



**MY
MEMOIRS**

MY MEMOIRS by Babamama (Hemant Prasadrao Salve)

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TO ALL THE SEEKERS OF TRUTH

Innocence is an eternal quality

which can never be

lost or destroyed.

H.H. Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi.

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FORWARD BY C.P. SRIVASTAVA

It is a great privilege to write a few words about this book which narrates, in vivid detail, the life story of a family which, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, played an important role in India's battle for freedom from the British rule, which gave to the country a brilliant, self-less, wise, cultured, learned, courageous and visionary political leader, Shri R.K. Salve, and which, in independent India, has given to the world a Divine Incarnation for the emancipation and evolution of human beings to a higher spiritual plane – Mataji Nirmala Devi.

The book, *My Memoirs*, has been written in his inimitable style, by the youngest member of this illustrious family, H.P. Salve, popularly and affectionately known as Baba Mama. No person is better qualified to write about these jewels of India than Baba Mama. From his birth, he was the darling of the entire family. He has personally lived through the thick and thin of those tumultuous years preceding and following independence and has enjoyed the trust and affection of all members of his family, especially of Mataji Nirmala Devi. He has been a witness of and participant in all the events which he has recaptured by graphic narration.

In essence, the book is a life story of Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi who, from the earliest days of her life, has demonstrated Her infinite love and compassion for men, women and children, especially children, of all creeds and communities. This book carefully describes Her life stage by stage.

In Her childhood, Nirmala displayed qualities which showed that She was a prodigy. Whenever, in the course of freedom struggle, Her parents were imprisoned by the British rulers, the household responsibilities were entrusted to Her and not to any of Her older brothers and sisters because She was the most responsible child of the family. In normal times She would continue Her studies, but would also join Her parents in political activities. Once, while She was about five years old, She was asked to address a large gathering. Without the slightest hesitation or stage fright, She spoke with patriotic fervour and carried the day. Sometimes, She would accompany Her parents to Mahatma Gandhi's ashram. There She instantly became the favourite of Gandhiji, who, off and on, talked to Her about the aims and objects of his movement based

on the concepts of truth and non-violence. For Nirmala, those were most elevating and memorable moments.

When Mahatma Gandhi launched the Quit India movement in 1942, calling upon the foreign rulers to leave the country, Nirmala, then a young girl of nineteen years in age, threw herself heart and soul into risky underground activities, motivated by intense and burning patriotism. As a result, Her studies were interrupted.

Later She pursued medical studies in Lahore, but because of the impending partition of India, She left Lahore early in 1947 and arrived in Her parents' house in New Delhi where Her father was then a member of the National Assembly. Left to Herself, She would have liked to complete Her medical graduation, but in obedience to the wishes of Her parents, She agreed to get married.

At that time, I was living temporarily in Her parent's house as a guest of Her brother who was a friend of mine from university days. Nirmala's parents thought, to my surprise, that I could be a suitable groom for their daughter. Nirmala did not wish to disappoint Her parents and, therefore, did not demur. That is how, due to my good fortune, Nirmala and I got married in 1947.

Ever since our marriage, Nirmala has been an ideal wife, bestowing immeasurable love and utmost care not only on me and our children, but also, in equal measure, on many other children who came to our house for support and comfort. In the beginning of my career as a government official, my salary was rather limited, but She managed the household affairs cheerfully within the available resources. Once our house was burgled and we lost most of our possessions. She was left only with some cotton saris and just one silk sari. To put me at rest, she carried on cheerfully, even in the situation, as if nothing had gone wrong. She never made any demands whatsoever and always gladly lived within the available means, however meagre. It is because of Her unfailing support and encouragement that the family was able to maintain the highest standards of integrity. As time passed and I got promoted, things improved. But all this while She displayed the virtues which are attributed in Indian scriptures to Goddesses Mahalakshmi and Saraswati.

While Nirmala had come from a family of freedom fighters and enlightened persons, I belonged to a conservative family of lawyers and landowners.

Numerous close relatives of mine with whom Nirmala came in touch were persons full of antediluvian ideas. By Her patient, caring and loving ways and by sincere attention to each person, She won their hearts in no time and became the favourite bahu rani (daughter-in-law), leaving me far behind in the family reckoning. She gave all that She could and never expected anything in return.

From the earliest days of our life together, Nirmala began to take active part in the promotion of numerous social, cultural and humanitarian activities. In Meerut district, She supported the establishment and running of a lepers' home. In Mumbai then Bombay, she organised welfare activities for the handicapped, especially the blind. She was also the leading light of the Children's Film Society and Hindi theatre.

Nirmala has always taken very keen interest in all cultural activities, especially classical music, dance, drama, painting, etc. She was the life and soul of many such events organised for the Shipping Corporation of India's guests from foreign countries, when I was the chairman of this national enterprise. She has taken great interest in the promotion of classical and devotional Indian music and, towards this end, She has established the late P.K. Salve International Academy for Music, Dance and Drama at Nagpur, in memory of Her late esteemed father. She has provided financial support for this project entirely from Her own resources and has entrusted its day-to-day management to Baba Mama. This Academy has received students from many countries and has given them high quality training. I have myself seen and heard amazing and breath-taking performances from the alumni of this academy. Classical and devotional music is now an essential component of all Sahaja Yoga programmes and activities.

I must recall also, though in a lighter vein, one area in which Nirmala has displayed less than adequate technical knowledge – financial matters and banking. For all this, She relies heavily on Sahaja Yogis.

The most important phase of Her life began in 1970, when She founded Sahaja Yoga and has, by a single-handed effort, created a mass movement. Through Her benediction, hundreds of thousands of people, in more than eighty-five countries, belonging to different faiths, races and communities have attained an inner transformation through the awakening of their Kundalini and through the resulting Self-realisation. She is transforming the

present-day selfish and immoral human society into a new universal human family of truly elevated, pure, chaste, compassionate and loving men and women of all ages and of all continents. Drugs, alcohol, immorality, etc. disappeared overnight from the lives of all these transformed people. I am personally aware of numerous instances of this kind. Instead, She has enabled all of them to get connected to the all-pervading power of Divine Love.

This book enables the reader to get a clear understanding and knowledge of this fascinating story of global transformation through the medium of love and Divinity.

There are numerous other facets of the many splendoured personality of Nirmala Devi. Her knowledge of the Holy Scriptures of all the major religions of the world is profound. It is thus that She has been able to enunciate, with great felicity, a synthesis of the fundamentals and essentials of all faiths as a new uniting and elevating philosophy for all human beings.

She is a powerful speaker and a great communicator. Large gatherings comprising thousands of people, listen to her in pin-drop silence. She is able to recall and narrate anecdotes, events and parables with amazing precision, clarity and speed as if She is in constant communication with some storehouse of knowledge, possibly the torsion area, as described by Einstein.

Amazing though it may seem, Nirmala Devi is running and managing the entire global Sahaja Yoga movement without any secretariat. She does not have even a personal secretary. In every location, the Sahaja Yogis provide the requisite assistance with great joy and devotion. Because of absolute integrity all round, nothing ever goes amiss. I am frankly unaware of any other movement which runs so efficiently and only on the basis of voluntary labour of love. That is a tribute both to Sahaja Yogis and to their beloved leader.

By writing this book, Baba Mama has rendered an invaluable service to the entire Sahaja Yoga Movement and to the Sahaja Yogis who will now have a glimpse of the many facets and events of Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi's life presented so authentically by the author with his personal and intimate knowledge.

I commend this book to all those who are seeking a better way of life through spiritual experience.

In conclusion, a few personal observations. Baba Mama says in his memoirs that when he saw me first in 1947 just prior to my marriage with his sister, he took an instant dislike to me because of my bureaucratic appearance. As far as I am concerned, I took an instant liking to him for he was then an extremely interesting and mischievous boy of fourteen years in age, merrily going around in his shorts. From then on he had been a very dear child and later a beloved member of the Srivastava family also.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR BY YOGI MAHAJAN

H.P. Salve was a scion of the illustrious Salve clan that hailed from the erstwhile Shalivan dynasty. He was born at a momentous time in the Indian history. A time when his father, along with the other elders of the nation, were fighting shoulder to shoulder to shake off the yoke of British rule. It was time when the noble human values prevailed and the sacrifice of one's life at the altar of such ideals was cherished, a time when the fathers of the nation had by-passed their youth in British jails and their families gladly accepted the hardship of poverty for the victory of their spirits. Coca-Cola and pop music was unheard of, only Jai Hind was on every lip and Bharat Mata inspired every soul. The giant figure of Mahatma Gandhi towered over the Indian sky and to kiss his shadow was the dream of every youth. The consciousness of young Salve was stamped in this ethos and he bore his brunt well. He followed the spartan Gandhian model all his life. With both his parents in the British jails, he grew up under the loving care of his elder sister, Nirmala, who not only nurtured his spirit, but also molded his personality in the lofty vision of their parents.

The banes and boons of the twentieth century were close at the heels of the partition and young Salve learnt to spread his wings in the turbulent changing times. He imbibed the traditional values and yet ventured forth in the modern profession of chartered accountancy, which was not surprising for those who knew that his mother had been a mathematics scholar. The seeds sown by his loving sister flowered into a compassionate personality, thus bringing a state of inner balance. His swift wit endeared him to friends who often had digs at him. A close friend recalled, "His father was the first mayor of Nagpur, but Baba was the last nightmare of Nagpur."

It seemed that destiny had much more in store for him. A turning point came in his life when he discovered the divine nature of his elder sister Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi. Under Her blessings he received his Self-realisation. Through an enlightened consciousness he transformed into a saint. Yet he remained full of humour. The Baba became Baba Mama, meaning the mother's brother to thousands of Sahaja Yogis all over the world. However he never took

advantage of his close relationship with his sister or took anything from Sahaja Yogis. He was an unassuming personality, very self-respecting and honest. Through mutation, he developed the dynamism of organising. His potential suddenly exploded and he became a great poet, musician and a linguist. Album after album poured out at a unique level of creativity.

Without him, it would not have been possible to organize Sahaja Yoga programmes. Under the guidance of Shri Mataji, he established a music academy in Nagpur to revive classical Indian music and dance. Within a short period the Academy was filled with over a hundred students from all over the world. The students not only attained excellence in skills, but also penetrated the source that inspired it, called the Kundalini, which is seated at the base of the spine. Through Sahaja Yoga, the Kundalini is ignited and after its ascent to the apex centre it nurtures our talents and brings out our genius. It is indeed amazing how foreign students could excel in complicated Indian ragas in short spells of learning. Also since then, many students have become great masters in their fields. As age caught on after sixty, Baba Mama had a few health problems. He passed away peacefully on the 28th February 2000 with the blessings of Shri Mataji.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

At the very outset I must seek pardon from the scholars of English and people having authority in the language, since, like Shri Mataji, my entire education has been in the vernacular language while English was an optional subject for us. I would therefore request the critics to avoid criticism in this context, and to see the content rather than the form of the content. I also have to apologize for all the “E & OE” (errors and omissions expected) since this is my first venture in writing a book.

It has been a long-cherished desire of most of the Sahaja Yogis to know about the life of Shri Mataji during Her pre-manifestation days and also particularly about the history of the family to which She belongs. My endeavour in this direction has been with quite a few difficulties, particularly regarding the history of the family, and therefore there are certain periods that are not covered. I have tried to keep the interest of the reader alive throughout the book, and therefore have taken the pattern of story-telling for the unfolding of book. If I have failed to keep up your interest, it be because certain details had to be given before unfolding a particular event.

In the year 1995, Sesh from South Africa came to the academy and made my life impossible by persistently nagging me about my writing the book, which I was not doing, out of sheer inertia. She was the motivating factor and to achieve that end she even went to the extent of sacrificing her study time to come and work in my office, while all the time goading me to keep on writing. I proudly admit that she deserves more than half the credit for getting me motivated in writing this book. Her husband, Matt, was equally enthusiastic about the book and would, in his gentle way, remind me that I could achieve, get over my inertia, by making a little extra effort. He went to the extent of inviting me to America. He, also, has contributed in getting this book completed.

How can I forget Dr. Rajiv and his charming wife, Dolly who were also reminding me constantly about the onus and responsibility I had to the Sahaj world and how people are eagerly awaiting to know about Shri Mataji. They

invited me to Manila, however, I could not go either to America or to Manila because of my commitments. My special thanks to Sannie bhaiyya, Shantatai and Sir C.P. for giving me interviews and giving me very vital information necessary for completion of this book.

Last, but not least, thanks to Mamta and Amber, who have replaced Sesh as far as her nuisance value is concerned and who have gone after me scrupulously and incessantly to complete this book. Both of them have taken down my lengthy dictations, in long-hand, without any objection or showing any signs of fatigue or tiredness. I must mention that these two girls are like my daughters, but I would not have expected such unflinching love and dedication even from my real daughters. It is gratifying to see how Shri Mataji has transformed people and how Her love manifests through Her devotees by showing their utmost dedication to the work they do. I salute them and all those who belong to their category. I must also thank Sunita, my daughter-in-law, for editing the book for me.

Since the book deals with the untold story of Shri Mataji, I have terminated the story in 1986, since from 1986 onwards, whatever Shri Mataji has done for Sahaj and whatever little I have contributed to Sahaj, is known to one and all. Hence, to avoid repetition (and to keep in store something for the next book, should I decide to write one), I thought it to be proper to write about Shri Mataji and Her family up until 1986. I hope and pray that this book will fulfill all your expectations and will provide the information expected from this book. In the end, I thank my wife, who has been ever-tolerant towards me and my unworthy behaviour as a husband.

ABOUT THE BOOK

This book is the result of persistent and consistent queries about Her Holiness, Shri Mataji Nirmla Devi Srivastava, about Her family background, Her childhood, Her youth, Her political activities and so on.

It was thought, therefore, that if I, as a member of Her family, write a book, these queries that Sahaja Yogis have about Her pre-and post manifestation days would be answered. The book therefore has H.H. Shri Mataji Nirmla Devi as the main figurehead and the events narrated are focused on Her life or happenings connected with Her political as well as religious activities.

It also brings out the illustrious nature of the family of the Salves, a name which even today signifies honesty, unflinching love for the country, and intolerance towards injustice. This book will surely satisfy the Sahaja Yogis and will also create interest in the people, carefully watching the growth of Sahaja Yoga, more so since most of the events have been written by an eye-witness.

CHAPTER ONE: 1883 TO 21ST MARCH 1927

My father, Prasadrao, was born posthumously to my grandmother, Sakhubai, on the 15th of July 1883 at Ujjain. My grandfather, Keshavrao, who was the descendant of Shalivahan dynasty, had died about four weeks before my father's birth, in the middle of June. My father told us once about the tragic and unexpected death of my grandfather at such a young age. The story is as follows.

My grandfather had gone to Rahuri to receive his cousin (my grand-aunt Renukabai), who was coming to attend on my grandmother during her confinement. He belonged to a royal family who owned a castle (known as Wada in Marathi) in Shrigoan. As had been told to me by my mother and confirmed by Her Holiness Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, my great great grandfather belonged to a Marathi royal family (warrior caste in the Hindu religion) that was ruling over a territory near Rahuri, including Shrigoan. Their rule extended until Hyderabad in the south, where there is the statue of the king, Shalivahan. They were the descendants of the famous Satvahan dynasty which was an offshoot of Chandragupta Maurya dynasty, Shalivahan came from Chittodgarh. There is a book, the *Bhavishya Purana*, that described the meeting of the Shalivahan king with Jesus Christ in Kashmir.

The descendants of this Satavahan dynasty defeated Vikramditya. Among them, Babruhan had a son called Shaliwah in the first century. He had migrated from the north of India to Paithan, near Aurangabad. They started the calendar known as Shalivahan Shaka, as opposed to the calendar of Vikramditya, known as *Vikramditya Samvat*. In the south of India, people use the Shalivahan calendar, while in the north they use Vikramditya Samvat. Both are based on the movement of the moon and not the sun.

A great flood in the seventeenth century destroyed the palace of Paithan. Shri Shivaji Maharaj had not only given protection to this descendant of King Shalivahan, but, in recognition of his valour and intelligence, had presented him with a territory adjoining Rahuri. He also gave the Shalivahan warriors a special category of high caste called *Shabanow Kuli*. They built a castle in

Shrigoan, now known as *Naiakanche Shingune*, meaning “Shingune belonging to naik.” This naik was a *mottabbar* (manager of the court) of the kingdom, who, after the departure of Salves from Shrigoan, had taken over. Shrigoan was called Shingve also. Other relatives also managed to take over the land of Keshavrao Salve, which is written in the land records by the English. His descendants also built a beautiful temple of Shri Rama and Sita in the premises of the castle about three hundred years back. Realising the sin of the ancestor, his descendant, who is living in the castle, has offered some rooms to Shri Mataji. Moreover there is a beautiful place called Sita’s Nahani where Sitaji lived with Shri Rama during his exile. All these monuments are of Rajput style architecture, which Shri Mataji has also used in construction of Her house called Pratishtan.

Coming back to the story, since the Rahuri railway station was about ten kilometers from Shrigoan, my grandfather had left early in the morning on horseback to receive Renukabai. The monsoon had started and it was threatening to rain. He, however, ignored the dark clouds and went to Rahuri, unprotected and unequipped to face the impending weather. He was disappointed not to find Renukabai on the train and decided to return. While returning, it started to rain heavily but he did not take shelter because he was quite upset that his cousin had not come. In that fury, he crossed the swollen river which separates Rahuri from Shrigoan. As he was climbing a steep rock on the opposite bank of the river (which had become extremely slippery), he fell from the horse and lost consciousness. My father told us that he remained unconscious for quite some time, totally exposed to the rains. As a result he developed pneumonia, which proved fatal.

The untimely death of my grandfather, as it transpired, proved to be extremely catastrophic, tragic and a trial of strength for my grandmother. As it is, an accidental death of a husband is an extreme calamity for an Indian woman, more so for Sakhubai since the calamity had occurred during the advanced stage of her pregnancy. (During those days, traditional India culture and custom taught Indian women, right from childhood, to respect and revere the husband. To her, he was her world, her provider and her protector. Therefore she depended on him entirely.) No doubt, she was totally unprepared to face worldly dealings like looking after the huge property left behind by her late husband and other affairs to which she had never been exposed.

Sakhubai was however a very brave, fearless and determined lady and hence she decided to cope with any eventuality that came her way. These qualities of our grandmother have played a major role in building up her children and have also, in the process, percolated into her grandchildren. She was extremely depressed, crestfallen and nearly on the brink of total collapse. She was even more upset because most of her very distant in-laws had ganged up against her. Since she was a Christian, they did not want her to inherit the property which they alleged was ancestral, belonging to the Hindu wing of the family.

The story of my father's birth will have to pause here for a while since it is relevant at this point to describe the circumstances in which my forefathers embraced Christianity.

A great ancestor of mine had a sister who became a widow in her early childhood. (During that time child marriages were a common practice and accepted in Hindu society.) He was a man with very liberal ideas about religion. He therefore could not accept the fanatic Hindu rituals and customs that were rampantly practised and accepted in those days. He was particularly against the atrocities and heinous acts committed against Hindu widows. According to Hindu custom, Hindu widows had to shave the hair on their head completely. She was required to wear a white sari and cover her head all the time. She was not allowed to attend any ceremony since her presence was considered to be inauspicious, so much so that even her shadow had not to fall on anyone. As a penance, she could not remarry and was forced to lead her life in seclusion and isolation.

The atrocities committed on his widowed sister by the Hindu priests under the guise of Hindu rites and customs were shocking and saddening and therefore beyond his tolerance. They were contrary to his conviction of respecting human dignity, values and ideals, which he held in high esteem. The harassment of his sister became increasingly unbearable. It was accepted in Hindu society as a penance for the alleged sins of the widow who is supposedly guilty of taking away the life of her husband. In contrast to this, when the husband becomes a widower, he is entitled to remarry, is never condemned by the Hindu society and, moreover, is never held guilty for the death of his wife. This discrimination is practised even today in some remote villages.

Since this was perpetrated in the name of religion, it forced my ancestor to rebel. His pleadings to the priests and elders of the society fell on deaf ears. The minds of the people were closed because of an age-old traditional fear of the priests, whose words and utterances were sacrosanct and had to be accepted blindly, without question and without applying the test of reason or rationality.

One day this widow lady was taken to visit a temple. She had not shaved her head so some relatives started stoning her on the way. She was a small girl, so she fainted and her brother brought her to their castle. But the same relatives had entered the castle and they would not open the gate of the castle, so he took her to another big house which was outside the castle and is known as Salve wada even today.

When my ancestor saw that he was breaking his head against a wall of unyielding blind faith by which a child widow has to be tortured, he decided to abandon such religion and embrace Christianity. He did not take to Islam because they gave even worse treatment to their womenfolk. He had distant relations who were Hindus and who condemned him for converting to Christianity, however, he continued to be the owner of the property even after he changed his religion. He married his sister to another brahmin boy who was already converted to Christianity by an English priest. My grandfather was from this converted Christian family.

To continue with the story of my father's birth, as soon as my grandfather died, his brothers and relatives began to create problems about the property he had left behind, which rightfully, by inheritance, belonged to Sakhubai and her children. It is said that the relatives tried to poison the milk of the fatherless family, but by chance Sakhubai discovered this, as a cat that drank the milk had died. This made her decide to leave the wada at the earliest possible opportunity. The monsoon was too heavy and all the rivers were overflowing. Sakhubai knew that if she delayed her departure any further, it might prove detrimental to her safety and to the safety of her children. If she had to act, then it had to be immediately and without any further delay.

However all odds were against her, the terrorising attitude of her in-laws, the inclement weather, the torrential rains and the inundated river. To add to her problems, she had no knowledge of trains, nor any resources to find out about trains or alternate means of transport. In such circumstances, attempting to

cross a flooded river with five children, in a pregnant state was totally unthinkable and in fact suicidal. She was, however, a very religious person and had immense faith in God. She was also extremely optimistic and had a fighting spirit to match.

So one rainy night when the village was asleep, she collected whatever belongings she could carry, part of the money which she had saved during her prosperous days and some jewellery. She shifted to Salve wada outside the castle.

Having ensured that nobody saw her, she slipped out of her house very quietly along with her five children, with her belongings tied to her back. The rain was just a drizzle, but it was good for her escape because everybody was indoors and she silently made her way to the river. Judging from the roar of the water, she knew that there was a strong current flowing. She was aware of the general topography of the riverbank from her frequent visits to the river during her earlier days. The intermittent lightning was upsetting since it was followed by loud thunder, which frightened the little children, however, the lightning, which lingered for a second or two, gave her enough light to ascertain her location and thus she made her way through the darkness. Gradually, she moved with her children to a place where she knew that the riverbed was shallow and narrow.

Praying to the Divine, she got hold of her two daughters by their hands and handed over the other two sons to her eldest son, Solomon, to lead them through the river. Solomon was a very well-built young man, aged about eleven or twelve at that time and was an expert swimmer. In fact, he was built like a wrestler. His physique was exceptional and he could carry a lot of weight on his shoulders and hands. So with my two younger uncles in his care and my two aunts tightly holding the hands of Sakhubai, they entered the river very slowly.

She had anticipated crossing the river without any difficulty, more so, since her son Solomon was leading her. However, when she came midstream, she realised that the current was very strong and that the sand under her feet was slipping, so she called Solomon, handed over her two daughters to him and asked her two younger sons to swim across to the other bank. Then she herself swam from midstream, countering the strong current. She had to muster all

her courage and strength all the more since she knew there was no other way out.

Solomon, realising the imminent danger of allowing his two younger brothers to swim, put them on his shoulders, held his two younger sisters firmly in his hands and started crossing the river with very firm steps. Though she was not an expert swimmer, Sakhubai managed to keep herself afloat. Whatever little swimming she knew was further marred by the handicap of wearing a nine-yard sari. However, knowing her options (which were no better than drowning), she put all her strength and power behind her limited talent of swimming.

The incessant rain in the catchment area had grown stronger and she was caught in the current. She started to drift with the current down the river, but, as I mentioned earlier, her indomitable willpower and courage gave her strength and energy to reach to the other side of the river, though she had drifted a little downstream. Meanwhile, Solomon, because of his sheer determination and prowess, managed to traverse through the strong current and safely reach the other shore. Having achieved the impossible task of crossing the swollen river with strong current, Sakhubai asked each of her children if they were all right. Then she took stock of her belongings tied on her back and was satisfied to see that they were intact, though completely wet. Now came the none-too-easy task of transporting herself and her family to the railway station, which was about eight to ten kilometers from the riverbank. However, in the context of what she had already achieved, traversing through rain and slush for a distance of eight to ten kilometers appeared to be a virtual walkover.

She and her children eventually arrived at the station completely drenched. They did not have any dry clothes, so, after building a fire, they all sat huddled together and awaited the train.

As I visualise her now, the image of my grandmother emerges as a towering personality full of courage and strength of conviction in her fight against injustice, a person who had the qualities of immense valour and courage on one side and a mother's love and benevolence towards her children on the other. These qualities are a source of inspiration for all her children. I am emphasising this because all these qualities have permeated through to her children and grandchildren, especially Shri Mataji.

During those days there was only one train connecting Rahuri to Manmad. As luck would have it, the train was running late. This worried Sakhubai since there was a strong possibility of her in-laws coming to look for her once it was dawn. The eastern sky was changing colour to reddish amber, which meant that dawn was not far away. Furthermore, the rain had also stopped, so Sakhubai closed her eyes in prayer, prayed to the Almighty and waited for the train. As she opened her eyes, two things happened simultaneously. Firstly, she heard the bell announcing the arrival of the train and she also saw the peeping sun. Shortly afterwards, the train arrived and she boarded the train along with her children and the train left Rahuri in due course of time without any further delays.

She reached Manmad first. Her husband's friend, Mr. Chatre, was living in Manmad and she knew his address. She then went to Ujjain to her brother. It was under these trying circumstances in Ujjain that my father was born on the 15th of July 1883. It was a rainy day and the baby was delivered in the morning. A normal delivery took place, the child had radiant and handsome looks, a very fair complexion and dark, sparkling eyes.

It is not known how her brother was making a living, but my self-respecting grandmother thought it definitely not good to put the additional burden of a widowed sister and her five children on him. Her brother, therefore, introduced her to Mr. Wilkey, an English missionary, settled in Indore, who was one of the senior office-bearers of the Christian mission in Indore, the neighbouring city of Ujjain.

On hearing her story and having known her brother for some time, Mr. Wilkey offered to help my grandmother by offering her the job of Bible-woman. This job meant that she had to go to Christian homes in and around Indore, including remote villages, and sell copies of the Bible, which would earn her a commission. It is said that she was offered four annas (one quarter of a rupee) by way of commission on the sale of each Bible. One additional benefit was that she was being given free accommodation in the church compound. Sakhubai was basically an optimist and, though the earning as a Bible-woman seemed to be very meagre, she accepted the job. Self-respecting as she was, she also did not want to be a burden on anybody. She also had her ornaments which she sold from time to time.

Accepting such a position meant making many compromises in her lifestyle, like forsaking the royal and majestic life of a queen she had led as the wife of a ruler. She also compromised by living in a one-room tenement as against the palatial building she was accustomed to living in. She was alive to the realities of her present life and therefore shut her past glory from her mind.

Her work as a Bible-woman required her to go from place to place. Since all the other children were going to school, nobody was able to look after my infant father. When she had to go out of Indore to remoter villages, she left my father behind with either her brother or Renukabai.

In this way, she started her new life. The earnings from the selling of Bibles were inconsistent, irregular and thoroughly inadequate, but she taught her children to live within their means by living a very frugal life. Shri Mataji is also extremely frugal and spartan. She can sleep on the pavement or live in the jungle. At the same time, She cares for each and every person's comfort.

My eldest uncle, Solomon, could see the difficulty his mother was experiencing. He had before him a bright academic career, which would have ensured him a very successful future. However, it would have meant showing indifference to the suffering and struggle that his mother was undergoing and that was not his character. He had the alternative of leaving his education and helping his mother, and he decided to do the latter.

So one day, he mustered enough courage to tell his mother of his decision. Sakhubai was deeply impressed by his profound sense of responsibility and the concern shown to the family. However, since at that point in time he had not even matriculated, Sakhubai persuaded him to defer the decision at least until he had passed his metric. She had a very strong desire to educate all her children, but was without resources to fulfill this desire. She knew that all her children were very bright and intelligent and, therefore, she wanted them to be educated all the more, particularly her boys. As the days passed by, her earnings remained static, while the expenses were rising. Prasad, her youngest son, was a growing child and was having growing needs, so it became inevitable that Solomon take up some sort of a job where he could continue his education as well as earn some money.

Sakhubai was staying in the mission compound and was always attending the church along with her children. One Sunday, the peon of the church who used

to toll the bell did not come and the priest was looking for a stout strong man who could toll the huge bell on top of the church. Solomon, who was both robust and stout, offered his services and he tolled the bell so rhythmically and with so much of vigour and strength that the missionary, Mr. Wilkey, offered him the job of tolling the bell every Sunday at a handsome salary of five rupees per month.

Thus began the career of Solomon, whose selfless and sacrificing character was to go a long way in moulding the lives of his younger brothers and sisters. This Sunday job suited him ideally since it did not disturb his schooling or his studies, nor did it affect the dignity of the family since he was rendering services to the church.

Five rupees per month was not a very big salary but it definitely made a substantial difference to Sakhubai, since her income was inconsistent and subject to the number of Bibles sold by her. Solomon's income was steady and assured, so she could at least procure her monthly rations and provisions. My mother once told me that during the last decade of the nineteenth century, rice was ten kudavs for a rupee (seven kilograms to a kudav), so you could get seventy kilograms of rice for a rupee, while wheat was seven kudavs for a rupee. So for two rupees one, could provide rice and wheat for a month. So five rupees meant a lot for her and provided the financial security, which she had been so much used to during her husband's time. She was selling her ornaments one by one, which also stopped to some extent.

Meanwhile, Prasad Rao was growing in age and from his childhood, he would help his mother. At the age of four, he was doing small household chores and thus became her assistant. He insisted on going out with her, particularly when she was visiting outside Indore. Initially, Sakhubai did not object, but, as he started growing in age she started keeping him at home on the pretext of making him responsible for some small odd jobs. In fact, she wanted him to be independent and self-reliant because she knew that if she made him depend on her too much, it would be bad for his future. This early grooming played a very important role in my father's future life.

There is a story that my father told me once about his immense faith in his mother. One day all the family had gone for a small picnic to a nearby river. All my uncles were expert swimmers and so jumped in the river and started swimming. My father, who was barely five or six years, was naturally scared of

going near the river since he did not know how to swim. As such, in spite of assurances given by his elder brothers, he did not venture near the water.

Sensing his fear, Sakhubai told him to go and join his brothers and learn how to swim. Prasad Rao had no fear of drowning, but he expressed his inability to swim. Sakhubai was, however, very firm and told him to go in the river and assured him again that his brothers were around him. Her assurance, no doubt, gave him the courage, but he first ventured only in to the shallow waters of the river and started to play with the water. Suddenly, his eldest brother Solomon lifted him bodily and took him midstream, and just dropped him in the water. Prasad Rao went down and was choked for want of air. However, the assurances of his mother, coupled with his courage and also his instinct for survival overtook inertia and he started kicking. As he surfaced, he found to his surprise that his brothers were standing some distance away, downstream. Sakhubai, who was standing on the bank, asked him to try and swim as best as he could. Her words were again more than an assurance and he started to kick his legs and move his arms in the water, trying to copy his brothers. This is how he got his first lesson in swimming. He became a champion swimmer later on.

Swimming became an addiction with him. He used to go on his own and would go to the river at any opportunity. Even for bathing he would go to the river. However, Sakhubai cautioned him not to get addicted to anything lest he becomes a slave of any habit.

Such was the training of Sakhuabi. As a result, all of her children were independent, but never transgressed the boundaries of discipline or Sakhubai's teachings. She also taught them to fight injustice from wherever it came. She firmly believed that accepting injustice was an act of cowardice and she never wanted her children to be cowards. She taught the value of honesty to her children. She had told them that uncompromising honesty was an absolute term and not a relative term, that one could only be absolutely honest or absolutely dishonest. She said that being honest would make them brave and courageous and would enable them to face difficulties with conviction in their own selves. She never compromised on honesty and said that the biggest sin one could commit was to be dishonest. This teaching of hers was permanently imprinted on to all her children. Such teaching, particularly in the context of the extreme poverty that she was facing, was very important in moulding the character of her children.

Astuteness, sense of honesty, dedication towards work, ever-willingness to fight injustice and respect for human dignity became the character of her children. All of them were also very loving and obedient children. For Prasad Rao she was not only his ideal, but also a source of inspiration and whatever she said, or advised, was sacrosanct.

As days passed by, Prasad Rao started going to the mission school. From his early school days, he started to show his calibre as a student. He was not only topping the class, but was well ahead and was discussing with authority subjects taught in higher classes. He was a voracious reader and had a photographic memory. He was a stickler for minute details and nothing could escape his attention. Shri Mataji also has exceptional qualities. She never studied much English or Hindi as a subject, but because of her reading habit, She has mastered both these languages. She too has a tremendous memory and a very deep attention.

In the real sense, my father was his own master and did not need any coaching from anybody. He took to his studies as easily as he took to his games. So good was his understanding of the subject matter that not only was he helping his own classmates with their difficulties, but also the boys of the senior classes.

However, his education was not without problems and difficulties. The biggest problem was the poverty of the family. Since kerosene was very expensive, or at least he thought it to be so, he could ill afford to burn the midnight oil for his studies. As a result, after nine o'clock in the night, he used to go and study under a street lamp. As a rule the lights in the house were shut off after dinner and therefore Prasad Rao either had to go under the street lamp or to a friend who could afford the luxury of kerosene oil.

I remember that once when he was narrating his tale of studying under the street lamp to his children, my elder brother asked him as to where the need was for him to study so much, since he was so brilliant. He said that he had to study since he had no alternative. He was getting a scholarship, to which he was entitled only if he topped his class. His family could ill-afford the loss of his scholarship and he was apprehensive that he would have to discontinue his education, which he did not want to do at any cost. He wanted to study, not only to do justice to his talent and knowledge, but also to ensure that the sacrifice made by his family, particularly Sakhubai and his eldest brother, was

not wasted. As such, he never compromised on his studies and used to study even during holidays.

Thus the family continued to live in extremely austere conditions and Prasadrao continued to top his class year after year. His immediate elder brother, David, and the one elder to David, Shantvan, continued their studies. Solomon, however, had to discontinue his studies after his matriculation and, after initial odd jobs, he was offered the post of teacher in the Danielson Middle School, Chhindwara. Reverend C.D. Jadhav, who was married to my father's second sister Shantabai, was looking after the Chhindwara Lutheran Church and had a lot of influence with the missionaries in Chhindwara. He was a poet of great repute and composed hymns and bhajans in Hindi which are even now sung in Hindi churches. Rev. Jadhav wrote to Uncle Solomon, saying that there was a post vacant in the Danielson Middle School, that they were looking for a deserving Christian candidate. Solomon was selected initially as a teacher and then as headmaster of the said school. The salary was not very lucrative, but was an assured income and hence proved a great financial help to Sakhubai. Solomon used to send her money every month by cutting down on his own expenses and living frugally in Chhindwara. This left a very great impact on the younger brothers. After a few years even Shantvanrao passed his matriculation exams and he was also given a position at the same school, which he accepted.

Solomon got married to Shevantibai Saunsare. In due course, Shantvanrao also got married. He married Premabai Saunsare, the younger sister of Shevantibai. My father, Prasadrao, and his elder brother David, however, continued their education in Indore, where they had shifted with their mother for their higher education. They frequently visited Chhindwara to meet their brothers. The most important feature of this family was the respect for each other and the bond of love that was to play a very important role in the development of the family tree of the Salves.

