of hers give up smoking in three months. She also had a powerful experience that showed her that even though she was relatively new to Sahaja, she was well connected to the all-pervading power and could use it with incredible results, even in a play. Here’s what happened.

One day I was walking on the Purdue campus in between my classes and noticed a strange weather pattern. It would rain for 10-15 minutes, then it would stop for half an hour and the sun would come out, then again rain vigorously for a short time, then again stop, and so on for several hours. I didn’t think much of it until our next public program, when the same lady told me what had happened to her on that very day, while moving some furniture to her son’s

place. It was a rainy day to begin with, and she was a bit worried that the furniture will get wet. However, when she pulled up the van to her door to start loading, the rain stopped. She was able to load everything she needed without a drop of rain, and then as soon as she got behind the wheel the rain started to pour. When she reached her son's place and got ready to unload, the rain stopped again, just long enough to allow her to unload everything. When she got back in the van, the rain started again. All this kept happening until she finished moving all the furniture, which took her the whole afternoon. "Ah, it was you!" I exclaimed with a smile.

But what surprised me more than these miracles is the fact that this lady, despite all the proofs she had received since starting to practice Sahaja Yoga, was not able to recognize what this was and realized that all these miracles were due to her Self realization and Sahaja Meditation practice. She eventually stopped practicing it in favor of some other disciplines which promised a lot of fantastic things, used big words and in the end gave her nothing except confusion and maybe a drained bank account. This made me think of the parable about true knowledge that will fall on the earth like seeds, but some will fall on a rock, some will be eaten by birds, some will sprout but then soon die, and only a few will grow into beautiful, strong trees and produce fragrant flowers and fruits. The key to the treasure may land in our lap, but it is what we do with it that counts in the end.

Our emancipation as human beings and the fulfillment of our destiny depends on our desire, and also on our intelligence to recognize the truth once we see it. The all-pervading power could cure people of smoking, move the clouds and control the rain, but there was one thing it could not do: change this lady's mind, or force her to evolve spiritually by embracing the path she had found.

Why? Because this is one of the fundamental rules of the cosmic game that has been playing since the beginning of the creation: human beings are given free will, and this is something the Divine will never trespass. The Divine could instantly change a stone into a flawless angel, but the contribution of the stone to this process

would be nil. In these modern times of confusion it is easy to go down the wrong trail and difficult to choose the path of ascent. However, if we succeed and embrace the correct path, the rewards of our spiritual evolution are tremendous, because these are the Blossom Times, when we can bloom into flowers and fulfill a destiny that we maybe didn't even know was awaiting us.

There are many miracle stories I could recount, of my own as well as of many other Sahaja Yogis. But above all these stories is our own experience which no one can take away from us, which helps us steer through times of confusion and reminds us of what is real.

Chapter 14. Testimonials of Enlightenment

These are people like you and I. They had to deal with all the tribulations of present day life, whether in a Western or Eastern world, but had one thing in common: their burning desire to find the ultimate truth and to achieve enlightenment. They achieved their Self realization through the discovery of Sahaja Yoga, and their lives have never been the same ever since. Their stories are just few of many more that echo similar amazing transformations. Here's how they did it, or rather, how they found it and experienced it.

The testimonials below were collected by someone very close and dear to me – my wife Barbara – and so given her tireless work in interviewing a great number of Sahaja Yogis and transcribing their stories, I will start with her testimonial.

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I had been seeking answers to so many questions of life since my childhood. Seeing that I was not getting anywhere and weary from the great effort, at age twenty-three I pretty much gave up and decided that if I cannot live a life of fulfillment, at least I can numb the pain.

It was in this self-destructive “party” mode that I met a good friend named Ransom. He was also a great seeker. He had a clear twinkle in his blue eyes and he pretty much got me up, dusted me off and set me back on the road.

Ransom shared with me some books about alternative spirituality. I enjoyed reading one written about a certain guru, but when it came to the part about this “saint” having impure relationships with many of his female disciples I felt like getting sick. Somehow I knew inside that there were rules for authentic gurus. Another rule I somehow knew was that spiritual teaching could not cost anything.

Ransom and I found out about a Buddhist meditation camp in Massachusetts where you meditate in silence for 10 days. It was free and we made a pact that we would go during the next summer. We had great hopes that we would somehow ascend in our spiritual climb by performing such austerities.

One day in the spring of 1991 I stopped by a sort of new age bakery after working a day shift. On the inside of the front door someone had taped a poster with a picture of an Indian lady. My eyes went straight to her face and a voice inside me said rather loudly, “This is for me.” My mind wondered about that voice but I figured that it was referring to the fact that she was a woman. Having been raised Catholic I was sure that I wasn’t interested in any male-dominated religion. I noted the time and place and was happy to read, “Always free of charge” at the bottom of the poster.

I went home excited to call Ransom with the news. He was in my house talking with my roommate when I arrived so I excitedly told him about the Indian lady giving the program. As I was trying to recall the details he stood up and took out of his pocket a leaflet with the same photograph that someone had given to him on the street that afternoon. He had come to my house to tell me about the same program. Kismet! We knew we had to go even though we both had to work Friday nights. We worked at a local pizzeria every Friday and we counted on that money, but this was something beyond material matters, so we put up our slips for someone to take our shifts and amazingly we both got replaced.

I didn’t have a car so we went in Ransom’s with his fiancé and two other friends. It was 20 minutes away at a community college and pretty much everyone in the room thought that the Indian lady would actually be there to talk to us. A man who had been practicing this method of meditation for a while gave an introduction and stated that we would get our Self realization that night.

I felt an urge to leave the room – I had read about Self realization and the enlightenment of Buddha for hours in libraries and my

yearning was palpable, but to have it right now – what would happen? How would I get home? Would I remember where I lived if I fused with the Divine? To have this desperate thirst quenched scared me, what would or could follow? As a seeker you get used to talking, discussing, thinking, you really don't get a chance to “do” much. Somehow I stayed in my seat as they put on a video tape showing a program given by the Indian lady in the photograph. I learned that her name was Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, and the method she had created was called Sahaja Yoga – spontaneous Self realization.

At some point they asked us to close our eyes. I was such an untrusting soul that I actually put my purse between my feet so that if these people wanted to steal my money I would feel it. The yogis came behind us and worked on us. I could feel something above my head kind of pulling, but I could not feel the cool breeze which they called as “vibrations” and which is the manifestation of this connection with the Divine. Ransom could feel it.

What I did feel was a change in my inner state of consciousness - I was at peace. At long last I was feeling comforted and satisfied. This kind of feeling I had felt before when I would go camping for many days in the woods or mountains: after a couple of days I had no longer the sensation of time being segmented into hours, I got onto a more natural rhythm, my thoughts dispersed in the air and I was very aware of my surroundings. This same feeling came to me after just ten minutes of this meditation. I didn't have any tangible proof since I couldn't feel vibrations, but the inward proof was definitely there. Ransom and I decided that we would have to take off more Friday nights. So each Friday we would go to the program, which included watching a video tape. At first I had difficulty understanding Shri Mataji's accent, but what I could understand confirmed to me her great knowledge.

Shri Mataji spoke to very profound questions with a warmth and humor and simplicity that were shocking because they were so natural. After the tape, the yogis would work on us and this was the

best meditation I had all week. I had a very modest setup for meditation in my bedroom but I wasn't at all regular yet. The method I found most effective for me was called foot soaking, where you meditate with your feet in a bowl of cool salt water. This helped my attention get focused and I could feel my thoughts slow down. At each program the yogis would ask me if I could feel the cool breeze and try to do things that might help me but still I could not feel the vibrations.

It was working on me though. When I would come home from the public program each week I would spend the rest of the night listening to music and cleaning my house. The way I lived before Realization was absolutely filthy. Of course my mother, but even my friends who were the same age would make fun of my disorder and dirt. Now my floors were shining and there was a new tidiness.

In my behavior there was also a cleansing. I was working at two restaurants by then – I had dropped out of college just two months before – and one was an upscale ritzy place. Hungry people can be demanding and rude but rich hungry people are even worse, I would end my shift with both hands shaking and needing three drinks just to feel mellow. Of course once you've had three drinks why should you stop there? The “fun” is just beginning.

After a couple of months of meditating I found that I could not enjoy drinking anymore. I couldn't understand it at first – suddenly this habit which I was so involved in was turning on me and making me feel depressed. I tried different kinds of alcohol to see if that would help, but still I was feeling deflated instead of elated. I drank shots of alcohol with coffee thinking that the caffeine might lift me up but it didn't work either. Finally one day I was struck by the fact that I wasn't tense anymore at the end of my shift. Since I had been doing this meditation I was on a natural high so I didn't need the alcohol to relax me – I was relaxed.

Then I had to make a big decision – either to stop the meditation and “enjoy” as before, or continue the meditation and stop spending time

with my friends. Twice before when I had to take penicillin and couldn't drink I realized that to be sober in the company of drunk people is torturous. When you are also drunk everyone seems smarter, funnier and more colorful than when you are sober and you can see things in a more realistic light. I really liked this new side to me and I felt if I gave up on it I would be giving away my chance at redemption. If I was sincerely seeking my Spirit, and believe me I had tried almost everything, how could I abandon the quest on account of alcohol? My biggest fear was that my laziness would somehow spoil this unique opportunity. It took me months to get my meditations regular, but I did always try to go to the meeting and have the yogis work on me.

Later on I discovered that the whole idea of Christ turning the water into wine is completely absurd. The Hebrew word *yayin* which they translate as "wine" can mean either wine or grape juice, and if there is any question there are scores of admonishments in the rest of the Bible against alcohol. Jesus, who was the son of God and was innocence and purity personified, could not have given people a substance that goes against human awareness, that takes the consciousness to a lower level instead of a raising it to a more elevated, spiritual dimension. Besides, grape juice needs time to rot in order to become alcohol. As I was going to find out later on, Shri Mataji also performed this same miracle of turning water into grape juice when she was being interviewed by a reputed Italian reporter.

So over a period of six months I had changed in many significant ways but it was so gentle and so effortless that I barely noticed. I still didn't understand the significance of what I had found. Perhaps out of habit I continued my search.

I met Ransom and his fiancée in Massachusetts for the Buddhist meditation and it was very different from the Sahaja methods we were learning. We had to rise at 4 am and meditate pretty much the whole day. In the evening we would listen to a videotape of a man talking, guiding us I guess. Every night when he would come on I would get a splitting headache – I didn't realize that what this man

was saying was not in harmony with the actual Buddha and that was why I was having so much pain. One night I had such a horrible migraine that I really wanted to die just so it would stop.

Also I noticed that although we were not speaking, our minds were as active as ever. When I went one day to brush my teeth I found a woman reading the back of her shampoo bottle with extreme interest. As you can imagine, after a few days without newspapers, TV, books, radio and so on, a shampoo bottle can be very stimulating. I was pretty depressed during the last few days, and I kept asking to talk to the woman who was in the front of the room to find out “how” I should meditate.

She would tell me to quiet my mind. Yes, but “how?” The last day came and we were to be soon free and I had imagined that I would be transformed by the experience into a fresher and purer me. On the contrary, what I remember most is that during the last meditation meeting my mind was filled with perverted thoughts which were very disturbing because I had never had them before. This made me think that maybe this wasn’t the answer I was hoping for.

Some days after returning home, I stopped by chance at the Sahaja Yoga ashram – a place where yogis lived together as a family. I had kind of felt that our relationship was finished by that point, but they welcomed me back so sweetly, with open arms and gave me a copy of a poem that Shri Mataji had written for the American seekers called “To My Flower Children.” I read that poem over and over. It seemed to be filled with profound meaning and by reading it I could feel some meaning coming into my being, I wasn’t just reading with my mind but also somehow it was feeding my soul. I am reproducing it below:

You are angry with life
Like small children
Whose Mother is lost in darkness
Your sulk expressing despair
At the fruitless end of your journey

You wear ugliness to discover beauty
You name everything false in the name of truth
You drain out emotions to fill the cup of love
My sweet children, my darlings
How can you get peace by waging war
With yourself, with your being, with joy itself?
Enough are your efforts of renunciation
The artificial mask of consolation
Now rest in the petals of the lotus flower
In the lap of your gracious Mother
I will adorn your life with beautiful blossoms
And fill your moments with joyful fragrance
I will anoint your head with divine love
For I cannot bear your torture anymore
Let me engulf you in the ocean of joy
So you lose your being in the greater one
Who is smiling in your calyx of Self
Secretly hidden to tease you all the while
Be aware and you will find Him
Vibrating your every fiber with blissful joy
Covering the whole Universe with light

That day the yogis invited me to an East Coast seminar. All the Sahaja yogis from the Midwest and the Eastern part of the United States and Canada gathered at a scout camp in Pennsylvania. There were over 100 people there of all walks of life, races and ages. We did many techniques in the nature and I felt their effect very strongly, I could really feel things going out of my system and into the ground. My attention was so fresh, I was completely involved in each activity and this time I could be thoughtless without any effort. I felt shy to talk to many adults, but I enjoyed being with the children of the yogis, I felt like I was a child again.

During the last day my hands began to speak, I finally felt the vibrations and this time it wasn't just a little trickle, they were awash in a fountain-like flow of cool air. We were inside a building with the doors closed, but really there was no doubt for me that the

vibrations were coming in my hands. Afterwards I walked or rather joyously pranced down the trail to my cabin. I who had been pretty much shattered to the core by a life of disconnection was whole and fresh again. When the yogis dropped me off at my little house that night I knew as I walked up the back steps that I would never be the same again and that I would continue this meditation for the rest of my life.

When I first met Shri Mataji what struck me most was how vivacious she was. In 1992 she was 69 years old, but when she walked through the door of the airport I felt that I was meeting a woman in her late thirties. She was looking so fresh and her skin was just glowing. I was holding a little child in my arms and she gently played with the girl while I stood watching her with great interest. I was keen to know more about who she was. Since then I have noticed many times that there is a certain silent electricity surrounding her, and if you are anywhere near her you feel it and are charged by it.

When I turned to leave the airport, I could perceive that I had been in contact with someone who is completely pure. I sensed a brilliant light in Shri Mataji's being and when I turned my attention back to myself, I became aware of the darkness that was still lingering in me, in my subtle body. As I walked to the car my footsteps felt as though they had been preordained, destined, as if with each step the gravity of this meeting was making my footstep echo into the center of the Earth.

