

Chinmaya Devi Retreats Generating Increasing Interest in US

By Vandana Bapna, CMWRC

For All Women (Devis)...

Chinmaya Devi (Women's) Group, a study forum and support system for women, was established in November 1958, in Chennai, India. Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda blessed this event with this message centered on women's role in the family: "When a mother is a true seeker, the whole environment of the house changes. Your family does not have to go out to hear a Swami. You are the mother, the model, the Guru. Women mould the future of the country. The caliber of the children will be determined by the upbringing given by their mothers. Indeed, women have been, and even today are, the real custodians of our country's spiritual culture."

We have heard a similar cross cultural message across racial, ethnic, religious, geographic and political horizons. The concept of our mother as an incarnation of goddess or Devi is an unspoken part of Indian culture. A famous phrase from the 1865 poem by William Ross Wallace is often used as a quote, "The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world." It is in praise of motherhood as the foremost Shakti for bringing about any change in the world. With the rapidly changing technological advances along with the associated challenges we face today, it is the women who are empowered to encourage grassroots innovation in the ways we think, feel and act to make the world a joyful and harmonious place. While fulfilling the multiple roles and responsibilities and giving unconditionally, many Devis today face unprecedented stress levels and overwhelming challenges not experienced by Devis of prior generations. Lost and muddled in this cycle, they tend to lose touch with their divinity, and fail to appreciate their own worth, the power to transform themselves and the world around them, their virtues of nurturing, compassion, unconditional love, and bringing joy to their loved ones.

Chinmaya Devi Retreats, known as Divya Shakti Retreats, have been conducted in the US annually since 2013 in various Mission centers, including Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center in Maryland, CM Northern Indiana, and CM Raleigh-Durham. Acharya Vivekji spearheaded the idea of a weekend retreat, and Acharya Vilasini has joined him to offer discourses, activities, and creative expression. The Retreats provide a wonderful opportunity to connect with other Devis, share stories and discuss ways to resolve some of the challenges modern women face. Most of all, it will be an opportunity to get back in touch with your own divinity and get recharged. From the depths of the collective spirit, paths open up for making courageous choices and fresh attitudes...to fulfill all the roles with peace & acceptance, with cheer & love, with awareness of the Shakti (Divine feminine energy) endowed upon the Devis and with reverence and gratitude towards this precious gift within them.

The 2016 Divya Shakti Retreat is fortunate to have Swamini Vimalanandaji's presence along with Acharya Vivekji and Vilasiniji. 2016 retreat will be held on Columbus Day weekend (as every year). This year it falls on the auspicious second weekend of Navaratri (Nine nights dedicated to Devi). We will celebrate Navaratri with a Garba dance on Saturday evening.

Devi Retreats inspire women with the age old Hindu culture, wisdom of Vedanta scriptures and their practical applications in all aspects life. We encourage all Devis to join in and gain an insight into the meaning of life, your special place in the cycle of life, and discover tips for strengthening your inner courage and blooming into your highest potential!

'Finding Your Courage' : Divya Shakti Women's Residential or Day Retreat at Chinmaya Mission Washington Regional Center Conducted by Swamini Vimalananda, Acharya Vivekji and Acharya Vilasiniji – October 7th to 9th, 2016

For more information and to Register, Visit: <http://cmwrc.chinmayadc.org/study-groups/devi-group/retreatforwomenoct2016/>