All the brothers were keen sportsmen and all played cricket, hockey, football and other games. David, the third brother, while still a student of the high school was seen playing hockey by the district officer of Indore. The superintendent of police, Indore, an Englishman, was greatly impressed by the ability and the agility which David exhibited while playing hockey. He, therefore, asked David if he would like to join the police department. David

most willingly accepted and was asked to come and meet the superintendent of police the next day in his office.

With a view to test his aptitude and knowledge, the superintendent of police asked him to read a police diary. The writings in the police diary are as a rule shabby and not easily decipherable. It is said that sometimes even the writer can not decipher his own handwriting. However, Uncle David, who as I remember was not only known for his presence of mind, but also for his quick wit, started reading the diary as though he knew each and every word. Whatever he could not decipher, he substituted with his own words. The result was a fluent flow of reading. The superintendent was so impressed that he immediately offered him a job as a police officer. My father always compared my sense of humour with that of Uncle David's because, like him, not only do I have a flair for humour, but I'm also known for my practical jokes on my brother and sisters. Shri Mataji is also a person of great humour. Even after marriage, She was very kind to my friends and used to make them laugh with Her subtle humour. I have never seen Her getting angry with anyone. Even when She recently wrote Her book, which was rather deep and strong for westerners, She described it in such a humorous way that you cannot put it down.

During this time, Uncle Solomon, the eldest brother, was assigned the job of teaching theology in the seminary at Chhindwara because of his very deep knowledge of the religion. Uncle Shantvan succeeded him as the headmaster of the middle school later on, while my father graduated from Christian College, Indore, which was affiliated to Calcutta University. As he was learning, he was also earning. I remember an event he had narrated which pertains to his student days. From the tuition and scholarship money that he was getting, he saved ten rupees and, as he was very fond of shoes, he purchased a pair of expensive shoes for eight rupees. He was thoroughly delighted at his new acquisition and wanted to share it with his family. As he reached home, he was greeted by his mother who asked him as to what he was carrying in the box, which he held so tightly in his hands. He proudly told her that he had purchased shoes from his savings. He was expecting appreciation from his mother. She, being a strict disciplinarian and wisdom personified, told my father to return the shoes, since all his other brothers were wearing chappals and slippers and, in this context, my father wearing shoes would be unfair. My father saw the wisdom and immediately returned the shoes, gave

the ten rupees to his mother, and never purchased a shoe until he graduated. Such was the respect for the wisdom of Sakhubai that it created a sense of sacrifice in him.

During his school and college days, my father had many friends who were ever willing to help him. Amongst these friends, he used to refer to one most prominently. His name was Jal. He was a Zoroastrian by faith and belonged to a very affluent family. Jal always used to bring lunch for two, telling his mother that his appetite had increased, so that Jal and my father could share the lunch. Jal's mother always used to wonder as to how Jal had such a good appetite at lunch, but did not have the same appetite at dinner. My father was telling us that Jal used to bluff his mother by telling her that he could study more with a light stomach. He always used to sleep with the light on so that his parents were under the impression that he was studying.

During his college days in Indore Christian College, my father created quite a few records. His brilliance was recognised by Dr. Wilkey, the principal of the college (not to be confused with Mr. Wilkey of Ujjain), who always encouraged him to do better. His friend, Jal, was not such an intelligent student and my father used to teach him. Some of his other college friends were Mr. W.R. Puranik, who became justice of the supreme court, Mr. Kaore and Mr. Garud, who eventually came to Nagpur and was in charge of a school known as Seva Sadan High School, from where Shri Mataji did her matriculation many years later. Mr. Kaore came particularly to meet my father after about two decades of their leaving the college. Mr. Kaore was known for his bathroom singing and my father always used to ask jokingly if the bathroom had got accustomed to his music.

He was studying for graduation and he had offered mathematics as one of the subjects, but somehow he fell very sick and he could not attend the exam, thus he failed. The next year he changed his subject to Sanskrit. He felt that he knew maths very well so why not take up another subject like Sanskrit. He was a master of languages especially Sanskrit. He knew twenty-six languages, but he was a master of fourteen. After his graduation, my father took up various jobs, including a job of teaching in the high school of Indore. He also worked for some time in Manipuri Farookhabad, as well as in Jhansi, now in Uttar Pradesh. He eventually became a teacher in St. John's High School, Agra. He chose Agra to be his place of work because Agra had the facility of a law college and it was his keenest desire to become a lawyer.

In 1906, he married Karunabai, daughter of his maternal uncle, Shri Gaikwad, which was a usual custom in Maharashtrians to save the property. He was blessed with his first daughter in 1908, whom he named Urmilla. As he taught, he studied law. This was a great task because not only was the course wide and intensive, but his time was divided between his job, his family and his studies. He passed his law exams from the Law College, Agra (affiliated to the University of Allahabad), but he continued to work as a teacher.

All the family used to get together at summertime in Chhindwara. On one such visit, Uncle Solomon suggested to my father that he could come and practise law there. Uncle Solomon was so much attached to my father that he did not want him to stay away from the family, of which most had migrated to Chhindwara for one reason or the other. My father eventually migrated to Chhindwara in the year 1914. By this time he had three more children, Vimila, Ashwini and Kamala. Two of his brothers and a sister, to whom he was very much attached, were already in Chhindwara, so the attraction of shifting of Chhindwara was stronger.

This was the time when the First World War broke out. My father had just commenced his legal practice. Keeping in view the popularity of my father, the deputy commissioner of Chhindwara had requested my father to accept the post of recruiting officer, which he accepted. He was appointed recruiting officer for the entire commissionary. He worked as an officer until the end of the war in 1918. In 1919, he was honoured with the title of Rao Sahib for his excellent work as a recruiting officer. He was also presented to King George V when he visited India. In recognition of his work, he was offered the job of an extra assistant commissioner, but he declined, as he preferred to be in a profession rather than in a service.

Karunabai was a very talented person and a social worker. She was very good at needlework. There was an exhibition of needlework held in Chhindwara in which she participated and got first prize for making a beautiful basket. Mr. Danielson was the bishop of the E.L.C., Chhindwara. Karunabi and Mr. Danielson's daughter (Mrs. Lemmon) were running an adult education class, which was attended by a number of ladies, especially to learn English.

After the World War was over, my father resumed his practice as a criminal lawyer in Chhindwara. He initially worked with Rai Bahadur Mathura Prasad, as a junior. Rai Bahadur was an eminent criminal lawyer and was known for

his legal acumen. There are many anecdotes about his absentmindedness, one of which I can recall vividly.

During those days the state did not have permanent public prosecutors like the present day. Nowadays, we have public prosecutors, government pleaders, advocate-generals and so forth to plead the case on behalf of the state. However, during the First World War, the government used to ask an eminent lawyer to plead the case for the state. Because of his eminence, the state used to give a lot of cases to Rai Bahadur Mathura Prasad to argue. More often than not he was appearing for the state, but once he accepted the brief of a person who was accused of murder and, therefore, he had to argue against the state, as a defence lawyer.

On the morning of the hearing, my father knowing his absentmindedness, reminded him that he was appearing for the defendant and not for the prosecution. As Rai Bahadur started the argument, he forgot that he was defending and started the case as the prosecution would have started. My father realised the mistake and pulled Rai Bahadur's robe to remind him that he was for the defendant, but Rai Bahadur Mathura Prasad was in full flow and was ignoring the hints given by my father. When pulling the robe did not yield results, my father got up to say something. Rai Bahadur scolded him and asked him to sit down and not to interrupt his argument. Even the court was puzzled and there was confusion all over. Seeing the gravity of the situation, my father totally disregarded the protest of Rai Bahadur Mathura Prasad and whispered loudly in his ear that he was to argue for the defence and not for the prosecution. Mathura Prasad immediately realised the error. However, being a lawyer of eminence he could not accept that he was committing an error, so he paused and, like a master magician, said, "My lord, this could be the best line of argument for the prosecution, as I see it. Now may I be permitted to proceed with my case for the defendant."

Mathura Prasad was also known for his tact in recovering fees from the clients. Most of the clients were uneducated villagers and were very reluctant to pay his normal fees. He therefore found a novel way of recovering his fee. He used to keep three pen-holders on his table, one made of wood, the second had a silver coating and the third was gold-plated. He used to tell the clients that if he drafted the application with the wooden holder, then the fees would be two rupees, if he used the silver one, then the fees would be three rupees and if he used the gold-plated one, then the fees would be five rupees. The innocent and

gullible villagers used to ask as to which would be the best application and he used to say that if the application was written with the golden pen the client was bound to win. This was the way he used to extract his fee of five rupees per application. When my father used to object about these unfair practices Rai Bahadur would say that they were not unfair, but rather the only way of extracting the exact fee without demanding it.

In a very short time, my father established himself as a noted criminal lawyer. His work required him to come to Nagpur very often, as such he purchased a car. He also constructed a house for himself on the main Nagpur road. This is the house where Shri Mataji was born.

In the year 1919 Karunabai took seriously ill. On the 27th August 1919, she expressed her desire to meet all her relatives, friends and acquaintances and she had an inkling that she would not survive for much longer. My father sent for all the relatives, friends and acquaintances and more than 150 people came and bade her goodbye. When Rai Bahadur Mathura Prasad came to see her, she pleaded with him to look after her husband and children. On the 29th August 1919, she told her relations who were attending her that she would leave this world on that day. She pleaded with them not to cry or weep as that would linger her departure. Thereafter, she raised her right arm and pointed three fingers to the sky. This was later interpreted as being that she saw three of God's messengers who had come to take her. Her last words, spoken in Marathi, were "Deva mala ghe," which means, "Oh God, please receive me." And then she breathed her last. Her death was a severe shock to my father and all my uncles and aunts, since Karunabai, because of her loving nature, was very dear to everyone.

At the time of her death her eldest daughter, Urmilla, was barely eleven years of age and her youngest son, Sushil, was barely three years of age. As such, a lady was required to come and look after the children. My uncles and aunts, who had come to attend the funeral, stayed back for a while, but they could not stay for long as they had their own families to look after. As such, they persuaded my father to marry again.

Miss Cornelia Jadhav had come to Nagpur with her father from Nandgoan. Nandgoan was on the other side of the Devnadi (Dev River) of Shrigoan. It is said that the father of Shivaji's mother Malojirao was persecuted by Aurangzeb, so he and his son came for help to the Shalivahanas. Somehow

Aurangzeb very much feared the Shalivahanas, who were the Devi's devotees so he never entered into the kingdom of Maloji. They came in the protection of descendants of Shalivahana, who called themselves as Salves.

Miss Cornelia Jadhav graduated with honours in mathematics from the Ferguson College, Pune, to take J.J.P. the post of headmistress at St. Ursula High School, Nagpur. She was the student of Wrangler Paranjpe. In fact, she was the only lady student under him during those days. Corneliabai, as she was called by all those who knew her well, was born on 20th December 1892, near Rahuri in Nandgoan. This village was given to Shivaji's grandfather and his son (Jadhav) to enjoy (nand means to enjoy) by the Shalivahanas. After her initial education in Ahemad Nagar, where she was staying with her father who was a librarian, she went to Pune for her graduation. This she did in spite of the protest of her family members who were not only concerned that she was the only lady student, but also that she was not familiar with big city life. However, Corneliabai was firm on her stand and joined college in spite of the protest.

In those days, girls seldom studied beyond matriculation and, as such, she had to counter strong opposition, both from her family members and the community. Her desire to become a graduate of mathematics, however, was so strong that she ensured that her wish prevailed over all opposition, howsoever strong it was.

Corneliabai was a brilliant academician, with exceptional aptitude for mathematics. She was an authority on Indian mathematics and I remember that she had once challenged Jagat Guru Shankaracharya (one of the authors of *Indian Mathematics*) on the basis of a theory he had propounded and successfully convinced him of the basic error in his theory. She was a master of Sanskrit and she told us that Pythagora's geometrical theory was already known in India long time ago. She was also a scholar of Sanskrit and very well versed in ancient Indian culture.

She was brought up with very strict discipline by her father and, therefore, had impeccable habits. She was fond of cleanliness, which later was to be a bone of contention between her and her children, particularly me. She was very conservative and frugal in her habits, but very broad-minded in her ideology. She used to tell us stories about her conservative and frugal habits. One such story I recall here.

When she came to Nagpur as the principal of the St. Ursula School, she was offered a fabulous salary of 125 rupees per month, plus a fully furnished bungalow, as well as a servant to attend to her needs. When she received her first month's salary, she went to the management and surrendered one hundred rupees out of the salary because she said that all her needs, including messing and other needs, were being met within twenty-five rupees. The management was, of course, surprised and appreciated her gesture, but persuaded her to accept the salary, as a reduction of her salary would have disturbed the salary structure of the entire staff. Her conservative habits went a long way in building up the character of her children. One of her qualities was her sense of honesty and frankness. She was honest because she was an absolute believer of God and she was frank because she was fearless and never wanted favours to be shown or accepted.

After great persuasion from an aunt of mine, my father decided to remarry. Through common friends a proposal was sent to Mr. Jadhav, who had retired and had come to stay in Nagpur with my mother. Corneliabai could not get married earlier since she was so well qualified and there was no deserving boy amongst the Christians who had a qualification higher or equal to hers. As such, when this proposal came to Mr. Jadhav he was quite happy and relieved, but he wanted her approval, so the proposal was put to my mother.

The following points were highlighted to my mother. The proposed bridegroom was, no doubt, a widower with five children, but he was well qualified, young, handsome, well placed in life, a great believer in God and a teetotaler. She weighed the pros and cons in her mind. Much later, she told me that two things influenced her decision to marry my father. The first was that he was well qualified and a brilliant lawyer, but more importantly, he was a believer of God and a teetotaler. She also felt a strong compassion for the children who were motherless at a very tender age. She knew as well that her ageing father was keen for her to marry my father.

My father could understand her predicament and wanted to talk to her in seclusion, but conservative as she was, she refused all his overtures in this direction. Once I remember that I was teasing her that she must have been completely floored by the handsomeness of my father. Ignoring my humour, she told me that it was for very different considerations that she married my father and that the younger generation could not understand such deep-rooted considerations.

Eventually, after many negotiations, they got married on the 21st of June 1920 in the E.L. Church, Chhindwara. At the time of the marriage, Corneliabai was a very delicate lady with very sharp and handsome features, while my father was robust and well built. From the photograph we saw of their marriage, they looked as though they were made for each other.

In due course of time, she moved to Chhindwara with my father and they started their family life together. Her job as a wife and also as a mother of five step-children was quite challenging, more so since the youngest child, Sushil, was epileptic from birth and his mental growth was stunted. She also had initial resistance from the children, but gradually she won them over and their confidence. On the 18th of March 1921, she was blessed with her first son, Narendra. Both my father and mother were delighted to have a son as the first child. Meanwhile my father left the association with Rai Bahadur Mathura Prasad and started his practice independently. Very soon he became the leading criminal lawyer of Chhindwara. My mother, Corneliabai, also wanted to do her exams and had joined the law college in Nagpur, but could not complete her law because of her family commitments.

My father remained in Chhindwara until 1927. Whilst he was there he took an active part in the civic affairs of the town. He was elected member of the Chhindwara Municipal Committee and was also vice-president, while Rai Bahadur Mathura Prasad was president. During his tenure as vice-president, he formed a committee under the chairmanship of Rai Bahadur Mathura Prasad and several other prominent citizens of the town to construct a women's hospital, which was very much needed in Chhindwara and the demand for which had been outstanding for many years. My father not only donated a lot of money, but was also involved in the construction of the women's hospital, which is even today doing a lot of good work. Dr. Miss Maclean, a Scottish lady, was the first medical superintendent of the hospital.

Chhindwara, being a coal belt, had a lot of European and English people working in the coal mines in and around the town. They had started a club, restricting the membership to only English and Europeans, as such the sports-loving Indians of Chhindwara decided to have a club of their own. Since Chhindwara is on a plateau of the Satpuda mountain ranges located in central India, they named the club as the Plateau Club. As mentioned earlier, my father and uncles were keen sportsmen. As such, they all became members of the club. Since the club did not have a lot of funds, they converted an open

piece of land into a cricket ground. Soon the club became very popular and they invited a team from Nagpur, which included stalwarts like Bhau Sahib Bhide, Colonel Nayudu (then known as Kankaiya) and Sylvester Chaube (known as Chobbs). Colonel Nayudu scored a century by hitting a lot of sixes. My father, who played for Chhindwara, along with Mr. Benton (additional S.P.), also hit a lot of sixes.

Since my father was a teetotaler, he had persuaded all the members of the Plateau Club to avoid alcoholic drinks within the premises of the club. Initially, there was resistance, but he had the backing of Rai Bahadur Mathura Prasad, who was president of the club, and, as a result, every member agreed to avoid alcoholic drinks while on the premises of the club. There have been many occasions when my father left social get-togethers or dinners just because alcoholic drinks were being served. My father's love for his country was as much as his love for sports. A few instances of his love for his country are cited below.

The famous Ali brothers were being kept under house arrest along with their mother, in Chhindwara. A bungalow was allotted to them on the Chakkar Road (circular road). They were, however, allowed to visit us. We were then staying in a bungalow of Jagirdar of Harrai, which was quite close to the bungalow allotted to the Ali brothers, and they were visiting our house practically every day. Seeing the proximity and the intimacy between my father and the Ali brothers, the S.R. of Chhindwara, who was an Englishman, requested my father to take advantage of his friendship with them and try to find out the future plans regarding the anti-British movement (Khilafat movement). My father point-blank refused and said, "If I have been the title of Rao Sahib by the British for doing such anti-national activity, I will renounce the name rather than betray my country and my countrymen."

There is another instance of his patriotism which is relevant not only because all of these things happened before he joined the National Movement, but also to illustrate the eminence of the person and his selfless dedication for the country, which later on was to play an important role in the freedom struggle. In the year 1921, the late Sarojini Naidu (titled as the Nightingale of India by Mahatma Gandhi) who was one of the forefront leaders of the congress, visited Chhindwara after having attended a conference in Nagpur. One Muslim extra assistant commissioner was appointed by the superintendent of police to take notes of her speech and report the same to the deputy

commissioner. The officer was sitting just ahead of my father, who was also attending the meeting. Of course, there were others from the police department who were also assigned similar work. This Muslim extra assistant commissioner was so overwhelmed by her forceful and mind-stirring speech that instead of making notes he was applauding her speech along with the audience. The other police personnel noticed this and the matter was reported to the deputy commissioner. When being confronted the extra assistant commissioner explained, "If you read my report you will see that I have practically quoted her verbatim and this was possible only when I understood and got involved in her speech." When this story was narrated to my father, he remarked that, being an Indian, you could not avoid getting inspired. My father was out and out Indian at heart and very patriotic, too. In praise of Sarojini Naidu, he recited an Urdu couplet which means that there are millions of educated people and thousands of them are graduates, but there is only one cuckoo who sings in the garden and the rest are all crows.

My father's patriotism was also seen by his strong resistance to the treatment meted out to the Indians by the British and to the Anglo-Indians and Indians who used to treat themselves as English, who were known as brown sahibs. Once there was a cricket match between the English and the Indians. It was a normal practice to pitch two adjoining tents and for the players to sit wherever they chose without any colour discrimination. However, on one Sunday there was a match between the Chhindwara club and the team from the coal mines. There were some players in the team from the coal mines who were purely British and the rest were brown sahibs. The S.R. of Chhindwara, who was British, was in charge of the ground arrangement. He had asked the groundsman to pitch the two tents far apart from each other and had instructed that the better tent be pitched under a tree for the British and the other be pitched a distance away for the non-British. When my father reached the ground, he realised immediately that the arrangement of the tents was to discriminate between the Indians and the British. He, along with his teammates, therefore told the groundsman to convey to the S.R. and the D.C. (district collector) that they had left the ground to protest against the discrimination between the races. As my father reached home, he announced that he had decided not to play the match because of the apartheid attitude of the British. My mother had prepared a very good lunch. She was a great cook especially with her rice preparation (pulao). My father told her that lunch was

cancelled and she should come to agree. She was also a great patriot and could not tolerate the insult of Indians by the British.

As soon as the news was conveyed to the management of the match, the D.C. Colonel Ploughdon and Colonel Chitaly came to our house and requested my father to come and play the match. He very humbly, but firmly, told them that colour discrimination was a social crime and that not only would he not play that day's match, but he would also not play again for or against the British in the future. Colonel Ploughdon and Colonel Chitaly apologised on behalf of the S.R. of Chhindwara and said that the tents had been re-pitched close to each other and that never in the future would there be such discrimination. It was only then that my father and the other members of the team went to play the match and, as assured, never again was there any colour discrimination practised on the sports ground.

When Shri Mataji was eight years old, She was attending a cricket match in which Her elder brother-in-law was playing. There was always the flag of the National Party flying on their car. This was a match between soldiers and the soldiers demanded that the flag be removed. Shri Mataji came out of the car and told them that they would have to kill Her before removing the flag. So the flag was left to fly. When She returned home, Her sister-in-law was very frightened, but Her brother-in-law told Her that She had done very well.

My father always encouraged all of his children to play some sport because he strongly believed that in addition to building a sportsman's spirit, sports taught you collectivity, sharing, mutual understanding and, above all, the goal to achieve. As a result, all of his children, including the daughters, played some game or the other during their school or college days. Shri Mataji Herself was a declared champion of badminton in the state. She also played many Indian games and represented Nagpur from Her school to go and play in the provincial game contest.

He was also profoundly interested in the hunting of big game, particularly big man-killer tigers. During 1921-22, his highness the Maharaja of Khilchipur was undergoing the training of a judicial officer in Chhindwara. In addition to being a good sportsman, his highness was also a very good *shikari* (hunter). As a result, he and my father became very good friends. They used to go out for shikar very often, particularly on holidays. On one such outing, they had gone to hunt for wild game, so my father carried a heavy rifle, a number 301.

However, they did not see any big game. Instead they saw a herd of black buck. My father was such a good shooter that when he took aim and fired, the bullet pierced through one black buck and hit another one standing close by. His companions were prepared to pick up one black buck, but were astonished to see two dead by only one bullet. The Maharajah of Khilchipur was so impressed by his shooting ability that he presented him with a very rare rifle, which could kill even elephants.

Khilchipur is a small state in the centre of India, near Bhopal. After the training was over, the Maharajah returned to Khilchipur and, thereafter, invited all the members of my father's family to come and visit Khilchipur. My mother told me that Shri Mataji was just one year old when they went to Khilchipur, where they stayed as state guests for seven to ten days. Surprisingly, Shri Mataji remembers everything about Kilchipur.

My father was also known for his quick wit and presence of mind. One such instance he had related. During the post-World War period the officers were asked to do additional jobs because of the shortage of staff. There was a Muslim magistrate by the name of Abdul Subhan Khan, who was also given the additional job of being a treasury officer since the treasury work could not be kept pending due to the money involved. He would work in the treasury u n t i l 3 p.m. and after that he would start taking criminal cases that would go on until beyond sunset. Since my father's main practice was on the criminal side and because Abdul Subhan Khan would take the criminal cases from 3 p.m. onwards, my father had no free evenings for outside games. Colonel Ploughdon, the district magistrate, was also a keen cricketer. One evening when my father was there, Colonel Ploughdon saw that the nets were not put up for practice. The groundsman explained that the kit had to be kept at a long distance from the field and he had to bring it in installments on the back of a bicycle and hence the delay. The D.C. wanted an alternative solution. It so happened that Mr. Subhan Khan's house was the closest to the field. My father immediately suggested to the D.C. that the kit could be lodged at Subhan Khan's house and that he should be made in charge of preparing the nets in the evening. The D.C. agreed and asked the groundsman to call Mr. Subhan Khan immediately. The groundsman came without Subhan Khan as he was still in the courtroom. The D.C. was upset as to how an officer could be working beyond court hours, so he marched to his courtroom along with my

father, only to see that the court proceedings were in full swing even though it was beyond court hours. Mr. Subhan Khan stood up to welcome the D.C. and was fully expectant that the D.C. would appreciate his working late hours but, contrary to his expectations, the D.C. shouted at him and said that he had no business working so late. He thereafter asked Mr. Khan to accompany him to the cricket ground where he made him in charge of the nets and asked him to ensure that the nets were ready by 5 p.m. and gave him permission to leave the court five minutes before the courthouse were over. The D.C. also thanked my father for having made a very valid and useful suggestion. Thus, because of his wit and presence of mind, my father was free to play games in the evening.

He not only played cricket, but also hockey, football, billiards and tennis. Cricket and other sports had given him a lot of friends. The famous Justice Pollock, whose decisions are quoted even now, and who later became the judge of the Nagpur High Court, became a very good friend of my father while he was a trainee judicial officer in Chhindwara. Justice Pollock, as he became known later on, was a Cambridge Blue (honour given to cricketers of the Cambridge University). He was impressed by both the game my father played and the legal acumen showed by him. This friendship went a long way in building my father's career as a lawyer.

Justice Pollock and all his friends and associates were very impressed by the value-based living of the Salve family, who were Christians and all teetotalers. All of them had a religious base, but particularly my father, who was not a fundamentalist. He had respect for all religions and above all he respected human dignity, since he believed that all human beings were the creation of God, irrespective of caste, creed or religion. Honesty and judiciousness were two qualities which, when juxtaposed along with his liberal and love-able disposition, made him a very popular man wherever he went. His wife, Corneliabai, was also a major contributory factor in helping him keep his high value standards. Like him, she was extremely honest and frank. No doubt she was a great disciplinarian because she was a mathematician, but behind the hard shell of discipline we could always feel her warmth. I think that we children owe a lot to her also because, had it not been for her strict discipline and value system, most of us would not have been whatever we are today. I once remember asking Shri Mataji as to why She chose to be born into the Salve family and She told me it was primarily because of the virtuous parents of whom She could always be proud.

As mentioned earlier, after the birth of Narendra, my mother joined the Law College to do her LLB. At that time, Law College classes were being held part-time in the Morris College, Nagpur. As a result, she was required to come to Nagpur very often, but, because of the increasing burden of family responsibilities, she had to discontinue her studies. In the meanwhile, my father prospered as a criminal lawyer and had become one of the leading lawyers in Chhindwara and also in Nagpur.

In the middle of 1922, my mother was again in the family way and this time both my parents wished that it would be a girl. In the beginning of March 1923, when she was due for confinement, my mother expressed to her husband the desire to go and see an uncaged tiger in its natural environment. It is customary amongst the Indians to fulfill all the desires of a pregnant wife. This is based on the belief that whatever an expectant mother desires is really the desire of the unborn child. So in spite of the protest of the midwife attending on my mother, my father arranged a shikar in the nearby jungle. The traditional drumbeat, noise and clatter (known as *baka* in Hindi), which is required to drive out animals from their hiding places, was arranged, while my mother and father were seated on a *machan* (a place for a shikari which is generally on a tree-top). In due course of time, a huge tiger came in the firing range of my father and he aimed his rifle towards the animal. My mother took a closer look at the animal and realised that it was a tigress that was pregnant, so she immediately asked my father not to shoot. When he asked why he had been stopped, she replied that she wanted to see a living tiger and not one being killed. Moreover, she said that the tigress was going to deliver her cub soon and that made her feel motherly and therefore she did not want the tigress to be killed. My father then said jokingly that she might deliver Shri Durga, the Goddess who rides on a tiger. How prophetic that joke became will become clear as my story unfolds.

This event took place in the month of March 1923. During those days, there were no facilities of maternity houses or even lady gynecologists. The deliveries were usually done at home and that too by the midwife. One of my father's relatives was a midwife with a lot of experience, so her services were summoned. A small room in the middle of the house was allocated for the delivery. There were no signs of labour pain or any indication of the child to be born. Suddenly, on the morning of 21st March 1923, my mother started feeling as if there were labour pains and was shifted to the allotted room and

at the stroke of midday she delivered a very radiant, fair-looking, female child. The child had a spotless complexion and a head full of thick, black hair. The birth of this child was unique in the following ways:

- My mother suffered very little labour pain.
- The child hardly cried. In fact the midwife had to make Her cry.
- She had very bright, shining eyes and a very sweet smile.
- Her complexion was actually pink and was spotless and that's why, when Renukadevi saw her, she said that She was Nishkalanka, meaning without any blemish. Renukadevi said that this is the name of the tenth avatar of Vishnu, but she is a girl so she should be called Nirmala, meaning pure, immaculate. My mother also gave another name of Daisy after the name of her ideal teacher.
- She was born in the middle of the day on the 21st March, that is the day on which the sun completes its travel from the equator to the tropic of Cancer and heralds the beginning of bright sunshine, particularly in India. It is also the day when day and night are equally divided.
- The child was born in Chhindwara, which is located on the longitude of the Tropic of Cancer. Incidentally, the holy city of Mecca is also situated on the Tropic of Cancer.
- She was the first daughter of my mother though my father had three daughters from his earlier marriage.
- The child was born on a Wednesday, on which day so many other saints were born.
- She was born into a family that was not only royal, very pious and righteous, with a great sense of honesty and truthfulness, but that was also very liberal and respected all religions. Especially Her parents were scholars and very well versed in Sanskrit. They were extremely patriotic.

I will dwell at length, and at a later point of time, on the discussion I had with Shri Mataji about Her taking birth in this special family.

CHAPTER TWO: SHRI MATAJI'S CHILDHOOD IN CHHINDWARA, 1923 TO 1927

Shri Mataji, from childhood, was very playful and would go to anybody and everybody who called Her. She had a very sweet and charming smile, which was Her way of expressing joy to everyone.

In the year 1922, as mentioned earlier, my mother was studying for her law exams. She used to keep all her jewellery in one box and always used to carry it with her whenever she went to Nagpur. She was very particular about taking it out from either the car or the tonga (horse drawn carriage) when she reached Chhindwara, after her classes were over in Nagpur. Once she brought back some other luggage along with this wooden jewellery box and it so happened that, while getting down from the tonga, it started to rain. She had also the infant Narendra (who later became known by his initials N.K.P.), whom she would carry with her while going to the classes. In order to protect the child from the rain, she got out of the tonga in a hurry and asked the servant to take out the luggage. The wooden box of jewellery was kept in the front side of the tonga and, as a result, when the luggage was taken out, the servant forgot to take out jewellery box. The tonga was hired and as soon as the luggage was removed the tonga-driver went away with the tonga and the jewellery box. Some time later my mother asked the servant about the jewellery box and the servant pleaded ignorance, saying that he did not see any box in the tonga. My mother immediately told my father about the loss of the jewellery box and the matter was reported to the police station, which was adjoining the house. The police sprang into action immediately and went to the tonga-driver's house but the box could not be found. The loss of the box was more important because, among my mother's jewellery, it was a present from friends like Rai Bahudur Mathura Prasad and all the uncles and aunts. The loss of the jewellery box was considered to be a bad omen, not because of the money value, but because it was strongly believed in India that losing jewellery of the lady of the house would always follow with some peril or danger to the family.

On the fifteenth day after Shri Mataji's birth, they carried Shri Mataji for her christening to the church. My mother, Shri Mataji, my aunt and Uttam, her son, and other aunts were in a tonga and, while crossing the bridge of the Bodri River (a river running very close to the outskirts of Chhindwara), the wheel of the tonga broke. The horses started raising their body upwards and making funny sounds. Thus, the tonga broke in the middle and Shri Mataji fell between the two parts. My mother told me when the frames of the tonga were removed Shri Mataji was absolutely unhurt and smiling very sweetly.

About a month later, a fire broke out in the right wing of the house because Vimla spilled some kerosene out of the lantern which was near the fireplace. Luckily, the fire was brought under control before any serious damage could be done to life or property, but this again was considered to be a bad omen. As a result, my mother grew even more protective towards all her children and would not allow them even to go and play. Some would call it superstition, but the ladies of the house were of a different view and every lady started to protect her child. My mother was particularly careful about Shri Mataji because She was beautifully cute with a very fair complexion and very long black hair and extremely good looks and my mother was fearful that somebody might cast some evil or negativity on Shri Mataji.

It so happened that just a few months after all this had occurred, Uttam, my cousin, that is the son of Shantwan Uncle, fell seriously ill and eventually the illness proved to be fatal. He too was very handsome to look at and had very bright shining eyes, like Shri Mataji. The effect of the death of Uttam was immense on the entire Salve household and every relative focused their attention on Shri Mataji, lest She also suffer from some serious illness. However, Shri Mataji remained very cheerful and was always giving a smile to everyone, which was like an assurance that nothing could go wrong with Her.

At this time, my mother was expecting another child and it was decided by my parents that if they had a son they would give the son up for adoption to Uncle Shantwanrao. The loss of Uttam was so great to my father that he felt that the only way he could reduce the grief of my uncle was to give his next baby boy to my uncle. My mother readily accepted, such was the bond of the family and the love for each other.

A month or so after the death of Uttam, my mother went shopping along with Shri Mataji in her arms, who at that time was about six months old. The bazaar

where she went was not very far from the bungalow where we were staying. As she was returning in a tonga, she put Shri Mataji on the back seat and called the tonga-driver to help her climb the step to get to the back seat. As the driver came to help her, the horse, for unknown reason, started to move the carriage before my mother could get into the tonga. So a situation arose where the horse was carrying the tonga with Shri Mataji in the back seat, all alone, with my mother and the tonga-driver running after the carriage, shouting at people to stop the horse. However, instead of the horse stopping, it changed the speed from trotting to nearly galloping and the carriage was in a very fast motion. The distance between my mother and the tonga was increasing and, as the speed increased, my mother became apprehensive of something worse to happen. The unmanned carriage became a spectacle and everybody expected that an accident was imminent. The road on which the tonga was travelling terminated at a T-junction, where, if he had continued to go straight, he would have fallen into a ditch and, had he turned right, he would have gone in the opposite direction to our bungalow. To the surprise of everyone the horse reduced its speed and took a left turn towards the bungalow and then again started galloping. The bungalow was nearly half a mile away from the T-junction. My mother and the tonga-driver continued their pursuit in another tonga, which she hired on her way, but to no avail. As the tonga approached the bungalow the horse reduced its speed, started trotting and then stopped by himself right in front of the gate of the bungalow, looking backwards as if to see whether the occupant of his tonga was safe or not. When my mother reached the tonga, Shri Mataji, as my mother told me, was just lying on the back seat without crying or showing any signs of fear. She gave my mother her usual smile, which relieved my mother immensely. She hugged the child and was thankful to the Almighty for having saved her child. This was considered to be a miracle and everyone was surprised as to how an unmanned tonga could halt right in front of our bungalow carrying an infant who was not able to talk. I need not tell the readers as to who was guiding the horse, even though it was without a driver! This is just one event I have narrated to many people that shows Her Divine Power, even as an infant.

My mother was telling me that the only problem she had with Shri Mataji was Her long abundant hair and combing it was a big task, but then Shri Mataji would ask my mother to put a lot of oil on it so that the hair would untangle. As a child, Shri Mataji never troubled my mother, other than with Her hair. When Shri Mataji was to be baptised, my mother had a dream in which she

saw her own mother, who was saying that this daughter of hers is something special and therefore she should name the child after her mother, that is my maternal grandmother Shantabai. So next morning, my mother told my father about the dream, but he said that the name Nirmala would aptly describe the child's spotless complexion and the purity of Her smile. So it was decided that if the next child was a daughter then she would be named after my maternal grandmother.

On the 6th of May 1924 my brother delivered another baby girl. Both my parents were slightly disappointed, since they had wanted a son whom they could give in adoption to Uncle Shantwanrao. Since she was a girl, she was given the name Shantasheela.

Having three small children terminated all hopes of my mother becoming a lawyer and, as such, she gave up this desire. In the year 1926, a son was born to my mother on the 10th of June. He was named Vinaykumar, popularly known as Balasahib. In the year 1927, my father sold his bungalow in Chhindwara to Rai Bahadur Malak, who was the spiritual head of the Bohara community (a Muslim community segmented from the main stream of the Islamic religion). My father migrated to Nagpur on a permanent basis. Shri Mataji was then only four years of age.