Barbara, USA

I received my Self realization from my brother Ray in 1980, in England. At that time Sahaja Yoga had not been long established in England and so it was a very special time. Many seekers at the start were coming out from the drug and hippy era. They were ardent seekers, who were not bothered about their social status, money or integration in the society. Coming from this atmosphere, a

miraculous transformation which took place after Self realization, completely altered my perception about life, who I was and the importance of being very much part of the society. Contrary to my beliefs before realization, these right codes of conducts after realization were more than just beliefs, they were integrated into my personality. To be able to change a personality so profoundly without having to turn the clocks back and start re-education in schools is quite remarkable.

My mother, despite the fact that she was a practicing Jew, saw such a change in my brother that she knew that Shri Mataji must be someone very special. So along with my family I received my realization. I did not feel the coolness at first. I would say that it took me about nine months to feel anything as my subtle system was quite blocked. But I knew it all made sense and was so logical so I stuck with it. Of course now I realize that Kundalini was working slowly through me, and changes took place that I was not even aware of at the time. Answers would come to me out of the very smallest questions and doubts, building up my faith and healing my soul.

It was only through the profundity of meditation that I really saw the changes take place and touched depths and beauty inside and became aware of a new vibratory awareness that I could use all the time. I felt things leave me and I had an amazing flow of creativity, which I used in writing songs. It seemed like the ultimate object of any art form was to be used in connection with the Divine, otherwise there is no meaning. My depressions left, a balance was established.

If ever I do feel these imbalances come, I can clear them. In consequence, my life is much more joyful. I do not worry, I can travel and enjoy being with others sleeping on floors or staying up until all hours of the night without feeling tired, refreshed by the vibrations. People have said to me how calm I appear and also the same for my husband. So I take these occasions, whenever I can, to talk about this amazing gift of realization.

In conclusion, there is no doubt in my mind that only through this Self realization will this and the future generations really survive.

Sharon, UK

It was in the spring of 1993. I was on a selection interview at the Music School. I play guitar. It came out not very well, so I was little bit sad. After the selection interview I wanted to go back home by train. It was in Bratislava where I haven't been before alone, and I had to travel one hundred kilometers home. When I was on the way to railway station one boy who was with me on the selection interview came to me and we started to talk about music. When we came to the station he asked me if I would not like to go with him to visit his teacher of music. He said that his teacher is very good, so maybe it would be possible to become his disciple. So we went to the school of his teacher.

After the conversation with the teacher I became his disciple. When that boy was on the way home he told me that I should find Igor – one of the disciples of that teacher. He said that he is really very good with the guitar, and that he can show me something. Twenty minutes later he came over. I remember that when he entered the class I felt that I knew him for a long time. He also looked at me in the same way. Then I came to his class to ask him for some sheet of music. When I entered his class I saw on his wall a photograph. I asked him, "Is this Shri Mataji?" He looked at me first and then on the wall. Then he asked me if I know Shri Mataji and I answered that I have seen her picture somewhere. He asked me then if I would like to hear something more about her and her work here. I said, "Yes."

We sat down and he told me about Shri Mataji and Sahaja Yoga. Then he asked me if I would like to experience what he had been talking about. I replied gladly. He came to me and told me, that I should take off my shoes and place my hands palms upwards on my knees. Then he put his hand on my fontanel. When he did that I

started to feel very cool in my hands and some unusual peace started overflowing me. I felt like being empty and like silently joyous. The strongest feeling I had was the feeling that I had been running and could now stop. I could feel vibrations, but the most important for me was the feeling within my being, that was like when you are very hungry and thirsty and you get the best food and pure water. The same day I gave Realization to my wife.

That experience was the entrance into the world of real joy and Mother's love, care and the beginning of many, many other beautiful experiences. Today I cannot describe in words the value of Sahaja Yoga and Shri Mataji, but I feel it in my heart. It is like a light when you read the book. What is the use of the book without light? But the light is here and I pray that I stay always in its rays enjoying it, surrendering to it, and reflecting it.

Dusan, Slovakia

I was fortunate enough to get my realization in February 1994. I had been a friend of Calin for three years. I had seen a poster about Shri Mataji and Sahaja Yoga in his office and in his dorm room. I never asked him about Shri Mataji, and he never offered to talk to me about her. Looking back, I think he talked to me couple of times about spirituality, but I had my own notions. For example, I used to say that "why should I worry God with my own problems." I was of the opinion that one who approaches God in times of need was not entirely faithful. What did I know? Then in December 1993, my friend got married to Barbara, and she asked him to invite me to the public program. I agreed without any qualms or questions as if it did not matter whether I went or not.

Entering the room, I felt shy and a little timid. They played the videotape of the public program Shri Mataji had held in Cincinnati a few years earlier. For the entire duration, I had my eyes fixated on the TV screen. I could not move my eyes and I was completely thoughtless. I can't explain how I felt, but something happened. We

had the realization after that. I did not feel anything on my fingertips or on my Sahasrara. The yogis kept on saying that they were feeling coolness on my head. But I could not agree because I felt nothing. But I felt immense peace inside.

I think after that day, I smoked one or two cigarettes, and whenever I did, I did not like it. The same thing happened to my drinking. These were visible, physical signs of change. The yogis continued to nurture my spiritual growth while they stayed in Lafayette. I felt like a part an extended family. Nothing had been as joyous and provided as much contentment in my life before.

Shalab, USA

Already as a young child I was confronted with the questions of life – its meaning and its fulfillment. I soon began to seek my answers in ideas of asceticism and competitive sports as a source of happiness for myself. I actually thought that I had possibly found a key to happiness for all human beings. I suppose if I hadn't done sports it would have been something else. It wouldn't really have mattered how I decided to seek because invariably the test of life's experience soon shattered my illusions and I was led to see the futility of my unfounded ideas – a year of hard training in the Austrian army proved to me that torturing the body was not a way to attain spiritual liberation – after this year I was empty and lost, and was seeking some source of energy.

I was again without answers but much more conscious of my disorientation than ever before. It was then, about thirteen years ago at the age of nineteen that I got my realization at one of the weekly Sahaja Yoga programs in Vienna. The experience was subtle and beautiful and yet infinitely powerful. A relaxation penetrated my whole body coupled with a kind of tickling joy. And the greatest thing was that I was absolutely aware. The rising of the Kundalini and the breaking of the Sahasrara dissolved all disorientation and I attained a state of crystal clear clarity.

This was the answer to my questions and also the fulfillment of my life itself. No one had explained to me what I should feel or tried to convince me of anything. I had made my own personal and individual experience and from that moment on I knew that Sahaja Yoga would provide me with the answers to all my questions. The peace of mind I experienced was tremendous and I felt as if I had finally reached home.

From that moment on, I meditated every day, desiring to feel this joy again. Slowly the power of this gentle compassionate energy transformed me. Its effect was so subtle that it was often only weeks later that I noticed the changes. I would no longer become angry in certain situations, spontaneously became absolutely moral and started to respect the true values of society. I started to understand the holy scriptures of various religions so that when I read them I felt that they had put into words what I intuitively already understood. This intuition was like a sixth sense which gave me a powerful discrimination between what is right or wrong, holy or negative, real or illusory.

I was very blessed to be in the presence of Shri Mataji many times during my first years in Sahaja Yoga and this invariably pulled me into new meditative heights and states of awareness – each time was a transformation and a new push in my spiritual growth.

By following Sahaja Yoga it has become possible to lead an absolutely normal, balanced and moral life in the midst of this chaotic and sick Western society that I live in. The purity of Sahaja Yoga has enabled me to understand the pure brother-sister relationship. This has helped me have much better relationships with everyone, because there are no hidden thoughts. Married life is a source of joy and happiness and satisfaction in a relationship based on trust and faith in the partner who is a realized soul. A field of life where I have very clearly seen the effect of transformation of Sahaja Yoga is in education. For six years I worked as a tutor in a boarding school. I was already a Sahaja Yogi and deeply desired the

wellbeing of the children there. I did not talk about Sahaja Yoga openly but did my best to use the power of desire, patience and compassion to guide these children to a righteous path and to be satisfied souls. As a Sahaja Yogi I found that these powers actually work and that most children are actually very thankful for them.

But where I saw the power of Sahaja Yoga work most effectively on the growth of children was at the various Sahaja Yoga Youth camps where so many young realized souls get together. Their mere meeting causes the vibrations to flow and the divine attention becomes very evident. If they are properly guided in such an atmosphere such children have often changed the course of their lives from one of excitement and indulgence to one of joy and righteousness and they do so in their own free will.

Finally, it is my utmost experience that the power of Sahaja Yoga is love – it is love that counsels and redeems us – love that is the source of our true joy, happiness and transformation, and this love is that of a mother, of our mother, Shri Mataji.

Hans, Austria

I was first introduced to Sahaja Yoga when I was twelve. My brother had been meditating for a few weeks and he helped me get my Self realization. I immediately accepted what he said as truth without even really thinking about it. It is very easy for children to do this because they don't really have any ego to tell them to doubt things that they feel are right. Also since I was so young, I could feel the vibrations strongly as my chakras were still quite clean.

Over the next few years, I would meditate only with my brother every once in a while. When I was about sixteen, I realized the truth of all this and I realized what vibrations actually were. I started to think more deeply about these things.

When I was in high school I found that I needed some way to get

through it. I could feel all the negativity that was present in a high school, all the partying that goes on, all the material desires, and those kinds of things that didn't appeal to me whatsoever. I had my realization and I knew the futility of all this. I found it very draining. So I began to meditate more regularly.

For the past two years I have been meditating and foot-soaking every day and night and have recently been attending collective meetings. I have noticed incredible changes. I find myself not worried about anything. I find myself living in the present only, and enjoying whatever it is I am doing. I am able to concentrate on my schoolwork much better, and the caliber of my work, and thus my grades have improved. I feel more love towards the people around me. I know that every situation always works out, so I don't dwell on mistakes I think I've made, or regrets I have. I find myself wanting to do kind things for others, and I am more aware of the feelings of those around me. The best part is that I know the truth and I know why all these changes have come about in me. I know it is not because I am a great person. It's because I am a blessed person. I have been given many blessings and everything in my life has become much more joyful because of it.

Sarah, UK

It was February, I was walking down the main street of my city and saw a poster advertising free meditation classes of Sahaja Yoga at the downtown library. Two things I still recall are: first of all, the arresting face of an Indian woman on the poster whom I expected to meet at the library, and secondly, the "always free" caption. I brought my friends with me to those early classes. The Indian woman at the library there looked different from woman in the photograph, and her husband, a German man, was leading the class. The experience of those first classes was like prying open a doorway to a new birth, a new life, but I won't try to describe my experiences here. They are probably not much different from stories that other yogis have described better than I can.

I can certainly laugh when I reflect on the impression my appearance must have made on the Sahaja yogis in those days, but I think these things are not unique to my story. My surprise at my friends' failing interest in Sahaja Yoga is certainly not unique, nor the distress I felt upon seeing them walk away. Instead I will try to describe the turn of events during the summer of 1996, and how close I came to losing myself forever.

The spring of that year was spent living and carrying on with my friends almost as I always had, though occasionally I would try the meditation techniques from the weekly Sahaja classes outside the class, usually with disappointing results. As a yogi now, I can reflect on how cigarettes, drugs, negative environments, and chaotic living could upset my inner balance enough to make meditation outside the collective difficult. However, Shri Mataji's lectures made a great impact on me, and I recognized her as the spiritual teacher I had been seeking. The feeling that I should follow the path of Sahaja Yoga and that I should never have to search beyond this for greater truths was somehow within me from the beginning. But I was still keeping all the channels to the negative forces around me open. And the negative forces within me were rallying for a counterstrike.

Self destructive forces within me had been settling into my being for some years by this time, and when the couple who had been traveling to our city to conduct classes took the summer to travel to Europe, those forces hatched a clever scheme to steal me away from truth. *I'm still quite young to settle down*, I reasoned, "I know now that I won't get anywhere with Sahaja Yoga until I turn away from cigarettes and drugs, so I might as well have some fun while the summer is here, and I can become a serious Sahaja yogi in September when the classes resume." My meditations tapered off to nothing, and in the interconnected chains of friends, music, drugs, and money, I constructed a plan for a new direction in life. With my beautiful girlfriend at my side, I would provide the youth of my city with chemical drugs, and free from the necessity of other work, I

could devote myself to my artwork, as well as parties organized with my friends integrating my art, lights, music, and drugs. Eventually, of course, my art career could evolve to the point where I could replace these more dubious kinds of income. Of course with Sahaja Yoga classes starting again soon, and with Shri Mataji visiting Toronto in person, I would have to stay off the drugs myself, but what was the harm in selling them to others? How else is a struggling artist to get on?

It was with this dangerous mindset that I fell further and further still along a course of self destruction, and it was with this mindset I stood one September evening on the eve of Shri Mataji's arrival in Canada with a bag of ecstasy tablets in my hand. Though I had resolved to stop using drugs as the Sahaja classes had begun again, I had convinced myself that I needed to sample the pills to find out their quality before selling them. But before I swallowed the pill, I prayed that I should learn something from this experience, that I may grow because of it.

After about half an hour as the chemical worked its wonders, the room began to feel as if its very air was a field of energy, electric and tangible. All the muscles of my body seemed to flow with this same energy, in a buzzing, numbing oneness. All the energy in the universe acted and reacted with the energy that was my body, and the smooth rhythmic forms that my body took as I moved were beautiful, full of meaning, a “body of knowledge” if you can imagine. My thoughts were sweeping me along in hundred different fantasies of where this magic bag of pills could lead me, how dancing could impart knowledge and bliss to others. Without words... a pure knowledge...

Wait a second, now here is something I recognize. It dawned on me, the understanding I had prayed for! This was my ego in fact, blown up to the size of a thousand egos. This was the death of spirituality. Like a hammer, the new concepts hit my hyperaware attention, “I could not sell this or any drug to anyone, let alone take any myself, however far I have gotten myself into this mess, I don't care

what happens, I'm going to walk away.” I resolved to wash my hands of everything I had begun. Greatly humbled, I went with two of my sisters to Shri Mataji's public program, and as if to complete my story of transformation for me personally, Shri Mataji gave to Toronto the unheard of blessing of staying and meeting all the seekers personally. In this way, Shri Mataji cured my fragile condition, taking my hands into hers, and cleansing me of that which possessed me, so that I was able to stop using drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes overnight, and forever! To this day I have not been troubled in the least by these addictions, and I must stress that it was never in any way through my own steadfastness, but through what Shri Mataji and Sahaja Yoga have done for me. Thank you again and again.

