

The teachings of the Spiritual Masters say our outer world reflects the inner world of everyone. Similarly, the outer world impacts our inner world. We may feel helpless to stop the war in Ukraine or conflicts in other parts of the world, but we have control of our inner world and can stop the conflict within ourselves. Mahatma Gandhiji said, 'We must be the change we want to see in the world'. We must do what we can with what we have in our control to make the change we want for ourselves and our world. By changing our inner world, we can change our little piece of the world.

If we want peace in our world, we must make a conscious effort to bring peace into our hearts, minds, thoughts, words, and actions, and in so doing bring peace into our little piece of the world. Living consciously means stepping into our inner power and taking responsibility for our thoughts, words and actions. When we understand how to access this inner power within, we can co-create the life we desire for ourselves and our families. This inner power has been recognized in many ancient traditions as feminine with name and form.

On March 8<sup>th</sup>, annually we celebrate International Women's Day globally – yet still there is gender inequity in the world. Stats Canada reported that for every dollar earned by men, women earn about 76.8 cents, and this gap gets wider for women who are Indigenous, living with a disability, visible minorities, and newcomers. According to Stats Canada, 2019, approximately every six days a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner. In 2019, The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls reported that Indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to be murdered or missing than any other women in Canada, and 16 times more than white women. Reports have shown that these stats have increased during the pandemic.

On March 8<sup>th</sup>, we celebrate International Women's Day, and, from April 1 – 9, 2022, Hindus celebrate Chaitra NavRatri – nine nights to honour Shakti, the Divine Mother. Shakti, this Divine Feminine Creative Power lies within each of us, within Mother Earth and all Her elements. We chant the Gayatri mantra to the Sun, refer to the moon, stars, rivers, trees, plants, and all life-giving elements as feminine. Let's use this month of March to cultivate and awaken Shakti within so that we can respect and honour Shakti in all when we celebrate Shakti in April.

Many of us chant the Chandi mantra, 'Om Aeem Hreem Kleem Chamundaye Vicchhe' concentrating on a murti or picture of our preferred form of the Divine Mother. To live as Shakti, we need to embody this mantra. 'Aeem' refers to MahaSaraswati who sits in our throat and flows a river of creative consciousness through our thoughts, words, and actions. 'Hreem' refers to MahaLakshmi who sits in our hearts bringing love and compassion, abundance, and prosperity into our lives. 'Kleem' refers to MahaKali who sits in our yoni or linga to give us the fierce strength we need to overcome obstacles and laziness for creation and regeneration to occur. 'Chamundaye' refer to the combination of MahaSaraswati, MahaLakshmi and MahaKali as Chandi who resides in our 'nabhi' or navel. 'Vicchhe' means victory. When we chant the mantra, 'Om Aeem Hreem Kleem Chamundaye Vicchhe' we are remembering that we are Shakti and can be victorious when we surrender our conditioned ego to our higher self, this Shakti within.

When we acknowledge and become conscious of Shakti within, we can step into our power and make a conscious effort to bring peace into our hearts, minds, thoughts, words, and actions, and in so doing bring peace into our little piece of the world. By changing our inner world, that which we have control, we can impact our outer world. Jai Maa! Sri Matre Namaha!