Shri Mataji has a tremendous memory and She is very fond of animals. In the Chhindwara house, my father had kept a monkey, dog and parrot. They were free to move about. My mother told me that when they moved to Nagpur, Shri Mataji used to remember all those pets and call them by name. From childhood, She used to spread rice on the lawn for the sparrows and doves. She remembered our house in Chhindwara very clearly and one day She drew a map of the house absolutely perfectly. She also pointed out where She was born She even remembered Her birth and all those who were present. She remembered my elder uncle's house and his garden and later told about the river. Considering that She was only four years old, it was amazing how She recalls everything so clearly. She was very satisfied child and never used to cry even for milk. The milk was given to Her regularly, but once the maid forgot, but She did not even cry to say that She was hungry.

CHAPTER THREE: THE ADVENT OF THE BRITISH RAJ, 1927 TO 1933

At the time of Shri Mataji's birth, the British Raj was at its peak. It is relevant to mention here as to how and why the British came to India.

In the year 1599, the Dutch, who were trading spices with Great Britain, increased the price of spices by only five miserable shillings per pound of spice. This prompted the British traders to launch a company of their own in England. The company received its official sanction on the 31st December 1599, when Queen Elizabeth I signed a royal charter giving the company exclusive rights of trading with all countries beyond the Cape of Good Hope for an initial period of fifteen years.

Eight months later, a five hundred ton galleon named Hector dropped anchor in the little port of Surat, north of Bombay (now Mumbai). This happened on the 24th of August, 1600. Captain William Hawkins was the captain of the ship. Since he had heard of the prosperous and rich Indians, he began exploring the interiors for rubies, diamonds, gold and also pepper, ginger and indigo, that was available in abundance.

He eventually ended up in the court of Emperor Jehangir, who was ruling over seventy million subjects. Emperor Jehangir, who was hospitable to guests to a point of weakness, welcomed the captain with open arms. The mogul emperor not only made him a member of the royalty, but also showered on him many gifts including a very beautiful girl who was a member of his harem, baptized by the American Mission later on.

The emperor also signed a *firman* (order of the king) authorising the East India company to open a trading depot near Bombay, formerly known as Mumbai, meaning the Mother Amba. So in this way, the British arrived in India and changed the name of the cities as they could not pronounce the Indian names properly. My father used to say that to teach an Indian language to any Englishman was a hard line task. One fellow wanted to know how to tell his servant to open or close the door. So my father told him the Hindi sentences, how to open the door – “dawaze khol de” (said in English as “there

was a cold day”) – and to close the door – “dawaze band kha” (said in English as “there was a banker”). He said this would communicate clearly!

Soon the British business prospered, two ships took off from Indian ports for the UK every month, carrying with them spices, gum, sugar, raw silk, muslin, cotton and indigo, while returning with hoards of English manufacturers eager to set up business in India. The unsuspecting Indians were welcoming Britishers with open arms for two reasons. Firstly, they were very innocent people and were enticed by the big promises of the English traders and, secondly, the British showed no ulterior motive. In fact, they were initially interested in trading and business. But as soon as they saw the tremendous potential of Indian business, they started political and administrative set-up. The involvement in the policies of small rulers gave them the doctrine of “divide and rule” and thus the process of the bringing of the British Raj was initiated.

As a consequence, in addition to trading and manufactures, small numbers of British troops also started pouring into India. Since they had substantial interest in jute and jute-based products, their attention was focused on Bengal and the adjoining areas, being the highest jute producing area. Since some of the *zamindaras* (landowners) refused permission to the British to grow or trade in jute on their land, there arose a situation of open confrontation. One landlord owning land near Plassy, located near Bengal, drove away the illegal British from his land. The British retaliated and Robert Clive, who was heading the British army, fought a bloody war with the army of the zamindar and the adjoining rulers. This was known as the War of Plassy.

Historically, the War of Plassy proved to be the turning point or, so to say, the starting point of British imperialism. The petty bickering amongst the rulers, created by the British, made them as easy prey to the wiles and cunning of the British. Their “divide and rule” policy paid rich dividends. Their modus operandi was to encourage fighting between two rulers. They would side with one, offer him a little extra territory and then collect revenue for providing protection to him. In this way, though the ruler was by law the owner of the land, he was a slave to the British because of the revenue earnings. This trick could not be understood by the simple, straightforward Indians until the British were virtually ruling the country. This position continued unhindered and uninterrupted until 1857, nearly 256 years after their arrival in India.

In 1857, Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi declared war against the British. Ironically, though Indians were more in number, they did not have the weapons like guns and canons that the British had. Rani of Jhansi fought with homemade swords and bows. The Indians lost the war. The British termed this as mutiny and rebellion against the British Raj. In the war, the queen of Jhansi lost the war, but the way she fought for independence stunned the British and they said, “We have Jhansi, but the real heroine is Laxmibai,” who is adorned by her bravery. For Indians however, it was the beginning of the revolution for obtaining their freedom. This revolution started gathering momentum initially with stray instances of revolt, but as the British brutality and merciless killing of the innocent intensified, so the desire of the Indians to fight for their freedom strengthened. The more the British oppressed the movement, the stronger it emerged. By the end of the nineteenth century, the British had come to know that sooner or later they would have to leave India.

The First World War in the beginning of the twentieth century did give some respite to the British since the priorities had changed and even the Indians decided to fight the war. However, after the war ended, many great leaders joined together. Mahatma Gandhi appeared on the scene and Indians rallied around him as if the Messiah had arrived.

It was in 1925 that my father met Mahatma Gandhi for the first time. One evening when he was returning from the court on his way to the Nagpur Railway Station to go to Chhindwara, he saw a huge gathering of people at Kathurchand Park, which is on the way to the station. The gathering was being addressed by a very frail looking figure. Enquiry revealed that it was Mahatma Gandhi who was addressing the meeting. As mentioned earlier, my father was a nationalist and had heard about Mahatma Gandhi and his movement of non-violence. As such, out of curiosity, he attended the meeting. Mahatma Gandhi was talking about slavery to the British, India’s right to freedom and that every self-respecting Indian should join the non-violence movement because they were under bondage in their own motherland.

The impact of the speech on my father was immense, not only because he was an out-and-out nationalist, but also because he strongly believed that living with respect was not possible if you were a slave. Even though he was given a title by the British and even though he was a Christian, which meant a lot of privileges during the British regime, he felt the need to revolt against the British.

While travelling back to Chhindwara he pondered over the pros and cons of joining the nationalist movement of nonviolence. He consulted my mother who was also not in favour of slavery. As a result both of them decided to meet Gandhiji at his ashram in Sevagram (about eighty kilometers from Nagpur). My mother said that Gandhiji had impressed both of them very much because of his clarity of thinking and the strong belief and conviction he had in his non-violent movement. He urged my father to join the Congress. The British had no legal right to rule over India and it was the sovereign duty of all Indians to throw out the British, who had ruled over India without any sanctity, sanity or authority.

The meeting had the needed impact. My father returned from Sevagram to Chhindwara and my mother later told me that while returning my father looked very resolute and spoke very little. Obviously something was working in his mind. The first thing he did on his return to Chhindwara was to burn all his foreign-made suits, publicly, in an open square. As mentioned earlier, my father was very fond of clothes, but if he had to join the Congress, then he had to be a congressman in every respect. In burning all his suits in public, he established firstly his total detachment from the expensive suits that he had had made, also his total detachment from the money he had spent on them and, lastly, his complete detachment from the loss in status due to his not wearing suits. My father never had duality in his pursuit of the nationalist movement, quite unlike some of the leaders of that time like Moti Lai Nehru (father of Jawaharlal Nehru) and Muhammed Ali Jinnha. If my father was to be a nationalist then it had to be in the fullest sense, without compromise. I can well imagine the impact of burning of the clothes publicly on the people in and around Chhindwara, including the British. This was the first act of open defiance of my father towards the British. Thereafter both my father and mother started wearing *khadi* (cloth made out of hand-spun yarn) and were wearing khadi until they died.

In the year 1927, my father decided to shift to Nagpur at the request of Mahatma Gandhi to deal more effectively with criminal cases of people connected with the Congress movement. In 1930 Mahatma Gandhi started to protest against the levy of tax on salt, which was a vital commodity. His intention was to question how the Britishers, who were foreigners, could levy a tax on the Indians for salt made in India, by Indians! The famous Dandi march that he undertook from Sabarmati ashram to Dandi, a seashore village

in the Kutch area, symbolised his belief and conviction that the British had no right to rule India. This march had a magic effect on the masses and the whole nation stood up as one to fight the British.

In Nagpur, the local Congress leaders, which included my father and mother, had to go to jail very often. In the meantime the family size had also increased further. In 1928, after my father had shifted to Nagpur, another daughter, Indubala, was born, this on the 25th August. On the 28th June 1930 one more daughter, Shashikala, was born. During this period some deaths also occurred. My grandmother, Sakhubai died in 1925. Vimala, one of my sisters, died on the 1st November 1931.

The period between 1930 and 1933 was a time when the people of India were caught by the fervour of the freedom movement. My parents had to go for meetings practically every evening, while my father's practice as a criminal lawyer was flourishing. As my mother and father had very little time to look after the children and as the family was increasing, my parents always had to look out for bigger premises. The elders of the family were busy doing their schooling or college. In the year 1932, my elder sister, Urmila, got married to Neelkant Nagkar, who was working for the police, so she went away to her husband's place.

Since my mother had no time to attend to the household chores and since the elder brother and sisters (those elder to Shri Mataji) were busy in their studies or in other activities, Shri Mataji decided to shoulder the responsibility of running the house at the tiny age of seven or eight. She had already endeared Herself to one and all because of the qualities of Her head and heart and therefore running the house and meeting the various demands of the elders, as well as looking after the youngsters, came naturally to Her. Initially, my mother had reluctance in giving a child the charge of the whole house. However she soon realised that her daughter was very competent and had rare capabilities of handling not only the routine problems of attending to the daily household needs, but also of meeting the needs of the various relatives who always used to visit my father, he being hospitable to a point of weakness.

In 1932, my mother was again pregnant for the seventh time and she later told me that she was not very happy with the pregnancy. Not only did she have so many children to look after, but this pregnancy would greatly hamper the political activities that were now gathering momentum all over India. When

the child was about to be born she again expressed a desire to see an uncaged tiger, but that was not to happen since my father was too busy in politics and in his practice, so he took her to the local zoo and showed her a caged tiger. It was in these circumstances that I was born on the 2nd May 1933 in the house of Ratnam Babu Mudliar in Mohan Nagar, Nagpur.

CHAPTER FOUR: MY CHILDHOOD UNTIL THE MARRIAGE OF SHRI MATAJI, 1933 TO 1947

I was the twelfth child of my father and the seventh of my mother. Being the youngest in the family, all my brothers and sisters wanted to take care of me. Shri Mataji by now was ten years of age and, as I mentioned earlier, She was taking care of the household needs. Shri Mataji felt that my mother, because of her political activities, was not giving me the needed attention and, as a result, She started giving me Her protection. The earliest recollection I have of my childhood is of a stay in a big house belonging to Mr. Chitnavis located on the Ghat Road. This house was known as Kanch Bungala (bungalow of glass) because it had many windows projecting towards the main road and the windowpanes were made of multi-coloured glass.

In the year 1936, I think, we shifted premises and came to stay in New Colony, Nagpur in the bungalow of Mr. Baig. In the year 1937, my father was elected president of the Nagpur Municipality, which post he held until 1939. In that year, two major events took place in my life. The first was that I was forced to go to school, which, like most children, I did not like at all, but since I was the son of the Mayor of Nagpur, the teacher was lenient and allowed me to come and go as I wished. However, every time I returned home early, my mother promptly dispatched me back to the school. I said earlier that it was a major event because Shri Mataji, at that early age, told me the importance of education and of making a career in life. Much to my dislike, I however agreed to go to school. The advice that She gave me at that time can be considered to be the foundation of my educational background. The other event was my exposure to the meaning of death.

Kadir, the youngest son of Mr. Baig, died of pneumonia at the very tender age of twelve or thirteen. Though he was older to me by quite some years, he and I were great friends and it was beyond my understanding as to how an innocent and loving person like him could suffer the penalty of death. That night I remember having asked Shri Mataji about death and She tried to explain to me that one day everybody has to die, but people like Kadir will live in people's thoughts because of his qualities. Honestly speaking, I did not

understand very much of what She was saying. To a child of six, it was quite incomprehensible that a man can live though he is dead! Many years later, during one of Her speeches, She mentioned that death is an integral part of life and that what dies is what is born, but what does not die is not born, meaning the soul. She also mentioned in the same speech that the qualities and values of a human being perpetuate and keep on perpetuating even after his death. To me, at that tender age, Kadir's death was a cruelty inflicted on him by God, but the speech of Shri Mataji has now given me the true meaning of death, that though a man is dead, he can yet live on in the thoughts of people or in history, like great men of patriotism or spirituality.

My father kept a cow so that we could have pure milk. The cow had a peculiar habit of running away for grazing and the milkman, who was kept for looking after her, was never able to find her. I somehow knew all her hiding places, so when the milkman returned empty handed my mother would send me to fetch the cow. When I found the cow, I used to give her a good shouting and she used to give me a patient hearing (or so I thought). While bringing her home, I used to give her a piece of advice and I used to feel like a cowherd. All the family members used to make a lot of fun of me on this account.

During the summertime, we used to sleep out in the open, each member of the family had a bed for him- or herself. My mother, being a strict disciplinarian, gave strict instructions that everybody should sleep in his or her own bed and that there should be no sharing with other brothers or sisters. She, however, used to go away with my father for political meetings and there was a tacit understanding between Shri Mataji and I that, whenever my mother was away, I would sneak into Her bed and She would cuddle me in Her arms. However, I was to ensure that the appearance of my bed was as if someone was sleeping there. This was achieved by arranging the pillows under a cover in such a way that the bed gave the appearance of a person sleeping under the cover. Since early in the morning both my parents would go for a walk, Shri Mataji used to wake me up and I used to sneak back into my bed, unnoticed, before my parents went for their walk. This operation went on successfully until one night, unscheduled, my mother came for an inspection. When she saw me in the bed of Shri Mataji, I pretended that I was fast asleep. My heart was beating very fast since I knew that I was in for punishment, but I was again protected by Shri Mataji. She told my mother, "because I was feeling that Baba was scared," and that She had asked me to come and sleep with Her. This gesture

of Hers really made me feel very protected and I also understood that my true well-wisher and protector was Shri Mataji and that if I had to be protected against my mother's discipline, then it would be Shri Mataji who would do it.

Shri Mataji always used to tell us that behind the sternness and discipline of my mother, there was benevolence and that what she wanted was only for our good. Today, as I reflect, I understand and appreciate the value system that my mother instilled in us. What we resented as children is now revered by us like the gospel of truth.

In the beginning of 1940, we again shifted premises and came to the Mount Road bungalow. My father's practice had flourished and we had a car and a tonga and several servants to attend to us. We had a driver known as Dhondya with whom I became very friendly. He taught me all the mechanics of the car and, because of my keen interest, I was very quick to learn. It was a dream for me to become an automobile engineer. Shri Mataji, however, used to say that there is no originality in repairing machines. Instead, She used to suggest that if I had to become an engineer, I should become a civil engineer so that I could show my originality by constructing cheap and innovative houses and thus help build rural India. She used to say that She wanted to become a doctor and also serve the poor Indians living in the rural areas. This may sound paradoxical in the context of the fact that we were living a very, very comfortable (if not luxurious) life and yet thinking of the suffering Indians. This only shows the bend of mind of Shri Mataji right from the beginning. I remember the plans we made in our youth. The first condition was that neither of us was going to get married. We would live in a cottage in the jungle and serve rural India to the best of our ability. She used to encourage my imagination lest I become involved in the temptations facing a young boy.

When my father was arrested and jailed in the year 1931 both my sisters were rusticated from the missionary school. The church also threw us out, but when my father came out of jail and became the mayor they all changed in their attitude towards our family. As we shifted premises, my mother also changed my school. It was an unwritten law of the family that none of us would attend the missionary schools. This was so, primarily because the schools with English medium were pro-British and both my parents felt that the education given in vernacular language would be of immense help in understanding the culture and heritage of our great country. So initially, I went to a primary school known as the Chokahamela, named after a saint who was from the

untouchable (*harijana*) class. Then I switched over to a school known as Tekdi (hill) School run by the municipality, since the school was situated on a hilltop next to the government house.

Being the son of the mayor of Nagpur, it was too humiliating for me to sit on the ground, that too on strips of carpets. So one day my ego really worked up and I went to the teacher and I said it was very difficult for me to sit on the ground since, not only was it very cold, but it was also uncomfortable. The poor teacher who feared that his job might be at stake offered me his chair and I felt very elated. However, to my misfortune (or should I say to my fortune!), the matter was reported to my mother and it was too much for her to accept that her son was being given preferential treatment just because he was the son of the mayor. She promptly took me to school the next day and made me sit on the floor and warned the teacher that he would lose his job if any preferential treatment were shown to her son. You can well imagine the dilemma the teacher was in. I must however, admit that, though at that point of time, I had a very bitter feeling for my mother. The drubbing that my ego got went a long way in making me humbler and more self-reliant.

My hatred of school continued unmitigated and I always used to find excuses to somehow avoid going. Initially I found the toilet the safest place to be in between 9:30 and 10:30 in the morning but my mother was too smart and she used to lock the toilet from outside from 9 a.m. onwards until everybody went to school. I found yet another excuse. I forgot to mention earlier that I started playing tabla at the tender age of five and, by the time, I was six my father had bought me a small pair of tablas suiting my small hands.

I had become quite an expert in playing tabla and I was aware that my father had quite an admiration for my being able to play tabla at such a tender age. Promptly, at 9:30 a.m. (just before my school time), I would take out the tabla and start practising. When my mother would first entreat me and then order me to go to school, I would pose as though lost in the rhythm of the tabla and I would request her not to disturb me. My father would invariably support me and as soon, as he left for court, I would leave the tabla and go out and play cricket with the children of the washermen and butlers, who were allotted outhouses by the British officers staying close-by. Although I enjoyed the company of these boys, my mother did not approve of it one bit because, among other things, their fathers used to drink, they had no educational background and, above all, I was doing this at the cost of my schooling. This

was like committing a sin to my mother, so she promptly lodged a complaint with my father, saying that I was misusing my father's support. My father immediately agreed not to support me any more, at least not at the cost of my studies. So even this excuse of mine did not work and I was back in the school again.

There is another interesting story about my primary school days. My mother had appointed a teacher to teach me and my sister, Shashi. Over a period of time we convinced him that playing cards was very useful and fruitful, rather than teaching us. The poor teacher had no option but to accede to our wish, since we were the children of the ex-mayor. So most of the time we used to play cards, except on the days of inspection by my mother. On the day of our inspection, we would pretend that we were studying very hard, which kept her happy. This drama went on for a couple of months, but had an abrupt ending when, on an unscheduled date, my mother walked into the room while we were playing cards with the teacher instead of studying. My teacher's back was towards the entrance of the room, while I was facing the entrance. As soon as I saw my mother, I threw down the cards and gave an accusing look to the teacher and said to him that he had no intention of teaching us so that we could pass the exam. Seeing the sudden change in my stance, the teacher was totally perplexed, but before he could defend himself, my mother had already unleashed her anger on him with harsh scolding and he was asked to stop teaching us forthwith. Both my sister and I had put on a very innocent look, but we also felt bad because, due to our mischief, the poor teacher had lost his job. Later on, we did go and apologise to him. Such were my days of schooling.

It is in the Sadar House that my sister, Shantatai, started to learn Indian classical music, while Balasahib was learning tabla. I was immensely impressed by the endless creativity of Indian classical music. All my friends around me were either children of Anglo-Indian families or brown sahibs and they used to sing western songs. I was, however, always drawn to Indian classical music. I think that the foundation of my appreciation for Indian music was laid in the formative years of my life. Shashi, my other sister, was singing and Shri Mataji also had a very sweet singing voice, which She lost later because of the innumerable speeches She had to give during the propagation of Sahaja Yoga. I never had any formal education in playing tabla, but it was my natural flair that enabled me to play to a certain standard in my younger days.

It was from this house that Shri Mataji used to walk every morning to go to a secluded temple known as the temple of Mother Lodrus. I was Her constant companion. She used to sit in a corner and meditate, so I thought, but She recently explained to me that in fact She used to contemplate how to help the people of the world to get rid of their problems by raising Kundalini collectively. The one thing that really impressed me as a child was that the statue of Mother Lodrus (which is now replaced by a new statue) bore such a resemblance to Shri Mataji that I thought the sculptor must have had Shri Mataji in his imagination while sculpting the statue. Also the morning breeze was so refreshing and energising that most of the time I used to run ahead of Shri Mataji to exhaust the energy. She would also feel very refreshed after the morning walk.

This temple was built by the missionaries, who were teaching in a local school, but this Goddess does not represent any particular community or religion. In fact, She is worshipped mostly by the poor non-Christian community not only to fulfill their needs and desires, but also because of the peace and love flowing from Her. Even today, thousands go to worship Her.

Though we were staying in a locality of Anglo-Indian and brown sahibs, that had a lot of nearby schools run by the missionaries, my parents did not want us to go to these schools. I was to go to a school that was close to my house, but the other children of the family had to go to very far-off schools. It was the discipline of the house to send children walking, even if the schools were located far-off. Shri Mataji and my sister, Shantatai, also had to walk.

One of the important reasons why my father had shifted to Nagpur was because he wanted his children to have a good education, which he felt was not available in Chhindwara. Early schooling was available at various schools including St. Ursula's. Shri Mataji joined the Bhide Girls' High School located in the Sitaburdy area. This school was quite a distance (about six or seven kilometers) from our Sadar house, yet, as mentioned above, the children had to walk the entire distance. To cut short the distance, both Shri Mataji and Shantatai would climb a hillock known as the Sitaburdy Tekdi, which would save some distance. They also used to enjoy the adventure of climbing the hillock. One day during monsoon season it had rained heavily and a small nallah (stream), which generally used to be dry, was overflowing and had tremendous force in its current. That day an escort was sent to bring them back home, since the car was undergoing repairs. As they were crossing the tekdi,

black clouds started gathering and, before they knew it, it had started to rain heavily. By the time they came to the stream, the stream had swollen and, seeing the force of the stream, Shantatai did not want to cross, but Shri Mataji was determined to cross. Shantatai, as is known to all of us, was a timid child, very scared to take risks, but Shri Mataji was just the contrary: brave and undaunted by fear. Seeing the condition of Shantatai, the servant picked her up in his arms and carried her across the stream. Having crossed, the servant was about to turn and help Shri Mataji when they heard a shout. Shri Mataji, it seems, had decided to cross the stream on Her own, but She soon realised that the current was very strong. As She started drifting, She held onto a tree firmly and the servant approached and pulled Her out of the stream. Such was the adventurous nature of Shri Mataji. Whenever the occasion arose, Shri Mataji used to prefer walking, while Shantatai preferred to go either by car or by tonga. Shri Mataji also had the habit of walking barefoot. My mother used to insist on Her wearing chappals, but She, on the way, used to remove the chappals and, holding them in her hand, would walk barefoot. Shri Mataji was full of kindness and compassion towards the poor. She also had immense patience. Once when a poor friend in the house said that there was no food for her to eat in her house, Shri Mataji gave away bags full of grain from the stock of grain we used to have in our house. This disturbed my mother a lot, but, knowing Shri Mataji and Her generous heart, my mother tolerated Her so-called misdeeds. She always used to tell us that Shri Mataji is moved immensely by the sufferings of the poor and She gets tears in Her eyes, sometimes flowing down Her cheeks.

There have been ample instances where this nature of Shri Mataji has been exploited by many people who posed about their sufferings and miseries, but She never stopped, in spite of the fact that She knew Her goodness was being exploited.

Shri Mataji was a very good nurse also. When Balasahib was down with typhoid, She was all the time nursing him along with my mother. An ice pack used to be laid on his head to bring down his fever. He was not able to talk for nearly a month because of the illness. My father, who was the mayor then, decided to shift us to Kamptee, just fifteen kilometers away from Nagpur. Since Balasahib was not speaking, Shri Mataji developed a language of speaking through action. If he showed two fingers that meant he was agreeing to eat what was to be served or had already been served and if he showed one

finger that meant no. During those days he used to read books written by Robert Blake and Sexton Blake. One day Shri Mataji asked him as to which book he would like to read and Balasahib mumbled, "Sexton Blake." This is how, because of Her nursing him, She made Balasahib talk. Next time she asked him whose musical record he would listen to, She told the names of many musicians. Balasahib pronounced with difficulty the name of Pannalal Ghosh and after that he started speaking very well.

My mother went to jail five times and Shri Mataji used to be in charge of the household.

On the political front, the years 1939-1941 saw a lot of ups and downs for Congress. In the year 1939, Congress held its annual session in Tripuri on the banks of river Narmada near Jabalpur. This session was attended not only by my father, who was the president of the Tripuri Congress Committee, my mother and Shri Mataji, but also by all other members of the family including me. Though I was just six year old then, I vividly remember the mammoth gathering. Important leaders like Jawahar Lai Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and, of course, Gandhiji were seated on the dais. This is the time when the frequency of visits to Wardha by both my parents and Shri Mataji had increased. Gandhiji used to call Shri Mataji "Nepali" because he said She had features like Sita (Goddess), who was from Nepal. When my father went to see Mahatma Gandhi with all the members of the family, Gandhiji said, "Which one of your children should I take for national work?" and Gandhiji picked up Shri Mataji. At the age of seven years, Shri Mataji was very much loved and appreciated by Mahatma.

Shri Mataji continued her education during these days and so did the other children. In the primary school, She was selected to act as Shri Krishna in a dance and She did it so well that everyone started calling Her Krishna. Even my father's friend used to call Her Krishna. For the academic year 1938-1939, Shri Mataji was studying in the Bhide Girls' High School in the tenth standard (pre-matriculation) The school was mostly for the brahmin girls. Shri Mataji was very popular. The brahmin girls were afraid to share her lunch because She was a Christian, but they loved it very much. They used to hide behind the school and share the lunch with her. Recently, Her friends wanted to give Her a big reception for Sahaja Yoga, but She avoided it. She was a very bright student and was particularly good in languages and in mathematics. Her mathematics teacher was a brahmin and Shri Mataji was the only

Christian girl. He was very fond of flattery and praise, but Shri Mataji never liked to praise or flatter somebody unnecessarily. As a result the teacher took a strong disliking to Shri Mataji and he was always taunting Her for Her frank and outspoken words against the caste system. His dislike for Shri Mataji grew over a period of time so much so that in spite of Shri Mataji solving all the problems correctly, he failed Her in the final mathematics exam. This was done out of a spiteful attitude. Shri Mataji reported the matter to my parents and both my parents and Shri Mataji went to meet the principal. He was a junior to my mother in Ferguson College, Pune, therefore my mother was very confident that she would be able to convince him. What transpired, however, was contrary to my mother's expectations. The principal refused to promote Her to the next class if She wanted to take mathematics as a subject. My mother and Shri Mataji suggested that Her paper be re-examined. This request was also denied. Seeing her prejudiced attitude, my parents decided to shift Her to a school known as Seva Sadan. The principal of the school, Mr. Garud, was a good friend of my father and readily agreed to take Shri Mataji in the tenth standard, which was equivalent of matriculation in their school, so in this way Shri Mataji did not lose any year in Her education.

She always won awards for acting in school drama and She was the head of the school. Moreover, Mr. Garud made Her stay in the hostel. Mr. Garud was a brahmin and a vegetarian. He would boil two eggs for Shri Mataji and would hide them in his coat pocket and secretly give them to Shri Mataji to eat and then he would take the shells to be disposed secretly. He would wrap them in a paper and put it in his pocket. He was a great friend of my father and he cared for Shri Mataji because She was living in the Seva Sadan hostel which was absolutely vegetarian.

In the year 1940, Shri Mataji qualified in Her matriculation examination. She got distinctions in Marathi, English language and mathematics. She had scored good marks, therefore getting admission into a science faculty was not a problem. As mentioned earlier, She had a keen interest in medicine. She used to say that India needed a lot of good doctors, particularly in the rural areas. However, it transpires now that She took medicine studies so that She would be able to better explain the activity of Kundalini, particularly to intellectuals and practitioners. Kundalini is explained in Ayurveda but it is said that the raising of the Kundalini is beyond ordinary human beings.

Her elder brother, Narendra, was studying in Lucknow University and he had praised the Lucknow University, stating that the standard of education was better and higher at the Lucknow University as compared to the Nagpur University. Since my parents were anxious to give their children the best education, they decided to send Shri Mataji to Lucknow. Accordingly, She took admission in the Isabella Thoban (IT) College, Lucknow. I remember that whenever She used to return home for Diwali or Christmas vacation, She used to bring small presents for all the members of the family, while my brother, who also used to come home for vacations, would come empty-handed. His explanation was that the money sent to him was not adequate to meet his requirements, though Shri Mataji, who used to get less money than he did, could always save enough to buy presents for us. As a result, we always used to look forward to Her return, rather than to our brother's return. Presents no doubt were a great source of joy, but we also used to enjoy the warmth and love that She would always give us. My elder brother was very fond of clothes. One day he got after my mother that he wanted to have a longer size coat and mother had to make it for him. She had a special tolerance for him and always used to give him a better deal.

While in Nagpur, Shri Mataji fractured Her right hand when She fell down while playing badminton. This happened very close to the annual exam during December holidays. When we went to hospital with Her, one Dr. Ragilal fixed Her arm. He asked Her if She could bear the pain and he fixed her arm without anaesthesia. He was overwhelmed and told my father that he had a Goddess Durga as his daughter. As She was a first year student and since the first year exam is a college exam rather than a university exam, She requested the authorities to allow Her to take Her exam after the plaster of the right hand was removed. The college authorities denied this request and, as a result, She had to return to Nagpur without taking the first year examination. My parents then decided to admit Her in the local College of Science (now known as the Institute of Science) and that is how She started going to the Science College in Nagpur.

At this time, my father was appointed as public prosecutor in the year 1939-40. As a prosecutor he fought many cases. There was one murder case, however, which is even today considered a leading case on circumstantial evidence. Since the case is very interesting, I am narrating it below, briefly.

A father-in-law had developed an illicit feeling with his own daughter-in-law who was an innocent girl from a village in Gujarat. He threatened her with dire consequences and, as such, the girl had to meekly submit herself to his desires. The son (husband of the girl), however, came to know about it and told his father that he would have to be exposed to society for committing such a heinous and sinful crime. The father, feeling very ashamed of himself, decided to kill his own son. Seizing an opportunity, the father shot the son in the back, at point-blank range, from a window which was behind him and with a very powerful, long-barrelled gun. The bullet entered the body from the back and came out through his chest in the front. As a result, the son died on the spot. This incident was seen by the wife. The father managed to bribe the medical authorities to make a favourable medical report, but the police suspected foul play. However, the body in the meantime was cremated, without police verification, and the shirt that the son was wearing at the time of the murder was given away to a washer man to destroy.

The case for the defence was that the son was fed up with his life and therefore committed suicide by pulling the trigger of the gun with his toe and placing the gun barrel on his chest. The only evidence that would have clinched the case in favour of the prosecution was the shirt. So my father launched a big hunt for the shirt, which was said to have been thrown away in the River Kanhan. After three or four days of searching the shirt was found stuck to a piece of driftwood. Luckily, the area where the bullet had entered and come out was intact. The shirt had a spray of gunpowder at the back. Also, the hole where the bullet had entered was small, while the hole in the front where the bullet had come out was larger than the hole at the back and there was no spray of gunpowder in the front. My father pleaded that, as a rule, that portion of the body where the bullet enters has a small hole, while the portion of the body from where it comes out has a larger hole because of the grooving movement of the bullet. He also argued that if the person is shot at point-blank range there is a spray of gunpowder. Since there was no spray of gunpowder in the front, the theory of the defence, that the victim had killed himself pulling the trigger of the gun and placing the gun-barrel on his chest, was untenable. The defence counsel, barrister Kedar, argued that what my father was saying could only be said by a ballistics expert and, since my father was not a ballistics expert, it was a layman's opinion and therefore the court was not bound to accept it.

The judge, who was an Englishman, was very fair-minded and sent all the evidence and the argument of my father to the Bombay police and then to Scotland Yard. The ballistics experts in both these agencies agreed in total with my father's theory and consequently, through the circumstantial evidence, the suspect was sentenced to life imprisonment.

In the beginning of 1942, Gandhiji, having seen the futility of negotiations with the British, decided to launch the Quit India movement. He asked all the congressmen to intensify the non-cooperation and disobedience to the British law. My father was a public prosecutor at that time and the first thing he did was to resign the post. There was a Union Jack flying on top of the high court and, as a true follower of Gandhiji, he climbed to the roof of the high court and tore down the Union Jack. We were told by him that we all should sing *Vande Mataram*. He was shot by the British on his left temple and he was bleeding profusely, but he hoisted our tri-colour flag and waited until it was flying freely, then he said, "Vande Mataram" loudly and saluted the flag. The Britishers were extremely agitated by this act and he returned home early to tell my mother that he was expecting guests and that she should prepare biryani (a special rice dish). My mother knew what he meant by "guests" as he had already told her that, though he was shot in his temple, the British would not wait.

I vividly remember the event. It was a Saturday and when the "guests" had not arrived by three o'clock, he asked the children to go and see a movie in the palace theatre, which was at walking distance, now known as Bharat Talkies. I, however, stayed back, as I did not like the darkness in the cinema hall. At 3:30 p.m., one Mr. Mustaq Ahemad, a friend of the family and an inspector of police, came along with his two assistants. My father welcomed him with both hands, as was his tradition, and he requested my mother to lay the table. In the meanwhile, I was asked to go and fetch my brothers and sister. I went along with the servant to the theatre and met the manager and requested him to display a slide on the screen. The slide read, "P.K. Salve is being arrested. His children should return home immediately." As soon as the slide was displayed on the screen practically the entire audience left along with the children, just to pay their respects to the arrested P.K. Salve. As the children got together, my father came to us and said not to cry, but to shout, "Vande Mataram" (which means, "I salute You, Oh Motherland"). This song was written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya and was used as a national anthem even

when we got our freedom, but some Muslim leaders raised the objection because it was written in Sanskrit and because it sang the praise of the motherland as Durga the Goddess. So this great song, which pulsated in the veins of all the Indians fighting for their freedom, was not accepted by the government.

Then my father asked the inspector whether he would take him handcuffed or not. The inspector was totally speechless and he only said, “Salve Sahib, arresting you as it is, is weighing very heavily on my conscience. Please do not ask me to handcuff you and add to my guilt.” Then my father asked the inspector if he would like to take my father in his van or would he like to take him in our car. One of the cars we owned was a beautiful Chevrolet convertible and Mustaq Ahemad said that he would be honoured to take him in our car, so my father asked the driver to fold down the hood of the car. He stood in the middle with the two escorts sitting on either side and shouted loudly, “Vande Mataram,” and as the car started to move, the crowd followed it for quite some distance. My mother did not cry, but shouted, “Vande Mataram” with tears in her eyes. Such was the patriotism of my father, and that is why all of us brothers and sisters, and more particularly Shri Mataji, hold my father in such great esteem and respect.