Bill, Canada

I was introduced to Sahaja Yoga for the first time, in our Rotary Club in Istanbul. Sahaja Yogis came and made a presentation. Until that time I had read every spiritual book I found and believed myself to be a seeker, but not a finder. For the sake of seeking the truth I went to the freemasons, promising to create a cubic stone from a round one... I went to the Sufis, who were preaching the application of Muslim mantras (holy names of Allah) and meditation to give spiritual enlightenment. My old friend and guru, Ibrahim Baba, was telling me that this is a long and difficult way to go.

I thought, *There must be a certain type of yoga helping people to clean their chakras.* Since I had read nearly every spiritual book on the market, I was aware of chakras and cleansing. At that time my life was in ruins. I had lost my job as the managing director of a big production plant and just ten days earlier there had been a fire in the apartment where I was living in with my wife and two sons.

I was surprised to learn from the Sahaja yogis that one can clean his/her chakras and be his/her own guru. After I received my realization, I went home, told my wife that I found something

remarkable, and we both began going to the center and meditating regularly.

A funny thing happened during that time. I had not given up drinking as such, but drank gradually less. It happened to me that if I drank even one glass of beer, the next day I had low blood pressure. When I asked my doctor about this he replied that he would expect quite the contrary. One evening at a dinner party my hosts asked me, "Saffet, you are the wine expert, please test this new wine on the market." I made the usual show, smelling the cork, the wine, looking through the glass for residue and finally sipped it. But I could not swallow it, all the wine spouted out of my mouth like a fountain. Everybody was upset and asked me, "Is the wine that bad?" That was my last sip of alcohol after having been a regular social drinker for thirty years. I realized then the action of my own Kundalini which does not allow dangerous elements entering to my body. This all happened in the 1995.

Four years later, in March 1999, we found out that our nineteen-year-old son had leukemia. Shocked at the news, we took him to the hospital, and they started the chemo treatment the same day. But after the first chemo treatment they found out that the treatment did not help and his blood test showed some residue of bad cells. So they started a second chemo treatment. During that time, I was applying Sahaja Yoga treatments on him and other Sahaja yogis would also come and work on our son every day.

While Eren, our son, was still in the hospital, Shri Mataji came to visit Istanbul. I went to the hotel where she was staying and asked her to help him. She told me not to worry, and that we should keep giving him the Sahaja treatments for the left side. Shri Mataji was so calming and I felt so relaxed, like having a warm chat with an older family member.

After two days or so, while we were waiting for the results of Eren's blood test, a real miracle happened. Seeing the blood test results the doctor cried "This cannot be true, I have not seen such a rapid

recovery in whole my life!” Since then Eren’s tests have always been normal. He is as healthy as he’s ever been.

Saffet, Turkey

The memory is keen and dramatic of the first time my Kundalini was raised some eighteen years ago. Surrounded by gentle, swirling cool breezes, it felt as if a sixteen-lane highway was opening up inside my back! A feeling of great peace followed; it gave me joy.

I was forty-five years old then, the mother of three grown children, divorced and living in New York City where my job in minority business development had taken me. Trained by a father who was a government civil servant and a mother who was a political, community development volunteer, they left no doubt in my mind that I was supposed to help save the world. Yet, the world was getting worse and my close proximity to political and community leaders led me to the conviction that I had met the enemy and it was us! Unless we human beings rose to a higher level so we could define the problems with a new and better perspective, our so-called “solutions” would continue to fail.

At this life junction I began trying to transform myself with greater intensity during all my non-working hours. I tried Re-evaluation Counseling, Tai Chi, Kriya Yoga and marijuana – all of which soon ceased to be helpful in giving me permanent change. I was also suffering deep depression from divorce, feeling distant from my children and having long, unhappy relationships in search of a new husband. My state of being swung like a pendulum between feeling very elated and energized – to long periods of crying and lethargy, wanting only to be a recluse.

Immediately upon beginning the practice of Sahaja Yoga, my optimism was restored. At last I had found a method of self-transformation that actually worked! My daily meditations produced small, subtle improvements immediately. Both large and small

emotional upsets began to subside inside me - even though nothing outside had actually changed. I continued to work in a high stress environment (which was by now in banking) where both customers and employees are most often upset. When I became upset, Sahaja Yoga had taught me how to immediately put myself back into balance. Equally profound was the impact that my restored balance had on the people around me! Their stress and upset also began to subside. I began to realize I didn't have to say or do anything, but if I could simply feel positive and project compassion into a meeting, or on the subway, or in any group situation, the reactions of those around me quickly became more positive. This positive energy was even more contagious than negativity.

After two years of the subtle clearing that comes with the daily practice of Sahaja Yoga meditation, I remember reaching a milestone. I could verify the truth that it is possible to keep oneself in a steady state of joy and inner peace. Even though I continued to live and work in stressful environments, now when anger, fear or depression tried to “swamp” my continence it no longer succeeded. My departures into the left side (too much emotion) or the right side (too much thinking or action) were happening less and less. Sahaja Yoga had given me the “steering wheel,” the “brakes,” and the power system to get myself back into the center.

In a continuing test as to the truth of Sahaja Yoga methodology, at age sixty, I married a sixty-two-year-old Ukrainian man who is also practicing Sahaja Yoga. At first it was clear that the “cold war” was not over. We struggled with our opposing conditionings about many issues, but especially those that are 180 degrees opposite of each other, such as the differences in attitudes about authority. Had we not been able to witness some of our own fanatical reactions, and introspect about our lack of ability to forgive and forget, this marriage would have lasted only a few months. What a miracle in human achievement. What a revolutionary discovery for bringing about true world peace. For if peace is going to be genuine, then first it has to happen within our own hearts, then in our own families and finally it can happen within the community.

Carolyn, USA

I was born in India but am currently working in Aruba. This is the place where I got my Self realization and my journey in Sahaja Yoga started.

Before coming to Aruba my life was in a mess. I had dropped out from my CPA exams after investing a couple of years of my career. I worked and studied hard, but even then I couldn't clear my exams. Then I decided to drop out and look for some job abroad. I saw an advertisement for a job in Aruba. I was not applying for the job because I was not sure how the place would be. But then I appeared for the interview and everything went smoothly. I was selected and came to Aruba. In Aruba I heard about Sahaja Yoga from my colleague and started going for meetings every week. Initially it was a bit difficult for me as everyone used to feel vibrations except me. But then slowly and steadily after meditating and foot-soaking regularly I started feeling vibrations.

After getting my realization my whole perspective towards life has changed and I see a new person within me. I have been in Sahaja for more than a year now.

Regarding my social life I am not a person who goes out for parties etc. but I enjoy the Sahaja collective. Whenever there is a Sahaja gathering, I make sure I attend, otherwise I feel like I am missing something. The most important thing I like about our collective is that everyone is happy and enjoying and you don't see anyone complaining or feeling jealous.

Meditating everyday gives me great joy, satisfaction and peace of mind. Just sitting in meditation relieves me of all my tensions and thoughts going through my mind.

This joy cannot be expressed in words, one has to feel it. The power

of the vibrations is phenomenal. There are different treatments in Sahaja Yoga that help me clean my chakras and remove the obstacles to my evolution.

Checking vibrations before doing anything important helps me to make the right decision and also it helps me in guiding other yogis who ask me for suggestions.

On the professional side after coming to Sahaja my performance has improved. I have been reaching my sales targets very comfortably. I feel that the road has been set for me and I am just following it.

Kishore, Aruba

It was January 1990, Friday the 26th in Bordeaux, France. I was on my way to celebrate a friend's birthday. I suddenly realized that I didn't have any gift with me. Luckily there was a big supermarket downtown which was still open. I went to the second floor and quickly bought a present. Coming out from the shop I stopped by an exhibition in the supermarket gallery.

It was not matching the habitual marketing harassment of the place. There was a pleasant setting of colorful boards of beautiful drawings that appeared to represent flowers. The people there told me that the flowers were not simply flowers but "chakras." They went on to give me an account of their knowledge.

To my own surprise, this knowledge sounded not so new to me; it was like something already known but which had not yet come to the surface of my consciousness. It sounded tremendous but it somehow felt obvious. The two men told me that those who receive the experience which was illustrated on the boards enter a new awareness and reach spiritual heights unknown until this day.

Although I was intrigued by what they told me, I hesitated because those two men, despite being kind and patient, didn't appear to me to

be particularly highly evolved. I decided to investigate more before attending their program the next Tuesday.

The program a few days later went smoothly. The experience of Self realization took place without me taking particular note. The Sahaja yogis told me later on that they felt that I would surely not come back) After the program I left and decided to go have a drink with some friends. That was when something unusual started happening. I felt that I should not drink this glass of champagne because inside something more interesting was trying to manifest.

The root of this feeling was for me the sensation of being reconnected to something very comforting, lost from my childhood; something very precious and private which was trying to awaken in me, and this champagne was going to disturb that awakening. So I stopped, and from that moment the best part of my attention left the gathering and was attempting to keep contact with this tiny “new” precious thing beginning to talk from deep down within me.

At that time I was twenty-five-years-old. I made the firm decision to restart the studies I stopped ten years ago. I left the city to live and study in a small city near the sea and dedicated myself to work, sports and to the techniques the people at the Sahaj program had explained to me: foot-soaking. All I remembered from that evening was that to clean your subtle system you could sit on the ground to use the earth element or you could use the water element by foot-soaking. So, as I was a time-saving person, I was taking a foot-soak every morning and meditating sitting on the ground at the same time (I agree it's not really practical neither comfortable but it is efficient).

I carried on with this practice for three months. Frankly speaking, I fought with many doubts. When you think of yourself as very independent and spiritual indeed, it can be difficult to see yourself every day in that situation: foot-soaking and sitting on the ground. But as there was probably a basis of honesty inside me, I was not ready to give up this treasure I had found deep inside that was still

more or less there throughout my day to day life.

Finally, after receiving my first real diploma, I went back to Bordeaux and visited my friends who were on their traditional weekend binge. They were all smoking, gathered in a café, with a drink in front of them, in a hard-rock music atmosphere. In my attention came only thoughts about what can I do to so-call “entertain” myself, meaning how to destroy myself in the most pleasing and superficial manner. Suddenly it became too much for me. I rushed out and tried from the next day to meet again those who gave me this experience. I started sticking to them and quickly they offered me a book which I started to read and practically ate, swallowed, and imbibed. Afterwards, I was able to find all the true knowledge on my own. I discovered then the source of all this knowledge and the transformation started. From that time I'm still drinking at the source of this knowledge each time I feel thirsty and enjoy the satisfaction of a drunkard who drinks something pure, high and eternally uplifting.

Christophe, France

As far as I remember, fourteen was the age at which *India* and *Yoga* came strongly to my attention in the urgent quest within me for “something higher” and of “something beyond.”

One splendid spring morning on my way to high school I asked myself the big question: “What is this «I» or «me» we are calling ourselves in the same way while, obviously, we are different persons?” I couldn't find the answer at that time.

My search continued for sixteen years, reading about spirituality and various methods of yoga, even practicing Hatha Yoga. Every time I come closer one way or another to India, it brought me special feelings and a kind of expectation. Still, the big questions continued, and strong confusions as well. I couldn't see the way out of the labyrinth.

1990 was the first year of freedom for my country after the communist plague fell. During the same year I noticed posters of Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi in the center of Bucharest. The lady with serenely mysterious smile was capturing my attention in a very special way. I decided to go to the public program announced for the first of August at the Polyvalent Hall.

The day of the program, while waiting for my friend at the subway station, I could feel a kind of joyous presence around me, as if mute voices were calling my attention to the specialness of that wonderful summer afternoon.

The big hall was filled with the delicate mild fragrance of Indian incense, creating an intimate atmosphere. I was astonished to see on stage a sea of flowers around a chair, which was holding a big framed photograph of the Indian lady. I caught the glances of angelic, pure, sparkling eyes of some youngsters near me who were wearing badges. I understood that they were Sahaja yogis. Something inside me already started working towards recognition of a long awaited truth.

More and more I was transported by my perceptions into a much subtler world when the yogis started their presentation. The speech surprised me, as it was just as if meant to answer *word by word* all my unspoken questions and aspirations and to reveal to me the missing link I was searching for ages, enabling me to integrate and make sense of the entire human existence. *Recognition was total, entire, absolute...* The same joyous voices were now telling me with great enthusiasm, “Enjoy fully, enjoy your long-awaited moment of discovering the Truth!”

After the introduction, the yogis invited us to have the experience of Self realization. I was tense and disturbed by inner discomforts. I couldn't feel the cool breeze that evening. But I did feel it the next day. I was somehow completely aware of what I was to get... or to lose.

That's how I came to answer my question from sixteen years earlier, I found that the "I" that each of us are calling ourselves is in fact One, Unique and is *the Pure Spirit*. Later on I came to know the one who made it possible for human beings to learn the answer to this question and to achieve their salvation was, as I was going to discover later on, a very special person.

Mihaela, Romania

My name is Martin and I live in Linlithgow, Scotland. I received my Self realization in February 1991 from my mother.

I'd just come back from a year in Australia searching for what I was going to do with my life, other than football and beer. It was a chance to get away from everything that had made me the way I was and be whoever I wanted to be. Like everyone else, I discovered that the person I most wanted to be was just myself. Away from home that was easier, especially in Australia which is one of those countries that, looking back, you can say has changed you. I never wanted to join any strange groups or happy-clappy brigades, but just share deep feelings with normal people.

After over a year away and having amassed huge debts, I returned home at twenty-one with no job. Yet, I still managed to have the feeling that the future was so bright I was going to need sun glasses. I hadn't discovered what I wanted to do with my life and I hadn't yet met people who I felt shared my deep restlessness to not just settle for an ordinary life of job, career, marriage, children, holidays and hobbies, retirement and death. I felt quite lonely in those feelings and isolated even, in the atmosphere of a good night out with many friends.

Something deep down had me pre-occupied with a dissatisfaction to find something like a better destiny for myself. My mother introduced me to Sahaja Yoga, Self realization and meditation one

evening and it made magical sense of everything for me. I felt peaceful, natural, normal and a definite sense of having benefited, but not much more

When I was given an audio tape of Shri Mataji, I was thrilled to hear how the little truths I had gathered fitted into a whole story. I always felt that everyone and every faith is right to some extent so why join any one of them, when none have the whole story. Then Shri Mataji described nothing short of the whole story and how all fit together. I felt great respect for the unique awareness she had.

It was a very exciting time of continuous discovery as I met other Sahaja yogis who were deep (and normal). I spent long nights in timeless conversations. With words we went on enlightening journeys where we revealed our deepest feelings and resolved many issues. The hair danced on the top of our heads with no hangover for the next day, just a deepening sense of discovering, growing, absorbing and changing.