In August 1942, my father was in jail and the family was under financial stress. At such a juncture, Shri Mataji, who was studying in the Science College, decided to stop Her college on the 15th of August, our Independence Day, by picketing in front of the gate. My mother, though very conservative, did not object to Her political activity. As a protest, Shri Mataji decided to picket in front of Her college and stop all the students who were trying to enter. The principal of the college was a good friend of the family, but he got orders from the British authorities to rusticate anybody who picketed or disobeyed the college rules. Mr. Krishnamurti, who was vice principal, was asked to go and persuade Shri Mataji to stop and to say that if She did not stop picketing, She would be given a college-leaving certificate. In those days, rustication meant that you could not seek admission into any other college. This proposal, when put to Shri Mataji, was refused immediately and She said that She would rather be rusticated than take favours from college authorities run by the British. Mr. Krishnamurti, having failed in persuading Shri Mataji from picketing, went back to the principal, Mr. Shabde, who was very much for the British, who dictated a letter rusticating Shri Mataji for obstructing students

from coming to class, inciting disobedience and protesting against the running of the college. With great reluctance Mr. Krishnamurti handed the letter of rustication over to Shri Mataji. It is interesting to note that, after retirement, he settled down in Pune. In the year 1991, I think, an elderly Mr. Krishnamurti came and met Shri Mataji, touched Her Lotus Feet and said that he was ashamed that he had rusticated such a divine personality, but that having touched Her feet, all his past sins were washed away. Shri Mataji was very moved by his gesture and She said that what he had done then was his duty to the college and what She had done then was her duty to the nation, so there was no sin committed. At any rate, She never had any grievance or dislike for him as he was a very noble soul. He said that when he saw Her facing the British soldiers and their guns fearlessly, he thought, "She is the incarnation of Durga."

There was one more reason for Her rustication. There was one Mr. Paul, who was a very good friend of the family and was the director of education. His son was a college classmate of Shri Mataji. On the day She was picketing, She told Paul Junior that, if he was a true Indian, he would not go to the class, but would help Her picket. Instead, Paul Junior, who was a typical example of a brown Sahib, flatly refused and, in fact, openly criticised Gandhiji and his non-violent movement. He further said that he was very happy under the British rule and that, at any rate, India could never achieve freedom through a movement of non-violence. He said India could never achieve freedom through a movement of non-violence because they were incompetent. Hearing this, Shri Mataji and Her friends removed their bangles and offered them to him. (In India, wearing of bangles by men is synonymous with effemininity, cowardice and timidity). This angered Paul Junior immensely and the matter was reported to his father, Mr. Paul, who, in spite of his friendship with my father, saw to it that Shri Mataji was rusticated.

There is another event that I would like to mention. One day Shri Mataji decided to picket in front of St. Ursula High School (this is the same school where my mother had been headmistress in the year 1919). Shri Mataji was holding an Indian flag in Her hand and standing in front of the gate and, in protest, pleaded with the students to go home. She was awaiting a bus that was to bring students from far-away places. As She saw the bus approaching, She lay Herself on the ground, right in front of the gate so that the bus could not go into the school compound. The school authorities, who saw all this, sent a

peon (messenger boy), who stopped the bus about a hundred yards from the gate. I was standing close to Shri Mataji and I could not tolerate Her just lying on the ground without anything underneath Her, so I decided to run home to bring a carpet for Her. While I was running home, I could hear the peon boy telling the driver to take a different route to go to the school. At any rate, my priority was to bring a carpet for Shri Mataji, so I ran home and got hold of a carpet and ran back only to find that a lot of police were around Shri Mataji. The bus had taken the road from a side gate to enter the school premises. Shri Mataji was standing and holding the flag and shouting slogans asking the British to leave India. After that, Shri Mataji was taken in a van to a police station where they tortured Her physically by putting Her on ice slabs. They also gave Her electric shocks. They let her go after a warning that, if She raised any slogans against the British or picketed before any institution, She would be put in jail. Her immediate reaction was that the Indians were already in jail since they did not have their freedom, so for Her, it did not make any difference whether She was outside or inside the jail.

As it is, She was rusticated from the college and She could not seek admission in any other college in our state. Sitting idle at home was beyond Her, particularly when the Quit India movement was at its peak. So one day She declared to my mother that She had decided to join a group that was doing underground work. They were distributing pamphlets and leaflets amongst the people and also posterings.

My mother was very conservative in her way of living and would never even have allowed her eighteen-year-old daughter, who was so beautiful to look at, to go alone to the market without an escort. The same mother, however, allowed Shri Mataji this risky assignment, which could have even meant long imprisonment or losing Her life if She was involved in an encounter with the British firing squad. To my mother, her children were very precious, particularly Shri Mataji, but the freedom of the nation was more precious and had the highest priority. So she allowed Shri Mataji to go underground.

One evening many years later, while I was looking after my mother and talking to her about this incident, I teasingly told her that she had different standards, one for the girls and one for the boys. I told her that she was very strict with the boys, but very lenient with the girls and that allowing Shri Mataji at that young age to go underground was a glaring example of her preferential treatment towards the girls. She answered me in all seriousness that, though

she did not like the idea of a young girl going underground, at that juncture in 1942 the nation had needed Her much more than her mother. Moreover, she told me that Shri Mataji was a very strong charactered personality. Much against her principles and conviction, my mother had allowed Shri Mataji to go underground.

Shri Mataji's group leader was one Thakur Niranjana Singh, an elderly gentleman who was committed to throwing the British out. Their underground activities included travelling from village to village, town to town and city to city, making people aware of the need to drive away the British and free themselves from slavery. This had to be done without being noticed by the vigilant British authorities. The job also included distribution of anti-British pamphlets. I remember Shri Mataji storing such pamphlets in our house. She used to sneak into the house at the most unexpected times of the night, collect the pamphlets and sneak out again. The British got the tip-off that some sort of subversive activity was going on in the house, so they raided the house, but were not able to find anything. My mother used to hide the pamphlets under the stack of grain that she was required to keep, as she had opened up a shop in the house selling hand-pounded rice and jaggery. She was working as an agent of an organisation run by Mahatma Gandhi known as Gram Udyog (cottage industry).

Since my father was the only earning member of the family, the income of the family had dropped substantially and, in order to keep the children properly fed, the assets of the house were sold, one by one, to meet the daily expenditure. To add to the problem, one of my sisters, Shanta Sheela (Shantatai), became critically ill with summer diarrhoea, which can sometimes prove fatal. So my mother had to sell some of her jewellery to raise the money to treat her. It was so bad then that we were not even able to pay the bills of the big house.

During the academic year 1942-43, some of us had to discontinue our education. I need not have, but I also managed to avoid one year's education. Due to rustication, Shri Mataji had lost one year, but was very anxious to continue Her studies as well as Her political activities. The year 1942-43 was a year of turmoil and a year of great hardship for the family. As mentioned earlier, due to lack of funds, we could not afford to pay the different bills and taxes of the premises we were occupying on the Mount Road, so we shifted to

smaller premises known as Buti ki Chawl, in Sitaburdy. Everyone was taught to live frugally and to avoid wasteful expenditure.

There are many interesting episodes of Shri Mataji's underground work during the freedom struggle. Once, She was made to carry a box full of explosives to Bombay. There was a friend travelling with her and suddenly they heard the police were coming to their hotel called Madhava Ashram. Shri Mataji tied a rope to the box and hung it outside the window. When the police came to search, they could not find anything in the room and they left.

Another time, She had to go to Mumbai with a friend to escort one Mr. Bagri who was very tall. They were all dressed up like Muslim women in burkas. When they passed the police station, the police inspector inquired about the tall lady. When he went to report inside the station, the driver drove the car very fast and the police chased them up to a point on a motorbike. The driver took the car into a jungle and dropped the three persons in the midst of a very thick jungle. They stayed there for three days without food, but there was a stream of water by which they managed to survive. Then the driver brought the car and took them back to Mumbai.

Once they were travelling by bus to Ujjain, the man sitting next to them was Niranjan Singh. When he asked where the girls were going, he was told that they were going for their marriage settlement. He was going to meet a party whose names he did not disclose. He offered Shri Mataji and her friends hospitality in his house. His wife was overcome with love for Shri Mataji and gave her a sari. When Shri Mataji told the hosts the real purpose of Her work, that they had to meet some absconders from jail and take them to Delhi, the hosts became very emotional and said, "If such innocent young girls are fighting for the freedom of our country, then what are we doing?" and they also joined. After three days, the party left for Delhi by car via Kota where they stayed for two days. She still remembers the beautiful lake in Kota surrounded by very beautiful scenery. They went to Delhi with five absconders and stayed in the house of a fellow patriot. They had to secretly take these people to the Unani Medical School. Many boys were standing on the road and, as soon as they saw the two young girls approaching, they started behaving like monkeys, some climbed up trees, some hung on branches and some started clapping. Instead of getting frightened, Shri Mataji started laughing loudly and all the monkeys came down surprised by Her fearlessness. It was a very amusing

situation because Shri Mataji had never seen such a thing in Maharashtra where men respect women. That was the first time She visited Delhi.

When She returned home, She was very cheerful, but Her mother said that she had become very weak. She replied that her mother said this because she did not want Her to go back, but now there was no way that she could retrace Her steps because She had taken up the task of releasing our motherland from the clutches of the British.

For nine months She stayed underground. Niranjn Singh was arrested and put in jail with a rigorous imprisonment. One day he suddenly appeared on our doorstep. He had escaped from jail with the help of other underground workers. Shri Mataji asked Her tutor, who lived in a far-fetched place, to hide him. She had a friend who lived close by to her house. Through this friend, she arranged to have food sent to him. Shri Mataji used to leave from the back door of the house to visit Niranjn Singh so that the police would not notice. Somehow the police found out about his hide-out which was also the headquarters of the underground movement. Niranjn Singh was arrested. He was released after independence, but the jail stay had made him very weak. He returned to his home in Gadarwala and, after a few months, he passed away.

Shri Mataji was disturbed by newspaper reports of the massacre at Cheemor Ashti. She visited the sight with a few friends and, even to this day, cannot forget the horrible things she saw. Even infants had been raped and massacred.

While Shri Mataji was studying in Balak Ram Medical College, partition took place and the massacres of Hindus and other non-Muslims started in Pakistan, so She had to immediately leave Her college. As She was heading towards the station in a tonga, She saw a big crowd approaching from the other side, who were after some Hindus whom they were trying to kill. The tonga-wallah was a very nice man and he took Shri Mataji through another route and managed to take Her safely to the station. Hers was the last train to reach India without being massacred.

The spirit of patriotism is so deep in Her that to this day, whenever She sees the national flag, tears well up in Her eyes.

My father was initially put in the Nagpur jail, where I used to go with my mother to visit him. My mother was allowed only to see him from a distance, but I, being very young, was allowed to go under the barrier and meet my

father. In the year 1941, I was playing the tabla and used to listen intently to the lessons given by the guru of my elder brother, Balasahib. Initially, I started playing on my knees and subsequently on the tabla that my father had purchased. Before going to jail, he had also started learning tabla and every morning he would make me sit in front of him and practise, while he would also practise. At the tender age of seven it was not possible for me to write down all the *bols* (the various ways of striking the tabla with the finger) and the *mukhada* and *kayda* (the various improvisations done on tabla), so I had committed them to memory and was able to reproduce them whenever needed. My meetings with my father in the jail used to be confined mostly to telling him of the mukhadas and kaydas and he would very proudly tell his jail-mates about my achievements in tabla.

After about a month and a half stay in the Nagpur jail, an emissary of Inspector Mustaq Ahmad came and said that my father was to be shifted to Vellore jail. (Vellore is a small city close to Madras.) We immediately rushed to the station, where we saw Vinoba Bhave sitting in the train. He called Shri Mataji and got very angry with Her. He was saying, "Why do you need to work for the country? You are too young. You are a source of worry to your mother." My father called Her to his side. He said, "Do not pay heed to what this old man is saying. I am very proud of you and if all my children work for the nation, I will be the proudest father." Turning to my mother, "You come from Jadhav family," (mother of Shivaji's family) "and why are you so much worried? Nirmala is Laxmibai of Jhansi, who fought the British." He looked very cheerful and I remember his smile when he looked at us. At that point, we least realised the we would not be seeing him for the next fifteen months. This happened in September of 1942.

While in jail, my father was allowed to write letters to the family. They were, however, censored by the jail authorities before they were dispatched. The censoring was done by putting black ink on the word or portion of the letter they did not want the family to read. Someone told my mother that if petrol was applied on the censored portion, the ink on top would fade out and you could read whatever was written below. There was a petrol pump by the side of our house and the son of the petrol pump owner was a Punjabi sardar. He was a good friend of mine and he always used to oblige me by giving a little petrol in a bottle I used to carry. In this way, my mother could read even the censored portions. My mother also used to write to my father, which were also censored

before they were handed over. My mother always used to give the brighter side of the family news, so that my father would not have to worry. She also knew that the priority of the family was the nation, which was undergoing a very big crisis. As compared to the national crisis, the crisis in the family was small, but we never felt depressed or dejected. On the contrary, we used to sing songs in praise of our motherland. Shri Mataji wrote a poem of great respect of the motherland at a young age of fourteen years and we all used to sing it with other songs.

When the academic year for 1943-44 began, we were all admitted to various schools and colleges. Shri Mataji got admission in the Medical School in Ludhiana (now in the state of Punjab) and my elder brother, Narendra, went back to Lucknow to complete his graduation. Though we were not very well off financially at that point of time, my mother was extremely particular about the continuation of education. So even though it meant a lot of strain on the limited financial resources, she decided that all the children should go back to school.

Shri Mataji was at Ludhiana Medical School from 1943 to 1945. Many years later, in the years 1985 to 1987, I was allotted the audit of the same school, which had since grown to be a very big medical college and hospital. One of the duties assigned to me as an auditor was the physical verification of all the assets in the hostel rooms.

Gagan Ahaluwalia was assisting me at that time and he came running one day and said that he could feel very strong vibrations from one room on the first floor of the girls' hostel. So I also went there and felt the vibrations. Later on, I narrated this story to Shri Mataji and She said that She lived in a room in the first floor. Obviously, the room from where the cool vibrations were coming must have been the place where She lived.

In the month of December 1943, my father was released from jail. He came home as a sick man. The food in the jail had not suited him and he had developed acidity and, later on, duodenal ulcers. People also said that he was given slow poisoning. However, on his return, he immediately took to his practice, which meant immediate financial relief. Consequently, we again shifted premises to Ramdaspath locality, which is now considered to be one of the poshest localities in Nagpur. The house was very big, but had recently been built and did not have electricity. Therefore, we had to study by using lanterns

or lamps. My mother had assigned me the job of cleaning the glass chimneys every day in the evening. It used to give me great joy, not so much for the work involved, but more so for the official leave that it meant from my studies.

By the beginning of 1944, the political scenario was fast changing. There was greater participation of Indians in the government and Britishers were inviting political parties to contest the elections, forming the government at the state and at the centre. The Congress gave my father ticket for the Central Legislative Council, which later on was known as parliament. The Hindu Mahasabha, the political front of R.S.S. (Rashtrya Swayamsevak Sangh), pitched one Colonel Paranjpe against him. My father's constituency was very large, covering an area of more than 150 square kilometers. He, along with my mother, used to tour extensively by car. His supporters included stalwarts like General Awari, Mr. Ruikar, Punamchandraka and Mr. Kanammwar, who later on became the Chief Minister of Maharashtra.

Mr. Paramandand Patel, the *bidi* (Indian cigarette) manufacturer from Goandia provided my father with a car and petrol. So strong was the national feeling and so strong was the support for Congress that, wherever my father went for speeches, thousands would come to attend and their one request was that India should be brought out of slavery. Needless to say, my father won with a thumping majority, so much so that the deposit of the opponent Colonel Paranjpe, was forfeited. The elections were held in the year 1945, however the constituent assembly was formed in 1946.

One of my uncles, David, was the deputy inspector-general of police of Maihar State. (Before India's freedom, the British had given some areas to their Indian well-wishers who were made kings or the maharaja, of those areas, which were called states.) The Maharaja of Maihar had heard about the British handing over the country to the people of India. In such an event, he would lose his kingdom and his state since Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who was a very close associate of Mahatma Gandhi and also very close to my father, had openly declared that, once India was free, all the states, whether big or small, would merge into the sovereign India,

My uncle knew my father's proximity to Sardar Patel, which he mentioned to the maharaja. This was all happening in the year 1946. When my father was in Delhi, an emissary came from Maihar to Delhi, conveying to my father that the Maihar Maharaja wanted to appoint him as his legal advisor and had

expressed a desire to meet my father. My uncle also knew that my father was suffering from duodenal ulcers and he had suggested that my father go to Maihar and be treated by Dr. Moitra, who was the state doctor of the Maharajah. My father, therefore, accepted the offer of the Maharajah and visited Maihar many times between 1946 and 1947, either from Delhi or from Nagpur.

In fact, all the family, including Shri Mataji, visited Maihar. We went there as state guests. These visits assumed significance in more ways than one. Firstly, because Dr. Moitra was not only clever but also had a curing hand. Secondly, because Ustad Allahuddin Khan Sahib, a master of fifty-six instruments and the guru of Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan Sahib, his son and Annapurana Devi, his daughter, was in the service of the Maihar Maharaja as court musician. At that point in time, Pandit Ravi Shankar, a young student, was learning sitar from the Ustad Allahuddin. During one of our visits to the Ustad Allahuddin's house, he asked my father if he was interested in listening to some lovely music. It was evening time and my father was a keen musician and, therefore, readily agreed to the proposal. The Ustad called out for Ravi Shankar and asked him to play *Raag Yaman*. To us, it sounded very melodious and we were all lost in his sitar, but, after about ten minutes, Allahuddin Khan Sahib stopped him from playing and said that the purity of the raga was not flowing from his sitar and that he needed to practise more. He then called his daughter, Annapurana, and asked her to play the same raag on the surbahar. Her performance was also very pleasing and after the program was over, the Ustad said that was how one should play *Yaman*.

This definitely bruised the ego of Ravi Shankar, so in the evening, he, along with a tabla player, came to the palace where we were staying and requested my father to give him fifteen minutes of his time to perform. My father readily agreed. Ravi Shankar then played *Raag Miya Mallahar* and that, too, for nearly one hour. Though his performance was superlative, we could hardly predict at that point in time that he would later be a world renowned master of sitar.

Dr. Moitra had two wives and a very interesting son. He was not very musical and used to complain to my father about the treatment Allahuddin Khan Sahib meted out to his disciples. He told us that one night at two o'clock, when everybody was sleeping, a disciple of Ustad Allahuddin Sahib had come knocking on the doctor's door. His head was bleeding and, on inquiry, it was revealed that Khan Sahib had thrown a tabla on his head because he was out

of tune. I feel ashamed to state that I, too, had the privilege of playing tabla before Khan Sahib and the Maharaja and, in my ignorance, I thought I did very well, least realising that it must have been as awful experience for both musicians. Dr. Moitra was also treating my father and Shri Mataji said that he was blessed with curing hands. This acquaintance with Dr. Moitra was to come in handy and be useful to Shri Mataji later on.

Shri Mataji cleared Her intermediate science from the Ludhiana Medical School in the year 1945. She had, of course, obtained very good marks. Since She wanted to pursue medicine, She applied to various medical colleges all over India. She, along with many other candidates, was called for an interview by the Balakram Medical College in Lahore (now in Pakistan). By the time She reached Lahore, the principal of the college had already selected six girls and since there were only six vacancies he turned down the application of Shri Mataji. Since She had better marks than the girls admitted to the college, She thought it was sheer injustice to have been denied admission, so She sought an interview with the principal to redress this injustice. The principal was initially very unreceptive and unresponsive to all the pleadings. He was, however, impressed by the vehemency and courage with which She brought out Her case, so he suddenly asked Her as to where She came from. When he heard that She was from Nagpur and also the daughter of R.K. Salve, he was totally floored. He said that he was also from Nagpur and had great respect for my father. He also said that since the seats were full he was helpless. He, however, assured Her that if any of the admitted applicants did not turn up on the appointed day, then he would admit Her. It so happened that one girl did not turn up and Shri Mataji was admitted to Balakram Medical College. She, however, came to Nagpur in December of 1945 for Her Christmas vacation and stayed back a little longer to help my father in the post-election period.

My father and mother went away to Delhi in February 1946 to attend the first session of the constituent assembly. When the debate about reservation came up before the constituent assembly, my father argued that reservation should not be according to caste, but according to economic consideration of haves and have-nots, but Dr. Ambedkar frightened everyone with the idea that one day we will be dominated by the higher castes.

In Delhi, the house allotted to my father was 15 Firozshah Road. It was a sprawling house with many rooms and two courtyards. Above all, it had electricity, which we did not have, at least at that time, in our house at

Ramdaspath. The added attraction was a telephone, which was considered to be a total luxury during those times. The only thing we did not have was a car. During Diwali time, when my school was closed, I went to Delhi along with my mother.

I remember my father walking to the parliament along with other members of parliament like Mr. Gangadhar Rao Gadgil, Mr. Mavlankar (the speaker), Mr. Minu Massani (author of the very famous book, *Our India*). Some of the eminent leaders of that time used to go walking to the parliament, that too without any security. When I compare the leaders of the India then with the leaders of the India now, I find a striking contrast. The priority of leaders contemporary to my father was selflessness and devotion to the national cause. They were very honest and absolutely fearless. In the present day, many politicians, however, are not only self-centred and selfish, projecting themselves differently before their voters while living in total luxury and comfort, but they also have, as their only virtue, corruption. Since they favour the wrong people, they are always afraid and, hence, need a lot of security.

The distance between Lahore and Delhi was not very much. Shri Mataji used to come from Lahore for weekends sometimes or during holidays. Sometimes my mother used to go to Lahore. Once she planned to take me also, but that program fizzled out and I could not go. My stay in Delhi used to be very boring, since I had no friends, but I preferred to stay in Delhi, since I could avoid school that way. But I wanted to come to Nagpur for another reason. I had learned through a friend's letter that I was selected for the junior cricket team of my school and that the inter-school tournament was to start very soon. So in spite of the problems of study, I came back to Nagpur. Our first match of the tournament was with a reputed school (Kurvey's New Model High School). I was playing for Hadas High School. I do not know if my cricket ability, or the absence of it, was the cause of my scoring about thirty runs and taking three wickets, which enabled our school to register a win over our mighty rivals. This performance of mine gave me grand ideas about myself and I started thinking that I was going to be a very great cricketer. My prestige in the school went up and the teachers, who used to punish me for not doing homework, became very lenient. But this dream-like situation did not last for very long because, in the very next match, I scored a big zero and got only one wicket. As expected the status quo returned, including the harsh treatment of my teachers.

I must admit that I was never a brilliant student, but I somehow managed to pass my exams. I again went to Delhi during the Christmas holidays. One evening the telephone rang and a squeaky voice spoke on the other side inquiring whether my brother, Narendra (popularly known as Polean), was at home. I inquired as to who was calling at the other end and the person said in the same squeaky voice that Chandrika bhai was calling. Because of this squeaky voice, I heard “bhai” (brother) as “bai” (lady) so I shouted out, without covering the mouthpiece, “Polean bhaiyya, some lady is calling you.” Immediately I could hear the protest on the other end of the telephone. He was telling me in a reserved voice that he was “bhai” and not “bai.” This was my first conversation with Sir C.P. Srivastava who was eventually to marry Shri Mataji. He had just led a delegation of officials of the government of India to Switzerland, at the very tender age of twenty-six and the wintry wind of Switzerland had affected his delicate throat and that was why he was squeaking. The next day, a very tall, grim-looking person appeared in the doorway and announced himself as Chandrika bhai. I instantly took a disliking to him because I have never liked people with grim faces. I was wondering how my brother, who was so jovial himself, could have a friend like him. However, I was too young to pass any judgement with any reckoning force and so I kept my views to myself.

In March of 1947, when I was about to finish my exams, a letter came from Delhi, from my mother, written to my eldest brother announcing the marriage of Shri Mataji with Chandrika bhai, whom I least expected to be the husband of Shri Mataji. The idea of Shri Mataji getting married to him was so disturbing to me that I started crying. I was actually in tears with the thought of Her leading Her entire life with one who was so boring. Thank God the first impression that I got was totally incorrect and, in fact, Sir C.P., as we fondly call him, has a tremendous sense of humour, while the outward expression that he carries is basically of the bureaucratic build-up he has for the world at large. The marriage was fixed for the 7th of April 1947 and we were asked to come with bag and baggage. Even my sisters from Gwalior came. Re-assembling of the family in Delhi was a matter of great joy.

Once my brother was already doing his articleship in Delhi for becoming a chartered accountant. He was staying in one of the rooms of my father’s house with his friend Chinnappa. We arrived there at the end of March. On the 1st of April, Shri Mataji decided to fool everybody. She got up early in the

morning and announced to him and his friend that Vijay Hazare (an eminent cricketer of that time) was waiting for them outside. Least realising that She was fooling them of April Fool's Day, they got out of their beds, half asleep and in a half-dazed condition and came out shouting to welcome Vijay Hazare and to give him a big hug, only to find that Shri Mataji was teasing them, April fool. The next victim was Balasahib whose friends were actually arriving on the 1st of April to attend the wedding of Shri Mataji and to see Delhi. The train was due to arrive past midday, but when Shri Mataji announced their arrival, he also came out, least suspecting. In this way, She continued fooling everyone. Balasahib tried to fool Shashi and I, but he was not as good an actor as Shri Mataji and the expression on his face betrayed him, so we were waived from being fooled. Then Shri Mataji decided to fool Sir C.P. The message was sent that he should come and attend a sick and ailing Shri Mataji. A few emissaries went, but Sir C.P. could sense the rat and did not come. Eventually, I was sent to him, since the place where he was residing was not very far away from our house. I answered all his questions with a very grim face and he assured me that he would just follow me. The plan was that, as soon as he came, Shri Mataji would lie on the sofa under a blanket and shiver and that, only when Sir C.P. saw Her face, would it be revealed that he had been fooled. Half an hour went by and he did not come. Suddenly Balasahib came running into the room and announced that Sir C.P. was arriving. Immediately, Shri Mataji went to the sofa and covered Her face with the blanket. As soon as She did that we all shouted, "April Fool!" Though it was meant for Shri Mataji, She thought we were teasing Sir C.P. least suspecting that Balasahib, who was the most innocent of all the lot, would play such a trick on Her. So when She saw that Sir C.P. had not come, She gave a good laugh at the way She had been fooled. Eventually in the evening, Sir C.P. came and he started laughing to find Her completely fit and said that it was not so easy to fool him. Such was the fun we had as a family.

Sir C.P. Sahib was very high in the market of the Kayasthas Community as an eligible bachelor. Lots of letters were sent to the president Shri Rajendra Prasad who was a great friend of my father. He told the Kayasthas, which is a caste in U.P., that R.K. Salve was his very great friend and that he had very great respect for him and his daughter, so he refused to interfere with this sacred marriage. The marriage ceremony on the 7th of April was preceded by the haldi ceremony. Everybody had a very enjoyable time. Since it was a registered marriage, there were no rituals to be performed either in the Hindu

style or the Christian style. I remember Sir C.P. was wearing a silk suit and Shri Mataji was wearing a reddish brocade sari, while I was wearing half-pants and a double-breasted coat made out of *khadi* (hand-woven cloth). I remember that a beautiful *shamiyana* (pendal) was erected in front of the house on the lawns and I also remember that the top national leaders and most of the parliamentarians came and attended the wedding and blessed the couple. Prof. John Mathai, who was then the finance minister and a good friend of my father, proposed a toast. In reply, Sir C.P. said that in the west people love first, then marry and forget love after marriage. In the east, people marry first and love after marriage, while in his case, he loves, is marrying whom he loves and would continue loving after marriage. After his reply, everybody applauded, but Shri Mataji was blushing red. The presence of national leaders in so many numbers bore testimony to the status and popularity of my father, though he was the only Christian member elected to the Central Assembly in the political circle during those days. Since the ceremony was held in the evening, guests were served with refreshments and snacks and Shantatai rendered a classical raga that was appreciated by one and all.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE BIRTH OF THE NATION, 1947 TO 1955

After the marriage, Shri Mataji stayed with us in Delhi for a few days and then shifted to a new tenement. It was decided that I should also shift, to Gwalior, for the new academic year (i.e. academic year 1947-48). So our Nagpur establishment was practically closed down except for Balasahib, Sannie bhaiyya and, of course, Sushil. In Gwalior, I was admitted to the Janak Gang Middle School, to the eighth standard, thanks to my mother and her influential personality. In Gwalior Middle School, there was a board exam.

In Gwalior we moved into an outhouse of one Mr. Malgaonkar. Shantatai was teaching and Shashi, Indu and I were schooling. Indu was giving her matriculation, while Shashi was a class or two junior to her and, as I mentioned above, I was taking my board exam in the eighth standard. I had two nephews (my elder sister's two sons), who were also studying in Gwalior. Some important events took place during my stay.

On the 14th of August, at midnight, India became free. My father, who was elected to be a member of the Central Assembly, had gone to attend the handing over of the British Raj to the Indian government. The slavery of three centuries was to end. Dr. Rajendra Prasad was the president of the free Indian Constituent Assembly and Jawaharlal Nehru was the prime minister. He, along with the members of his ministry, went around the sacred fire, which was consecrated and purified according to the Vedic rights, while the priest chanted mantras praising the Trimurti or the Trinity. Symbolically, I think they were praising the Adi Shakti, which is the Trinity. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru spoke to the nation at the stroke of midnight. He said that the nation had a tryst with destiny and that the moment had come to achieve what was destined. The whole nation was joyous and we were very proud of the fact that my father and mother who had sacrificed everything were witnessing all this in person.

Next day they organised a very big rally at the India Gate, wherein Lord Mountbatten, the Governor General of free India, and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru were to come on horseback and lower the Union Jack and raise the tri-

colour flag of the India National Congress. However, the crowd was so huge that it was impossible for Pundit Nehru and Lord Mountbatten to come on horseback. My father was, of course, invited to sit in an enclosure and so were Sir C.P. and Shri Mataji, but the rest of us were commoners and had to find our own way through the crowd. The crowd easily exceeded one million people, but my mother was undeterred by the number. She caught hold of my hand and dragged me through the crowd until she reached very close to the spot where the bringing down of the Union Jack and the raising of the national flag was to be held. As Pandit Nehru and Lord Mountbatten arrived, suddenly the crowd surged in front and my neck was caught between two shoulders and I was hanging in midair, shouting for help. I thought for a moment that I was going to die, since I was suffocating. Suddenly a helping hand came and pushed away the two shoulders pressing my neck. The momentary help enabled me to come down to the ground and I could breathe, though with some difficulty. The helping hand was none other than my mother's and then I realised how much strength a mother can muster if required. The entire ceremony of the lowering of the Union Jack and the raising of the tri-colour could not be seen by me, nor by my mother, lest the possibility of my being trapped again in the melee. We started walking back and did not stop until we were at a safe distance. It was a very joyous occasion and I soon forgot about the whole incident. I returned to Gwalior with a very proud feeling that I had lived to see the lowering of the Union Jack and the raising of the tri-colour.

With independence came the communal riots. At the insistence of barrister Mohammed Ali Jinnha, Pakistan was created and they celebrated their independence at midnight of the 13th of August 1947. Immediately thereafter the Muslims of Pakistan started to drive away or kill the Hindus staying in Pakistan. As a retaliatory action, the Hindus in India started killing Muslims in India.

There is a story connected with the communal riots of 1947, which shows the concern and the magnanimity of Shri Mataji. Immediately after the marriage, Sir C.P. and Shri Mataji were staying in the house of my father in Delhi. One afternoon when Sir C.P. had gone to the office and my brother, N.K.P., had gone for his audit, someone knocked on the door of the house. When Shri Mataji opened the door, she found one lady and two gentlemen standing at the entrance looking extremely frightened and scared. They told Shri Mataji

that they were refugees from Pakistan and, since one of them was a Muslim, the Hindus were after them, chasing them with drawn swords. Shri Mataji took them in without a moment's hesitation and hid them in a room. After some time some people came with drawn swords and said that a Muslim was hiding in the house. Shri Mataji categorically denied this and bluffed them by saying that She was a staunch Hindu Herself, so how could She give protection to a Muslim. The people with the swords initially did not believe Her, but they saw the large bindi on Her forehead, which is symbolic of a Hindu married woman, so they went away convinced that She was a Hindu.

The three who were hiding were extremely grateful to Shri Mataji and She offered to keep them in the house until it was safe for them to leave. In the evening, when Sir C.P. and Polean bhaiyya returned, both of them admonished Her for giving protection to strangers, particularly at time when there was communal riots. Shri Mataji said that She was a better judge of human beings and She was quite sure of what She had done and, at any rate, it was Her father's house and She had every right to decide about who could stay and who could not.

Of the three, only one happened to be Muslim, while the other two were Hindus who had all fled from Pakistan. As it transpired later the lady and one gentleman, who were both Hindus and became very famous actors in the Indian film industry. The lady's name was Achala Sachdev and the man's name was Balraj Sahani. Those who are conversant with Hindi movies are aware of the immense contribution given by these two actors to the film industry. The third gentleman, who was Muslim, also joined the film industry later. His name is Saheer Ludhianvi. Today he is also considered to be one of the best Urdu poets the country has produced. All three would have been lost to the film world and to the nation had it not been for the intervention of Shri Mataji and the timely help She gave. Many years later when Shri Mataji was in Bombay, She was elected vice president of a youth federation organisation which wanted to produce a thematic movie based on saving and changing the youth culture of India. They wanted to cast Achala Sachdev as the mother. However she quoted a very high price. The producers of the film came to Shri Mataji and She said to them that they should not give Her reference to Mrs. Sachdev. Mrs. Sachdev had her own demands which were accepted by the producer with great difficulty. Later, at the inauguration of the film, when Achala Sachdev suddenly saw Shri Mataji she hugged Her and was in tears.

This perplexed the onlookers, which included the producers of the film. They were wondering what had gone wrong with the actress and they asked Shri Mataji. Since the story behind her crying would have embarrassed the actress, Shri Mataji shunned the question by saying that it was an old story. (Such is the character of Shri Mataji, showing concern for others' feelings.) But achala Sachdev herself told them that Shri Mataji was the angel who saved her life. She telephoned her husband and Saheer Ludhiyanvi, the poet, and they rushed to the spot and touched Shri Mataji's feet and, with tears, they asked, "Where were you lost all these days?"

Shri Mataji delivered Her first child in Gwalior in the Victoria Memorial Hospital on the 22nd December 1947. My mother was by Her side during the confinement. Sir C.P. came to Gwalior a few days later and I was the first to inform Sir C.P. about his becoming the father of a daughter. The delivery was normal and Shri Mataji returned to the house after ten days along with a very sweet and charming daughter, whom she named Kalpana.

In the following year a tragic event shocked the nation. On the 30th January 1948 Ghandiji was assassinated while going for his evening prayers in the Birla Bhavan (house) in Delhi. Shri Mataji, who was living in 22 Rattandan Road, had heard three shots since her house was very close to Birla Bhavan. In Gwalior I had gone to the market to buy some sweets as we had guests visiting us. The news of the assassination spread all over the nation like wildfire and within minutes shopkeepers brought down their shutters and I was quite perplexed at the sudden flare of activity. I thought it might be because of communal riots. As I came home, the news had already reached my mother and my sisters. I was shocked to hear the news, and the box of sweets that I was carrying fell from my hand. I still vividly remember the tears in my mother's eyes and the fallen lower jaw, which indicated her dismay and disbelief at the news. Within minutes, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the prime minister, addressed the nation. It was announced that the funeral would take place in the afternoon of the next day. My mother wanted to go to Delhi to attend the funeral, but there was a mad rush of people wanting to go to Delhi. My father, who was in Nagpur, was unable to board the train because of the same reason. Soon the news came that a Brahmin by the name of Nathuram Godse had shot him and that the plan of the assassination had been hatched in Gwalior, where there was already communal tension. We were all glued to the radio and we had no sense of time or food or sleep. The funeral procession

of Mahatma Gandhi was attended by millions. The pyre was made out of sandalwood. When the pyre was lit, only then did we realise that we had not eaten for more than twenty-four hours, nor had we slept practically the whole night. The ashes of the Mahatma came to Gwalior after about three days and I remember a huge procession was taken out behind a chariot that was carrying the urn in which the ashes were kept. It was the greatest shock that Mahatma Gandhi was killed by a staunch Brahmin called Nathuram Godse, a Maharashtrian. Sir C.P. told me how Shri Mataji had met Gandhiji just one day before and how he took Her daughter on his lap and said, "Nepali, you are the same to look at and now you are a mother. When are you going to start your spiritual work? Now we are free and you should start whatever you wanted to do."