Many pleasant things began to happen and a great sense of optimism or faith in the future continued to grow in me as I met my future sweet wife, got on a better career path and miraculously cleared all my debts with tremendous energy.

A challenging time then emerged within the first year as I realized, to my puzzlement, that not many people wanted to get their Self realization and take advantage of all that Shri Mataji clearly had to offer freely. This made me feel like an oddity in the midst of many old friends but as my life in every other respect continued to be charmed and every meditation made me feel good, I felt no reason to stop.

The more I jumped in, the more beneficial it was: I went to national gatherings, then international gatherings, then a tour in India, then Russia etc. For the first time in my life I had such strong feelings of being exactly where I was supposed to be and not missing anything.

Sahaja Yoga, through the love of Shri Mataji which I feel in my own personal way, continues to nurture me in every respect. My whole life is charmed and I can now see how the charm is spreading all around me. I have a beautiful home, family, I am self-employed, keep healthy, always have enough resources for what's important and enjoy tremendous satisfaction of soul with all my Sahaja brothers and sisters. Time tells all and time is proving the worth of Sahaja Yoga to anyone who cares to look. It takes us very sensitively on a path of real spiritual experience and growth at just our own pace and gradually everyone who knows you can see something great is happening for you. It's the real McCoy and what a joy!!

I hope the truth of this helps someone as I have been helped by so many.

Martin, Scotland

It all happened in the end of 1995. My boss' wife came to our office and said that she saw an interesting poster on the street, which talked about some kind of yoga. I was not too excited but said, "Okay, why not go?"

I was never interested in any yoga before. I had only read the Bible, but found it difficult to see how it could help me. Also, from time to time, I read the Lord's Prayer. I was searching for the right ways of living life, asking myself questions like *Why did I do this or that?* and *Why did I get into this situation?*, *What is the reason?* But the main thing I was interested in was, *What must I do in life to avoid all kinds of problems?* I thought the answer was money, because it could bring so-called independence. I got a good job and with the money and with the money I earned I started to gamble at the casino. Obviously I was on the wrong course, getting money then burning it up and again looking for money. In this way I was becoming more and more aggressive.

One day, I went with three of my friends to a Sahaja program which was organized by the Kiev Sahaja yogis. I cannot say that I felt the cool breeze from the first time. What attracted my attention was that they said they would teach us to remove blockages inside ourselves.

Many times before I had attempted to put my attention inside but did not understand how. Now the Sahaja yogis said they would teach me. That was something new. It sounded very interesting.

I didn't feel vibrations at all for the next three or four years, but foot-soaking and collective meditations did the job. Today, after attending two international events this year with Shri Mataji I feel that something real is going on inside of me all the time and I understand more and more who I am and how great Shri Mataji is.

Sasha, Ukraine

Very few people are as fortunate as I am. For the past five years I have had the enormous privilege of conducting weekly meetings in Sahaja Yoga. I have had the opportunity to experience Sahaja Yoga first hand and then to enjoy seeing its manifestations in others.

Like many other people, I thought I was unique and intellectual. When I got my Self realization, I felt a tremor of happiness in my heart which quickly disappeared in the harsh unreality of my thoughts. But as I meditated daily, the bubbles of this joy kept eroding the weight of my thoughts.

I received my Self realization in India. There were about 100,000 people gathered to see Shri Mataji. I was skeptical but curiosity drew me to her. I must have been about three hundred feet away from the stage, when Shri Mataji arrived. She wore a white sari and appeared most resplendent, like a thousand suns. I felt goose bumps all over me and I was flushed with a thrill that went to every cell of my body. My eyes were awash with water and I could not stop them from crying. What a feeling!

My mind was silent, though the chatter started later. The rest was quite simple. Afterwards, all the problems that I was facing faded away one by one. Opportunities appeared everywhere. And things have worked out fantastically. When we first came to Aruba there was not even one Sahaja yogi here. Over the years our collective has grown quite a bit and we share the love and affection even more deeply than in a “real” family.

I have also had the privilege to conduct meetings and offer Shri Mataji’s deep love to severe drug abusers among others. The results are amazing. I have seen so many people getting cured in Sahaja Yoga that it’s not even a miracle anymore – people with asthma, sleeping disorders, depression. This blessing came to all of us, despite our character flaws, knowing that deep within each one of us there is a higher personality. Shri Mataji sees this in each and every one of us.

We are truly blessed to be here and alive at this very great time.

Nikkhil, India

I received my Self realization on November 29, 1993. I was quite skeptical when I came to my first meeting, but I came for the following reasons: I was told by a masseuse that this meditation could heal a scar I had on my back since I was hit by a shoe at age eight. And she said that the meeting was free. Although, at that time I was involved in something that I thought was the ultimate spiritual journey, I also believed that everything happens for a reason and therefore it would be short-sighted to ignore this suggestion. When I walked into the meeting I went up to the woman who appeared to be the leader and asked her if Sahaja Yoga could heal my scar, because that is why I was there.

She smiled and said very forthrightly and sweetly that that is not what Sahaja Yoga is all about. She said that it was true, physical

healing is a by-product of this meditation, but it was much more than that. So with that, I stated that it didn't really make much sense for me to stay and that I would be leaving. Then she said something that forever changed my life: "You came this far, why don't you just stay for the meeting." She spoke with such a warmth and generosity of spirit and with no pressure at all, that I just surrendered to this woman's invitation and sat down.

I listened to a fascinating talk about the subtle system within us that made total sense to me. But I had lots of questions. One of my questions was about anger, "What do you do with your anger?" (The dominant place of anger in my life was something I wanted to change.) The speaker said that your attention in life shifts. The things that made you angry will simply not provoke that reaction. That was an interesting response. So, I decided to try this meditation for a week or two.

That first week, I just happened to have a chance encounter with the woman who led that meeting. Today I see how Sahaja that encounter was. I felt great warmth towards her and gave her a hug. I still had many questions, being a typically right-sided New York woman, so I asked her if we could have lunch together. I did not know then that she had a very busy schedule, but made time for us to meet. At lunch, while I was trying to figure out if Sahaja Yoga was the next step for me, this lovely lady, Andrea, did not at all try to convince me.

She spoke so sweetly of what Sahaja Yoga had meant to her life, I was utterly captivated. I still did not know in which direction to go. I went to a meeting of the group that I had been with for nine years, and for the first time my hands were full of vibrations. I did not understand what the vibrations meant, but my hands felt painfully cold and to me they were saying, "This is finished. You have to move on." So I told my fellow seekers that this would be my last meeting, that I had found something that represented the next step for me. To my surprise, no one asked me much about Sahaja Yoga. I now see this as a reflection of their attachment to that group.

Meditation was brand new to me, so it took a real desire to establish this new routine. I found it pleasant to meditate as I was taught at the Sahaja Yoga meeting. It was not something I had to spend a lot of time at and yet I still felt that something powerful was happening. About two weeks after I started meditating, I found myself in a situation that would have normally provoked a huge angry reaction – and I wasn't feeling at all angry. I wondered, “Does this have anything to do with the meditation?” It is now many years later and I will try to express how my life has been transformed by Sahaja Yoga.

One of the biggest blessings for me, as a mother, has been the transformation of my daughter. Melanie was fourteen-years-old when I discovered Sahaja Yoga. I was a Mom who grew up in the sixties and was stunningly ignorant of how to raise a teenager. I really was not prepared to protect her from the unbalanced immoral lifestyles that most teens lead. She was not associating with people that I thought were a very good influence. She told me, when she saw me meditating, “You know, Mom, I am not going to meditate just because you do. I have to find my own path.” “Of course you do, darling.” I said, and then, sensing that Sahaja Yoga would be a great blessing for her, prayed that she would turn towards it.

Before long, she started meditating. Her life started to change dramatically. A schism developed between her and her old friends. She started to recognize who she really was – the pure spirit – and changed her life accordingly. She was no longer tied to what her peers said and thought. She had a connection to the truth within her and her life became balanced and very sweet.

While she continued to struggle with the conflict between wanting to be a yogi and wanting acceptance from her peers, she also grew in her depth. She met some yogis who were also teenagers from Europe and took her first trip abroad at sixteen. Then at seventeen she went to India for a Sahaja Yoga tour and told me she felt like she was coming home. When she went to college, she decided to

major in both dance and Asian studies and in her junior year spent ten months studying in India. In that year, she also got married to a wonderful Indian yogi. I was at their wedding in India and remembered how I had prayed when Melanie was just a young teenager, that she will someday marry her perfect partner. And now my prayer was answered. I felt such eternal gratitude on that day.

And there is more. I have a nineteen-year-old son. He does not practice Sahaja Yoga, but has benefited enormously by my growth. He is a bright, beautiful and deep boy and has always been very successful in manipulating me. My love for him blinded me to his inappropriate and disrespectful behavior. It was actually my daughter who first started pointing out to me how I was allowing him to speak to me with little respect. The light that was growing within me and the light shed on his behavior by my daughter started the change that would eventually be a total transformation in this relationship. My son, who used to be the class clown and the underachiever is now getting good grades and behaving with respect and dignity both in and out of the house.

My marriage was filled with conflict before Sahaja Yoga. After my Self realization I started to see the source of all the problems. While I used to focus on all the things about my husband that needed to be “fixed” so that my life would be better. I began to understand that the woman holds the power to transform herself and her whole family – but not by carping and nagging.

As I strengthened my connection to my spirit I realized I no longer needed to go outside for happiness and peace. I began to feel this in my being, my heart started to open, and before me was this fantastic man who had so much depth and so much love to give. It was actually my demands that were stifling his ability to express his true self. While my husband does not meditate, he has also become a more peaceful person. After all, when one person in a family changes so dramatically, the ripple effect is powerful and undeniable. I am now enjoying my life as never before, and the gratitude I feel for the very special person who has given this all to

me is beyond measure.

Diana, USA

I received my Self realization in November 1992, in Germany.

Early in the summer of 1992, I had decided to spend the remainder of the year seriously looking for “it” – “it” not being anything I could put a name to, but knowing that “it” was missing from my life.

I was in my early twenties then, and since childhood and early adolescence I had been aware of living in phases – phases of simply being and doing giving way to phases of being withdrawn, incredibly sad, sometimes simply not getting out of bed because I didn’t know what for -- bouts of depression haunted me fairly early in life.

I tried being very busy, I tried going to church, and I tried falling in love. I used to be a pretty intense person, so when I say I tried, I mean I really tried. Hard.

So one day in May or June that year, I decided I had had it. The phases of being desperate and feeling lost were stretching over several weeks, sometimes months, the phases of being content and balanced had narrowed down to a few days at a time. Don’t get me wrong; I was always functional and kept commitments and schedules. Being very analytical and critical, I did very well in academics, I had a busy social life, I was earning well. Why couldn’t I be at peace?

I simply knew life wasn’t supposed to feel like this. I also felt sure that I would know “it” when I saw it.

I tried a lot of different things, from revisiting a previous life to color therapy, and looking back it amazes me how I could tell so clearly that none of these techniques or groups had “it”. When I did

receive my Self realization, I immediately knew that this was exactly what I had been looking for all my life.

On a Sunday afternoon, in the basement of a tract house in the countryside, I suddenly felt like I had finally come home.

At the time I was working as an assistant director in theatre. We were doing a small piece, only two actors, the story of Cain and Abel. In the mornings, I'd be the first one to arrive, making sure the set and props were set up for the rehearsal, switching on the kettle to make tea for the morning session, having a quiet moment to go over the director's notes from the previous session. Early on one of the actors (Mr. K) started to come early too, we'd talk a little or none, we'd sit quietly together, me doing paperwork or rearranging things, him sitting.

One afternoon, the actors were taking a break in their dressing room, while the director and I were trying to rearrange a whole sequence of scenes (the morning had not gone well). Moving things about on stage, we witnessed an argument unfolding in the dressing room, broadcast over the PA system (which I had forgotten to turn off) to everybody working in the building. "All you care about is your yoga. Every time I miss my cue you just...." There was a quite a bundle of accusations being directed at Mr. K, who replied calmly, while I hastened to switch the power off, and the director approached the dressing room to straighten things out.

The next morning, when Mr. K came in early again, we were sitting quietly for a little while, until I took heart, and said as casually as I could: "So, I heard you're doing some kind of yoga. Can I try?" I had been awake the better part of the night trying to figure out how to start the subject without being too nosy. Luckily, Mr. K was very willing to share information about it. But I cut him off, I didn't want to hear about it, I just wished to try it for myself, and see. If it was any good, we could talk about it later, but first I needed to find out. So we fixed up for Sunday afternoon, and although he had said there was no need to bring sweatpants, I took my gym-bag, just in case.

We sat down in his meditation room. Mr. K showed me how to sit, explained to me what he would do (hand movements behind my back) and said that any question I have, I could ask in my meditation, and I would get the answer. I didn't have any questions.

We sat silently; I tried to keep my attention on the top of my head, my hands lying on my lap, open, palms upward. Next, I went through a series of nightmares in an awakened state. Afterwards, when I saw a chakra chart, I was able to understand what had happened.

Once my Kundalini had started its journey (and I could feel it travel along my spine), at each chakra I was having a nightmare related to the quality of that chakra. (At that time in my life I was used to having nightmares the moment I closed my eyes. Vivid, terrifying nightmares – amazing, the terrors we can get used to. Needless to say, I avoided sleep whenever I could.) However, this time was different: instead of waking up and needing time to recover, I decided at each scenario that I am not giving up, that my need to find out about this was stronger than the urge to shake off the pictures in my mind and walk out.

Let me give you an example: the heart chakra governs our sense of security and fear. When the Kundalini came up to my heart, I was suddenly convinced that it wasn't Mr. K sitting behind me, but somebody else, somebody I knew, and that he was putting his hands around my throat and was going to kill me. And that moment I was absolutely sure that this was happening, and I was absolutely terrified. Almost unable to breathe. Yet, I suddenly decided not to move, I just completely surrendered, and accepted that what has to happen has to happen, but I will not move until I feel this ominous cool breeze.

That day of early summer, when I started my active and accelerated seeking, I had made a pact with myself: if I do not find what I am looking for by the end of the year, I will end my life. And I meant it,

too. I didn't tell anybody about it, I wasn't being suicidal hoping to be talked out of it; I just couldn't bear the sheer pain of living anymore without any relief in sight. So I was sitting there, thinking I will be suffocated within seconds or minutes and it seemed not to matter whether death would come sooner or later.