The nation was reeling under the shock when communal riots started. People from the Brahmin community were being killed. Since we were staying in a Brahmin locality, the tension was very high and the schools and colleges were closed for some time. As a result of Mahatma's death, a lot of non-Brahmins had threatened to kill the Brahmins, however my father intervened and said that any act of violence would betray the very purpose and ideal that Mahatma Gandhi had loved and struggled for.

As it was, the nation had witnessed one communal riot in the 1947 partition, when, at the insistence of barrister Mohammed Ali Jinnha, Pakistan was created. After that, the Muslims in Pakistan were killing the Hindus who had settled down in that land for many years. The Hindus in India retaliated by killing the Muslims in India. In view of the massacre in Pakistan, there was a big exodus and people left their homes in Pakistan and started pouring into India as refugees. There were millions of such refugees. I have an interesting story to narrate that happened during the communal riots of 1947.

My mother was travelling from Maihar to Delhi with a Muslim escort, somewhere at the end of August, beginning of September. She was aware of the communal riots, but was oblivious to its intensity, particularly in Delhi. It may be divine intervention, but her train could not reach Delhi station because it had to cross a bridge over the Yamuna River and the river was overflowing the bridge and every time the driver tried to cross the bridge he had to retreat. Since there was no way of reaching Delhi, the train came back to an earlier station and then went to Agra. On the way to Agra, the violence erupted. Though she was inside the compartment, she could hear the shrieks and

shouts of Muslims who were being hit by swords. The man escorting her was called Mr. Amien. Sensing the fear that he would be also attacked, she changed his name to Amar.

When the train reached Agra, she alighted from the train with the intention of going to Delhi, but all the trains were overcrowded, so she eventually came back to Gwalior, where we were staying. It was a case of jumping from the frying pan to the fire because Gwalior was as dangerous as any other place. So with great difficulty and with the help of our landlord, Mr. Malgaonkar, and my brother-in-law, we were able to send her on a flight from Gwalior to Delhi along with Amien, alias Amar. We were in great tension until she reached Delhi and telephoned us of her safe arrival.

After the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, when the schools reopened, it was very close to the annual exams, so I immediately plunged myself into my studies. I forgot to mention that when Shri Mataji was staying with us during Her confinement days, She was teaching me physics, Her way of teaching was so illustrative and effective that, even today, I would be able to reproduce some of the things She taught. One such thing I remember vividly was the qualities of mercury and how the same qualities were useful in any thermometer. The results of my board exams were declared in May 1948 and I was declared successful. I sought admission in the Patwardhan High School in Nagpur, which was then considered to be one of the most meritorious schools. One of the reasons why I got admission was that I had played for my school in the junior cricket team.

The period between 1948 and 1952 was not very eventful for me, except that I fell ill with typhoid and cold and could not clear my matriculation examination and had to repeat the class. However, this period was very eventful for Shri Mataji, as Sir C.P. was selected for both Indian Foreign Service (I.E.S.) and the Indian Administration Service (I.A.S.) and he was given a choice to select any of the two services. When he referred this to Shri Mataji, She said that serving the nation by staying in the nation is, at any rate, better than taking a post abroad. This meant a lot of financial loss, but nationalist as She was, She persuaded Sir C.P. to accept the job of Indian Administration only. When he appeared before the medical board he was found physically unfit because his weight was less than the standard weight by fourteen pounds, so Shri Mataji took him to Maiher to Dr. Moitra, where Shri Mataji had gone earlier for Her own treatment. She stayed at Maiher with Sir

C.P. until he had gained about eight or nine kilos of weight and, when he came back, he was found medically fit by the medical board and selected for a posting in the I.A.S. cadre in Uttar Pradesh (United Provinces).

After his being selected for the I.A.S. he was posted in Lucknow as a city magistrate. My story must pause here to tell you a little about the background of Sir C.P.'s family.

Sir C.P. lost his father at a very tender age and was brought up by his uncles in a joint family system in Unnao, a small town near Lucknow. He belonged to the Kayastha caste of the Hindus and all the ladies in the house were traditional Kayastha Hindus. Sir C.P. had a brilliant academic career and always came first in both school and university. He was a gold medalist and in his law final he obtained 92% marks, which record seems to be unbroken even today. Right from his school and college days, he was very fond of music and sports. He was also very fond of the Urdu language. Even today he keeps on reciting Urdu couplets.

Though he was brought up in the Hindu tradition, he strongly believed that there is only one God and that the barrier of religion is man-made. Therefore, he had no difficulty marrying Shri Mataji, who belonged to a Christian family. However this marriage was not acceptable to most of his relatives, who were hardcore traditional Hindus. As such, very few of his relatives came to attend the wedding. All the relatives had very funny ideas about Christian girls. They thought that Shri Mataji must be wearing frocks, putting on lipstick and going for ballroom dancing with strangers.

As a result, when Sir C.P. went to Unnao to show his bride, they were shocked to see a traditional Indian girl, hiding her head under the sari and touching the feet of all elders. The person they saw was totally contrary to what they had projected in their minds. Initially, all of them were extremely skeptical, but they could not resist the warmth and love flowing from Shri Mataji. So when it was time to leave, everybody was sad that Shri Mataji was going. Sir C.P. was himself totally astonished to see the way Shri Mataji had won over his very conservative and traditional relations. Thereafter, even until today, Shri Mataji has been a pillar of strength, particularly for all the relations of Sir C.P. and they come to Her for any problem that they face. She attends to all of them as if they are the problems of Her own children.

After two years of stay as a city magistrate of Lucknow, Sir C.P. went to Meerut as the additional district magistrate (A.D.M.).

In February 1952, I again came back to the Sadar House and took my matriculation examination in March of that year from Sadar. I was very happy when the exam was over. The obvious reason was that I didn't have to study any more for the next two or three months, but the latent reason was that Shri Mataji had invited me and my sister, Shashi, to go to Meerut where Sir C.P. was posted. So at the end of March 1952, we left for Delhi, where we were picked up in Sir C.P.'s car and driven to Meerut. The A.D.M.'s bungalow was very huge and, since Shri Mataji was finding it very difficult to maintain, She allowed another government servant to occupy half of it. The bungalow was built in the traditional British style and had a very big compounded land with kennels for dogs and twenty-five *tabelas* (stables) for the horses, which was just lying waste. Since the salary of Sir C.P. was really meager, Shri Mataji decided to do agriculture on the land adjoining the bungalow. She worked on the land with the help of one farm hand and what was before a wasteland was converted into very fertile agriculture land. She grew a lot of vegetables that helped Her provide for Her own house, while the surplus She sold to supplement the income of Her husband. In the evenings, we used to go to the officer's club where I learnt to play badminton for the first time. The days were spent in the farm or visiting friends of Shri Mataji. I must mention that Shri Mataji's farm was regarded as the best farm in the district. The *brinjal* (eggplants) were so big that I could not lift them. She produced very, very big cauliflowers, very big tomatoes, very large cucumbers. It was unbelievable how She made such great sized vegetables. She told me later, this was the land of Shakambari Devi (Goddess of vegetables). I have seen later even the flowers that are plucked reach enormous sizes in Her presence.

The only source of entertainment then was to see movies, but seeing movies was problematic. The movie owner knew that the A.D.M. and his family had come to see movies, so he would make sure that, not only did Sir C.P. not pay for the ticket, but also that the family members were offered refreshments and cold drink. Since the A.D.M. is a very important post, they wanted to be hospitable to the A.D.M. and his family.

Sir C.P., being scrupulously honest and extremely overcautious, would not only insist on paying for the ticket, but would also pay for the hospitality that was extended, which meant unnecessary expenditure. So, to overcome this

problem, whenever we decided to go for a movie he would stop the car a little distance away from the theatre and would ask his driver, Raghubir, to go and buy the tickets. He would then enter the theatre, which he thought was not noticed by the owners, but his height, coupled with his three-piece suit attire, would always betray him and, more often than not, he would have to bear the additional expenditure of cold drinks. Since the situation became very difficult and unmanageable, a compromise was struck that he would pay at least the excise money on the tickets that was due to government and the owner would not offer him any hospitality.

Sadhana, who was born as a second child to Shri Mataji in Luck-now in February 1950 was in a very interesting stage of growth and she would keep us very much entertained with her talk. I remember she was very fond of ice cream and Shri Mataji always had to avoid the quality restaurants, lest Sadhana insisted on ice cream.

It was in Meerut that I first learnt to drive. Initially, Sir C.P. decided to give us lessons, but the demands of his work on his time was so great that he hardly had any time to teach us driving. So I learned to drive from the driver, Raghubir. I was very quick in learning and, within a few days, I was driving on the road. The driver, however, used to advise me to avoid the traffic police, since I did not have a driving license. Once it so happened that, in spite of my best effort, I happened to cross the path of a traffic police and I was apprehensive about being asked about the driving license. But, to my surprise, when the car came close to him, instead of stopping it, he saluted me. Then I realised that he had recognised the A.D.M.'s car.

Raghubir was very pleased with my driving and that gave me confidence until one day I met with an accident. As I was overtaking a *tonga* (a horse-drawn carriage), I honked very near to the horse, only to see that the horse was disturbed and started running towards the car and the carriage rammed into the rear of the car. I came home and told everything to Shri Mataji and I said that I was very ashamed of what I had done, but, more than Her, I was scared of Sir C.P. When he was to come back home for lunch, I went and hid myself in the farm and I did not come out in spite of his pleadings. In the evening, when I mustered enough courage to face him, he said that accidents could not be predicted and, as they were accidents, they could not be anticipated or avoided. That day I learnt a lesson, which went a long way in helping my future, particularly while driving.

During our stay, Shri Mataji took us twice to a very old church close-by in a place known as Sardhana and She told us that you feel very cool seeing the beautiful carvings on the walls and paintings on the glass windows of the church and in the abbey. To be honest, I did not feel the cool, but I enjoyed the paintings and the carvings. This only proves that self-realised people only can feel the cool.

One day a letter came from my eldest brother in which he had written that I had cleared my matriculation examination and also that my sister Shantatai's marriage was fixed. She was to marry one Mr. Sathianathan, a Gandhian living in Sevagram and belonging to a very orthodox Hindu family from Kerala. This meant another inter-caste marriage, the third one in a row. We were all very much excited. The marriage was fixed for May and, as a result, we had to cut short our stay in Meerut. I was also excited because I was going to go to college. I had decided to join the faculty of geology, since on one of my visits to my cousin, to a coal mine, I was very much impressed by the style and manner of living of the manager. He had a big sprawling house, one attendant to carry his bag to the car and a chauffeur to drive him to the office. This, to my tender mind, appeared to be the ultimate of comfort and on my asking my cousin how one became a mine manager, he had said that I had to join the faculty of geology in the university. This is how I decided to join the Science College, if my marks were to permit. The marriage of my sister was a simple ceremony, since both my father and the bridegroom did not want any pomp and show, thereby avoiding wasteful expenditure. All the inmates of the ashram of Gandhiji in Sevagram had come and I was struck by their simplicity and unassuming character. I was also very much impressed by the fact that people of great calibre and achievement just gave up everything to become Gandhiji's followers. After the marriage, we all went to Sevagram and we were treated with Gandhian hospitality.

When my brother came to know of my intention to join the department of geology, he was quite upset, since he wanted me to join the commerce faculty and become a chartered accountant so that I could help him with his profession. However, my father said that my wish should be supreme and that all his sons had the right to choose their own careers. I sought admission in Hislop College. I was taken in the sports quota, since I had represented my school in cricket. My admission was to be formalised after the acceptance of

another sportsman by the name of Laurie Peter, who had represented India in the game of hockey.

As I was awaiting the formalisation of my application, I met two friends from my school who were both studying in the Commerce College. One of them was K.K. Adhikari, who later on was to become the judge of Jabalpur High Court, and the other was Mr. M.T. Gabhe, who was later to become the vice-chancellor of Nagpur University. M.T. Gabhe was more popularly known as Moru and K.K. Adhikari as Daku. Moru advised me to join the commerce faculty, since I would get a chance to play for the college cricket team from the first year itself, while in Hislop College I had a very slender chance and, that too, after a waiting period of two to three years. To add to this, Daku said that he was very lonely and that he would like me to join the Commerce College to provide him with company. I considered the proposition for a couple of days and my love for cricket prevailed over every other consideration. So I went and told my brother I had decided to join the Commerce College. He was very happy, but did not know the real reason for the change in my decision.

My father gave me a letter of introduction to the principal of the Commerce College, Mr. Tokhi, who was a Gandhian in principle and who had a very high regard for my father. When I sent the letter of my father through a peon, the principal came out of his room to meet me on the veranda where I was sitting awaiting my turn. There was another boy also waiting for admission. The principal asked me as to which of the two was Salve and, when I gave my identity, he said that I had good marks and even then was wanting to join the Commerce faculty, which was normally considered to be the domain of the rejects. I told the principal that I was quite determined to join the Commerce College in spite of my marks, since I wanted to become a chartered accountant. This was a fast one I pulled on him because, at that point in time, it was too futuristic and too distant to think of a career. My immediate gain was that I would play for the college cricket team. It was for such superficial and frivolous reasons that I joined the Commerce College. I sought admission in the same section where Daku was admitted, but, when I actually went to the college, Daku had left college the previous day and joined the science faculty. There was another friend of mine from school by the name of Bhatt, who was very brilliant and very studious (and therefore did not suit my liking). As desired, I was selected in the first eleven of the cricket team, but, not only that, I also represented the college in badminton. Shri Mataji Herself was a first-

class champion of badminton. In the first year itself, I became the champion in badminton and won one cup each for singles and doubles, thanks to Shri Mataji because She taught me how to play. My expectations of showing my calibre as a cricketer, however, were thwarted, since we met the champions of last year in the first round of the inter-college tournament and we lost miserably.

During Diwali time Shri Mataji was in Nagpur with us. She had come from Meerut. During the social gathering of my college, Mujadid Niazi, a very great gazzal singer of his time, was called for the concert night and Shri Mataji, my father and all the family members were invited. Shri Mataji was quite surprised to see the way the principal addressed me as Mr. Salve instead of saying only Salve or my first name. She told my father that I must have created a good impression on the principal. My first year exam was a college exam and I was studying with a friend of mine, who was more interested in listening to the radio at two o'clock in the morning. He was full of humour, which is why I used to enjoy his company. Fortunately or unfortunately, he dropped out of the college after the first year and so did Dhanu Bhatt, so then I made some other friends, prominent among them were Madhu Joshi, Shyam Jodh and Aba Phadnavis. There were two girls in my class and both of them had made me their brother. They would make me sit behind their desks so that the other boys would not trouble them. I must have hardly studied for a fortnight for my final exam, but I passed. Shri Mataji by then had shifted to Bombay because Sir C.P. was made the director-general of Shipping Corporation.

There is one event, or rather an adventure, I would like to narrate. Just as our intermediate exams were over, five or six friends decided to go to Bombay from Nagpur by cycle. The distance between Bombay and Nagpur is around nine hundred kilometers. I was very sure that, if I told the truth, none in the household would allow such an adventure, particularly during summer time when the mercury sometimes touches forty-eight degrees Celsius. So I cooked up a story that I was going for my friend's marriage. This story was accepted, but this alone did not end my problems. The second, and the all-important problem, was to arrange money, that too the huge sum of one hundred rupees. During those days, we were required to pay caution money of forty-five rupees towards reimbursement of the cost of library books lost or mutilated by the student during the academic year. Since I had not even seen the face of the library (let alone borrowing a book from it), I got the entire forty-five rupees

back, which I conveniently pocketed. During those days, I used to get small roles in radio plays for which the All India Radio was paying me fifteen rupees. I managed one such role and my kitty was worth sixty rupees. I had a niece who was a working girl and she promised to lend me twenty-five rupees on a “payable-when-able-if-able” basis. So in that way, I collected to eighty-five rupees. Since Shri Mataji was staying in Bombay my staying expenses in Bombay would be looked after. At any rate, I was confident that I could always arrange fifteen rupees in Bombay. Out of eighty-five rupees, five rupees were spent on repairs of the cycle. A letter was taken from the collector of Nagpur and from the principal of our college and a date was fixed for our departure. Before we departed, we took a trial run on the cycles up to Sevagram, where Shantatai was staying. A distance of about eighty kilometers was covered in two and a half to three hours and we returned to Nagpur that evening itself since we were to embark on the journey a couple of days later.

On the scheduled date, we all gathered in the Variety Square (a very famous square in Nagpur) and had a nice cup of tea along with friends who had come to see us off. On the dot of 5:30 a.m., we six friends left Nagpur for Bombay. It so happened that the uncle of one of my friends was working for a local newspaper. In order to give us publicity, he published in that day’s daily edition the news of six boys from Commerce College leaving for Bombay by cycle and that the team was being led by H.P. Salve.

We were totally oblivious of this news and had covered a distance of one hundred kilometers by the evening. We were resting in the government rest house after enjoying a sumptuous and heavy meal of chicken, hosted by the *patil* (chief of the village), whom we had convinced that we had been assigned the job of carrying out a survey of rural India on the potential of the cottage industry in the economic growth of India. In fact, the patil was so much impressed by the bombastic phrases I had used that he requested us to stay a couple of days in the village to carry out a full survey of the village.

As we were about to hit the bed, musing over the distance we would cover the next day, we saw the headlights of a car coming towards our direction. We thought some tourist wanted to occupy the rest house, so we did not give any importance to the approaching car, also since the watchman of the rest house had been instructed by the patil to see that we were not disturbed by any new arrivals. We saw a person alighting from the car with a rifle gun in his hand and we inferred that maybe some *shikari* (hunter) had come to spend the night

in the rest house. As he approached closer, I was shocked to see Sannie bhaiyya.

As it transpired, the news of us six leaving for Bombay by cycle was read by N.K.P. and he rushed to where we were living only to find out that I had already gone to Bombay, that too without much money. This upset him, and eventually my father, and it was decided to send Sannie bhaiyya to bring me back to Nagpur. Knowing full well that I was determined to go to Bombay come what may, Sannie bhaiyya said with a grim face that my leaving Nagpur like that had come as a big shock to my father and that he had been admitted to the hospital. Under these circumstances, I had to yield to the request of Sannie bhaiyya and return to Nagpur. When I returned, the first person to meet me was my father. I was so annoyed that I did not speak to any member of the family for nearly a week. Thus ended the adventure. (Eventually, my friends got to Bombay and returned via Pune and Aurangabad, covering a distance of about twenty-five hundred kilometers.) It was good in a way, since Shri Mataji came to Nagpur that very week to spend the summer holidays with us. We went to Pachmadhi (a hill station near Chhindwara) and spent a hilarious fifteen days there.

My father's health had started deteriorating and Shri Mataji said that he should go to Bombay for a thorough examination, so my mother, my father and I went to Bombay to stay with Shri Mataji. She was staying in the Ivanhoe Building in the Cuff Parade. Indu was already with her, studying painting and fine art in the J.J. School of Art. Whilst in Bombay, I took my father to the Tata Cancer Research Institute to eliminate the possibility of his suffering from cancer. There, Dr. Borjes, a specialist in cancer, examined him and ruled out any malignancy. During our stay in Bombay two major events took place. Shushil, my brother, died in Nagpur, which news was conveyed by a friend of N.K.P. That news came as a shock to both my father and mother and to all of us. He had been an invalid, but had also been very innocent, loving and caring. The second news was that I had cleared my intermediate exam. It was a university exam and I was eligible for going on to the graduation stage.

There were quite a few funny instances that Sir C.P. and Shri Mataji were required to face while in Bombay. I will however, for the sake of brevity, narrate only one. Both of them were very popular and had a lot of friends who used to visit them at all times. There was, however, one particular friend who had the habit of dropping in at any time without prior intimation. One evening,

Sir C.P. came from the office very tired and was sitting very apprehensively, dreading the impending visit of this friend of his. Shri Mataji, sensing his worry, suggested that since this friend had not announced his arrival, we all go out and have dinner somewhere and maybe see a movie. Seeing the house locked, he would definitely go away. So accordingly, we left the house and returned after seeing a late show, only to find his friend and wife and child sitting on the doorstep, having borrowed chairs from the neighbours. They had been sitting there for three to four hours. After they left, we had a hearty dig at Sir C.P.'s capacity for collecting boring people around him, but we were also concerned about finding ways and means of avoiding such persons. I think even today Sir C.P. and Shri Mataji have not had any success in this matter.

There is another event I would want to recall. The building they were staying in was located very close to the Mantralaya (where all the ministers and their staff sit). One day a big procession came to the Mantralaya, but they were stopped short by the police. That infuriated the mob and some of them started pelting stones. As a result, a *lathi charge* (beating with batons) was ordered and, in the process, a lot of people were injured, some of them were innocent passersby. Then the police started shooting people. Shri Mataji was watching the entire drama from the fifth floor balcony of Her flat. She could not tolerate the atrocities and She rushed down to help those who were hurt. A few of them, She brought up to the flat for first aid. She removed their bullets and dressed them. Later, they had medical treatment as She had called the ambulance and they were taken to the hospital. Sir C.P., when he came to know of this, was very upset because She had nursed and protected the agitators who were against the government. Sir C.P., being a government servant, was apprehensive of the reaction of the government to his wife giving protection and help to people who were anti-government. When he expressed his apprehension to Shri Mataji, She explained that what She had done was according to Her human nature and that, when She was helping, it was according to Her human nature. And that when She was helping, She did not think that Her position as his wife was more important than helping the wounded people who were dying. That definitely silenced the bureaucrat in Sir C.P.

During our stay in Bombay that year, my father met one minister, Mr. Hiray, who welcomed him with all the respect that my father deserved. My father had gone to meet him to find out ways and means of publishing his book on

the translation of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's commentary on Koran. My father had taken to translating the commentary of Koran written by Maulana Azad (who was then the education minister at the centre). There is a little story behind the motivation for translating the Koran.

As mentioned earlier, as an aftermath of partition, a communal riot on a very large scale had started between Pakistan and India. Muslims in Pakistan were killing Hindus migrating from Pakistan to India and as a retaliatory measure the Hindus in India were killing Muslims. These killings disturbed my father immensely. One evening a few Muslims came into my father's house in Firoz Shah Road, New Delhi, thinking that my father had hidden some Hindus. My father pacified their anger and asked them as to why they were killing, to which the Muslims replied that if they killed people who were against Islam, they would get *zebad* (heaven). When my father asked them from where their wrong information came, they said that it came from the Holy Koran. To this my father asked whether they had read the Koran themselves or were they acting at the behest of the *maulvi* (priest). They replied that the Koran was in Arabic and, since they had lived in India all their life, they did not even know Urdu properly. My father explained to them that he had read the Koran and that there was no mention about killing people and that what they were doing was out of sheer ignorance, blindly following the directions of the *maulvi*. He then realised that he owed a responsibility to the people of India to remove this ignorance by translating the Koran into Hindi. He therefore met Maulana Azad, who suggested that my father translate his commentary on the Koran, which was more relevant and contemporary to the crisis at that time. Since he was a sitting member of the Central Assembly, my father did not have much time to devote to the translation work. However, in 1952, when he was denied a ticket, he decided to devote more time to his translation. Since the translation required a knowledge of Arabic, Urdu and Hindi, he could not get an able hand to assist him, so he decided to write the entire translation in his own handwriting. He wrote the entire translation of the commentary on Koran in forty registers of two hundred pages each, which are presently with Shri Mataji. My initiation into the Urdu language may have its origin in this story since the topic at the dining table would always be a subject out of the Koran.

Mr. Hiray gave a letter of introduction to the Taj Book Depot, who were publishers for most of the Urdu books. When we contacted the Taj Book

Depot, they expressed their inability, since they did not have Arabic print. So the book remained unprinted for that reason.

N.K.P. and his wife were also in Bombay during our stay there and it was decided that the establishment in Nagpur should be handed over to my eldest brother and that we should shift to stay with N.K.P. So accordingly, when we returned from Bombay, we shifted premises to Asha Villa, New Colony, Nagpur. This house had an annex, having three rooms where we shifted. Kalpana, the eldest daughter of Shri Mataji, had sought admission in the local Bishop Cotton School. Shri Mataji had also shifted to Nagpur with Sadhana. Seeing my father going to the court despite his deteriorating health was a cause of concern to me and Shri Mataji was obviously my philosopher, friend and guide. I felt that to be a burden on my father for the next four to five years was not proper. Moreover, N.K.P.'s attitude towards the family was not particularly encouraging and I therefore thought it proper to get into some sort of job. Shri Mataji spoke to Sir C.P. and it was decided that I should join the merchant navy. I was interviewed in Bombay and was assigned a ship for training in Calcutta. So on December 30th 1954, I bid farewell to the family and to my friends and went to Calcutta. I was assigned the job of looking after the boiler room, but I found it very difficult to stay for long in the suffocating atmosphere, so I requested the captain to give me duty on the deck, which he refused and so I decided to quit. My romance with the merchant navy lasted only three days and the only loss was the crew cut that I got during the stay. I returned to Nagpur and rejoined the Commerce College and everybody, including the professors, were very happy that I had come back.

In the month of January 1955, my father took up a case representing twelve persons who were accused of gang murder. In spite of his bad health he used to prepare for the case. In the evenings, my sister Shashi and I used to take turns pressing his feet and legs. On the 8th of February, he had concluded his argument as defence counsel and came home very tired and exhausted. Since my exams were approaching and I was studying until late at night, I could hear his restless breathing and so I went and asked him two or three times whether he needed any help, but he, as usual, said that he would be all right by the morning. In the morning, however, his pain had aggravated and it was decided to shift him to the paying ward to the Mayo Hospital. Since the paying ward was not vacant, we rang up Mr. Kannamwar, who was then the health minister, who made available the Parsi ward, which is the best ward. By the time he was

shifted, my father had vomited blood twice. As soon as he was admitted, a team of doctors headed by the civil surgeon, Dr. Uddanwadikar, was in attendance. However, by the time the treatments had started, the ulcers in his stomach had probably burst and he had again started vomiting blood. To reduce his agony, I think he was administered a sleeping pill and he then went into a delirium and was talking about his shikar days and fishing days all night. I sat by his bedside the whole night. The morning newspaper carried the news that he had been admitted to the hospital and a host of his friends and admirers started visiting the hospital. During those days cars were allowed to come up to the paying wards and the number of visitors was so many that the enquiry booth was kept very busy. Once I was standing near the enquiry booth and a car pulled up and stopped, before the occupants of the car could enquire, the booth man gave directions to the Parsi ward without ascertaining whether they had actually come to meet my father or not. Ministers, judges, lawyers, sportsmen and clients made a beeline to visit him. We had sent telegrams to all my sisters. Two of them were in Gwalior and so they had not yet arrived. Shri Mataji was next to his pillow all the time. She told us that he was narrating interesting legal cases to Her. On the 14th of February, Dr. Uddanwadikar gave up hopes of my father's survival and, since he was a great admirer of my father, he suggested that his end should not come in the hospital. So on the morning of the 15th, we shifted him to N.K.R.'s residence. At around ten o'clock in the morning he showed signs of revival. Shri Mataji was all the time near. He felt Her bangles and said, "Bai, are you going to make me starve?"

Immediately, Shri Mataji told him that he has to eat whatever he wants. She asked us to call Dr. Uddanwadikar. We immediately called him, who used to call my father "Raosahib." In order to ascertain whether the shifting of my father from the hospital to N.K.P.'s residence had registered with my father (since he was delirious most of the time), he questioned my father as to where he was. The answer that he gave stunned us all because he was a man who always spoke relevant and cogent things. Even in his delirium his talk was not uncogent. In this context, the reply that he gave was most unexpected. He said to the doctor that he had been "there" (meaning heaven), but they had said that there was no doctor, so he still had time for him to come. This obviously means that he had been to the other world but they were not yet ready to receive him there. On the evening of the 15th, all his children gathered around him. He asked Shri Mataji, "Have you been able to find the method? He was

asking about mass Realisation, which we realized much later. He saw them and then went into a coma, in which state he remained until the morning of the 17th. He passed away into the other world at around 9:30 a.m. on the 17th of February 1955. My friend and I were at his bedside as he was breathing his last. Shri Mataji was in the bathroom. She came back to find him dead. My mother's hair had become absolutely grey overnight. Shri Mataji who used to be filled with tears when She saw a beggar, at that moment summoned up all Her courage and started arranging for the funeral. This was the first time that I had seen death from such a close distance and it was quite a shock for me to understand that a person, who was so full of life, could suddenly become lifeless.

The funeral was fixed for the evening and the news spread like fire in the city. It was a rule of all the courts, including the high court, that none of the courts should close because of the death of a lawyer. However, the judges, including the High Court judges had so much respect for my father that most of them took casual leave and came to attend the funeral. The burial ground was not very far from where N.K.P. was staying and it was decided to carry the coffin on shoulders and the judges, ministers and lawyers were scrambling to be able to give their shoulder to the coffin. Reverend S.T. Navagri, who was not only the priest of our church, but a family friend, conducted the service and the mortal remains of my father were laid to rest on the 17th February 1955. In this tragedy I must mention the courage of Shri Mataji and of my mother who put her grief aside and was consoling her children and other mourners saying that we should bow down to the will of God.

Next day, the judgment of the gang murder came and all twelve accused were set free and they came to give this news to my father, only to find out that he was no more. They said that a man who tried to save their lives, which were not so precious, lost his own life which was not only precious for him, his family and the nation, but also for the entire human race.

CHAPTER SIX: 1955 TO 1963

The death of my father made me realise slowly but surely that I did not have an umbrella to protect me. The shelter had gone and, for the first time, I felt that I was completely on my own and that I had to build myself up without of any help or assistance. It was a situation that was totally new and I somehow started feeling greatly responsible for my mother and my two other unmarried sisters. My attitude and behaviour had suddenly changed. Inwardly, I was feeling great remorse and dejection since I did not have any financial source to show my concern for my mother and two sisters. Outwardly, I pretended that I was the same flamboyant, carefree boy, but within me I could feel a great transformation taking place.

It was in these circumstances that I took my final exams for a bachelor of commerce in the year 1956. We had shifted premises and Balasahib, who had started his practice as a lawyer on his own, took the responsibility of running the household. In January 1956, Shri Mataji arranged his marriage with Venu Deodhar, a girl from Wilson College, Bombay, and the wedding was solemnised in April 1956. The entire arrangement of the marriage from catering to decoration of the church and distribution of invitation cards fell on my friends and I. The heat was scorching. It was 118 degrees fahrenheit (that is, nearly forty-seven degrees Celsius) and I saw birds falling dead from the trees in the heat. My friends and I distributed the invitation cards to all the relatives. Shri Mataji had come a week or ten days earlier. She formed a brigade of workers because at that point in time there was no system of professional caterers to look after the catering. The brigade consisted of my friends and I and a few young relatives. I was assigned quite a few jobs. I was also to be the best man for my brother. The marriage ceremony was to start at 4:30 p.m. in the evening. However, at four o'clock on the day, I was still trying to complete unfinished jobs. Then to still go home, have a quick bath, get into a suit and rush to the church in the span of half-an-hour was next to impossible. So, in consequence, I was late in arriving at the church and a makeshift best man had been made available. As I reached the church premises at 4:40 p.m., both my elder brothers, Sannie bhaiyya and N.K.P. were standing at the entrance and N.K.R. was giving me a very nasty look. It was

Sannie bhaiyya who calmed N.K.P. down and that was how I survived his wrath. I was well in time to replace the makeshift best man and to hand over the wedding bank to Balasahib, which was the only role I had to play as a best man. The wedding reception was arranged at the association ground in Nagpur and the dinner was in the buffet style. The buffet system was quite new to the society of Nagpur, so, when a person went to the table for a helping, he would keep standing in front of his favorite dish, which was usually the biryani. So my elders had to virtually tell the elite of Nagpur to keep on moving. I also had the privilege of seeing the icing of the cake jutting out from the pockets of the black coats of the lawyers, who had come directly from the courts, that revealed the cake pieces had been secretly pocketed. It was quite an interesting marriage and also an education for future marriages. My mother received people who brought money that my father had lent them. Moreover, all shopkeepers were helpful and gave ample help.

After the marriage, I was awaiting the exam result, but N.K.P. asked us to join the office immediately. As a result, Madhu Joshi, Shyam Jodh and myself joined my brother's office in April of 1956. We were offered a handsome salary of fifteen rupees per month and a raincoat and brown hat to protect us from rain and sun. We were required, of course, to go and do audits on cycles and also required to go on long tours outside Nagpur.

N.K.P. is a hard taskmaster and most of the time he was ruthless and never spared us for the smallest of mistakes. He had a very strong vocabulary and would use it on us, particularly on me, at the smallest provocation. Then I used to feel that he was giving a step-motherly treatment to me, but later on I realised that this training under him would hold me in good stead in my future practice. One thing I may mention is that, in the context of Shri Mataji's generosity, he was very stingy, both with money and with expressing love to the family members. On Sunday, while I was playing a match for my college, my senior came to the ground and asked me to report to my brother immediately. I was very indignant and went to meet him during the lunch recess. On his asking me as to why I was not in the office, I said that it was a Sunday and he said, "So what, for C.A.'s there is no Sunday." In this way, I had to bid farewell to my cricket and other festivities we used to have on Sundays.

In the 1957 monsoon I was required to go to Kerala to be with my sister Shantatai. I had just finished my law-previous exams. As I returned from Kerala after staying there for about forty-five days, I was told that I had passed

my first LL.B. (law previous). In the law final, I was made the captain of the college hockey team, even though I had never played hockey in my life. The basic purpose of my becoming the captain of the hockey team was to utilise the eleven hundred rupees allotted for hockey. So every morning, I used to arrange friendly matches with various colleges with the incentive that, after the match free snacks would be served to both the teams. I also forgot to mention that in the years 1955-56 I was made the captain of my Commerce College cricket team and I was also the captain of the badminton team. My captainship was celebrated with a lot of fanfare and I remember that I was presented with a cricket cap by my friends. Shri Mataji, who used to come to Nagpur often, used to feel very proud of these small achievements of mine.

In 1958, Sir C.P. had gone back to Delhi and was working with Shri Lai Bahadur Shastri, who was the commerce minister. In November 1958, I went to Delhi to take my C.A. intermediate exam. Obviously, I was staying with Shri Mataji, who had instructed Kalpana and Sadhana not to disturb me until I finished my exam. I must tell a very interesting anecdote about what happened when I was in Delhi.

One evening, a gentleman from Lucknow knocked on the door and declared that he was a friend of Sir C.P.'s from childhood and that he was a doctor who had come to attend a seminar on malaria. (He used to pronounce malaria as "malavia," since he was not able to pronounce the letter "r".) He announced his intention of staying in Shri Mataji's house for three to four days. By now Shri Mataji had got accustomed to receiving people who claimed to be relatives or friends of Sir C.P. who always came without prior notice or intimation. She would always welcome everyone with all Her warmth. That evening at the dinner table, She narrated to the doctor Her plight and Her difficulties, dropping discrete hints about his arriving without giving prior notice. The doctor, however, did not take the hint, but reacted very differently. He said to Shri Mataji that he would ensure that during his stay nobody came without prior intimation.

Unfortunately for Sir C.P., he returned from abroad past midnight that very night. He knocked at the door and the doctor, who was sleeping in the drawing room, got up and opened the door, only to see Sir C.P. standing there with all his luggage, eager to get to bed. The doctor, who had sworn that he would not allow any guests, suddenly sprang on Sir C.P. and started to blast him, thinking that he was some relation from Lucknow. The doctor's sermon

went on unabated and poor Sir C.P. had no chance even to tell him who he was. Sir C.P. was totally exasperated and said that the doctor should wake up Mrs. Srivastava. This angered the doctor all the more, and he started his sermon again with double vigour and force. He added that She is such an innocent, loving person that She would not say anything. The noise created by him was so much that the whole house woke up and when Shri Mataji came to the door, She saw Sir C.P. standing outside and told the doctor that he was stopping the owner of the house from coming in! Sir C.P., as usual, forgave him but later confessed to Shri Mataji that he did not know the doctor at all. We used to tease Sir C.P. on this account.