The moment I surrendered, the Kundalini moved on. The next drama got solved, and on it went. Until it got stuck in my head. And then I asked a question in my heart: "where is my home?"

Lightning struck. It came from above, entered through the top of my head struck down to the lowest chakra and went up again. Pouring out of my head was a fountain of cool vibrations, and I was in bliss. We finished meditating, and sat down in the kitchen for tea. I couldn't talk in full sentences. I sounded something like this: "This is just ... Wow, well, just, hmmm."

I drove home on a cloud. I called my mom to tell her that something wonderful had happened. I slept like I hadn't slept in a long, long time.

That gray day in November I started meditating. In a basement in the German countryside "it" found me, and we recognized each other.

Julie, Germany

I was twenty-four and a last year student in Medicine when I first started Sahaja Yoga. Shri Mataji had visited all the countries of the Eastern Bloc in 1990 and Romania was amongst them. I intended to see her in person but it somehow didn't work out. My sister went and thought it was great and that being close to Shri Mataji had been a transforming experience.

At the first follow-up program in Bucharest I was there, seated between my sister and my wife. The French Sahaja yogis held the

program which was translated into Romanian. I spoke French well but for some reason they either never explained to us what we were supposed to feel or it got lost due to my overly-eager attention. Fact is that after the Self realization experience I felt very light and, together with my sister and my wife, almost couldn't stop giggling.

It was really a joyous experience without any preconceived idea whatsoever, and the very good mood persisted for a couple of days.

After a couple of weeks of attending two Sahaja programs every week, it was clear that a soft, pleasant breeze was hanging above the heads for a while after the meditation along with a general sensation of wellbeing of a unique type. It seemed that when this soft breeze was with me, I rarely if ever was wrong about things and everything I was doing (from work to playing chess or... dice!) had a sensibly higher rate of success. I also noticed that the cigarettes didn't taste good after the meditations.

All these things became more obvious as months went going by. I quit smoking without difficulty and life felt easier for some reason, although for an external observer our material life was harder. It was amazing for me to feel how meditating was incompatible with worrying.

And indeed, my wife and I did not need to worry. Our lives followed a gently winding path in between many apparent obstacles and consequences of a few mistakes, miraculously avoiding every one of them. In our work (we are both physicians) we have seen many highly unlikely occurrences when we were around – they never seemed to happen to anybody else.

We had also seen our daughter who started out as an incredibly sweet and obedient little child, show some disturbing traits largely due to our imperfections as parents, and finally evolve together with us into a combination of a mature, joyful, strong and sweet pre-teen that has us tearfully grateful!

Today, we are completely absorbed in the Ocean of Love and there are no words to describe the feeling. We couldn't imagine our life without this love, without the effects it had on us, and, most of all, without the divine experience of sharing it with others as it was once shared with us on a mild October afternoon.

Andrei, Romania

During the fall of 1999 I traveled to India for a study abroad program with my school. My first experience with my Self took place in a Sahaja yogi's home in Dehradun, India. I was introduced to Sahaja through my friend Melanie. She was one of the twenty students on this program and was giving Sahaja Yoga meetings to our group. I was practicing Hatha Yoga at the time and was also giving classes. She came to one of my classes, and I to hers.

I fancied Sahaja right from the start. It appeared correct, and easy. Correct because it was easy, or perhaps easy because it was correct. In any case, my interest grew as I practiced Sahaja under Melanie's guidance. While I was trying to understand Sahaja better and better, I could not leave my Hatha Yoga practice so easily. Doing both at the same time was difficult and unsatisfying to me. However, I knew that if I was truly interested in knowing whether or not there was any truth behind Sahaja Yoga, I needed to stop the Hatha Yoga practice in order to see the difference clearly. As time went on my Sahaja Yoga practice increased and my Hatha Yoga practice decreased. However, it was this one experience at a Sahaja yogi's house that truly got my attention. It was this experience, which convinced me of the reality of Sahaja Yoga.

One weekend Melanie took me to a yogis' home. Melanie had been to India a few times before and established contacts in various places. It was our first night in their home. Melanie and I were getting ready to sit down for evening meditation. I closed my eyes, then I heard the bedroom door opening. Someone came out and headed for the kitchen. That much I was sure of. I wondered who it

was, and thought it might be the Sahaja Yogini living in that house.

Suddenly something peculiar happened. It was something I had never before experienced... I felt what they called the Kundalini moving upwards from the base of my spine. But, I felt it moving very, very slowly. They told me that we have seven main chakras, but the way the Kundalini was rising felt like we have fourteen. It was literally moving that slowly. Though it was moving slowly, it felt very powerful. While this energy inside me was rising I felt a bit apprehensive and curious. *What is this?*, I thought. *Could this be?* When the Kundalini reached my throat area it shot up to the top of my head and beyond and someone quickly placed their hand on the top of my head.

I naturally thought that person was Melanie, but when I opened my eyes to see I came to know that it was the yogini living in the house. She later explained to me that she initially walked over to the kitchen but then saw me sitting for meditation and wanted to come behind me and raise my Kundalini. It felt like an electric shock rising up my back. Then, as soon as it passed out from my fontanel bone I was in thoughtlessness, and I got my answer. *Yes, it could be, and it is. My Kundalini has risen and has put me into the state of meditation.* I no longer felt apprehensive or curious. I felt tremendous love and peace. I felt like I knew everything in that moment. I did not want it to end.

It was in that moment that I realized my value, our value, the value of Sahaja Yoga, and the value of Shri Mataji. It was during this very meditation that I decided that Sahaja Yoga was what I wanted to spend my time knowing more about. If this yogini could raise my Kundalini, so could I. I should tell you again that the experience was of total loving silence. Not quiet, like a room would be when it is empty, but a divine quiet, a silence. And, this was like nothing before. It was so very enjoyable. I was thoughtless and very aware. I was more aware than I had ever been. It was during this thoughtlessness that I realized and decided that Sahaja Yoga was something special, something real, and something that I wanted in

my life.

Louisa, USA

It's a great joy for me to speak about the moment I got my Self realization. It happened miraculously on November 2, 1993, about 7 months before my coming to Sahaja Yoga.

On November 1st, a very sad moment occurred in my life: the death of my grandmother. I was deeply attached to her and her death was unexpected and in tragic conditions I got a great pain in my heart and felt very depressed. The next day we went to the hospital for her body. I thought that the moment would be unbearable. After leaving the hospital, returning back to her house, I felt a very cool breeze coming on my fontanel bone area and flowing up to the lower portion of the neck.

I felt extreme peace filling me up and a joy that I could not compare with anything I had felt before. I experienced tremendous happiness and I think that the single word, which could describe my feelings, is ecstasy. Yes, it is true. I was taken to Heaven. The cool breeze flowed from my head continually for about two hours. I was unable to talk, but simply enjoyed that state. I could not understand anything of what was happening to me but I did not want to disturb in any way that state of bliss so I let myself be completely absorbed in it. After two or three hours I dared to speak to my mother and told her that "Now I do not feel sad," that I was filled with peace and joy and I was sure that my grandmother was happy there in God's realm. My mother told me that she had also a kind of tranquility, incomprehensible in view of the event.

The cool breeze disappeared after several hours but the peace and joy remained so that I could shed not even one tear for my dead grandmother. Moreover, whenever I remembered the tragic event that kind of bliss flooded my heart again. During the seven months, that passed until I came to Sahaja Yoga, many times I felt something

like a touch on my fontanel bone area. I recollect that, unable to understand what happened, I was checking with my palm on my head whether something was wrong or not. Also during these months my faith in God increased so much that I was praying with tears in my eyes for getting all the qualities of a saint. One day when somebody was reading loudly something about God I was so deeply moved and felt a cool breeze starting from the sacrum bone and raising up to the neck. It was only for few minutes I felt it but I got amazed of what strange things were happening to me.

On June 9, 1994, I received my Self realization from a sahaja Yogi. I heard that one of my ex-classmates from college was practicing Sahaja Yoga and immediately felt curious about it. I telephoned and told him that I want to know what Sahaja Yoga is. He came and explained to me, gave me my Self realization and invited me to an exhibition of Sahaja Yoga, which was going to start the very next Sunday. I went to the exhibition and the moment I entered the hall I felt that a kind of energy took away my weariness (during that period I was feeling tired and sad almost all the time) and made me feel more refreshed than I had felt for a long time. I was unable to read anything in that exhibition but remained there for few hours and enjoyed the peaceful and joyful mood. During the following days, I went every day to the exhibition and in the company of Sahaja yogis I learned how to meditate. I must confess that it took some time to feel the cool breeze in the palms but what convinced me was that divine joy experienced in my heart and the inner transformation, which took place very quickly.

Only after few months I understood what actually happened at my grandmother's death. It was nothing else but the experience of Self realization, the Kundalini awakening which is the first step in Sahaja Yoga. It was a blessing I got it in a moment in my life when I needed help and it took me out of grief. That is why with a joyous and grateful heart I want to thank Shri Mataji for the blissful gift of Self realization, for revealing to us the meaning and aim of every human being's life, which is spiritual growth, and for showing us the path of Sahaja Yoga.

Carmen, Romania

Sahaja Yoga has changed my life in many profound ways. Actually, it has saved my life. The deepest and most important changes have been in my awareness and consciousness. As a young boy I was sexually abused a number of times. Since that time my life was filled with fear that it would happen again, self-hatred for allowing it to happen, and anger at the ones who abused me. I had to deal also with lust sparked by this loss of innocence. After that time I was plagued by horrible violent and sexual images all the time in my head. I did not know what to do or how to escape from these images. I knew no peace and began to take drugs at the age of twelve.

By fifteen, I was beginning to despair of life. I had chronic back pain and sciatica. The pain was so bad that after school I would have to lie down for hours. I took painkillers all the time and went to the chiropractor three times a week. Around the age of sixteen, a dramatic change took place in my life, but it was only some time later that I understood what had happened.

My mother went to a Sahaja Yoga program given by Shri Mataji in 1989 in Toronto. She received her Self realization but she did not feel much and did not follow up on it. She told me nothing of the program except that she had gone to a nice program of a spiritual lady and I thought nothing of it.

Soon after my mother's Realization my friend who did drugs with me would not talk to me anymore. This gave me the chance to see him from a distance and it became clear how much he had changed for the worse from doing drugs. I stopped taking drugs almost entirely. I began to seek and one day a few months later I got my Realization just like that, walking down the street.

I was thoughtless and felt a cool energy around my body and felt such love in my heart as I have never felt before, love for God and

love for all human beings. This feeling lasted for about twenty minutes and afterwards I was desperate to get it back. Already though I felt much better. I quit drugs and alcohol. Lust and anger had less control over my life. About a year later I saw Shri Mataji in Toronto and knew that Sahaja Yoga was what I was looking for. Within two weeks of Sahaja Yoga practice, almost all of my back pain disappeared. The last desire for drugs stopped. The horrible images gradually lessened. Now after many years in Sahaja Yoga the images are almost gone.

If disturbances come from the past, from being abused, I use Sahaja Yoga treatments to make them go away. Innocence has come back to my life. Being abused did not rob me of my innocence, it only covered it up and Sahaja Yoga reawakened it. Now I can see, feel, and most of all enjoy innocence. I am now happily married with two children. Sahaja Yoga has saved me from drugs, alcohol, physical pain and despair. It has saved me from mental disturbances that made life a maze of hate and lust and surely would have ended my life.

Anonymous, Canada

Kundalini has been working within me now for some years. It is a real power that leads me through my life, giving me the necessary power I need to face the difficulties of existence.

The day Shri Mataji raised my Kundalini was the most important of my life. Just before the exercise of raising the Kundalini started, Shri Mataji told us that those who want to learn the “Art of Love” should follow her. That touched me deeply because that’s what I was searching for. I did what Shri Mataji told us all to do and my Kundalini rose, destroying all doubts about this power in myself.

I started regular meditation and went to meetings with Sahaja yogis. Soon I gave up self-destroying habits like taking drugs or drinking and smoking. Over the years I went deeper in meditation and I

gained confidence in myself.

I experienced that it is one of the most negative things to have blind faith in something that does not really exist, to have faith in powers that are not real. Kundalini is the opposite. It is real and everyone can experience it like one can experience the burning of fire on the skin.

It is a power that organizes our lives. The basic things like having a proper job, a home, and proper relationships in life work out by themselves. Sometimes I was worried about these things but I experienced that everything comes at the proper time and place. Kundalini gives us what we call “the luck of life.”

Whenever some difficulties in jobs, relationships or in day to day life appeared, this power is there to help me. Maybe it is not obvious at first, but along the way it can be clearly recognized. I learned to see things as they really are and not to get frightened by wrong ideas. This is perhaps the most important achievement: to start seeing things how they really are which is of course necessary to be able to act in a proper way.

Confidence in this helping energy leads to a subtle kind of satisfaction. I have less desires and I do not need so much in order to be happy with life. This also brought an inner beauty to my life, which attracts other people.

It is the most beautiful feeling to know that we are loved by this motherly energy.

She is here and she is forgiving. No need to be afraid. Just ask for forgiveness and she will flow through our being. I know that she is real and that she is within me.

Wolfgang, Austria

Even after many years in Sahaja Yoga, one cannot forget about the unique experience of Self realization.

In 1989, because of excessive work and traveling for United Nations as a Senior Regional Officer for Latin America and the Caribbean, I went as I usually did every month, to several South American countries. In Lima, Peru, I suffered a hip fracture in a dramatic accident.

The hip prostheses changed my whole life. The change was not only physical, because that negative event in my life took me to the most positive and privileged call of Shri Mataji, whose picture I had seen at the United Nations the previous year

At least one hundred ads had been posted at the UN. Still in the process of recuperation from the hip operation, and in total ignorance of what meditation was, I decided to attend a Sahaja Yoga meditation session at the UN Secretariat.

In that room there were a few established Sahaja yogis who lived in New Rochelle. Among them were Katherine and Grégoire whom I had seen at the World Bank a few months back, Babette, Carolyn, Debby, and a few others. They were people who greatly enjoyed their collectivity, and their faces shined with joy. At this first session, they played an audio recording of one of Shri Mataji's talks. Babette was working on me, when Grégoire also came behind me and said, "You have some problems with the heart, but you will get over it."

I had been deeply depressed after the accident, and had also just lost a dear friendly relation. But, after receiving my Self realization, I felt such peace, that I knew that this was what I had been looking for, all my life. In my lifetime I had met hundreds of people from many different countries, but these few individuals were not only different in culture, nationality and language, but also responded to a great need deep in my heart.

From that session on, I began to go to the center every weekend, and the Sahaja yogis felt more and more to me like a family. In 1992 we went to an international Sahaja event in Italy. That experience was very special. The locals were astonished to see thousands of people come their town and behave so gently.

After Grégoire and family went back to Europe, I had the privilege of coordinating the Sahaja sessions at the United Nations and in Manhattan. It was a great experience, surrounded by so many established yogis, and newcomers. Before leaving New York in 1994, Shri Mataji offered a Public Program at the UN where we met every Friday, on 45th Street in Manhattan. It was a grand success. We had to open the doors into the street where people were standing since they could not fit in the conference room. At the airport, Shri Mataji took my hand and said, “Manhattan has taken off.” Every year I go to New York, Shri Mataji’s prediction is confirmed as the Manhattan collective is growing steadily.

Now we coordinate the Sahaja sessions in Mexico. Many thousands have received Self realization in the recent years, and we hope that all the seekers of this country will get to experience the joy, blessings and beauty that we have experienced and which changed our lives.

Graciela, Mexico

I received my Self realization in November 1977. For years before this, I had been seeking. And as a result of trying so-called spiritual paths, had become damaged and confused. By mid 1977, I had decided that it would be better not to get involved with “spiritual” groups or people.

One day, one of the people I was sharing a house with, Linda, mentioned an advertisement which she had seen in Time Out magazine for a program at Caxton Hall, London, given by an Indian lady. With my past experiences in mind, I declined to go with her.

Linda went to the meeting, and when she came back, she looked different. There was some color in her normally ashen face, and there seemed to be a glow about her. On her next visit to Caxton Hall, a week later, I again refused to go. I was very unwell, and had asked Linda if she would buy me some fruit on her way home from work.

That night, she came back late after the program, and handed me some grapes. I ate one, and to my amazement received what felt like a very pleasant electric shock! The grape tasted so cool, sweet and delicious. It seemed to sparkle with life! I began to feel better. When I asked Linda where she had bought the grapes, she said that she had bought them in the market. When she went to the program, the Indian lady had given her a lemon, which she had placed in the same bag as the grapes.

Linda said that she knew that she had to take me to see Shri Mataji. Needless to say, the following week, I agreed to attend the program.

We arrived in good time for the program. Shri Mataji was already seated on the stage, waiting patiently for people to arrive, and looking intently at the audience. I remember feeling awed at seeing her, and found her presence immensely powerful. There was a group of Sahaja yogis seated around her -- perhaps six or seven.

Shri Mataji gave a talk, which I was unable to understand very well, partly due to a very poor sound system, but no doubt also due to the state of my subtle system at the time. Shri Mataji then gave the experience of Self realization. At that moment I knew that this was the end of my years of searching. I was aware of a happening in my system, and a quieting of the mind.

Shri Mataji then came down from the stage and worked on each person in the audience individually. When my turn came, Shri Mataji looked into me deeply and compassionately. It felt as if her eyes were seeing right inside me, but without judgment. She asked me where my parents were. I told her that my father had died five

years before. She told me to put my left hand on my right heart center. I also told her that my mother had hardly spoken to me for some years. (A few days later, when I saw Shri Mataji again, she told me to write to my mother. I had done this a few months before, without receiving a reply. On Shri Mataji's instruction, I wrote again. To my amazement, my mother replied immediately, inviting me to visit her! From that moment our shattered relationship quickly began to heal.)

Shri Mataji put her hand on my back, and then on my head. This time I felt an immensely powerful rushing sensation up my spine, and then -- silence, total silence, total peace. All thoughts, all suffering subsided. Just being. This was the greatest moment I had ever experienced in my life. After that first meeting with Shri Mataji, on leaving the hall, I cried tears of utter relief and gratitude. I was unable to speak at all, until the next day, feeling such deep peace and silence. Next morning I went to work, having been completely cleared of the fever and sickness that I had been suffering from for some days. I felt totally different – thoughtlessly quiet, relaxed. It was as if the weight of the world had been lifted from my shoulders. The atmosphere at work had completely changed. It was far more harmonious and everyone was unusually friendly, happy and kind.

This was just the beginning – of a new awareness, a new dimension of being, of sweet miracles, of a new life.

Patricia, UK

My name is Marilyn and I live in Perth, Australia. I would not call myself a seeker – in fact I was quite happy with my life as it was at the time. My husband Hugh and I were living in USA and he had been traveling to India for his job. On one particular occasion he met a fellow who always seemed calm and at peace and they exchanged books. The one Hugh received was on Sahaja Yoga. Hugh was interested as he had always been looking for something and when he

returned to the USA he found a small group within the World Bank where he worked and started attending lunchtime meetings. He asked me to go as well but I was not looking for anything!

His experience was not that great and with my snide remarks at home about him being crazy (watching him doing weird movements above his head etc.) he soon stopped going.

When several months later Hugh got quite sick and had to undergo surgery he said he was going to go back to the yoga. Would I go with him? When I said I wasn't interested, he said he couldn't go either if I did not at least understand what he was doing. The guilt then hit me that if he was to get sick again and he hadn't gone back to meditation it would be my fault! So really under protest I offered to go along to the group and once he got settled I would leave. There was also no way that I would give up enjoying a drink of champagne if I wanted it either.

I recall really vividly how I went into a room at the National Institute of Health in Washington DC on a Friday evening. It was not a big group; in fact about only five people were there but they were very friendly and receiving. I, on the other hand, was standoffish and said that I was only there for my husband and if they felt negativity it would be me.

With this they all laughed and said they loved skeptics and without much further ado proceeded to put me through the Self realization experience. I didn't know what to expect but I tell you the colors and firecracker type golden rain that showered from the top of my head was amazing and, would you believe, it still didn't convince me. I felt the cool breeze and I told them of my experience yet still I went home that evening thinking whatever it was really wasn't important. I continued to go to meetings each Friday evening (and in the meantime meditated for about ten minutes night and morning each day, timing myself so that it was just ten minutes and no more.)

Each time I went to the Friday night meeting I experienced a similar

type of effect coming from my head, always strands like seaweed, spaghetti etc. It is hard to describe, but each time it seemed more important and when three months were up and my husband said I didn't have to go any more he would be okay in the group, I announced that I would go if I wanted to! Meditations became easier, time began to not matter and half hours would drift by without my noticing. Surprisingly, after a few weeks I felt I could no longer stomach champagne or any other alcoholic drink and without even wanting to give it up I did.

The things that I see now and wonder why I didn't see them before, the feelings of love for others, the wanting to give up material things that once meant so much, the joy of being able to give Self realization to others, the running of programs both in the city and country areas with my husband (with me doing very little except helping set up etc. until just now while Hugh has been away and I have had to continue to run the programs, doing some myself and arranging for others to help.)

I feel I am extremely fortunate to have a husband like Hugh who brought me to realize that life could be very different, and although I have to admit it is not always an easy journey, at least it proves interesting and it is never boring being able to just watch and witness the world around us. I was not a seeker, but another Sahaja Yogi told me that I am very fortunate as I am a *finder*, and to me that makes a lot of sense.

I received my realization in 1995 and we returned home to Perth in September 1996 and of course it has really been since being back here that I have grown so much, the collective being so much bigger and with the help of so many great people.

I was really amazed some three years after getting my realization to see the video called "The Vision" where Shri Mataji tells of her experience opening the Sahasrara – the fire cracker and colors she experienced was just as I had seen in my first experience.

Marilyn, Australia

When I was in college at UCLA I was seeking the truth very strongly. I was seeking in a lot of ways: I was a vegetarian, very concerned about environmental and social issues, and I was teaching a course in New Age Psychology. I was working in Parapsychology just trying to understand more about the subtle parts of life.

One day I saw a young man with a backpack and something drew me to him and we realized that we shared the same desire of seeking for a higher knowledge. We became friends, he came to stay at my parents' house where I was living at the time and then he left to go back home – he was from Europe.

Over the years we kept in touch by exchanging letters about our paths of seeking. He went to India and would send me postcards about the different gurus and ashrams he was visiting and I knew he had some very difficult times with his health and he actually had to leave India and go back home to get medical attention, but the doctors said they could not help him, they said his illness was incurable. So then I received postcards from India again and he told me he had met a yogi who had told him about this woman and after meeting her, his health was improving.

Several years later I was in Great Britain traveling and living and working and I rang him up and he said he was coming to London to attend a public program given by the same woman that he had written to me about and invited me along. So on my way to the program, which was in Caxton Hall, I suddenly realized that *I am going to meet a very special lady and I should get some flowers for her*. So even though I had never met her, I brought flowers.

And at the program I felt nothing. I was so damaged from all my seeking, there I was sitting in the lotus position with my back very erect and I felt nothing. After Shri Mataji spoke (I remembered nothing of what she said), the yogis came behind me and they were

giving me vibrations. And then the program was over but I didn't want to leave, these people seemed so nice and they eventually invited me to go with them for dinner and then they invited me to go back to the ashram.

For the next month or two I continued to go for the meeting and do the meditation but I felt nothing. I didn't understand anything about this yoga but I really liked the people and I felt good when I was around them. In all my free time I would go to the ashram and they would answer all my questions. I felt like these were the kind of people I wanted to meet all my life, but I had never been able to find them in my own county.

Then one time I was very sick with a very high fever and one of the yogis worked on me and said, "You must start foot soaking." So I did. The yogis had taught me that night how to give a bandhan and I decided to try it and I noticed that wherever I gave a bandhan I felt this energy physically moving and twirling. That was the first time I realized that there was more to Sahaja Yoga than just these really wonderful human beings – that this Yoga and this meditation were something for real.

At another time I was in a room next to Shri Mataji and I sat down to meditate. As I was sitting there I felt my Kundalini all of a sudden rise in a very powerful way and I knew that Shri Mataji was doing that. So that was the next part of it – to actually feel my Kundalini rise and to feel such a tremendous state of peace and joy and well-being. This experience convinced me that this divine power exists within us and is always looking after us and we can experience it within our own beings.

Tracy, USA

Two years before getting my Self realization, I had an experience related to Sahaja Yoga that helped me be more open to it when I finally experienced it. I'm a musician and in the mid 1970's I was

living in Bristol, England sharing a flat with a friend, Chris, who was a writer and philosophy and literature major as well as a great lover of music.

Though Chris did not play an instrument he introduced me to a lot of music and musicians. Some of the musicians I met at that time formed with me an acoustic group that played primarily improvised music though we did compose some of it too. The music we produced drew on an eclectic range of influences we all shared including everything from The Grateful Dead to Indian Classical music to jazz by Miles Davis and John Coltrane to western classical music by composers like Ravel and Copland – we loved it all. Chris encouraged us and was a fan of what we did.

Though the group was a sideline for the four of us (we were all in other bands at the time) it gradually became more important to us as we performed more and felt more and more creatively fulfilled by our work together. We felt there was often a magic in which the whole was greater than the sum of the parts when we would improvise together (violin, guitar, percussion and myself on twelve string guitar).

One day we were preparing for a concert and did not yet have a name for the group that satisfied us. A friend who had been listening to us rehearse suggested a word that he had just run across in a text on Eastern philosophy he had been reading. The word was “Sahaja.” None of us had ever heard it before but he told us that, according to the book he was reading, it meant “spontaneous.” Since we depended on spontaneous inspiration to improvise together at our concerts we thought it would be a good name and we adopted it. We went on to play together under that name for about a year and I named one of the compositions I wrote for the group “Sahaja” as well.

The group eventually disbanded as life took us in different directions but it remained a musical high point for us all. About a year after disbanding, Chris announced that he was going to attend a

meeting in London that mentioned Self realization. He showed me an ad in a London paper that said something like “Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi will grant spontaneous Self realization En-Masse” on such and such a date at Caxton Hall in London. The word Sahaja did not appear in the ad. At first I was amazed that Chris would even consider such a thing because he was at the time a fairly radical Marxist and an intellectual who, though sensitive to the world of art and creativity, was also very cynical in many ways. He was also, as far as I remember, quite agnostic. As he showed me the ad my first reaction was deep skepticism because my spiritual education background was centered around reading a few books on Zen in which Self realization was depicted as extremely difficult and rare, attained only by the purist spiritual souls at a rate of perhaps one per generation.

The idea that a person, any person, could grant such an experience or act as a catalyst to trigger this profound transformation in one person, let alone in many people at once who just walked in off the street at some hall in London seemed preposterous to me. I was preparing to dismiss the idea with a cynical comment when I saw the picture in the ad. The beauty and peace that emanated from the little black and white photo of Shri Mataji in the ad made me stop. I remember feeling kind of stunned by the sight of it. I found I simply no longer wanted to say anything negative. I felt surprised by a kind of awe that felt deep and unexpected. When I collected myself I said something tactful and non-committal. Chris continued with his plan.

As it worked out, there was a jazz concert in London I wanted to see on the same night as the meeting so Chris and I decided to travel to London together with the intention that I would go to the jazz concert and he would attend the Self realization meeting. The impact the photo had had on me wore off after a day or so and I remember thinking that Chris must be kind of crazy to want to go to this meeting that made such ridiculous claims.

When the day came, Chris did go to the meeting and then met me and some friends at the jazz club later that night. I expected his

account of things to be a humorous story about a charlatan who conducted a charade of spiritual sleight of hand (Chris had, and still has, a wicked sense of humor). Instead he seemed very calm and at ease. He said, "Though I didn't feel everything that was mentioned, I know there is something about that lady." Then he said "and guess what – the practice is called Sahaja Yoga!" This had an impact on me because of the coincidence of it. Sahaja is an unusual word and I'd never heard it before or since we'd used it as the name of the band. Again, I felt the impulse to be cynical sort of melt away.

A few months went by. Chris was meditating every day in his room. That alone was amazing to me because he was a very edgy sort of person who had trouble being still and was always thinking about things. He went to some other meetings and seemed more and more positive about the practice. I couldn't help noticing that he seemed calmer and more at peace with things in general that he had during any of the three years I had known him. He also seemed like he was actually becoming genuinely happier. He was still himself, alert, intelligent, discerning, interested in the world and the big questions or life, but he wasn't as tortured as he had been. Despite this I still hung onto my skepticism. Chris did invite me to go to a meeting a few times out of his own enthusiasm.