The years 1959-60 were also very busy for me. Not only was I required to tour extensively, but also I had to attend the wedding of my other sister, Shashi, in Gwalior. In the meantime, I had cleared my intermediate exam of C.A. and was preparing for the final. Since Nagpur was not an examination centre for chartered accountancy, I used to select either Bombay or Delhi as my exam centre. Since Shri Mataji used to be staying in either Bombay or Delhi, I used to go to Her during examination leave. There were again strict instructions to Kalpana and Sadhana and all other guests staying with Her not to disturb me while I was studying. I was in the habit of taking tea at midnight and She used to prepare it Herself. The routine was that She used to put Kalpana and Sadhana to sleep and used to give me a nice head massage. She would always say that a lot of heat was coming out of my head and I would tell Her that it was the heat of all the studying of chartered accountancy. After massaging my head for about an hour or so, She would then go and prepare a cup of hot tea and give it to me.

After the exams, She would delay me for a few days and take me to concerts of eminent musicians. In addition to being vice president of Sur Singar Samsad, a very prestigious cultural organisation of India, She was a member of the Music Club of Bombay and was invited to various concerts. I had the privilege of listening to great artists like Bismillal Khan, Amir Khan, Bhimsen Joshi, Shiv Kumar Sharma, Vilayat Khan, etc., along with Her. I also attended a concert of Zareen Daroowala, whom Shri Mataji said was a child prodigy who played her sarod in front of Shri Mataji much later, during Her seventy-fifth birthday celebrations. In the year 1960, I also cleared my law exam.

In 1961, May, I took the exam of group two of the C.A. final, but this time I appeared from Pune since all my friends used to go to Pune. Pune was then a

very beautiful and clean city. This was just before the breaking out of the Panshet Dam near Khadakwasla, which practically wiped out half of Pune city. In 1961, December, three of my sisters had come to spend Christmas with me, along with Kalpana and Sadhana. I had only one room in which I had to accommodate them all. So I allotted the four corners, three to my three sisters and one to Kalpana and Sadhana and I used to sleep in the centre. It was a very crowded Christmas, but it was full of joy. After Christmas, when everybody had left, I had to go to Calcutta to drop Shashi and Indu, but I hurried back to Nagpur, since I was to prepare for my final C.A. exam. My pattern of studying was to study from 8 p.m. in the evening, after taking an early dinner, until 4 a.m. in the morning because that was the quietest time of the night and I could study without disturbance.

One night, while I was deeply engrossed in my studies, I saw my mother standing in front of the door of my room. I looked at the watch, which showed 2:30 a.m. I was quite surprised to see her at that late hour of the night. Presuming that she needed me for something, I asked her if she wanted anything. She smiled and said she didn't want anything, but she said that she wanted to tell me that she was very impressed by the labour that I was putting into my studies and that I would be known the world over. I thought she was half-asleep and dreaming, so I asked her to go and sleep and I also told her that, whatever she had to tell me, could wait until the following morning. She, however, persisted and said that she had to tell me what she had to say then, rather than the next morning. I convinced her to sleep, but when I was alone again I mused over what she had said, all the more so since my mother as a rule never complimented any of her children for what they were worth. For her, praising her children was like spoiling them beyond redemption. I was therefore amazed, or I should say I was stunned, to hear her praise me. Thinking it must be a dream that she saw, saying what she didn't really mean, I therefore ignored her remark completely. Many years later I narrated this incident to Shri Mataji and She said that my mother was named Cornelia after a famous queen, who also had seven children like my mother, but only two of the queen's children had become famous. So Shri Mataji was saying that, other than Herself, it is me, since I am internationally known.

I had been occupying a two-room annex of N.K.P.'s bungalow. One room was allotted to my mother and one room was allotted to me. I was required to work late in the office and, as a result, meeting my friends or socialising was beyond

the ambit of my activity. The coffee-house, which was an assembly point for all my friends in the evening, was at a walking distance from the place where I was staying. I felt very frustrated at not being able to meet my friends and, as and when I met them, I used to shout at them, saying that they were squandering away their time and not building a career as I was. As a result, quite a few of my friends started coming to study in my room. Though they were pursuing different careers or academic study, the common point was the cup of tea in the night. Duties were assigned to each friend before the tea was served. One would wash the cups and saucers, the other would light the stove and the third would boil the water, while my job was the final blending for tea and milk. It was a great joy in the collectivity and, whenever we friends meet, we nostalgically remember the cups of tea taken at midnight.

I remember having asked Sir C.P. about the secret of his success in his exams. He had said that it was dangerous to bluff the examiner, so if you did not know a subject or if you did not know an answer to a question, it was proper not to reply because to do so would create a prejudice in the mind of the examiner and he would start judging your correct answers as well, in a prejudiced frame of mind. He also told me that, while replying to a question, you should always make the examiner feel that you know a lot more than you are writing, but are unable to write all of it because of paucity of time. This was an education itself for me and I tried to bring it into practice while writing my exams.

In May 1962, I took the final group of the C.A. exam. Shri Mataji was then staying in Bombay, in Jeevan Jyot. I was very fond of Her daughters. They were great entertainers. Shri Mataji had told them lot of stories of Shri Ram, Christ and Shri Krishna. They never liked films that were not *puranic* (mythological). They used to tell us that we should not see any dirty films. They knew such a lot about all Gods and Goddess. They had to study in the convent because Sir C.P. was always being transferred. Both of them hated their school because of the dry-faced nuns. Later on, they would not even go near the school. They used to tell me how the nuns were very cruel ladies. Both of them were very brilliant students.

I was well prepared for the final exam and was quite happy to see the first paper on accounts since I was capable of answering all the question. Having solved one question, which took me thirty minutes, I wanted to put down the pen just to relax my fingers, but my fingers would not open. For a moment I thought that I was paralysed. I stretched open my fingers which had gone

totally numb and I started sweating since I thought I might not be able to write the exam any more. The invigilator was very kind and he suggested that I should go out, wash my face and try solving the paper as much as my hand would allow. I followed his advice and had a good wash. The blood was by now re-circulating in the fingers, but I had lost a precious twenty minutes in recuperating to normalcy. As a result, I could only solve seventy-five marks worth of paper out of the hundred marks. I came out from the examination hall very dejected, since accounts was my favourite scoring subject. Shri Mataji could read my dejection and, after giving lunch to Sir. C.P., She came into my room and heard the entire story of my not being able to answer twenty-five marks worth of questions. She advised me to forget the past as if nothing had happened and appear in the rest of the papers as if it was the last attempt to which I was entitled. I initially felt like skipping the exams, but gradually I realised the wisdom in Her advice and I built up a do-or-die attitude and wrote the rest of the papers in a very desperate mood. I was, however, very sure about my failure since the result of passing CA then used to be between two and three percent. I returned to Nagpur and I started preparing for the November exam. I was so sure of my failure that I didn't even go to see my result. One afternoon, while I was working on a balance sheet of a client, a friend of mine rang me up to say that I had passed my exam. I rebuked him saying that I would not tolerate such jokes. After that I started getting phone calls from all my friends, but I didn't believe any of them. Eventually, my brother rang up, but I was not satisfied, so I went to the press and saw the result myself and reconfirmed it three to four times before accepting that I had passed. I had ultimately surmounted the mountain of the C.A. exam, but it was largely due to the inspiring advice of Shri Mataji. Out of a total of one thousand and odd students, only thirty-three were declared successful in the whole country and this was considered to be a liberal result according to the standards laid down by our institute.

In 1961, Shri Mataji had started constructing a house in Nirala Nagar, in Lucknow. By the time my result was announced, She was in need of marble, so She rang me up to say that She was coming to Jabalpur to buy the marble and that I should receive Her in Jabalpur. We had an audit of a college in Seoni (midway to Jabalpur), so I went and did the audit and then went to Jabalpur in time to receive Shri Mataji. After we had purchased the marble, which was quite in bulk, we went to meet a cousin of ours. Her daughter was the student of Acharya Rajneesh (who was later on known as Bhagwan Rajneesh, or

Osho). Acharya Rajneesh was a professor in the local Robertson College and was giving spiritual discourses. Knowing the inclination of Shri Mataji towards spirituality, my cousin arranged a meeting between Shri Mataji and Acharya Rajneesh. When Acharya Rajneesh saw Shri Mataji, he raised his arms and ran to Shri Mataji, saying, “Oh Mother Adi Shakti, I have been looking forward to meeting You for so long! And today my dream is fulfilled.” So saying, he lay prostrate at the feet of Shri Mataji. I was a personal witness to all this and so was my cousin and her daughter. Later on, the same Acharya Rajneesh was to hold a seminar in Nargol, where Shri Mataji decided to manifest on the 5th of May 1970. He was very anxious that Shri Mataji should attend. She did not want to go, but C.P. arranged a separate house and a car for Her with a cook and so She went because She was very much pressurised by Sir C.P., as Rajneesh was telephoning him all the time.

Due to my extreme pre-occupation with my profession and my exams, I felt that I had neglected my mother, although every evening I used to sit with her and learn about the history of the family. Many an event that I have written here in this book are the result of the one hour meetings I used to have with my mother. Moreover, I was anxious to start my own establishment, since I didn't want to depend on my brother any more for anything. Since running an establishment required a lady in the house, I decided that I should get married as early as possible. I put this view to N.K.P. and he jokingly asked whether I had an affair going on with anybody. Quick-witted as I was, I replied to him saying that the time he allowed us to leave the office was so late that no decent father would allow courting of his daughter that late in the night. He was quite stunned by the reply.

The news went to Shri Mataji that I had expressed the desire to get married and immediately the hunt was on. In September of 1962, I went to Bombay for an audit and when Shri Mataji asked me as to what my preference was, I said the only prime consideration was my mother and I therefore wanted somebody who would take care of her and her health. She therefore had not to be a working girl. Shri Mataji said that She would look into it and the matter ended there.

On my return to Nagpur, I received a phone call from Shri Mataji that She wanted a photograph of mine to be sent to one Mr. Ranbhise whose youngest daughter was due for marriage and who fitted into my expectations of a wife. I sent the photograph and I requested Shri Mataji to send me a photograph

of the girl. Since I did not receive the photo for many days, I thought the girl did not want to marry me. One day in late October of 1962, I received a letter from Shri Mataji and enclosed with the letter was a photo. As I saw the photo I started laughing. My mother asked me as to why I was laughing. I told her that I had asked for a photo of my prospective bride, who I knew was twenty-three or twenty-four years of age. What I saw in that photo was a twelve-year-old girl holding a two-year-old child and I was unable to decide as to which of the two was my bride-to-be! So I wrote back to Shri Mataji and She in return wrote to the parents of the girl, asking them to bring the girl to Bombay from Pali (about fifty kilometers away from Ganapatipule on the Bombay-Goa Road). So a meeting was arranged in mid-November and three of my friends, Madhu, Shyam and Ganu prevailed on me and Shri Mataji that they should come and see the girl also, along with me. Seeing all this, Sir C.P. called me aside and gave me some advice that I will remember all my life. He said that I should not go with any pre-determined view. It was not an inspection that I was carrying out and that I had to preserve her dignity and honour when I was talking to the girl in question. While I had the right of rejection, she also had an equal right to reject me. I was not on a pedestal, he said, and I had no right to reject her on the facts that I already knew about her. (Generally speaking, in India, in such meetings, the boy is supposed to ask stupid questions as to whether the girl can cook, sew, sing, etc., as if that was the criteria of marriage.) To Sir C.P. and Shri Mataji, human dignity came above every other consideration.

I remember that I had worn a suit that was highly inappropriate for the weather of Bombay. To top it all, I was known for sweating, so I started sweating as soon as I got into the car to go to see the girl. Everybody was teasing me, saying that I was nervous, but, in fact, I was churning over the advice of Sir C.P. in my mind. When we reached the house, I was surprised to see that there was no fan in the room where we were sitting. My father-in-law-to-be was talking to me, but half of my attention was on wiping the sweat and the other half was anxious that this ordeal should be over very soon. Shri Mataji had gone inside the house to decorate the girl. After an agonising fifteen minutes, Shri Mataji came out with the girl. I just got a glimpse of her and since I was profoundly confused as to how I could talk to her in the presence of three of my friends, Shri Mataji and my father-in-law, I just kept quiet. After fifteen or twenty minutes of formalities, we bade farewell and started homeward. On the way Shri Mataji asked my reaction and I frankly

told Her that, more than seeing her, I wanted to talk to her and appraise her of my expectations as a wife and also to find out if I came up to her expectations. To this, Shri Mataji kidded me and said that I should have done this in the first meeting itself and I confessed that I was totally dumbfounded.

The next day when the father-in-law rang up, Shri Mataji requested him whether he could bring the girl to Shri Mataji's house for another meeting, to which he readily agreed. At the next meeting I told her about the responsibility I had towards my mother and the consequent expectations I had of her as a wife. I also asked her if I fulfilled her expectations. I also told her that I was a very bad Christian and never went to church, except for Christmas and Easter. I told her about my salary and in the end I said she was as much free to reject as I was. Having unloaded my views, which were like a burden on me, I felt very relieved. Her reaction was favourable and I told Shri Mataji that I had put everything to her and that she had accepted all that I had expected of her.

I got engaged to my wife-to-be on the 30th December 1962 in Pali. Those present for the engagement included my eldest brother and sister-in-law Shalini, their three children, Sir C.P., my brother, one of my friends – Ganu, Kalpana, Sadhana and, of course, Shri Mataji. Shri Mataji, Kalpana, Sadhana and my eldest brother, along with his family, went ahead in one car. They took the Goa road, which was full of ditches and thoroughly under-prepared for travel and we were to follow the next day on the same road. However, Shri Mataji rang up from Ratnagiri, saying that we should come via Pune.

On the morning of 29 December, Sir C.P., my brother, my friend and I left for Pali via Pune. On the way, I developed a fever and it was rising. Being a Sunday, there was no clinic open nor doctor available, so I was administered some medicine and made to sleep in the back seat on the lap of my friend, while Sir C.P. and my brother were crowded in the front seat along with the driver. We reached Pali at around eleven in the night and thereafter my engagement took place at midnight. I changed into a suit with fever and as soon as the engagement was over I went off to sleep. We returned to Bombay the next day and, in due course of time, went back to Nagpur.

There is another significant event that took place during May 1963. I had saved about seven hundred rupees out of the reimbursement for conveyance and travel from my clients and I had planned to stitch suits and other clothes

with this money and had discussed this plan with Shri Mataji with great boast and pride. Two days before I was to return to Nagpur, She said that She was in urgent need of some money and that could I lend Her the seven hundred rupees that I had saved for buying clothes. I very reluctantly gave the money to Her, knowing that the money would not return. Next day in the morning, I was sitting very depressed that all my plans for making clothes had been destroyed. She came into my room with two cardboard boxes and asked whether I could guess as to what She had bought. I was totally perplexed and, at any rate, I was not in the mood for solving riddles, so I just gave a casual answer and said that She must have bought something for Her home. To that, She replied that She had bought something for my house to be. Thus, She started unpacking and I saw a lot of items made of stainless steel. She had bought me a whole dinner set in stainless steel, consisting of six plates (*thali*), twelve bowls (*katori*), six glasses, some cooking utensils and large and small spoons and, for this, She had spent only 590 rupees. She said that spending money on clothes was not very essential, but having the proper stainless steel dinner set was more important. Thus saying, “Now you are a family man and you must look after the needs of your family,” She returned the 110 rupees to me and my eyes were filled with tears of gratitude. I am proud to say that even today, after nearly thirty-seven years, I am still eating from the same plates that She gave me. Such is Her wisdom and foresight.

CHAPTER SEVEN: 1963 TO 1970

Eventually, I got married to Kumud on the 16th of October 1963, in Pune. I am using the word “eventually” since many event took place between my engagement and my marriage. I am mentioning a few below.

My brother offered me, along with M.M. Jain, partnership in a new firm. M.M. Jain was my senior during the articles period (apprenticeship), but he passed his C.A. final along with me in May 1962. Jain and I purchased a second-hand car for five thousand rupees. Although it was jointly owned, since Jain did not know how to drive, the car generally remained with me. It was only when it had to be refuelled that it would go to Jain. There was a standing joke amongst friends that whenever they saw the car standing in front of Jain’s residence, they would know that it had come for refuelling.

Shri Mataji had wanted me to get married earlier, but N.K.P. was not willing. So in the dispute that arose, N.K.P. asked me to discontinue coming to the office while Shri Mataji was in Nagpur. Shri Mataji was, of course, staying with me. This incident made me feel very insecure in my job with N.K.P. and I decided that after my marriage, I would leave his firm.

The marriage was fixed in Pune, but we had no place to stay. (Just imagine, even Shri Mataji, who now owns the Prathisthan house had to stay with friends.) Through a friend, we were able to book a school for three days, that too after great effort and persuasion. As mentioned earlier, my marriage was fixed on 16th October 1963, which was Diwali (festival of lights and joy), so every nook and corner of Pune was lit up.

My marriage was solemnised in the Christian tradition, in the St. Andrew’s Church, Pune. There was the usual confusion in the marriage. The train that was scheduled to reach Pune on the 15th morning was delayed by twelve to fourteen hours. That meant that I could not be present for the haldi ceremony, which was scheduled for the 15th evening. (In India the bridegroom is first applied with turmeric paste and then the remaining of the turmeric paste is applied to the bride.) So we had to change trains midway and travel in unreserved compartments. I somehow reached Pune on the 15th evening,

standing on the footboard of the first class compartment. My father-in-law, who had come to receive me, thought that I was travelling in first class. Factually, I was holding a ticket of second class, but was forced to travel on the footboard of a first class compartment. There were two marriages fixed on the same day in the same church. My marriage was the second, but the sermon of the first marriage went on a little longer. Hence, we had to wait, so also the bride. The wedding band that I was supposed to wear did not arrive until the end, so a ring that I was wearing was substituted in place of the wedding band.

While proposing the toast, the speaker, Bishop Luther, spoke about the bridegroom and completely forgot to speak about the bride and the family of the bride. So when I got up to reply I covered up that aspect. Sir C.P., Kalpana and Sadhana arrived only just before the marriage, since the car they were travelling in broke down on the way from Bombay to Pune. Shri Mataji, of course, was in Pune even before we had arrived.

After the marriage, there was a reception, followed by dinner. After staying in Pune for a day more, I came along with my wife to Bombay with the intention of returning to Nagpur. I could not think of a honeymoon since it meant spending money that I did not have. Most of the money that I had saved from my salary and partnership income was utilised in converting the two-roomed apartment and veranda that had been given to me into a five-roomed apartment. I had converted the veranda into a kitchen and one guest room and divided the big living room where I had been staying into a sitting room and bedroom. So I decided to return to Nagpur, but Shri Mataji had other plans. She had arranged a hotel for us for three days in Matheran (a hill resort near Bombay). So Kumud and I went to Matheran, but both of us were sick. She was sick from the food, which was not to her taste, and I was sick with an acidic condition. So it was more of a misery than a honeymoon for the both of us. We eventually came back to Nagpur and I resumed my routine. I was anxious that my wife should meet all the members of the family so I requested N.K.P. to introduce my wife to his wife. For reasons best known to him, he refused such a meeting and this set the idea of my leaving him in motion. Soon Kumud became pregnant and we were blessed with a son on the 4th of November 1964, which again happened to be a Diwali day. We named our son Prateek, meaning “symbol.” He is popularly known as Raju.

In July 1965, I appeared for an interview with Air India, but did not hear from them until September. So I thought I was rejected. In September 1965,

however, it was intimated by Air India that I was appointed as assistant accounts officer and that I should join as early as possible. My selection in Air India was not entirely my effort. A word had been put in by Sir C.P. to the managing director, Mr. Lai and that was at the insistence of Shri Mataji.

Sir C.P. had shifted to Delhi, since after the death of Jawaharlal Nehru, Shri Lai Badhur Shastri had become the prime minister and Sir C.P. had joined him as his personal secretary. This was the time when Pakistan had started a war against India and therefore Sir C.P. would return home very late. I went to Delhi to seek the blessings of Shri Mataji and Sir C.P. and joined Air India on the 6th of December 1965. It was a major decision because I was leaving my mother behind in Nagpur. I, however, had to choose between my career and my duties towards my mother. So a compromise was struck that as soon as I had proper accommodation, I would bring her to Bombay.

In June of 1966, the rupee was devalued in relation to the dollar and this created a lot of problems in the ticketing and in interline travel on tickets of Air India. Though I was new, I could visualise the difficulties involved in the settling of accounts with other airlines, particularly for tickets which were paid in Indian rupees prior to devaluation, where the date of the actual travel on interline airline was to commence after the devaluation of the rupee. To illustrate this point I will give a small example. Let us say a ticket was made for sectors Bombay-London-New York on an Air India ticket. Bombay-London was to be covered by Air India and London-New York was to be covered by American Airlines. The fare for the entire sector, let us say, was \$300 which at the pre-devaluation date was taken in rupees at 3.45 rupees for one dollar. Supposing the passenger travelled the sector London-New York after the 6th of June, the interline rule was to settle the account in dollars, which had become seven rupees per dollar. So a net loss of 3.55 rupees per dollar would have had to be borne by Air India. I read the manuals and the various rules and regulations of interline settlement by sitting late in the office and on the 9th of June I prepared a comprehensive note and submitted it to my senior, Mr. Balaporia. Since I was new and, at any rate, this job had not been assigned to me, he was angry and threw aside the note saying it was not worth the paper on which it had been written. I was very upset, obviously, and in that state of mind the note remained on the table of Mr. Balaporia, since I forgot to pick it up. I came home in a fit of anger and declared that I would soon be resigning from Air India. My wife, however, pacified me.

The next day, as I reached the office, a peon was standing near my table. He told me that Mr. Balaporia was anxiously waiting for me. Anticipating another shouting, I entered his cabin hesitantly. The first question he asked was who the author of the note was. I shakingly said that it was me and I was about to apologise when he said that he could not believe that such a comprehensive note could have been prepared within three days of devaluation and that too, by a person comparatively new in the organisation. He complimented me and said that I should prepare guidelines for all the stations all over the world and telex them. He authorised me to open a separate file and that file was to be known as “H.P. Salve on Devaluation.” This was the beginning of a very successful career in Air India.

I was selected to go to Brussels, but since there were no maids in Brussels and Kumud did not like the idea of my washing dishes while she cooked, we opted out for Tehran (capital of Iran). I went to Tehran via Beirut on the 5th of May 1966.

The airport manager, Mr. Theophilis, came to receive me and my counterpart in Tehran and on the way I asked him about the flat that I was being given. He said it was nice, but it was small. In the context of my coming from Bombay, where I was staying in a one-bedroom apartment, I thought that I had been given an even smaller flat. When I actually saw the flat, it was not only spacious, having three bedrooms, but was fully furnished with fridge, television, crockery, cutlery, linen, washing machine and cooking range. I was totally floored to see the flat. To add to this it was totally air-conditioned and I thought that I was in heaven. I immediately sat down to write a letter to my wife, describing the flat. It was on the third floor, while my manager, Mr. Kaul, stayed a floor above me with his wife Katy and two children. Katy was an interesting person, full of fun, while Mr. Kaul was a nice man, but with a very strict sense of discipline.

On the 6th of June 1966, the war broke out between Israel and Egypt and, as a result, all the online and offline stations of Air India in the Middle East had to close down, except Tehran, which was peaceful. A lot of staff were coming to or transiting Tehran. The instructions from my head office were to give the staff their allowances while in flight. I had to go and attend the flights at all odd times, which meant a lot of strain. The war was eventually over after three weeks and I was then given leave by my manager to come and collect my

family. I was very eager to take my mother with me, but she said that she would like to spend her last days close to my father's grave.

My stay in Tehran was very comfortable, and luxurious. My work was very cosy. I was allotted a secretary and an assistant, whom I trained to look after the routine and in my free time I used to promote Air India. My friends circle was mostly Indian with some Americans. There used to be cocktail parties practically every evening and I, because of my nature, became very popular, particularly with the Americans. In due course of time, I purchased a car – a small D.K.W. made in Germany and I felt very proud, even though the car was small. We used to come to Nagpur every winter, particularly to meet my mother. The manager was so kind that he would allow me to go to Hong Kong or Kuwait for the purchasing of electronic goods and other items which I used to bring as gifts for my relations in Nagpur. I remember, I gave a wristwatch to my mother which she used to wear very proudly.

In the year 1969, Kalpana got married to Prabhat Shrivastav. The marriage was solemnised in October in Bombay. In the same year, I was blessed with another son on the 24th of August 1969. We named him Milind, who is popularly known as Bunty. In Kalpana's marriage, I remember, I had brought nearly fifty kilograms of pistachios from Tehran since they were very cheap there. The wedding was a grand function. The top brass of Bombay had come to bless the couple. There is an interesting story you may like to hear about Kalpana's wedding.

As is the tradition in India, eunuchs come and dance at the place of the wedding and this is considered to be auspicious. So, as per tradition, the eunuchs came and wanted to dance and sing. Sir C.P. in his three-piece suit, was sitting upstairs in an air-conditioned room, leaving Shri Mataji to face the music. So Shri Mataji hit on a plan and directed them to Sir C.P., saying that there is a tall gentleman sitting upstairs, who is the father of the bride, and who would appreciate your dance and music. So a gang of about one dozen eunuchs went up to the room of Sir C.P., who was busy discussing marriage plans with his colleagues. Seeing the eunuchs and that too in so many numbers, he started shouting at them, but they would not pay any heed to his shouting and insisted on his listening to their music. As a last resort, he asked for Shri Mataji who was not to be seen, purposefully. So he had to shell out money, not only for making them go, but an extra bit for making them not to

sing. When he finally met Shri Mataji, She told him that some music he should also face and not leave everything to Her.

Kalpana's wedding was like a festival. Shri Mataji had called cooks from Lucknow and they prepared delicious dishes. These cooks had cooked for the opening ceremony of Shri Mataji's house. They were very much obliged to the gentle and loving personality of Shri Mataji. So when She invited them for Kalpana's wedding they sent a telegram that they were coming but to receive them with a truck at the Bombay railway station. Shri Mataji Herself went to receive them with a truck. They had brought big cooking vessels and also all kinds of spoons and ladles with very long holders. The food was excellent. Another relation brought two hundred chickens, which he had hatched and reared. The evenings were filled with musical concerts and eminent musicians of India performed. So many musicians came without charging. The whole night music was going on. Such was Her popularity. The whole place was filled with the beautiful aroma of fragrant incense. The people who had brought them came all the way from some village near Chandrapur. They told us that Shri Mataji had made a sanatorium for them. Later on, I came to know that Shri Mataji had collected this money for them.

She was a very silent social worker. Once She became the president of a society called the Friends of the Blind. Lots of money was collected in Her name and now there is a very beautiful building in Bombay. She said that the blind could offer massage and the people who were trained later on are now doing very well. In Meerut She started a refugee home and a home for invalids. She also became very busy with a big leper home. In Her experience, She has found that people do social work mostly for status, for making money or for converting people to their own faith, but She feels that social workers should work only because they love and care.

In due course of time, Kalpana became pregnant and she delivered a baby girl. The girl had a hole in her heart and the doctors in Bombay advised Shri Mataji to go to Houston for an operation on the heart of the child. She telexed me in Tehran of Her plan and requested me to come to New York, but the telex came late and I reached New York only to find that She had already gone to Houston and that the child would not survive the operation. Dr. Denton Coolie, an eminent cardiologist, was attending. This happened before I could reach New York and She had already returned to India. So I also came back.

In October 1970, my mother fell seriously ill. I was informed but I could not travel out of Iran, since my passport had been tampered with by a local employee and had become evidence in a criminal case lodged against him by Air India. Shri Mataji came back from Houston and the next day She went to see my mother. Surprisingly, my mother was in a cheerful mood. She asked Shri Mataji if She had found what her father wanted her to find. So Shri Mataji told her that She had found the method of en masse Realisation. On the 11th of October 1970, my mother passed away in Nagpur. Unfortunately, I could not be at her bedside at that point in time. It was a very big loss for me, since I had a great desire to take her to Tehran and to Jerusalem to see the birthplace of Christ.

As I was getting over the tragic news of my mother's death, I got a message from Bombay that Shri Mataji, who was an invitee on an inaugural flight of Air India, was planning to visit me in Tehran after She had completed the inaugural flight to Paris. My joy knew no bounds. I immediately applied for one week's leave and told my new manager, Mr. Joglekar, to spare me that week, since a very special person was coming to visit me. When I met Shri Mataji at the airport, She was without Her luggage. She smilingly told me that Her luggage had been mishandled, but She was sure that it would be found. Being an airline man, I was quite disturbed and I started sending out tracers all over the world. Her luggage eventually came back after three days. In the meantime, She used Kumud's clothes as a stopgap arrangement. Her nonchalant, unconcerned attitude towards Her luggage upset me but always she was very detached and peaceful. I was not aware of the new transformation that had overtaken Her. I was totally oblivious of the fact that on the 5th of May of that year, She had manifested in Her Full Form. As a result, when I took Her around Tehran, showing Her the beautiful gardens and palaces of the king, the carpet industry and the crown jewels, She did not react in the normal way, as She should have. She told me that She had no interest in jewels and palaces, but preferred to be with nature.

I was more astonished when I took Her to the ruins of Persepolis in Shiraz, south of Tehran. As soon as She saw the ruins, She said that this is Amravati. I thought that She was out of her mind, since I knew that Amravati is a small town located about 150 kilometers west of Nagpur. When I told her that it could not be Amravati, She said She was not mentioning the Amravati I understood, but the kingdom of Lord Indra. What was seen as ruins was in

fact, once upon a time, the palace of Cyrus the Great. This palace had eight pillars and each pillar had a chair where the king's courtesans sat and the king used to deliver judgements on the cases brought before him. Though the ruins indicated nothing of the sort, Shri Mataji described in great detail the structure of the palace, the placement of the throne and the chairs, which was a complete replica of the kingdom of Indra, known as Amravati. Seeing my disbelief, She asked me to confirm it with our tour guide. I very hesitatingly went to him and, apprehending that he may consider me to be a novice, I started explaining to him that my sister had a funny feeling, etc. Hearing me, he was so astonished and asked me if my sister was a member of some archaeological society. He said that every word She had said was true, the description of the palace was 100% correct and he expressed a desire to meet Shri Mataji. I was totally dumb-founded and, in my disbelief, attributed Her accurate description to some book that She must have read, least realising that She was speaking the language of vibrations. I was further shocked when She said that my counterpart from Tokyo, who was accompanying us on the tour, had some Indian relation. Since I had lived with him in Tokyo and since I had met his mother and father and his wife, who were all 100% Japanese, I was very sure that he did not have any Indian blood in him. Shri Mataji, however, insisted and, just to prove Her wrong, I took my counterpart aside and asked him whether he had any Indian blood in him. He looked Japanese himself and therefore this question seemed totally unnecessary, so I added that I knew he was Japanese, but that my sister had a strong feeling that he had Indian blood. To my astonishment, he said that Shri Mataji was correct. His real mother was Indian, while the lady I had met in Tokyo was his stepmother. Two events in one day, which were beyond rational explanation, baffled me. The fact that She did not show interest in materialistic things, the total detachment to the luggage lost and, to top it all, with these two events gave me a feeling that She had definitely changed, I was anxious to know the cause of the change, the source of Her transformation.

So, in the evening when we were sitting in the beautiful garden of Shiraz, sipping a cup of coffee, I asked Her bluntly whether She had undergone a transformation in the recent past.

CHAPTER EIGHT: SHRI MATAJI'S REVELATION, 1970 TO 1986

In answer to my question, She gave me her million-dollar smile and said that She had wanted to talk to me about Her spiritual life, but I had been too busy and engrossed in my mundane life and so She had not opened the subject until now when I asked this question. My curiosity to know about Her spiritual life was so strong that I urged Her to tell me everything about it, particularly since Kalpana's marriage. What She told me is being narrated below.

She said that from Her childhood, She had been trying to find a solution to redeem the human being from the slavery of his mundane, materialistic habits. To that end, She had read Vivekanand, Ramkrishna Paramhans and also attended speeches and sermons of eminent spiritual leaders like Chinmay Anand and other. All their speeches and sermons were at the mental level and this mental acrobatic did not provide the redemption of mankind. It only, if anything, created doubts in Her mind about the so-called spiritual leaders being able to lead a human being to his or her salvation. She was extremely disturbed by the misleading statements made by the so-called spiritual leaders. One question was always haunting Her and that was whether the spiritual leaders were themselves enlightened or was it a question of the blind leading the blind to nowhere. By enlightenment, what She meant was the enlightenment of one's inner being. Were the speeches and sermons actualising this enlightenment within, of the inner being? Another question to which She was not able to get an answer was whether the alleged godmen had the authority to lead the gullible and so-to-say ignorant people on the way to what they call their salvation and, if so, from where did they derive their authority? She knew that She had within Her this authority and it was only a matter of time before She decided to manifest through this Divine Power. She was particularly critical of spiritual leaders casting a spell or a web around simple-hearted people by their seemingly profound knowledge of the scriptures. The question was whether the knowledge they had was enlightened knowledge or was it just a reproduction of the scriptures or a misinterpretation of the scriptures.

She further said She, from Her childhood, had had an innate desire to do good for the human beings at large by transforming them. However, since She had other duties to perform like Her duties towards Her studies, duties towards Her nation and duties as a wife and as a mother, She had deferred manifesting Herself. She was totally convinced that the energy that was within Her could kindle the light that would provide enlightenment for a human being within himself. She was also sure that once a man or woman was enlightened through Her energy, he or she would be capable of enlightening others like one candle to another.

During May 1970, a seminar (*shibir*) had been organised by Acharya Rajneesh in Nargol, in the state of Gujarat. She had gone to Nargol primarily to find out the way in which Rajneesh was conducting the seminar. As was expected, he had virtually hypnotised all the audience and they were merely tools in his hands and not the human beings which they were. She saw this while sitting under a banyan tree. She could not tolerate the misleading of the innocent seekers. In fact She felt strongly that it was time ripe enough to manifest. So on the night of the 4th of May 1970, She went to a secluded place, away from the seminar, and sat down in mediation, Her face towards the eastern sky and Her back towards the sea. She meditated practically the whole night and as the sun appeared on the eastern sky, She had a powerful experience within Herself.

She felt Her head, Her Sahasrara, suddenly opening and a round-shaped flower like the lotus emerged and, as it came out, it opened its leaves and inside the lotus there were a thousand lamps glowing. The glow was there, but it was very soft and gentle and was not hurting. The glow did not flicker and sent a light beyond the Sahasrara, which was pointing towards the sky. Then suddenly the lotus disappeared and was replaced by another flower which had one thousand petals. She could easily count the petals. This flower was sending very cool vibrations throughout Her body. She also felt Her Kundalini rising, piercing through the Sahasrara and blending with the cool vibrations being emitted by the flower. Because of the cool vibrations the petals of the flower started to flutter and the flow of vibrations was continuous and incessant. She knew that She had no control over the flow and that it would continue, uninterrupted. The month of May is very hot and, since She was at the seashore, it was humid, but She was feeling very cool from within. The flower with one thousand petals disappeared and the flower with one thousand lamps

reappeared. This time there was a fusion of the glow of lamps and it penetrated the Sahasrara like a beam or ray and, though the cool vibrations were flowing from Her Sahasrara, it was not disturbing or flickering the beam. The beam was pointing skyward and could be seen in spite of the sunshine. She felt a lot of energy flowing from Her without causing any drain on Her. This perennial flow of energy was, in fact, a very invigorating experience. She felt joyous and happy over this happening. Her eyes were sparkling and She could see straight into the sun without suffering from temporary blindness which people suffer normally, when seeing the sun directly. Shri Mataji knew that She had manifested and that the energy within Her was flowing with full grace and that She had to redeem mankind through this energy. She knew that this was the Paramchaitanya (pure vibrations) and that She is the source of this energy, that is, the Adi Shakti (primordial energy).

Shri Mataji knew that She had manifested and was also aware that the seminar that was being conducted by Acharya Rajneesh was misguiding people. So She left the place of the seminar and returned to Bombay. On the way, She pondered as to how She should tell people that She had manifested. Would Her own people, Her husband, Her children and Her other relations believe Her? She knew that nobody would believe Her, not only for Her ability to manifest as the Adi Shakti, as for the inability of the relations to accept that their mother, wife, sister or aunt could have this spiritual quality. So She said to Herself that it would be better not to speak about it to anyone, but rather to wait for a proper opportunity to reveal Her true Self. She knew that if She spoke about Her spiritual advent, nobody would ever believe Her. In fact, they would ridicule Her for such a, so-to-say, flamboyant claim. Moreover, She firmly believed that Her work should speak for Herself, rather than Her words. Even today, it is only Her work that speaks for Her deeds, as far as Her personal achievements are concerned. Even today, if a person is cured, She says it is the Paramchaitanya, that too at the insistence of the healing. Only one time do I remember that She Herself, that too at the insistence of the Sahaja Yogis, said that She is the Adi Shakti. This quality of Hers immensely impressed me then, and even today.

So She came home and quietly resumed Her daily chores of looking after the children and Her husband. She said that the only person who had understood Her and knew about Her was our father, who had once told Her that She should manifest only when She could give en masse Realisation. She told me

that She was missing my father at that point in time. Her immediate need was for someone to recognise Her, rather than for Her to herald Her own manifestation.

Soon an opportunity came Her way that established Her identity at least as a spiritual healer, if not the Adi Shakti. A distant relative of Sir C.P. came to Her house along with his wife. Since he was elder to Sir C.P. and Shri Mataji in age, She pulled Her sari over Her head (*ghunghat*) as a mark of respect and wanted to touch the couple's feet. (It is a Hindu tradition to touch the feet of the elders for taking their blessings.) However, the relative immediately objected to Shri Mataji touching their feet since he had had a dream where Shri Mataji had appeared as a Goddess and had assured him that She could cure his wife's illness without any medicine. He said to Shri Mataji that She was the Devi (Goddess) and that they should touch Her feet.

The curing of the patient was unfortunately attributed to the immense faith that the patient had in Shri Mataji and not to Her spiritual energy. The scepticism of accepting one's own mother or wife as a spiritual energy was beyond the acceptance of Her daughters, Her husband and Her relation. This event, however, gave the boost to Her conviction that eventually She would redeem mankind from his illusion, created by maya. She knew that the power of love was so overpowering that She would be able to overcome all the hurdles that would come Her way.

She also knew that, in order to reach people spiritually, She had to show Her energy by curing people. The news of the curing of the cancer patient reached some of Her acquaintances, friends and well-wishers and a few of them came and met Her with their physical complaints. Only one lady, Mrs. Oak, accepted Her as her guru and started following all the instructions that Shri Mataji gave. This is how the Sahaja Yoga activity started, somewhere in July 1970. When She came to Tehran, She had about twelve disciples, Chandubai Javeri, Raulbai and others, some of whom looked at Her only as a healer, while a few of them looked at Her as a spiritual leader.

She was talking to me for about three hours, non-stop. When She started talking it was twilight and when She finished it was dark and both of us did not realize how those three hours had passed. She expressed a desire to give Self-realisation to a few friends of mine, who had spiritual inclination. So, on

our return to Tehran, I rang up a few friends of mine and arranged a dinner-cum-spiritual meeting with Shri Mataji the next day.

A few friends of mine, who had heard about Shri Mataji through me, had developed a lot of admiration for Her. So they decided to entertain Her. The only places of entertainment in Tehran were the night clubs, so we took Her to a night club and my friends, out of sheer hospitality, offered Her champagne. I was positively embarrassed because this was being done in spite of my clear instructions to my friends that no drinks should be offered or taken when entertaining Shri Mataji. Shri Mataji obviously refused, but understood my predicament. She said that She did not mind my friends drinking. I was also apprehensive that they would offer me champagne, but somehow wisdom prevailed on them. Instead, they offered some to my wife, who also refused. I may mention here that I was never much of the drinking type, but still I could never dream of drinking even champagne before Shri Mataji. Such was my respect of Her.

The next day nearly twenty friends of mine, some with their wives, came to my house for dinner-cum-spiritual awakening. My friends from the Indian embassy, United Nations, travel agents, people from the press and of course, my manager all came and after dinner there was a session of Self-realisation. At that time Shri Mataji used to make people lie down before giving Self-realisation. As She was giving Self-realisation, I was standing close by watching the whole activity. Suddenly I smelled the aroma of sandalwood. The smell was so strong that the whole room was filled with the fragrance of sandalwood. I suspected that Shri Mataji may have brought some sandalwood in Her purse and I knew fully well that bringing sandalwood into Tehran was totally prohibited. In the context of the fact that some people from the press were also attending the Self-realisation session, I, apprehensive that something untoward may happen, went to Her and whispered whether She had brought some sandalwood with Her. To this, She gave a hearty laugh and, without speaking pointed Her finger to one Dr. Divan and She asked me to go and smell his head. Dr. Divan, who was in some different world after his Realisation was emitting a strong fragrance of sandalwood from his head. After smelling his head, I whispered his name in his ear, but there was no reaction. So I shook him and asked him whether he had applied any oil that had sandalwood fragrance. He replied that he had stopped applying oil for quite some time since he was losing his hair and he said that Shri Mataji must

have put some cooling effect on his head since he was feeling very cool from within. I was quite surprised as to how Shri Mataji could transmit such fragrance into somebody's body by sitting at a distance.

There was another Parsi lady who had come on crutches since she had acute arthritis. When she went after her Self-realisation she went without crutches and was seen driving her car the next day.

The following day all leading English papers of Tehran printed the above event as news and they said that they were witnesses to what had been mentioned in this news. This news was read by many a people and all of a sudden I started receiving a lot of telephone calls. By the evening, many people, with their sick relatives, were making a beeline for my house. One afternoon as I came home for lunch, I saw a host of people standing at the entrance of my building. On enquiry, they said that they were waiting for their turn to take the blessings from Shri Mataji and, since it was lunch time, my wife had requested them to wait. So I asked as to why they were waiting outside. To which they said that my house was already full with visitors waiting their turn. When I came up to my flat I saw a lot of people, some Indian, some Parsi, some Persian, some Lebanese and Iranian Muslims all waiting for Shri Mataji to finish Her lunch. Her popularity was so much that, when She first came, I was introducing Her as my sister, but when She left I was being introduced as Her brother.

Shri Mataji stayed with me for nearly eight days and, after some downtown shopping, She returned to Bombay. Even after She had left, people kept on coming to my house, enquiring about Her.

Her visit to Tehran definitely left me bewildered. I was on the one hand willing to admit that She had powers of healing people, but my reason and rationality did not allow me to admit that She could transform a human being from within. At the same time, I very much felt that if She could achieve this impossible task I would be happiest, since she was the one I loved the most. Such contradictory feelings created a lot of confusion and somehow I reasoned out that, sooner or later, She would realize the futility of Her pursuit and, out of sanity, would abandon the idea of transforming human beings.

In the year 1971, Sadhana got married and we all came for the marriage. Sadhana's husband, Rommel, comes from a landlord family of Bihar and has

very great spiritual inclination. The marriage as usual was a grand festival of music and fanfare. It was also enjoyable because a lot of relations came to attend the wedding.

By this time, I had already completed nearly five years of my foreign posting. I was originally sent for three years, but my manager and regional manager in Beirut recommended extending my stay by another three years. However, the officers' association of the finance department of Air India raised a hue and cry about my being singled out amongst the accounts managers posted abroad. As a result, in the beginning of 1972, I had to return to Bombay.

I came to Bombay and joined Air India in the pay account department (looking after the salary and other benefits to employees). I was re-posted to Tehran for a short period of fifteen days to sort out some problems of an agent who was cheating Air India. As I came to Bombay, I was told by Shri Mataji that Sir C.P. was being considered for the post of the chairman of the International Maritime Coordinating Organization – a UN body – having its head office in London. Since I did not have a house of my own, I was staying with my other sister, Indu. In February of 1972, Jyoti, the younger sister of Mridul, got married to one Mr. Kripa David, who was then working as a manager in one of the tea gardens in West Bengal. We returned to Bombay after the marriage and, while in Nagpur, I purchased a second-hand car – a Herald – and I drove back in the car to Bombay. In due course of time, I rented a flat in east Santa Cruz, close to my office and I got my elder son admitted into a school run by Air India.

In September of 1972, the government of India had introduced a twenty rupee note and, since they were in short supply, I had gone to the bankers to reserve a quota for Air India, particularly for disbursement of salaries. Since I had gone to the bankers without discussing such a small matter with my seniors, I was called in for an explanation by my deputy financial controller. I was very hurt to see that the whole bureaucratic setup of Air India had gone against me just because I had taken an initiative to do something good for Air India. I explained to the “high-ups” that by having twenty rupee notes we would save overtime because the counting of ten rupees notes would take longer time than the counting of these twenty rupee notes. When my boss persisted on his argument that I should have taken his permission, I really lost my temper and I told him that they did not need officers with initiative, but slaves who would work under their order. This angered my boss and he started shouting at me.

As it is, I was very much annoyed and I told him that I would rather resign than work as bonded labour. So saying, I left his cabin extremely agitated and quite decided to quit Air India at the first opportunity.

I had a very sensible south Indian girl as my secretary. Her name was Jaya and I used to treat her like my daughter. She was a very sensitive person, therefore she could immediately guess that I was in a fury. She came into my cabin and said that she had taken care of all the work that was to be done for the day and that I should relax and read the newspaper. As I was going through the newspaper, I saw an advertisement taken out by Modi Rubber – a leading manufacturer of tyres – advertising for the post of assistant financial controller with a salary which was twice the salary I was getting in Air India. I immediately called Jaya and prepared an application, applying for the post or its equivalent. For reference, I mentioned the names of Sir C.P. and N.K.P. Salve, who was by then member of parliament.

In the evening, my boss called me and said that I should forget whatever had happened that morning and that certain allowances should be made for his old age. Since my boss and I were good friends, I readily agreed to forget the whole thing as a bad dream. I however forgot that I had already mailed an application seeking a job elsewhere. After nearly a week of this event, as I was going through the newspaper, I read that N.K.P. was on the board of directors of Modi Rubber. I was immediately reminded of my application and the consequent embarrassment N.K.P. would suffer because of this application. So I immediately rang up N.K.P. and told him the whole story and requested him to ask the Modi Rubber people to ignore the application.

I forgot to mention that in the year 1967 N.K.P. was elected as member of Lok Sabha (House of Commons) in the parliament. His practice as a chartered accountant was being looked after by Mr. Jain, along with Krishna Saharabuddhe, a boy quite junior to me, but who had been taken into Salve and Co. at my instance. It so happened that the practice of Salve and Co. flourished and it became a leading company in the whole of Central India. In this light, N.K.P. needed more hands whom he could trust. So, seizing the opportunity that I wanted to change employment, he asked me to come to Delhi immediately, assuring me very good prospects. When I met him in Delhi, he put the proposal of my rejoining Salve and Co. by painting a very rosy picture. I came back to Bombay and consulted Shri Mataji and Sir C.P., who advised me to join Salve and Co. since I had a better future in this

company. So in the month of September 1972, I submitted my resignation with one month's notice. There was an immediate reaction in the entire financial department. Some of my bosses did not want me to go while others wanted that I should go, since Air India was not a place where I would be able to show my calibre. My financial director called me one day and offered me a promotion and a flat in the Air India colony, yet I was quite decided to go and join my brother. So on the 5th of October 1972, after bidding farewell to all my friends and well-wishers, I left for Nagpur by car along with my wife and two children.

As we came to Nagpur on the 7th of October, after a days rest on the way, we immediately went to the hospital to see Mridul and her new-born baby, who had been delivered that very morning. It was again a Diwali day. After a very hectic day, we spent a night in the flat I had rented from my sister-in-law. (I forgot to mention that I had booked a flat in an Air India colony in Santa Cruz, Bombay under an "own your flat" scheme promoted by Air India. When I left Air India, it was still under construction and, since I had ceased to be the staff of Air India, I was denied the ownership of the flat and the money that I had paid was refunded to me.) Since my furniture was yet to arrive and since we did not have any arrangement for cooking our own food, we started our life in Nagpur by cooking some food on a kerosene stove. Soon, however, the furniture and other provisions, etc. came and we settled down to a routine life in Nagpur. The office of Salve and Co., where I was going to work, was not very far from my flat. The flat I rented was of a duplex system. It had one bedroom downstairs and two bedrooms with a huge balcony upstairs. It was one of the bedrooms on the top floor that was occupied by Shri Mataji, whenever She visited Nagpur.

As I started my work in all seriousness, I realized that all was not as green as had been painted. My return to Salve and Co. was not acceptable to all, so also I was not able to immediately readjust to the very heavy demands of the profession, as compared to the job I was doing in Air India. I was positively frustrated and started blaming myself for leaving the cosy and comfortable job of Air India. My frustration was further increased by the fact that all the client cases that were considered to be hopeless or very complicated were assigned to me, with the expectation that I would be successful in all of them, particularly in income tax matters. None of the assurances given by N.K.P. were fulfilled. I was assured that I would be made a partner in Salve and Co., which

assurance remained an assurance. My repeated reminders yielded no result. I was instead made a partner in two other companies, for namesake. I was also not given the status that I deserved since maybe my brother thought that I would not fulfill his expectations of me.

In the year 1973, Shri Mataji came to Nagpur along with Sir C.P. and children and She brought twelve of Her disciples along with Her. I remember one of her disciples, Mr. Pai, a staunch Hindu Brahmin, did Her puja in the traditional Hindu style, where no outsider was allowed. Later on, it was explained to me that when they were doing the puja of Shri Mataji the vibrations were very strong and any intruder into the room would disturb the vibrations. I interpreted the puja as another ritual, which drove me further away from Sahaj, thinking it to be one more ritualistic religion, devoid of spirituality. There is one event, however, that I would want to recall here.

One afternoon when Shri Mataji was sitting on the veranda of N.K.P.'s house, a man with very shabby clothes and an unshaven face came to the doorstep shouting, "Ma! Ma!" (that is, "Mother, Mother") "Where are you?" As soon as he saw Shri Mataji, he lay prostrate before Her and started sobbing uncontrollably, murmuring that his mission in life was accomplished. Seeing his dirty clothes and equally dirty appearance, I wanted him to leave the house immediately, thinking that he was a beggar or some urchin from the street who knew about Shri Mataji and wanted to take advantage by pretending that he was Her devotee. Shri Mataji, as usual, was very generous towards him and asked him if he would want something to drink or eat. I was a little shocked since I thought She would want him to go away, but instead, She was being generous to him. In reply to Her question, he requested with tears in his eyes that he would like a glass of water. Asking me to get him a glass of water, Shri Mataji went inside the house and I went to get the glass of water. When I came out, I could not find the person with the dirty clothes. So I thought maybe he had gone out onto the porch, so I came to the porch to only find that there was a security man standing there and no one else. N.K.P.'s house had a very big compound and had only one gate from which to go out, where this security man was standing.

On enquiry, the security man said that a man had come, but had turned right and not towards the left where the exit gate was and that he had vanished inexplicably. I followed in the direction where the man could have gone and was astonished to find there was nobody there. Since it was the dead-end of

the compound the man had to go out from the exit gate. The whole episode baffled me and I narrated this event to Shri Mataji, who said that he was a saint and a realized soul who had the capacity of vanishing. I, of course, disbelieved Her, but this event registered with me strongly and vividly.

In the beginning of 1974, Shri Mataji went away to England as the wife of the chairman of the I.M.C.O. (International Maritime Coordinating Organization) and I was left behind to fight my battle in career circumstances, which were not totally favourable to me. It was, however, very late for me to opt for a change since I had the added responsibility of educating my two sons. I was hoping that one day my ability, for whatever worth it was, would earn me my position in my profession. In that hope, I continued working with Salve and Co., though I must admit that my heart was not fully in the profession because of the negative attitude of people around me. Shri Mataji used to come to Nagpur every Christmas and would say encouraging words to me.

Right from 1970 to 1983, Shri Mataji tried to give me Self-realisation. Her Christmas visits to Nagpur were no exception. She used to put Her hand and feet on my body, trying to clear my chakras (centres), but to no avail. Every time my Kundalini did rise, but came down immediately, as I saw my sister. Her desire to give me Self-realisation was so strong that the exertion She had to undergo while trying to give me Self-realisation would make Her sweat even in the winter months. I used to feel very bad and on many occasions requested Her to give me up as an incorrigible case. In spite of Her keenest desire, I failed Her every time to get my Self-realisation.

Since I was not fully satisfied with my profession, out of sheer disgust, I also tried my hand in a business of manufacturing rolling shutters but it was also a grand failure. By the end of 1975, I had become very friendly with one Mr. L.S. Dewani, who is a leading lawyer of Nagpur. He had a great interest in me and whenever I used to complain to him about the bitter feelings that I got from the profession, he used to always advise me to start independent practice, without the protection or umbrella of Salve and Co. It was a very major decision, since I had already crossed forty and to plunge into independent practice would have meant hara-kiri, if I did not do well in the practice. Mr. Dewani, however, was very confident of my being a successful professional in the independent practice. I was also encouraged by Shri Mataji on Her Christmas visits. So in December 1977, I sought permission from Shri Mataji

to change to independent practice. However, I had to finish my commitments in Salve and Co. and that took a little time. Mr. Dewani had offered me one of his offices in Gandhi Bagh, a commercial area in downtown Nagpur, along with a telephone and furniture, completely free of cost. That gesture of his was not only noble and generous but clearly indicated his desire to help me out. So on the 1st August 1978, I bid goodbye to Salve and Co. and started practice in my name. I was prohibited from adding the suffix “and Co.” to my name, since N.K.P. thought that I would divert some of the business of Salve and Co. because of it. So I started my profession in the name and style of “H.P. Salve,” without adding any prefix or suffix to it. Ajit, my nephew and one Mr. Menghani and Nandlal as the peon was my entire staff. I was briefless and soon I would have become moneyless. For the first fortnight or so, I did not have any client and I started feeling that I had again made a mistake. Thereafter, however, I had many clients and I never looked back in my practice.

In the year 1979-80, Shri Mataji brought a group of foreigners to Nagpur as a part of the tour of Maharashtra. I organised public programmes and sightseeing. I took them to the Tadoba Tiger Sanctuary and they had a wonderful experience in the jungle. I'm mentioning this more particularly since the caterer that I had organised was one Mr. Gangaram, who was to play a major role in my initiation into Sahaj in the future.

In the year 1980, I was elected chairman of the Nagpur branch of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, which post I held until 1982. I took charge to the branch when it was on the brink of closure, but because of the sincere efforts of the working committee, we were not only able to bring the branch out of its crisis, but by the time I ended my tenure, the branch was declared the best branch in the whole of India.

Since the Sahaja Yoga activity had started gaining momentum in and around Bombay, the duration of stay of Shri Mataji in India had increased and I had the privilege of attending programmes of birthday felicitations and a couple of pujas. I found the pujas to be very monotonous and boring. I was convinced that She was preaching about universal religion and one God, which I also firmly believed in and I was always averse to following man-made religions, since they were making artificial compartments of human beings, which could never have been the intention of the Divinity. She used to say that we should always go beyond the obvious and feel the subtle, but, since I was not a self-

realized man, I used to think that feeling the subtle was more imaginary than actual. I also could not understand why, if the Divinity was formless, they were worshipping Shri Mataji as a Goddess, though She was in human form. All this was beyond my understanding and, hence, I thought that whatever She was preaching was beyond the realms of reality or at least beyond my comprehension and hence I did not give very much attention to Her spiritual activity.

In the year 1983, the Maharashtra seminar was held in Bordi, in the state of Gujarat and the job of catering was given to Gangaram. The whole seminar was totally mismanaged and it resulted in a loss to Gangaram, since a lot of people from the nearby villages sneaked into the eating area and ate lunch and dinner for which no payment was made. As a result, when he was offered the catering for 1984, he insisted that I should also be present, lest he suffer another loss. I would not have gone to Bordi, but for the insistence of Gangaram.

The 1984 seminar was again organised in the months of December and January. There were about three to four hundred Sahaja Yogis, including about sixty to seventy foreign Sahaja Yogis. I had taken a flight from Calcutta directly to Bombay and taken a train to Bordi. I had expected a grand reception, but my ego had a very bad bruise as nobody came to receive me at the station. The seminar was a little distance away and quite a few Sahaja Yogis had come from Bombay. I followed them by hiring a tonga. When I reached the place of the seminar, I went to Shri Mataji's room straight away, without observing any protocol (I did not know there was a protocol while entering Shri Mataji's room) and I registered my complaint that nobody came to receive me. Seeing my fury, She calmed me and said that nobody knew the exact train I was coming on (though I had taken care to send a telegram to the organisers detailing the schedule of my arrival). At any rate, She said whatever had happened was now past and I should relax and enjoy the seminar.

After dinner that night, as usual, there was some musical programme. An American Sahaja Yogi (I forget his name) was asked to sing a bhajan. Initially, I was quite astonished to see that an American was going to sing an Indian bhajan and I awaited his singing in all expectation. A guitar was arranged, which was the only instrument that was to accompany his singing. There was no tabla or harmonium or any of the traditional Indian instruments to accompany him. I was perplexed, as to what sort of a bhajan he was going to

sing. He started singing *Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram*,” a very popular bhajan, but he was singing it in the rock’n’roll style. I did not know whether I should laugh or cry, particularly when he started improvising in typical rock’n’roll style, singing, “One-two-three-Raghu-four-Raghu-Raghu.” I felt like asking him to stop the bhajan and give him a piece of my mind for distorting, in such a bad way, a bhajan which was not only a source of chanting to all the Indians, but was also very dear to Mahatma Gandhi. I was totally bewildered and astonished to see Shri Mataji praising him for his singing. This was too much for me to accept. How a lady who all Her life was and is listening to the top-most musicians of India could be exposed to and tortured by such ridiculously tuneless and hopeless music, and then for Her to praise it, was beyond my tolerance. I could not bear the idea that my sister, who was a connoisseur of music, should suffer the indignity of listening to such horrendous and out-of-tune music. So I resolved then and there that wherever or whenever a seminar was to be held, I would bring my musicians from Nagpur to give Her some good music.

I forgot to mention that in the year 1973, I was made a judge of a musical competition where Prabhakar Dhakde (Guruji) was singing a gazzal. I immediately realized his potential and requested the organisers to ask him to contact me. I was very impressed not only by his musical talent, but by the fact that he was running a music school for the poor and the downtrodden by charging them minimum fees or no fees at all. I decided to help him and we created an organisation known as Swar Madhuri (sweet notation) and, under the auspices of this organisation, we arranged programmes of eminent artists like Ustad Amjad Ali Khan Sahib, Budhadit Mukerji, Pandit Jagdish Prasad, M. Rajam and very famous qawwals known as Shankar Shambhu. As a result, there was a very great rapport between Guruji and his musicians. And I was confident that they would be most happy to come and perform for Shri Mataji. It is proper here to mention that Shri Mataji Herself was very impressed by the fact that Guruji was running a school for the poor and She had also visited the school once during one of Her visits to Nagpur. So I made the resolution, but I did not make it public. This according to me must have been the turning point in my life and, ironically, I may say that I owe it to the American singer. Strange are the ways and means of the Destiny.

After the seminar, I drove back to Bombay from Bordi with Shri Mataji. She had requisitioned my car for Her entire tour of Maharashtra and I was very

proud that I was of some help to Her. However at the subtle, She was helping me to understand Her better. When we reached Bombay, She offered me some money so that I could take my car back to Nagpur. This I refused, since I said I had some money and I was due to get some money from my clients in Bombay. I refused the money in spite of Her insistence. I was planning to leave for Nagpur the next morning after meeting my clients. What happened the next day was one more eye-opener for me. It happened to be a Sunday and all the offices of my clients were closed and they had gone for a picnic to a nearby island. I asked my niece if she could lend me some money and she said that all her money was in the bank and that it would only be possible to help me out on Monday. Since I had an important matter fixed for Monday in Nagpur, I had no choice but to leave Bombay by noon that day. So like a vanquished soldier, I went to Shri Mataji and I confessed that I should have taken the money She had offered and it was because of my ego that I had refused. She laughed and gave me the money, but advised me never to contradict Her since She could see the future.

A similar situation arose many years later in the year 1987 when I was in Pune. I was required to meet the chief commissioner of income tax and, therefore, I had asked my wife to pack a suit and a tie in the suitcase I was carrying to Pune. The appointment with the chief commissioner was in the afternoon and that morning Shri Mataji called me and offered me a beautiful tie, saying that She had never given me a tie before. I again protested and said to Shri Mataji that She must have given me at least a hundred ties. Yet she insisted, saying that I should keep this one more, which I refused very firmly, saying that Her generosity would spoil me. That afternoon when I started getting ready to go and meet the chief commissioner, the suit was there, but there was no tie. I was very ashamed and, to avoid my embarrassment, I wanted to borrow a tie from any of the Sahaja Yogis including the foreign Sahaja Yogis who were working on the construction of Prathisthan. At that time, Shri Mataji was giving them money for their work, but they were not taking it and only with great persuasion they accepted. Since all of them were wearing kurta pyjamas, none of them had a tie. So eventually, I had to go to Shri Mataji and She again reminded me of the same thing, that She could see the future, which I cannot. Thus, the Sahaja Yogis who were adamant, accepted the money of their work, they accepted because they needed it. This has been proven to me so many times. As I returned to Nagpur, the first thing I did was to contact Guruji and

other musicians and request them to keep December and the beginning of January of 1985-86 free, to which they readily agreed.

My success in my practice, no doubt, brought me a lot of money, but with it came a very huge ego. I used to smoke a pipe and would talk with an air to my clients. My humility had gone and was replaced by arrogance and self-ego. I started feeling very proud of my achievements and boasting about them, which was very contrary to my general demeanor. I somehow felt that, if I boasted about my success, I would get more clients and would be acclaimed as an outstanding person. I was drifting in the current of fame and glory of what I thought was a successful life. In September of 1985, I suddenly decided to give up smoking and whatever little drinks I used to have. One night at a dinner party of a friend of mine, I was surrounded by all the ladies to tell them jokes. Since none of them were drinking or smoking, I said I would also not drink or smoke, at least that night. In the night, I was pondering over my past life and somehow I felt that my life was really going to waste and that the materialistic success that I had was not a lasting one. I questioned myself about my habits. Was I becoming a slave of the habits? Was I my own master in actuality? Or was I posing to be one? All these questions and many more stirred me up from within and I decided that from the next day I would not be a slave of my habits. I thought that being egotistical was a habit and that I should not allow myself to be overpowered by my ego. This seemed to be the second step that I took towards Sahaj. However, at that point in time I did not even imagine that I would become a Sahaja Yogi. I had seven pipes for the seven days of the week to smoke from and the first thing that I did the next day was to present these pipes to my various friends. I was feeling very happy and victorious since I thought I had won a battle.

That year's seminar was going to be organised for the first time in Ganapatipule. The seminar was to start, if I recollect correctly, during Christmas time and was to last until a couple of days beyond the New Year. Gangaram was made the caterer and I left with a team of musicians for Ganapatipule, somewhere near Christmas. Needless to mention that I, as well as the musicians, were not Sahaja Yogis, but I had vowed to provide good music to my sister. There were no bhajans or other songs that we could sing. In fact, there was no Nirmal Sangeet Sarita, it was just a group of musicians and I had the dual responsibility of supervising Gangaram one hand and providing music on the other. There was a group of musicians from Nasik who was

headed by Mr. Saundankar and a team from Shrirampur. On the first day, I remember, we were the last to perform since we were not established as musicians. We sang some Kabir songs. Guruji played the violin and Nasir played the sitar, accompanied on the tabla by Mujumdar. The music we presented, was very much appreciated and a lot of foreigners came and congratulated us. I thought this was out of sheer formality, since I had my doubts as to how much of Indian music the foreigners would understand. The language of vibration was totally alien to us, therefore we thought that the audience, and especially the foreigners, could not genuinely appreciate the music. We were only happy to see that Shri Mataji was very happy and thus our sole object of coming to Ganapatipule, at that point in time, was fulfilled.

That year's seminar was held in a mango grove under the mango trees. I estimate about four to five hundred people must have attended. Since our concern was only music, we were not participating in any other event. A Sahaja Yogi from Bombay was the convener of the seminar and I remember I stayed in one of the rooms near the temple, since the rooms at the M.T.D.C. (Maharashtrian Tourism Development Corporation) were allotted to the V.I.P.s. In fact, the M.T.D.C. had small complex and very few rooms were allotted for the seminar.

It amused me a lot to see that the foreigners were least bothered about how they dressed. The kurta pyjama, which is made out of khadi, used to gather a lot of red mud, but the foreigners did not mind since as they explained they were on a pilgrimage and what they wore was not at all material. The foreign ladies were all wearing cotton saris provided by Shri Mataji and the simplicity of their dress, coupled with very radiant and joyous looks on their faces, made every Indian, particularly the non-Sahaja Yogis, look a little smaller in stature before these people. I was feeling sorry that I was not able to identify myself with the Sahaja Yogis and felt very lonely, in spite of the big crowd.

It was in these circumstances that I was standing under a mango tree listening to the conversation of Dr. Rustum Barjorji and Rajesh Shah who were discussing their growth in Sahaj and the speed at which Shri Mataji was now taking them to their ascent. Seeing a mused smile on my face, Rajesh Shah told me that, since I was not self-realised, it would be difficult to understand their conversation. Rustum was surprised to know that I did not have my Self-realisation. He asked me as to why I was not getting my Self-realisation. I counter-questioned him, saying that would he have accepted his own sister as

the Adi Shakti or the Divinity? He said the he would give me Self-realisation in two minutes. I thought he was talking through his hat because Shri Mataji Herself had tried for well over thirteen years and had not succeeded. Anyway, taking him on his word, I said that I challenged him to give me Self-realisation. He asked me to sit down under the tree and put his hand on my head, ruffling my hair, which I did not like. Anyway, I said that his failure would be my triumph and I was so confident that he would fail in giving me Self-realisation. He started asking me questions. The first question he asked me was as to what I loved the most. I said Shri Mataji, obviously. He said, other than Shri Mataji, what did I love the most. And I said music, obviously. Then he asked me a very innocent question. He asked as to what was the epitome of music, the highest point, the pinnacle. I thought for a moment and replied, "That note which is created by the artist and accepted by the audience fully, without any loss to the music created by that note." I thought I had answered marvelously and I expected Rustum to be floored by my answer. To this Rustum suddenly said, "Think that Shri Mataji is not your sister, but the epitome of music that you just described so beautifully." That sentence of his did the job. The link of the brother-sister relationship had been so strong and the bond of love so unshakable that I had not been able to get out of my conditioning of the relationship, but, in identifying Shri Mataji as that note which is the pinnacle of music, this bond was broken. The shackles were removed and suddenly I found a new identity of Shri Mataji which was totally formless, which had no prefixes or suffixes, which was put and unmaligned by the stains of relation or any bond. I felt a strange experience within myself, as if the identity of my sister was being taken over by the identity of this formless note of music. I knew then and there that a transformation was taking place within me. Suddenly, I felt very cool all over, particularly in my hands and on my head and my eyes started to dilate. I had become thoughtless involuntarily and nothing seemed to register with me, as if I was in a trance in some other different world.

As soon as Rajesh saw my eyes dilating, he started dancing with joy and said, "Babamama has got it!" Thus saying, he ran to Shri Mataji to convey to Her the news. Later, Rustum took me to Shri Mataji and She said that, though late, I had arrived at my destination. This happened on the 28th of December 1985. That evening, I told Guruji and my other musicians about my experience and said that soon they would have to follow suit, since Self-realisation is a fantastic experience.

After the seminar, I returned to Nagpur. As I got back to my profession, I was a very confused person. Shri Mataji had asked me to meditate in the morning, which I was doing very regularly. Since I could not concentrate, I had a million questions in my mind for which I was not finding any answers. My questions were generally of a very mundane nature, more to establish my intellectual supremacy than to satisfy the seeker in me. Questions like “how to discriminate between good and bad?” “how to judge a person?” “what is God?” “what is religion?” “what is the nexus between human being, religion and God?” “is religion necessary to reach God?” and such questions, which were at the mental level, started bothering me. As a result, though I was self-realised, I was very confused. It was a very critical juncture in my life when I suddenly got a call from Shri Mataji saying that I should come to Calcutta to attend the public programme She had organised there. That must have been the third week of January 1986. So I took a train to Calcutta. The train had to make an unscheduled stop near one of the suburbs of Calcutta. I was travelling in a non-A.C. (non-air-conditioned) compartment and the rotten smell of the garbage and stagnated water of the suburb was suffocating. In order to divert my attention from the garbage and stagnated water, I involuntarily took a pen and paper and started writing. I suddenly saw that I was writing Urdu poetry. Poetry, flowing in the most unpoetic atmospheres, left me totally dumbfounded. I knew that it was not me who was writing. Something was flowing from within me and was pouring out through the pen onto the paper. While I was writing the poetry, I became totally oblivious of my surroundings and the smell did not bother me any more. The overwhelming influence of the poetry was so great that I even forgot that I was in a train, but I sincerely tell you that it was not me who was writing. Someone was virtually compelling me or, so to say, dictating to me while I was just reproducing whatever was dictated. That was my first poetry, *Na Khuda Ko Dubte Bich Majdhar Dhoondte He* (the people who are caught midstream only look for the navigator when in crisis), which was to become a hit song later on, was my first stint, so to say, with poetry. I went to Calcutta and met Shri Mataji and every other Sahaji Yogi, but ventured not to show my poetry, lest they laugh at me.

One day, at a Self-realisation programme, I was sitting by the side of Dr. Talwar, who was not only related to me through a marriage, but was a leader of Delhi, when I broached the subject of Urdu poetry and he started reciting a few couplets, which appeared to be very mundane. I then ventured to take out the piece of paper on which I had written the poetry and started reading

from the paper. When he came to know that it had been written by me, he snatched the paper from my hand and straightaway handed it over to Shri Mataji. On going through the poetry, She asked me whether I had written it. I said very humbly, "Yes." I was totally taken by surprise by Her next sentence. She said that not only was a great poet born, but the Urdu language, which until then was being misused by the poets only to express grief, sorrow, the suffering of a lover or the stone-heartedness of the beloved, was redeemed. I, of course, did not believe Shri Mataji, knowing full well Her nature of praising people and also my ability as a poet. All my life my weakest subject was literature and writing poetry in Urdu was not only incomprehensible, but beyond the realms of reality, not only because I did not know how to read and write Urdu, but also because poetry in Urdu required a great depth and knowledge of the language which I did not have. So I ignored the praise of Shri Mataji and attributed the poetry as a freak, which I was sure would never happen again. This poetry, however, gave me immediate recognition in the Sahaj world and I was being introduced to people as a great Urdu poet. I was always shy of this identity, lest I be exposed of my ignorance. So I put aside the idea of writing more poetry and went and attended that public programme of Shri Mataji, which was very largely attended.

As Shri Mataji was leaving Calcutta, I went to take permission to come back to Nagpur but She requested me to go to Bombay with Her. I was wondering what prompted her to do that because She knew that the months of January, February and March are the busiest months for a chartered accountant. As mentioned earlier, I had decided never to contradict Her so I went to Bombay and returned to Nagpur after a couple of days.