Finally, after about five months, my curiosity got the better of me and I decided I'd go to a meeting still fairly convinced that it couldn't possibly be anything more than some gentle stress reduction technique. Before going to the meeting I read something written by Shri Mataji called *A Unique Discovery*. It was actually a transcription of a talk given by her on an earlier date. I remember being skeptical about it because it had what struck me as an almost scientific description of the Self realization process which seemed to go against my concept of it that I'd formed from reading Zen in which everything is referred to as formless and not able to be contained by language. *A Unique Discovery* contained a lot of specific references to a subtle system in all human beings through which an energy known as Kundalini, once awakened, would flow and heal and balance various centers known as chakras. This was all

new to me and, though it was explained very articulately and intelligently, I was actually skeptical of how specific it was.

When I got to the meeting I was in a fairly skeptical frame of mind. I sat down. Shri Mataji was on the stage sitting in a chair facing the audience of about 150 people with a very benign air. A very articulate and obviously intelligent person gave an introductory talk of which I remember nothing except that he referred occasionally to Shri Mataji with much respect and reverence. Throughout his talk I studied Shri Mataji. I knew that one sign of a truly enlightened being would be that they would be beyond the ego. They would not be able to be flattered or insulted either. They would emanate completeness, a peace, a joy that was not dependent on what others thought or said about them; and it would not depend on their surroundings. I was looking for any sign of vanity, self-importance, false modesty or ego in her expression, her manner. I was sure it had to be there. *After all*, I was thinking, *all these people are here to basically hang onto her every word*. At the same time, the speaker was referring to her as a very pure and powerful, yet gracious and compassionate individual – how could any human being sit and be praised and not give an indication of being flattered in some way? I was actually trying to find fault with her because, though I was intrigued by the idea of Self realization, I think I didn't actually believe that I would ever meet someone who had achieved it.

The more I stared at Shri Mataji, looking for her feet of clay as it were, the more silent and peaceful I felt and the more amazed I became. I really saw no sign of ego or vanity – it just wasn't there! I just saw someone who appeared to be in a deep state of joy, both peaceful and yet extremely alert and discerning. I felt like I could tell the joy in her was not an emotion; it was a state of being. She seemed to emit her joy and it was contagious. It was tinged with a deep amusement that seemed as though it might cause her at any moment to burst forth in laughter (and she did indeed laugh a lot here and there throughout the proceedings).

As the yogi finished his talk he suggested we take off our shoes to

help connect with the earth element, and place our hands palm upwards on our laps, to facilitate feeling the “cool vibrations” that indicate that our Kundalini had risen and we had touched the beginning of Self realization. I was already feeling great but my mind objected to these requests. I remember thinking, “this is pretty interesting but why do they have to ruin it now by talking about this silly cool breeze stuff which couldn’t possibly exist and wasting time with this superstitious ritual of removing one’s shoes to be better connected with the earth element?” In spite of these thoughts I did comply with the request so as not to be impolite and out of respect for Chris who had invited me and was sitting right next to me.

I experienced this strange dualism in which I was actually thinking skeptical thoughts but, at the same time, feeling an unmistakably powerful cool breeze on my hands and throughout my entire body. I was feeling this while literally thinking things like *Wow, I do feel this strong cool breeze but I can't be, that's ridiculous – I must be imagining it, I must be feeling this because it's been suggested that I might feel it or something.* If it had stopped at that, I probably would have been able to explain it away to myself. But gradually this feeling of overwhelming joy and bliss just flooded through me and the thoughts gently became removed from the center of myself, as if I were gradually rising in a balloon towards the sky as I left below the fading, humorless voice of some tiresome, boring person.

From that moment on I don't remember much of what Shri Mataji said but occasionally I felt as though she was looking right at me. I was just feeling the most incredible flowing, soothing energy, coursing through my being. Occasionally a thought of some sort or other would drift by but it would feel so tiny and inconsequential, like a little ant walking by as you witness a beautiful sunrise. I was completely thoughtless yet aware of my surroundings. At the end of Shri Mataji's talk she said the Sahaja yogis should go work on everyone.

In those days Shri Mataji would go around and personally attend to

every single person at the meeting. As she started to attend to people at the front of the hall, two young men came up to me and said they were going to use their attention and with hand motions “work on me” a process to help clear the subtle system and establish the state of realization. I still had my eyes open at this point. After a while Shri Mataji was closer to me and looked at me. As she did I felt such tremendous joy and love from her. She smiled and said to the Sahaja yogis working on me, “He's ok, he can close his eyes.” Afterwards when the meeting was over, we went out for a meal with some of the yogis. I felt free. The food tasted so amazingly good. I found to my surprise I didn't want to smoke a cigarette afterwards though I had been smoking a pack a day at that point. The lights of the city seemed to glisten with joy. I'll never forget that night.

Steven, USA

Chapter 15. Epilogue

This is the beginning of Sahaja Meditation. Most of us who have benefited tremendously from its practice on a daily basis started in similar ways – by feeling something, often a gentle cool breeze above our head, and wanting to find out from where it had come. Some of us felt relaxed, some of us felt peace, some felt joy, but we all wanted to explore it and find out more about it. Little did we know that we were embarking on the inner journey of our lives: finding our true nature, the ultimate source within us – the pure Spirit.

So why Sahaja Meditation? Undoubtedly, there is a dizzying array of methods of meditation, yoga, relaxation and so on out there. And while many of them might make us more relaxed or improve our health – sometimes only temporarily – the question remains: can they engender a long-term transformation of our awareness? Can they cure a physical ailment or emotional imbalance by going to the root cause of the problem instead of treating the leaves? And in the long run, can they improve our lives and make us a better, happier, and more fulfilled human being?

Sahaja is a living process of the growth of our awareness. And like all living processes, it doesn't happen overnight. We cannot become perfect after a five minute meditation – we still have the baggage accumulated over years to get rid of. But Sahaja Meditation gives us a little light, through our Self realization, which can guide us to grow much faster than if we were to find our way in the dark.

The changes are subtle in the beginning, but with regular, daily practice of meditation, absorbing this divine energy in our thoughtless awareness, the positive impact on our life can become over time truly remarkable. After one year of practicing it, I felt that I was a different person. After two years, I could not recognize myself – so many things had cleared out and improved dramatically in my life, and my knowledge about myself and the subtle reality

had increased so much more compared to what I had known before Self realization.

Hundreds of thousands around the world can attest to similar stories. For some it takes a shorter time, for others the journey is longer, depending on how much self-doubt, ego and conditionings we have stored within ourselves. But any Sahaja Yogi you ask will tell you that they would have never achieved, even in a lifetime, the same spiritual evolution and personal transformation they were able to achieve in a few years, or even a few months, through the Self realization process that Sahaja Meditation helps achieve from day one.

To grow further and reach our depth, we must not only meditate but also introspect. It doesn't make sense to try to cleanse ourselves spiritually if we keep repeating the same detrimental actions. As we meditate every day and our brain becomes gradually more and more enlightened, things will surface from within us and we will realize that we have this issue and that issue, which we were not aware of before. We must then introspect and find out why we do this, why do we behave like that, and we must strive to remove any defects, any black spots on our being that the Kundalini will reveal on our fingers, on our chakras and in our consciousness. The Kundalini itself and our state of thoughtless awareness will help us in this process of introspection and purification. This is what true spiritual growth is about. No mantras or techniques in the world can replace that.

Sahaja Meditation opens a door to a new dimension of our awareness. We are free to open this door and explore or to close it and ignore what lies before us. It also puts a mirror in our hand, in which we can see ourselves clearly, at the deepest level. With full sincerity and courage, when issues we may have inside come into our attention, we can then use the tools that Sahaja provides to remove problems in our subtle systems and to enlighten ourselves fully.

True detachment is the essence of Sahaja Yoga. It's not about the ascetic giving up bodily comforts and living in the forest; it's about the family householder living a normal life, in the midst of the so-called comforts, while being detached about them and thus being the true ascetic – *inside* – who enjoys life with purity, without artificially giving up anything, without being bound or enslaved by anything. That is the true freedom.

Once you are established in your Self realization through regular meditation you will find that you go beyond time. You will start finding yourself in situations where you are late for a meeting or for catching a plane, only to realize that it was delayed and it is just waiting for you. Or you might not be able to make it to an event, only to find out later that it had been cancelled. After a while you stop worrying about time and realize that, through this newly found connection to the collective unconscious, you are always at the right place at the right time.

Another thing that happens over time, and in some cases even overnight, is that you automatically become moral and virtuous. Without even trying, you just don't do wrong things. It happens spontaneously as our Kundalini rises and starts to burn with its silent fire all the negativity in our chakras that causes us to stray from the path of *dharma* – our inner laws. Also, we cease to see following *dharma* as a restriction, as a bondage imposed on us. We enjoy purity in ourselves as well as in others. This is the true meaning of detachment – detachment from all that is bad in our lives, by spontaneously following our good nature (the Spirit) which now manifests clearly in our attention.

Sahaja is the pure enjoyment of the Spirit, and the complete freedom of the Spirit. Shri Mataji explained the meaning of freedom in a message to the American people given during an interview in California in 1983, “When we say ‘what’s wrong?’ we go headlong into our destruction. Human beings should not take freedom as abandonment, but freedom to enjoy, completely and fully. Freedom that takes you to your destruction is not freedom. The right idea of

freedom must be taken and people should know that ultimate freedom is when you become your own master. When there are no habits, when you cannot be dominated by anything, you are above everything – that is the freedom you have to achieve. And that is why people talked long time back in this country about freedom, they helped all other countries to get their freedom, and now it is their job to get their own freedom within themselves, so that others will also follow.”

Shri Mataji also explains that the true enjoyment is not the enjoyment of our ego, but is experienced in the state of thoughtless awareness. “Enjoyment is only possible when you are beyond your mind. With your mind you can never enjoy. It’s like a big load. It will not act, it will not help. Enjoyment comes when you are in complete silence - in a ripple-less lake. The reflection of all the joy that is created on the shores of that lake are (sic) completely reflected, they are not deflected. If there were ripples it would have been a different image altogether and would have been something nowhere near the image of reality.” (Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, Italy, October 1, 1995).

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I must add an important observation, namely that Sahaja Meditation is both experiential and collective by nature. It is experiential because no amount of reading can substitute the actual experience meditation which is the only aspect that can make us grow spiritually. And it is collective is because our Spirit is the collective being within us, and our Kundalini feels happy and grows stronger when we share this experience with others. I cannot overemphasize the importance of attending Sahaja Meditation public programs and collective meditations that are held free of charge around the world.

Nothing can replace the direct interaction, knowledge sharing and exchange of subtle energy that happens when you meet other Sahaja yogis. During all my years of Sahaja Yoga practice, I have attended

many international seminars and got to meet Sahaja yogis from many countries around the world. Every time, I felt like they are all my brothers and sisters, all bathing in the same light of the Spirit that shines in the hearts of every human being and that has been awakened through the realization of the Self.

Sahaja cannot be learned from books because it is a living knowledge – it has to be experienced directly, in a collective way. This book can take you, dear reader, only so far, as it marks just the beginning of a unique journey inside, and is only a glance at the tip of the iceberg. The deepest questions can only be answered through direct experience and meditation.

The transformation of our inner selves and of our society is within our reach, through the awakening of our consciousness to a new level. This is the message of Sahaja Meditation.

I thank you for reading this book and wish you all the very best on your spiritual journey. I hope you will come to discover and enjoy the innumerable benefits that Sahaja Meditation has to offer, based on the process of Self realization, now made available to humankind by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi.

Appendix A. The Experience of Self Realization

Like the sprouting of a seed and like all living processes, Self realization – the awakening of the Kundalini energy – is a natural, spontaneous happening. The experience is very gentle, soothing and relaxing, as the Kundalini is a motherly energy, knowing exactly where the problems are within us and how to solve them.

There are only three conditions to receive our Self realization. First is our genuine desire to have it. Secondly, we must forgive everyone in general. Logically, whether we forgive or don't forgive, we don't do anything. However, if we don't forgive, we are only torturing ourselves. If we forgive and leave everything to the Divine, the all-pervading power will look after everything and solve all that needs to be solved. By forgiving we will feel so much lighter, the heat and pressure will go out of our head. The third condition is to forgive ourselves and not feel guilty about anything. In short, we should forget the past which is gone and finished and be in the present moment.

Sit either on the ground, cross-legged, or on a chair, comfortably but with your back straight, and without shoes, which tend to restrict the flow of energy out of the feet. Place both your hands on your lap with the palms facing upwards. Take a few deep breaths, relax and allow your mind and thoughts to slow down. Don't think about the past or future – just be in the present moment.

Continuing to keep your left hand on your left knee with the palm upwards, put your right hand on your heart and affirm in your heart a few times, with full confidence, the greatest truth about yourself: "I am the pure Spirit."

Now put your right hand at the corner of your neck and shoulder, on the left side of your neck, and turn your head to the right. This is the location of the left Vishuddhi and it gets blocked particularly if we are feeling guilty for whatever reason. At this point, we need to

forgive ourselves and completely forget the past. With your hand on that spot, say in your heart a few times: “I am not guilty.” Don’t try to analyze it, just say it with full confidence.

Now put your right palm across your forehead and bend your head forward, resting it in your palm. This center of Agnya gets blocked particularly if we hold grudges against anyone. So here say in your heart several times, “I forgive everyone.”

Finally, place your right palm on the top of your head (fontanel bone area which was soft in your childhood), stretch your fingers by extending them fully, and press down firmly on the scalp with the center of your palm massage the scalp by rotating your palm clockwise, seven times, each time saying in your heart “May I please have the experience of Self realization.” Expressing your sincere desire will be sufficient for the Kundalini energy to rise to the seventh center of the Sahasrara, on top of the head.

Then bring your right hand on your lap, palm upwards, remain silent for a few moments and just enjoy this state of meditation, keeping your attention on the top of your head.



Are you able to be without any thought? Even if only for a short time – what you are experiencing now is the state of meditation.

Now, keeping the right hand on your lap, place your left hand a few inches above your head and see if you can feel a very gentle, cool breeze coming into your palm from the fontanel bone area. You can turn off the air conditioning and make sure that all windows are closed so that there is no movement of air. Don't keep the hand too close to your head since otherwise you will be feeling the temperature of your head. Many people feel it about six inches or more away from the head. This gentle breeze may be initially warm or even hot, in case there is a lot of heat that needs to come out as the Kundalini already starts to cleanse our chakras in its ascent. This is no cause of concern, as the warm breeze will normally cool down within a few minutes.

Then, put the left hand on your lap with the palm upwards and try to feel the breeze above your head with the right hand. Find the spot where you can feel it best and keep the hand in that position until you are sure you felt it. It is not a strong wind, but rather a slightly perceptible feeling, gentle like any other living process. Finally, put again the right hand down and try to feel above the head with your left hand.