On the 1st of February, that is, a day after my arrival in Nagpur, Shri Mataji rang me up and asked me to accompany Her to Hong Kong. Initially I was delighted, but when She said She wanted me to go and do some shopping for myself, I was profoundly perplexed and confused. A lady who wanted me to get away from *maya* (materialism) wanted me to go to Hong Kong to do shopping. So, in all impertinence, I asked Her that on one side She had complete detachment from materialism and on the other She was pulling me into the same *maya*. Her quick reply was that unless I possessed materialistic things, how could I develop detachment. Detachment to Her was not abandonment or staying away, but staying with it and not getting attached. This was one more lesson for me. So accordingly, we went to Hong Kong. A

friend of mine, Avinash Siria, also came along, which was totally contrary to protocol, but Shri Mataji tolerated.

In Hong Kong, Shri Mataji addressed four or five public meetings and before Her speech Dr. Warren Reeves of Australia introduced the subject. She made me purchase, among other things, a television, a VCR tape recorder, cameras, wristwatch, etc. She purchased identical things for my other brother, Balasahib, and my nephew, Harish. As a result, I was carrying three sets of each electronic item. During my Air India days, I knew that all these items attracted heavy custom duty and, while I was packing, I was planning what was to be declared and what could be taken out of customs without their noticing it. So I packed the portable tape recorders and other small electronic items under the clothes in my suitcase.

The stay in Hong Kong was really very exciting and every evening Shri Mataji used to take us out for dinner in some Chinese restaurant. She was an expert in ordering food and therefore was not only ordering correct quantities of food, but also dishes that were very palatable and delicious in taste.

At the Hong Kong airport, we had extra baggage and, as they say, habits are hard to die. I started to bargain with the airport manager. Being an airline man, I knew that if you made a nuisance, the airport manager would allow most of the excess baggage as normal baggage but Shri Mataji insisted that She should pay the normal excess baggage charge. I did not like the idea very much since I wanted to save some money for Her. Later on, I was to realize that honesty to Her was a virtue and not a policy which could fluctuate according to the circumstances.

All throughout the journey to Bombay, I was in great tension. This was mainly because all the time I was planning as to how I should smuggle out most of the electronic goods. As we landed Bombay, all the custom officers came and touched the feet of Shri Mataji and they welcomed Her with folded hands. I gave a sigh of relief because I was sure that nobody would check our luggage now. Shri Mataji, however, after enquiring about each individual's health and the problems of the family, told the customs officers that Her brothers, that is, me and Avinash, were carrying items which were attracting custom duty. She instructed them to work out the fair custom duty, which She would pay. All my planning of smuggling goods through the customs had collapsed and I had to declare each and every item to the customs. She was waiting outside as we

were clearing customs, addressing the Sahaja Yogis who had gathered to receive Her at the airport, least concerned about the amount She may have to pay as custom duty. The custom officers were also equally aware of Her nature and levied the correct custom duty. It is customary to bribe the custom officer for a favour, but, because of Shri Mataji's sense of honesty, the custom officers were also very honest in their assessment. In a way, She was transmitting Her honesty to everyone around Her, including me.

After a couple of days, I returned to Nagpur in completely dazed condition, wondering what I had done to become worthy of so many blessings from Shri Mataji.

That summer I went with my family to Dharamshala as a guest of Yogi Mahajan and then on the Kulu and Manali valley along with my friends and their families. Since I was the non-drinking type, I formed a group with the children of my friends and their wives and, in a way, we boycotted my drinking friends. That summer, Manali was exceptionally cold and we were thoroughly ill-equipped to cope with the severe cold, so we were buying woollens, though it was summer time elsewhere.

My older brother, Balasahib, had become the judge of the Bombay High Court and was a sitting judge of the Aurangabad bench of the Bombay High Court. I remember I had driven to Goa for my professional work and, on my way back, I had stopped in Aurangabad to meet my brother and also to meet Shri Mataji, who was staying with him. One of my nephews, who had recently got married had also come and Balasahib had arranged sightseeing for us, which included the famous Ajanta and Ellora caves. So one day we four, that is Shri Mataji, the newlywed couple and I, went to see the caves. As expected, the couple were lost in looking after each other. This afforded me an opportunity to ask a plethora of questions that had accumulated in my mind since my return from Hong Kong, questions like "what is soul?" "what is mind?" "what is the purpose of God creating human beings?" "what is cosmos?" "what is universe?" "where does the Divinity reside?" etc. and a number of other silly questions that were bothering me. As soon as I got an opportunity, I unleashed the questions on Shri Mataji, one after another. She answered me very patiently. To my question as to how this cosmos was created, She said that She would have to draw out a sketch to explain. So we abandoned seeing the caves and came to the circuit house which was booked for us and She started explaining.

CHAPTER NINE: THE CREATION OF THE COSMOS, 1986

She said that certain facts would have to be believed, before She explained the creation of the cosmos. She said that I would have to accept that there is only one God and that He is all-pervading, omnipotent and omnipresent. I readily agreed, since I also strongly believed that there had to be only one God. She then said that if one goes to the Bible, in the book of Genesis, it is written that in the beginning there was darkness, the spirit was hovering everywhere. That spirit, She said, could be called Sadashiva or the Creator who is all-pervading, the power of the vibrations of the sleeping Sadashiva or the Creator, who is all-pervading. The power of the vibration of the sleeping Sadashiva was hovering around the cosmos in a clockwise circular pattern. The energy of desire (*Ichha Shakti*), which was located within Sadashiva, was quite tired of this orbiting (*parikrama*) of Sadashiva and expressed the desire to be independent of Sadashiva. So, Sadashiva acceded to Her request with the condition that, She should remain in Her orbit (*parikrama*) and not return to Sadashiva unless He desired. The Ichha Shakti agreed and Sadashiva put Her in Her own orbit, which was also clockwise. After millions of years, the Ichha Shakti got tired of Her loneliness and wanted to rejoin Sadashiva, ignoring his condition that She could only come back to Him when He wanted Her and not at Her free will. As Ichha Shakti started coming closer to Sadashiva, He held out His hand to stop Her and it hit the orbit (*parikrama*), which was shaped like a bangle. The orbit then disintegrated into three parts with a sound and rejoined to form the AUM.

This was the first sound (*naad*) created or, as Shri Mataji said, the first musical note that was created.

I was listening with rapt attention as She explained that the dot that is shown on top of the third disintegrated part is in fact Sadashiva Himself. In fact, Shri Mataji went on to say that these three disintegrated parts were the three energies, the Mahakali, the Mahasaraswati and the Mahalakshmi, which is now known as the Trinity. These three energies wanted to do something good for the cosmos and they requested Sadashiva to allow them to manifest. As a result, Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu, Lord Brahma and Goddess Saraswati,

Goddess Lakshmi and Goddess Parvati manifested through these three energies, out of which Shiva married Parvati, Vishnu married Lakshmi and Brahma joined Saraswati. Even after the creation of the six deities, they had no work to do, nothing that could benefit from them. Therefore, Adi Shakti decided to create the human being. Shri Mataji went on to say that She went around and around with all the energies which thickened. It was broken into pieces with a big bang (this explains the theory of the big bang) and a piece which had a Mahalakshmi energy, now known as the Earth, fell apart and was moving with momentum staying in a revolving motion. Also the other pieces like the Sun and Moon fell out with the Mahasaraswati and Mahakali powers. The Sun, which was another piece, was very hot, but became bearable because of the distance. But the Moon, which was another piece, became very cool and the Moon and stars were also visible from the Earth, though they were themselves part of the Cosmos. Now the Earth was moved from the Sun towards the Moon. The coolness of Moon cooled the Earth and thus ice was formed and, when the Earth was moved towards the Sun, the ice melted and water was created and the Sun was closer to the middle part so it became hotter, while the two poles became covered with the ice.

Sadashiva created Adam and Eve in His own image and, since they were the split image of God Himself, He did not put knowledge of dharma into the system of the new world. As you all know, Adam and Eve ate the prohibited fruit of knowledge at the request of Adi Shakti, who came as the Kundalini or serpent, and, because they had no free will, they were like superior animals. Many different types of species had to be destroyed, more so since there was no knowledge of the dharma installed in the system. As a result, the famous deluge was created and, barring one species of each creature, everything else was destroyed. This meant again that there was no work for the deities, as all the species were without the knowledge. Adi Shakti decided to evolve a human being rather than to create one. The deities started to function. They established different centres or chakras in human beings, which evolve the human beings who were previously just like animals.

Shri Mataji went on to say that from the atom of a carbon to the present day state of the human being, it would have taken a million years more than it took. In fact, She gave the example of the Sputnik missile. The evolution She explained in a very clear manner. One capsule carries many other capsules, one in another. She drew the first capsule of the body, inside it was the evolving

emotions and third the intellect. When the first capsule exploded the other two were thrown into space with a much greater speed. Then, the second exploded, so the third one was thrown with greater speed and it entered into the area which had no gravity pull. So eventually, by a process of evolution, the human being was created and along with him came the evolution of the knowledge of dharma. Dharma, according to Shri Mataji, meant the limits in which the activity could be carried out. Animals have dharma, but they do not know about it. To illustrate, She gave the example of a tree. She said the tree could never grow downwards and She said that it could not grow beyond a particular height because its dharma did not allow it. But the tree has no knowledge about it. In the same way, a human being was also bestowed with dharma and its knowledge is manifested initially through the conscious, the subconscious and the supra-conscious and later on through the wisdom and spiritual enlightenment. To know the ultimate knowledge of dharma, the Kundalini, which is the reflection of the Adi Shakti, was ignited from its state of dormancy. This Kundalini, when awakened, establishes a direct connection with the All-pervading Vibrations (*Paramchaitanya*). The first thing that happens is that you become thoughtless, yet aware of things around you. Since this energy is the Divine Energy of Love, it can, when allowed to flow, do things which appear to be humanly impossible.

This, very detailed revelation by Shri Mataji of the creation of the Trinity, the Cosmos, the Universe and the world, in such a short time with all the diagrams, made me speechless. I did not know what to say. So I said the first thing that came to my mind which was why did She not tell me all this much earlier. To this, She said that I was not matured enough then and that there are many more things I would learn from Her as I started getting deeper into Sahaj. She also said that question only reflects one's mental ability and answers to them only satisfy one mentally, while what She was saying was more a matter of experiencing, rather than of understanding, and therefore, She said, I should give greater emphasis to experiencing things rather than to understanding them.

I was totally amazed, to say the least, at the store of knowledge that Shri Mataji has, which She never shows or exhibits unless an occasion arises. To me, She has been a very good and loving sister. Her identity for me also included Her spiritual inclination, as She was a very peaceful, forgiving person, but, to tell you honestly, I never attributed to Her such stupendous wisdom

and knowledge. As such it was natural that I should be so surprised, it was beyond my belief until then that She could have known so much and yet not have revealed it to me, though I thought I was so close to Her. Obviously, my capability of understanding must have grown because of the proximity to Her. I also realized that the transformation taking place in me was not of a temporary nature. This led me to believe that the poetry I had written was not an accident or a freak, but Her inspiration, using me as a medium.

That was it. I suddenly realized that She was the Divinity, call it by whatever name. Until then, I had been calling Her by Her name given in the family, but then I ventured to ask Her whether, like others, I could also call Her “Shri Mataji.” To this, She replied that calling Her by any name did not make any difference to Her, but She said that as I had recognised Her, now I could call Her “Shri Mataji.”

I then asked Her why She had chosen to be born in the Salve family, to which She replied that I was not aware of the virtues and human qualities that our family has. The first priority of our parents was the proper upbringing of children. They were selfless, with a very high sense of self-respect and dignity, and were bestowed with an ocean of knowledge, both spiritual and non-spiritual. They were very pious and virtuous human beings. The family belonged to royalty, to the warrior caste of Chittodgarh, where Padmini did the *johar*. (She burnt herself with thirty-two thousand ladies who wanted to save their chastity from the lust and greed of a Muslim king, Adil Shah Khilji.) Therefore, they were strongly nationalistic and patriotic towards the nation and their culture was deeply embedded within them.

Both my father and mother were symbolic of simple living and high thinking, especially my father, who was very fond of art and artists. Above all, their sense of honesty and intolerance of injustice to other human beings was their strongest point, a quality that is rare. They were both mentally and morally incorruptible and would never compromise on their values. They were also exceptionally brilliant and humble. At the same time, they were perfectionists in doing anything and expected the same qualities from their children. They loved their children, equally all those known to them and met everybody with the same warmth and love. Our parents were very fond of music and sports and did not have any bad habits or addictions. They had a lot of respect for all religions, as they had all the knowledge about all the religions and never forced their children to accept any religion, including Christianity in which they were

born. They both had scholarly habits and were very well read. Our father was a great linguist and had a photographic memory.

As such, they were perfect people and without any stigma or stain on their characters. Shri Mataji chose to be born in this family because of such pure, perfect parents.

As I was returning to Nagpur by car, I was in a total state of joy and I decided that, as soon as I returned to Nagpur, I would start a centre propagating Sahaja Yoga. Accordingly, in the month of June or July 1986, I started a small centre in my flat. There were only two of us who were regularly attending the centre on Sundays. The other person was Chanda Deshpande.

Gradually, my social life was also changing. My socialisation was the barest minimum and my popularity with my drinking friends was at its lowest point. Whenever I met my friends I would talk about Sahaj and, as a result, they started avoiding my company. I soon realized that Sahaj cannot be thrust upon people and should be accepted first. Sahaj should only be told to people who are genuinely seeking.

It was at this time that I was handling very intricate and difficult income tax files of a very rich and well-known group known as the Dhanwatey Group. I was required all the time to plan their future line of action, which meant that I had to visualise the future events. I was however told by Shri Mataji that the past and future is not relevant and that I should learn to live in the present. So I was in a quandary. How could I avoid going into the future without anticipating the events of the future? So I rang up Shri Mataji in London and She said whenever I felt I was going into the future I should request Her to do this for me and be a witness to what was happening. So thereafter, on many occasions, when my client asks me of the future, I just close my eyes in prayer to Shri Mataji, who does my guidance.

That year's seminar of 1986 was also organised in Ganapatipule in the month of December. It was preceded by a tour of Maharashtra where Shri Mataji took the foreign Sahaja Yogis to the smaller villages of Maharashtra and lived with them in spartan and not at all comfortable conditions. By the time we were to leave for Ganapatipule, my poetry seemed to have blossomed and I had written about eight to ten songs, some in Urdu, some in Hindi, some in Marathi and two songs in English. I had also decided to actively participate in

the management of the Ganapatipule seminar. To begin with, I did not understand puja. I thought it was another ritual, but, surprisingly, when I attended the puja, I felt my Kundalini rising and cleansing my thoughts. It gave me the thoughtless awareness. After every puja, I felt I am going deep in the knowledge of absolute truth because my sensitivity to vibrations cleared out. I requested the leader of Sahaja Yoga to call a meeting of all the volunteers, whom I wanted to address. Accordingly, a meeting was convened in Bombay and I went there to address the volunteers. At my behest, various committees were formed, like the reception committee, programme committee, food and catering, stage management, etc. Each committee had a convenor and in Ganapatipule, before the seminar started, I called all the convenors and explained to them their duties and role. But what actually transpired was totally contrary to my instruction. A member of the transport committee was interfering with the food committee. A member of the reception committee was seen with the committee of stage management. In other words, everything was jumbled up. This infuriated me and, without observing the protocol one has to observe while entering Shri Mataji's room, I entered the room with anger and annoyance and I told Her that all the Sahaja Yogis were useless and that we could never organise them, as I felt totally let down. To this, She answered that Sahaja Yogis were not going to fall from heaven and that we had to work with this disorganised lot. She further said that Sahaj is not meant for organisation. She said that She did not have any paid staff, did not have any personal assistant and what people were doing was because of their devotion and devotion has to flow from the heart, which cannot be organised. Even today, though there are millions of Sahaja Yogis, there is not a single paid staff looking after the various activities which Shri Mataji is carrying out. Even today, I would not say that Sahaja Yoga is an organisation, but is a growing process of human being's ascent and salvation. Such a collective of enlightened Sahaja Yogis will transform the whole of humanity.

Seeing the popularity of the songs sung by Nirmal Sangeet Sarita, Shri Mataji requested me to record a cassette. It was in the Ganapatipule seminar that people like Guido and his like-minded friends requested me to go abroad, to go and sing and play for the Sahaj community there. I was quite thrilled by the idea, so I went and sought permission from Shri Mataji. Shri Mataji liked the idea and said that She would confirm when She went abroad. In March 1987, while Shri Mataji was busy building Prathisthan, we went to Pune as a group,

took Her blessings, went to Bombay, barged ourselves on poor Mr. Magdum and produced a cassette known as *Bandagi*. Mr. and Mrs. Magdum were very magnanimous, not only in their hospitality but also in arranging the finance for the cassette. We again went to Pune so that we could present a copy of the cassette to Shri Mataji and it so happened that the first song that we played to Her was *Brahma Shodile*. On hearing the cassette, not only were Shri Mataji's eyes filled with tears, all the Sahaja Yogis who had gathered to listen to the cassette were also crying. For reasons unknown I was also in tears. It was a moment of great joy and glory.

As we were leaving Pune for Nagpur, Shri Mataji called me and said that She would invite a few of us to Andorra in Spain for the Guru Puja and that we should all apply for our passports and visas. Our group was to consist of Guruji, Mujumdar, Shankar, Nasir, Ashok, Chhayya, Sanjay Talwar, Nagarao and, of course, myself. Of these, Ashok, Chhayya and Nagarao did not have passports and, just a day before the flight, we got their passports. By the blessings of Shri Mataji, we got the Spanish visa and the Italian visa, but could not get the British visa for the three. The puja in Andorra was held by the side of a very beautiful brook. The setting was very picturesque and the yogis attending the puja said that our music was not only of a very high quality, but it also gave a lot of vibrations. I must admit that I could not imagine music giving vibrations at that stage.

That year, there were marriages and those who have been to the ashram of Garlate will know that it was located on the banks of a lake and the marriage procession of the bridegrooms, headed by Nagarao on shennai and Ashok on tabla, was brought in boats. Rajesh had arranged the *raas leela* (a traditional Indian folk dance) and everybody, including the bridegrooms danced with great joy. It was very amusing. After the marriages we went sightseeing to Venice and, from there, to Geneva and then to England and back to India.

After 1987, there is very little that I could write which could add to the knowledge of Sahaja Yogis, since most of my life was dedicated to Sahaj or Sahaj work. From 1987 to 1998, Nirmal Sangeet Sarita has given fourteen cassettes to the Sahaj world and we have gone abroad every year. Until 1994, we used to tour Europe extensively, by road, for nearly a month at a time, but, ever since, Shri Mataji has settled down in Cabella, thus our tours are now only confined to Italy and, that too, for Guru Puja. In between, I have been to Russia quite often and also to Australia twice.

In the year 1991, I requested Shri Mataji to be allowed to open an academy in Nagpur, but She said that it was premature and that it should wait a while. In the 1994 at Ganapatipule, when I had given up hope of starting an academy in Nagpur, She called me and most unexpectedly asked me to announce about starting up an academy in Nagpur in January 1995. Since I was managing the stage, I saw to it that the announcement of the starting of the academy was repeated as many times as possible in the hope that I would be flooded with requests. Eventually, I got only three students: Sia from Austria and Lyndon and Nick Buff from Australia. This was how, in the name of my father, the academy in Nagpur was started. I am proud to mention that for the academic year 1998-99 we had more than seventy students with us.

In the year 1996 Shri Mataji made purchases of nearly fifty acres of land by the site of a small river, about twenty kilometers away from Nagpur. The land is so full of vibrations that I asked Shri Mataji the reason for it and She said that She had visited this place many times when She was accompanying my father when he went out fishing.

There is a little story behind the purchasing of this land. Initially, Shri Mataji wanted to build the academy on land measuring about four to five acres. Since the road leading to Chhindwara was the only road having vacant land, I contacted one Dr. Mohangoankar, who is practising in Patansaongi, about six kilometers away from the academy land. Initially, he showed me some land that was adjacent to the main road, but I did not like the land since it was too expensive, not free from noise pollution and, above all, there were no vibrations coming from the land. He kept on showing me land after land and, for one reason or the other, I kept on rejecting. In disgust, he asked me what sort of a land I wanted and I said I would prefer a land by the side of a river, that was pollution-free and had good vibrations. He said he did not understand about vibrations, but there was about forty-four acres of land by the side of the Kolhar River, though the problem was that it did not have an approach road and to reach the farm you had to wade through knee-deep water. I said that I would like to see the land and one day, after wading through water and removing the shrubs and bushes that had grown on the pathway to the farm, we reached the spot that was to be shown. As soon as I saw the land, I felt like I was in a paradise. Not only was it very quiet and peaceful, but it was without any pollution. Above all, it had very good vibrations and a cool gentle breeze was blowing across as we entered deeper into the farm. I saw a flock of

peacocks, nearly twenty of them, and somehow I felt that this is the promised land and that it was an ideal setting for an academy. The next immediate problem was the price and also the size of the farm, which I thought was too much. When I met Shri Mataji in Pune that year, I hesitatingly mentioned about the land and the price, thinking that I would be given a papatch for exceeding the brief. When She heard the price and the location of the land, She said that I should buy it immediately. There were quite a few legal hurdles that had to be crossed, which was managed because Her attention was always on the land and, in June 1996, we got possession of the land.

CHAPTER TEN: SHRI MATAJI, MY REDEEMER, 1999

While reading this book you would have noticed on many occasions where I was redeemed by Shri Mataji. When I was in financial difficulties, during the time I started the business of rolling shutters, She was the one who came and redeemed me by giving me financial help and also much-needed advice. What happened recently, however, goes to prove the extent of love and concern She has for me. I am writing this experience not for any self-glory or sympathy, but to share with the Sahaja Yogis, my experience while facing death and how I overcame this adversity.

As recently as the 5th of January 1999, having come back from Ganapatipule absolutely hale and hearty, I suddenly started coughing and normal medication did not give me any relief. My family physician, Dr. Chaube, was away in Calcutta and, since I was suffering only from a cough, I thought I could go and consult any physician. So I went to a doctor who was not aware of my medical history, who prescribed me a medicine known as Voveron. I took these tablets from the 11th to the 15th of January, but to no avail. My cough increased, while my urine secretion went down. This was obviously because of the wrong medication, since I had no previous record of kidney problems. On the 18th of January, my urine stopped completely and a nephrologist in Nagpur diagnosed this as 100% renal failure. I was immediately rushed to a hospital and before I could consult Shri Mataji, I was put on haemo-dialysis. Initially, I was allowed only three hundred milliliters of water for the whole day and completely saltless food. Between the 18th and the 23rd, I was on dialysis five times. Since I did not find the nephrologist competent enough, I met Dr. Chaube, who had by then returned from Calcutta, to ascertain the line of treatment and whether I should go to Bombay to check all the parameters connected with renal failure. Meanwhile, I talked to Shri Mataji in Bombay and She asked me to come to Bombay immediately.

Accordingly, I left for Bombay along with my wife and son, on the morning of the 27th of January, and we went straight to Shri Mataji, who started treating me. Surprisingly, I had a desire to urinate and passed urine after such a long

time. That evening, I had an appointment with the doctor in the Hinduja Hospital and she advised me to be admitted to the hospital immediately. Shri Mataji, however, had different plans.

On the 28th, She drove me to the Vashi ashram and started Her treatment along with Dr. Rai. She worked on me constantly and all my parameters started to respond. My blood sugar normalised and so did my potassium and sodium levels. The cough due to the bulge in my chest disappeared. My blood pressure became normal. I felt very normal. However, my blood urea and creatinine levels did not come down. It was obviously because I had been on dialysis. On the thirtieth night, my pathology report showed that my creatinine level was 17, while normal is only 1.5. As it is, this level is very high and, had it risen any further, I would have suffered from uremia and other complications, which generally prove to be fatal. I requested to Shri Mataji that I be allowed to go to the hospital and I was admitted to Hinduja at around 1:30 a.m. on the 31st of January and my treatment started at 7 a.m. that morning. There also, the doctor said that any further delay would have meant exposure to complications because of the accumulation of fluids in the body. I was again put on dialysis. My kidneys were not responding and the doctors were talking of a transplant.

On the first night, I argued to myself that, if I believed that Shri Mataji is the Adi Shakti, that is the Primordial Energy, then how can any negativity stop Her from curing one of Her devotees. I was convinced that there could be nothing that could stop the Adi Shakti from curing me and this restored my confidence, but the doctors were saying that I would need a transplant of my kidney. I felt sure that, sooner or later, Her energy would show effect. It so happened that on the 3rd of February, morning, I started to pass urine, though very little in quantity. Doctors said that this could happen as a result of dialysis, but ruled out revival of my kidneys and continued to talk of a transplant. I was, however, holding steadfast to my conviction that my kidneys would revive because of the Paramchaitanya, the power of Adi Shakti.

Instructions from Shri Mataji were coming every day through Mr. Pradhan, who, I must say, was of immense help in getting things moving in the Hospital, which would have been impossible without his intervention. I was following the instructions to the letter, even though I was bedridden. By the 7th of February, my urine output had gone beyond twelve hundred milliliters per day and I had become confident that Shri Mataji had revived my kidneys through

Her energy. Even the doctors were surprised and described it as a miracle, since once the patient goes on dialysis, revival of the kidneys was very rare, maybe one in a million.

When I returned to Nagpur on the 13th of February and underwent a diagnostic test, they diagnosed that my kidneys were working forty percent. How could this happen when Shri Mataji Herself had said that once a person goes on dialysis Her vibrations do not reach the affected area? In spite of my illness, I held on to my belief and faith that nothing can stop the Adi Shakti from working it out by Her attention. The instances that Shri Mataji gave where She had worked on people after they had dialysis were top leaders of India, including an ex-prime minister, but none of them were Sahaja Yogis, at least none of them had a devotion towards Shri Mataji. In this way, I have proven that, just because of one's complete and utter faith in Sahaja Yoga, one can win over death, provided that, when facing adversity, one never allows one's faith or conviction to waiver or be deterred. I am sure that this experience of mine will help a lot of you in increasing your surrender status to the Holy Mother.

I started to write this book in the year 1995, but because of the history involved and the fact-finding that was necessary, its completion was delayed. I have written this book since I feel I have this special responsibility of sharing with Shri Mataji's devotees, Her family life and the history of the family to which She belongs. This is my first venture in writing a book and, if I have done well, then the entire credit goes to Shri Mataji and, if I have done badly, then the blame lies entirely with me.

May I conclude by expressing my gratitude to my grandmother, Sakhubai, who gave me such a wonderful father, of whom I will always be proud, my gratitude to my mother for her sense of discipline and benevolent love in bringing us children up. I wish and pray that everyone has a mother like her, so upright, so frank, selfless, a nationalist and, above all, a great mathematician. I must express my gratitude to all my brothers and sisters, particularly to Shalini Vahini who gave me love and protection when I needed it most. My gratitude also goes to all my relations and friends who helped me immensely in compiling the facts of this book. My gratitude is also to Mr. L. S. Dewani, for being a wonderful friend, and to Jodh, Joshi, Jain, Shastrabuddhe and other colleagues without whose help I would not have been what I am today. My utmost sense of gratitude to the one and only Sir. C.P., whom I think is the

epitome of human qualities and who I think could be the only person who could marry the Divinity, that is Shri Mataji. My reverence and pranams to Her Holiness Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi, who was not only a very loving sister for nearly fifty years of my life, but who has been my Divine Mother, the Adi Shakti, the Redeemer, the Giver and the Primordial Force which runs this Universe.

In the Bible, it was written that Christ said that, “I will send you a counselor, a comforter and a redeemer.” I was busy looking for that Holy Ghost, which is such an ambiguous term, I could not understand it. It was such a joy to find my revered sister, Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi whom Christ has sent. By awakening my Kundalini, She gave me the pure knowledge of truth and all the necessary solutions. She is the one who gave me help and capacity to earn wealth and how to spend it judiciously. She taught me how all the religions are absolutely connected. As described in the Koran, my hands started speaking because of my resurrection. I could feel the vibrations on the top of my head as cool breeze, as described by Kabir and Shri Adi Shankaracharya. On my fingertips I could feel my own subtle centres and those of others and I knew how to cure people through the diagnosis on the fingertips. I had a great experience, but not as theoretical knowledge. Poetry started pouring out of my heart while I was not at all a good student of languages. The innate knowledge came through inner experience. In my profession, I became very honest, and proficient. I started enjoying my knowledge of spirituality. Suddenly, I felt I had become a very honest and religious person. I lost my faith in all organized religions. My relations were lost in *shabda jalam* (web of words). I had never understood Kahlil Gibran, Kabir, Adi Shankaracharya before my Self-realisation. What a store of subtle, beautiful knowledge it is to know their sayings. What Christ had said about seekers is “Know thyself.” I realised it is the only way to purify yourself. I understood the secret knowledge of love, compassion and truth. My mind started enjoying a new horizon without any complaints, grudges, hatred and jealousies. My attention started flowing into a subtle stream of life and I realised that the whole world is one and that we are part and parcel of One Great Being.

Now I have found many brothers and sisters who have got rid of their destructive habits of drinking, smoking and gambling. They are such great souls and their children are such fragrant, beautiful flowers, perhaps I might

have to write another book to describe the great spirituality I have achieved like many others, all over the world.

What is the cause of our sickness in our mind, body and life, I found it is when we do not have a relation with the Divine (spiritual yoga). We go on roaming all over in the falsehood of mental reactions. For the truth, you cannot pay any money, you cannot exert it with artificial renunciation and all such acrobats. It was a great experience to know that we are a small drop dissolved in the ocean of love. It all happened with the blessings of Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi. It was a resurrection of a very humble person like me, which gave me so much understanding of love, peace and joy.

After enlightenment, I was amazed how my understanding of every aspect of life manifested in its glory. Like flowers, we do not know what fragrance we have, but, by knowing yourself, you know what fragrance the Divine has blessed you with.

I have seen thousands and thousands of people coming to Sahaja Yoga for their resurrection. I realised that this is the last judgment that Christ had described. So many want their emancipation and they got their Realisation without any effort (sahaja). I cannot fully describe the experience in human words. One has to taste it personally.

In this millennium, Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi has taken birth to save the drowning humanity and to save us from destruction. It is remarkable how single-handed She is doing this tremendous work all over the world. She has silenced our mind. It was reacting, but now it has become *nirvichara* (thoughtlessly aware). Like me, thousands have learnt to live in the present, which is the reality. Now I have no doubts about the power of Shri Mataji and Sahaja Yoga. I don't have to give up my family and relatives, though they are all very slow in understanding the subtleties of Sahaja Yoga. I did not have to give up my profession and run away to some far-fetched corner of the Himalayas. Living in this world, I established myself in this state. My own spirit came into my attention and enlightened me. I became absolutely detached. I learnt how to respect others. I found the Sahaja Yogis all over the world respecting me as I was respecting them.

I know it is hard to understand how so many of us in Sahaja all over the world are living together in this unique harmony. Only one desire haunts me, how to

bring Sahaja Yoga to so many others who are lost, but who are seeking pure love and absolute truth. This is the last chance of our evolution to enter into a new human race of enlightened personalities.

NOTES

Some notes on first three pages.

Ujjain – a city in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh

Shrigoan – literally, the village goan of Shri, the Goddess

Satvahan dynasty – a dynasty in southern India from circa 300 BCE to the third century AD

Chandragupta Maurya dynasty – a dynasty in northern India circa 300 BCE

Chittodgarh – a fortified city in northern India, location of the Raput rebellion

Babruvahan – Some descendants of this Satavhan dynasty defeated Vikramditya and started the calendar known as Shalivahan Shaka. Among them, Badruvahan had a son named Shaliwah (or Shalivahan) in the first century AD. He migrated from northern India to Paithan, near Aurangabad.

Shri Shivaji – founder of the Marathi empire, 1627-1680

Naik – a village warrior chief

Mottabbar – powerful landowners in nineteenth century at the time of Zamindaris

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Some notes on the genealogy of Shri Mataji and Babamama

information and assumptions about the Salve lineage drawn from this book

Chandragupta Maurya dynasty

• fourth century BCE until about the third century

Satvahan dynasty

- central and southern India in the third century BCE until the beginning of the third century AD

Emperor Shalivahan

- Shalivahan came from Chittodgarh in the first century AD and migrated from northern India to Pratistan (now Paithan)
- he is contemporary with Jesus Christ and met him (Bhavishya Purana)
- he set up the Shalivahan shaka calendar still used in southern India and Maharashtra

Maratha dynasty

- warrior caste in the Hindu religion
- descendants of King Shalivahan, reigning in a territory near Rahuri, including Shrigoan with authority extending to Hyderabad

Shalivahans in the seventeenth century AD

- devout warrior caste of Goddess Devi
- the Shalivahans protected Malojirao, the maternal grandfather of Shivaji, and Jadhav, Shivaji's father, against Aurangzeb
- they gave the village of Nandgoan, opposite Shrigoan on the bank of the Devnadi River, to Shivaji's grandfather and his son Jadhav
- the descendants of the Shalivahanas protected the descendants of Malojirao
- the Shalivahans are later called Salve

Seventeenth century

- a strong flood destroys the palace of Pratistan (Paithan)
- the descendants receive a territory, including the city of Rahuri and Shrigoan, from Maharaja Shri Shivaji

- they are raised to the rank of Shabanow Kali, caste of warriors, by the Maharaja
- they build a castle in the city of Shrigoan

Grandfather Keshavrao

- descendant of the Shalivahan dynasty, born to the first family of Christians
- his wife, Sakhubai, lost Shrigoan Castle, stolen by the Hindu branch of the family
- he and his parents live in the palace Salve wada
- died in mid-June 1883

Father Prasadrao

- born July 15, 1883 in Ujjain, Maharashtra
- lost, with his mother Sakhubai, the palace Salve wada for the benefit of the Hindu branch of the family

Prasadrao's first marriage

- marriage to Karunabai in 1906
- Children are Urmilla (born in 1908), Vimila (died 1931), Aswini and Kamala (born before 1914), Sushil (born in 1916)
- Karunabai died on August 29, 1919

Corneliabai Jadhav

- born on December 20, 1892, near Ahuri Nandgoan
- descendant of Shri Shivaji
- the mother-in-law of the first five children of Prasadrao and Karunabai
- mother of seven children including Shri Mataji and Babamama

Prasadrao's second marriage

- Prasadrao marries Cornéliabai Jadhav, June 21, 1920

- children of that marriage are Narendra (nicknamed Polean or N.K.P., born March 18, 1921), Shri Mataji (born March 21, 1923), Shantaseela (born May 6, 1924), Vinaykumar (called Balasahib, then Balamama, born June 10, 1926), Indubala (born August 25, 1928), Shaskikala (born June 28, 1930), Babamama (born on May 2, 1933)

Sakhubai, the grandmother dies in 1925

Shri Mataji

- born March 21, 1923 in Chhindwara
- first names: Nirmala, Daisy, also called Nepal by Mahatma Gandhi

Babamama

- born May 2, 1933 in Nagpur
- full name: Hemant Prasadrao Salve
- died on February 28, 2000

*“Think that Shri Mataji is not your sister,
but the epitome of music.”*

That sentence did the job.

The link of brother–sister relationship had been so strong and the bond of love, so unshakable,

that I had not been able to get out of my conditioning.

But in identifying Shri Mataji as that note

which is the pinnacle of music, this bond was broken.

The shackles were removed and suddenly

I found a new identity of Shri Mataji

which was totally formless,

which had no prefixes or suffixes,

which was put and unmaligned

by the stains of relation or any bond.

I felt a strange experience within myself,

as if the identity of my sister

was being taken over by the identity

of this formless note of music.

I knew then and there,

that a transformation was taking place within me.