If the breeze we feel above the head is hot, it may be due to any anger we may have bottled inside or to having grudges against anyone who troubled us in the past. The best is to forgive everyone and everything that ever troubled us and putting all past behind us.

If you are not sure if you felt it, the best way to convince yourself of the authenticity of this breeze is to try to feel it above the head of another person who has followed the same experience. You can also ask them to feel it above your head, then again feel your own. Feeling it above someone else's head shows you how and where to objectively look for the same sensation above your own fontanel bone area.

Now hold your hands out, palms upwards, and see what you feel in your palms and fingers. You may be able to feel the cool breeze in the center of the palms, and it may be cooler in one hand than in the

other. The Kundalini is already giving you information about the current state of your subtle system. For example, heat, tingling, pressure or slight pain in your left palm indicate some blockages in your left side, while coolness in the left palm is a sign that the left side is clear. The same type of sensations in your right palm show the state of your right side.

If your hands are sensitive to the subtle vibrations of the Kundalini, you might also feel the above-mentioned sensations in your fingers. While the palms correspond to the two side channels, the fingers and various specific areas in the palm correspond to the seven chakras or centers of energy. If you can feel them and know how to decode them, you will know what chakras are blocked. The correspondence between chakras and fingers is shown in Figure 3.2.

For example, if you feel tingling, pain, pressure or heat in the index finger of your left hand, this indicates a problem in the left side of the fifth chakra (Vishuddhi) which is located at the base of the throat. If you feel it in the right index finger, the blockage is on the right side of the Vishuddhi. If you feel such a sensation in both index fingers, then the blockage is in the center of that corresponding chakra. The same principle applies for all the seven chakras. All blockages of the various chakras as well as the left and right sides can be cured through Sahaja Meditation techniques.

Don't be concerned if you don't feel anything at this point, since depending on the state of our subtle system our hands may not be sensitive at first. However, the sensitivity improves with time. In my case, when I received my Self realization, I only felt a very slight cool breeze in one hand and I wasn't sure if I had felt anything, but it soon became stronger once I started to do it regularly. My wife took about six months to feel the cool breeze, and my father felt it after several years of practice, though he could feel it in the soles of the feet and inside the body from the very beginning.

Everyone I talked to had a different experience, some of which were truly remarkable. However, one thing many people felt during the

meditation was a sense of peace and elevated consciousness that prompted us to go further and find out more. What we came to realize through this investigation and through continuous practice was something that altered the course of our lives. Though we were seeking it in different forms and often did not know what we were seeking, we had found “it” and much more. This world within has now become available for all of us to find, explore and fully enjoy in our lives, through the enlightened state of awareness given by meditation.

To deepen this initial connection, more and more strands of the Kundalini, which can be thought of as a rope made of energy, have to pass through all the chakras and reach the seventh chakra, Sahasrara, located on the top of the head. If any of the chakras has a serious blockage, the Kundalini will stop there and start working to clear it before continuing its ascent.

Appendix B. On Meditation

Beyond all techniques that can help us clear our subtle system, being in the state of meditation is the cornerstone of Sahaja practice.

In Shri Mataji's words¹: "So the thought that starts moving in our mind all the time, which creates tensions, is not the thought of the Spirit. So what you should say [is] 'Not this thought. Not this thought, not this thought, not this thought, not this thought,' and see how you relax.

Now you are relaxed. 'Not this thought, not this thought'... Just go on refusing accepting any thought. So you go into Nirvichara [thoughtless awareness]. In that state you feel the Spirit. [...]

When you forgive a person, what do you do? You accept the situation, to begin with, and secondly you forgive what you think has been done wrong to you. But because nothing can be done wrong to your Spirit, you just forgive, because you are the Spirit. And when you forgive, you have found that your tension goes away. So even to your thoughts if you say, 'All right, forgive this thought, forgive this thought,' – because the thought is also not to be punished. 'Forgive this thought, forgive this thought, forgive everything.' Not forget -- forgive. Because then you will even forget that you are the Spirit."

Excerpt from the talk "The Journey Within" given by Shri Mataji in England in 1988: "Try to meditate. Meditate more, so that you reach that inner being. And this inner being is the vast ocean of bliss which exists in every one of us, the vast flood of light that floods everybody's inner beauty. So to approach it, you have to go within yourself by denying things which are against it, against your movement. [...]"

Before that it's an absolutely individual journey within. It's an

¹ Excerpts from a talk given by Shri Mataji in 1984 in Hampstead, UK.

absolutely individual journey. You should be able to see this: that in this journey nobody is your relation, nobody is your friend. You are absolutely alone, absolutely alone. You have to move alone within yourself. Don't hate anyone, don't be irresponsible, but in a meditative mood you are alone. No one exists there, you alone, and once you enter into that ocean then the whole world becomes your family, the whole world is your own manifestation. All the children become your children and you treat all people with equal understanding.

The whole expansion takes place when you enter inside your Spirit and start seeing through the eyes of the Spirit. There's such calm, such peace, such bliss within you.

You have to be ready for that journey. In that journey you are alone in your meditative state, and the more you find something in your meditation, the more you want to go and distribute it to others. That has to be. If that does not come into you then it has not worked out, there is no purity, there is some sort of a bias.

In that individual pursuit, whatever you find, you want to enjoy it with others, you want to give it to others. This is the sign of the person who has been really meditative.

The one who has been meditative and has not been able to distribute what he has found is cheating himself and cheating others as well. Because that joy that you receive in your meditation has to be distributed, has to be given, has to be shown. It should flow in your being as the light radiates from every illumined lamp. You don't have to take a vow to say that 'this is an enlightened light'; in the same way a saint should not have to be certified that he is a saint.

The depth you achieve within yourself spreads all over. It is such an action and reaction. The deeper you become, the radiation is much more. A simple, very ordinary person, uneducated person, can be like that. We have you know, one gentleman called Varick in Bombay. He's an old man, and is so deep. He radiates love. He's so

meditative.

You don't have to spend too much time on meditation. But whatever time you spend, whatever you gain, has to be visible outside – how you radiate and how you give it to others.”

What is effortless meditation?

Shri Mataji explains in a speech delivered in London on January 1, 1980: “In the same way vibrations are coming, they are radiated. What you have to do is to expose yourself to it. The best way is not to put in any effort.

Don't worry at what point you have a problem. Say, many people during meditation, I have seen, if they catch somewhere they go on looking after it. You just don't have to worry. You just let it go and it will work by itself. So you don't have to put in any effort. This is what meditation is. [...]

In meditation you have to be absolutely effortless, expose yourself fully and you have to be absolutely thoughtless at that time.

Supposing, possibly, you might not be thoughtless. At that time you have to just watch your thoughts, but do not get involved into them. You will find gradually as the sun rises, darkness goes away and the sun's rays go into every part and makes the whole place enlightened.

In the same way your being will be completely enlightened but if you put in an effort at that time or try to stop something within you [...] it will not.

Effortlessness is the only way into meditation, but you should not be lethargic about it – should be alert and watch it. The other side could be that people just doze off. No, you have to be alert. If you doze off nothing will work out. That's another side of it. If you are lazy about it nothing will work out. You have to be alert and open, absolutely aware, completely effortless, absolutely effortless. If you are

absolutely effortless meditation will work the best.

Don't think about your problems at all, whatever chakras you have, anything, just expose yourself to the vibrations. See when the sun shines all the nature exposes itself to the sun and receives the blessings of the sun effortlessly. It does not put in any effort, it just receives the sun - the sun's rays start acting. In the same way the all-pervading power starts working. You are not to maneuver it, you are not to do anything about it. Just be effortless, absolutely effortless.

Do not take any names (mantras). Do not bother if your Agnya is catching, this is catching, that is catching. It is working out.

It will go on working as long as it can and it will do the miracle that it has to do. You don't have to worry about it, it knows its job. But when you put an effort you actually create a barrier for it. So no effort is needed, be absolutely effortless and say 'let it go, let it go.' That's all.

So one has to be absolutely effortless, absolutely effortless. That is what it is.

Meditation is for your own ascent, is for your own capital gains that you have to have. But once you get to it, you also achieve your powers. Like if you become the governor, you get the powers of the governor. At this time you don't have to think about anybody else. You are not to put your attention towards anybody else but just receive, just receive it. Do not think about any other problem, but that you have to be absolutely effortless. It would work the best on the people who are just receiving it.

You have problems, that's why you are here, but you cannot solve them, they are to be solved by the divine power. This must be understood fully, that we cannot solve our problems. It is beyond us to solve our problems. So leave it in the hands of divine power and expose yourself effortlessly, absolutely effortlessly."

Appendix C. Correspondences

There are many correspondences associated with each chakra, including colors, planets, gemstones, days of the week, and many others. We are listing some of them below.

Chakra	Color	Element	No. Petals	Place	Planet	Region	Gem stone	Week day
Mooladhara	Red	Earth	4	Heel of palm	Mars	Australia	Coral	Tue
Swadhishtan	Yellow	Fire	6	Thumb	Mercury	Africa	Topaz	Wed
Nabhi	Green	Water	10	Middle finger	Jupiter	Europe	Emerald	Thu
Heart	Purple	Air	12	Little finger	Venus	England, Japan	Ruby	Fri
Vishuddhi	Blue	Ether	16	Index finger	Saturn	The Americas	Sapphire	Sat
Aghnya	Grey	Light	2	Ring finger	Sun	Russia, China, Israel	Diamond	Sun
Sahasrara	White	Vibrations	1000	Center of palm	Moon	The Himalayas	Pearl	Mon

The world of spirituality is full of correspondences which span religions, cultures, ages and continents. Other correspondences include for example the seven musical notes (Do corresponds to the Mooladhara, Re to Swadhishtan, and so on).

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Glossary of Terms

Agnya = The sixth chakra, located in the center of the head where the nerves of the optical chiasm meet. It is also the place where the left and right channels of energy cross. Its main quality is forgiveness.

Chaitanya = Sanskrit word translated (for lack of a better English word) as “vibrations” (see “vibrations” below).

Chakra = Literally meaning “wheel,” it is a spiritual center of energy in our subtle body. There are seven main chakras placed along the spine, each of which has certain qualities and governs certain physical/mental/emotional/spiritual aspects of our being.

Dharma = The path of righteousness, the innate law that keeps us and the world in balance and sustains our evolution.

Hamsa = A sub-chakra of the Vishuddhi chakra located between the eyebrows. Its main quality is the power to discriminate between good and bad, between truth and falsehood.

Heart chakra = The fourth chakra, called Anahatha in Sanskrit, located at the level of the physical heart. In the left heart resides the Spirit.

Guru = Spiritual teacher or guide. An enlightened person who can take one to a higher state of spiritual evolution. Unfortunately, there are many false, self-proclaimed gurus nowadays who masquerade as spiritual masters but are just out to make money and cut the chances of spiritual ascent of the seekers of truth who fall into their trap. At a minimum, a real guru has to be a realized soul (i.e. have his or her Self realization).

Kundalini = Residual spiritual energy coiled in three and a half coils in our sacrum bone. Its awakening is called Self realization and has

been the goal of all major religions and spiritual traditions of the world.

Meditation = The state of thoughtless awareness (being fully aware, but without any thought), when we are connected with the divine power.

Mooladhara = The first chakra, situated below the base of the spine. Its main qualities are innocence, purity, wisdom and joy.

Nabhi = The third chakra, located at the level of the navel. Its main qualities are righteousness, morality, contentment, balance and sustenance of our evolution.

Nadi = Channel of energy. There are three main nadis (left, right and center) running along the spine. They correspond to the left and right sympathetic nervous system and to the parasympathetic nervous system (the central channel).

Nirvichara = Thoughtless awareness. The state achieved after Self realization, through Sahaja Yoga meditation, where one is fully alert but without any thought of the past or future, being in the present moment where there is nothing but silence. This is the first stage of meditation which needs to be established with regular practice.

Realized Soul = Person who has their Self realization (i.e. whose Kundalini is awakened).

Sahaja = Spontaneous or inborn. In the Sanskrit language, “Saha” means “with” and “Ja” means “born.” Sahaja Yoga is a method of meditation founded by Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi by which the Yoga (union with the Divine) is achieved spontaneously and en-masse.

Sahasrara = Seventh chakra – the thousand-petalled lotus – situated in the limbic area at the top of the head (fontanel bone area which was soft in our childhood). Its main quality is that of integrating the qualities of all the other chakras.

Self (or Spirit) = What we truly are, our real nature. The Spirit is the reflection of the Divine in our heart. Unlike our ego and superego (which are unreal but with which we are mostly identified before Self realization), it is eternal, pure, and of a divine nature. It is a witness of everything we are doing, but itself is in a perpetual state of peace and bliss. We are not the body, mind, emotions or intellect, but we are in reality the pure Spirit, which is of the form of Truth (corresponding to the central channel), Consciousness (corresponding to the right channel) and Bliss (corresponding to the left channel) – as the Sanskrit saying goes: “Sat Chit Ananda Rupam, Shivo Ham, Shivo Ham” (“I am of the form of Truth, Consciousness and Bliss, I am the Spirit, I am the Spirit”).

Self realization = The connection with our Spirit and with the divine power. It takes place when the Kundalini energy rises along the central channel and emerges at the top of the head as a gentle cool breeze (vibrations).

Shri = Respectful form of address.

Shri Chakra - Chakra located between the heart and Vishuddhi on the right side of the chest. Controls our right shoulder and arm.

Shri Lalita - Chakra located between the heart and Vishuddhi on the left side of the chest. Controls our left shoulder and arm.

Spirit = see “Self.”

Swadhishtan = Second chakra, located about two inches below the navel. Its main qualities are pure creativity, pure knowledge and pure attention.

Void = The circular area around the Nabhi chakra. Its main quality is that of self-mastery.

Vibrations = Manifestation of the divine energy as a cool breeze that

can be felt on one's palms and above the head after Self realization.

Vishuddhi = Fifth chakra, located at the base of the throat. Its main qualities are communication, witnessing power, and divine diplomacy.

Yoga = The union between the individual and the whole, between the microcosm and the macrocosm. In the West, this word has been abused by reducing its meaning to a set of physical or breathing exercises that are practiced as part of one of the Yoga branches, Hatha Yoga.

Zen = Comes from the Sanskrit word Dhyana, which means meditation. Zen was founded by Veditama, who was a realized soul as indicated by Shri Mataji. It is a practice that initially spread in China and Japan as a method to attain enlightenment by being in the present moment and trying to go beyond the mind, into thoughtless awareness.