

Sri Karunamayi: An Incarnation of the Divine Feminine

by

Wes Milliman

My first encounter with Sri Karunamayi was at a Hindu temple near Cincinnati, Ohio. After seeing a magazine advertisement for her 2007 World Tour, I knew that I needed to meet her somewhere on the tour schedule. Cincinnati was about a five hour drive, and it didn't take me long to find the temple. Considering the surroundings, I could have been in India. For some reason, this twenty acre estate reminded me of the Taj Mahal in Agra, Uttar Pradesh. As I entered through a side door at the basement level, I immediately saw Sri Karunamayi sitting on a flower throne fit for the Divine Mother, and she was singing a sacred bhajan. There was a long line of people waiting for her darshan, or individual blessing. So, I sat down and watched for awhile. The following prose piece entered my mind.

a parade of forms bowing
to the formless, sacred One
a multitude of hearts opening
to a never ending sea of light
the mystery is the meaning
translucent and clear
immanent and transcendent
the current of grace runs free
to the ocean of love divine

To hear Sri Karunamayi sing a bhajan, or watch her bless her children with the light of love, is an awe-inspiring experience. One of her many gifts to humanity is the awareness that we are living in a world filled with glorious music and iridescent light. Our spiritual sensibilities are aroused by sacred song and dance, for they are a foretaste of the glory of heaven. Human dreams and the human imagination are touched most deeply by the fragile beauty of a rose in the noonday sun, or the sweet refrain of a Bach violin concerto. Our senses are inundated with amazing

grace every hour of the day, if we would only take stock of the mercy of the moment. This is not some sort of refined sensibility. It is just important to have a tender and open heart. Truly speaking, love is the heart's truth, and it is the only hope for the future of humanity, caught between the dark, uncaring forces of fear and want. Compassion is not only the every day action of a saint; it is an act of prayer for the alienated. Through compassionate action, we have an opportunity to redeem ourselves in the eyes of truth. It is only with the gifts of love and compassion that we can actually stand in the Holy Presence.

After milleniums of patriarchal dominance, the rebirth of Goddess mythology in the past few decades has been a saving grace and absolute necessity for the healing of our planet. Sri Karunamayi, or Amma (Mother) to her children, is an incarnation of the Divine Feminine. Wheresoever she walks, she gives light to the path. Wheresoever she steps, there is no damage to the earth, only the the gift of life. Her form casts no shadow, for this is the invisible nature of grace. She blesses each blade of grass with a sacred passion and touches every heart with the light of a thousand suns.

From Sri Karunamayi's biography...

Amma was born in South India in 1958. Her parents were deeply spiritual, so it was only natural that she would spend her childhood immersed in an atmosphere of prayer and worship. Both of Amma's parents received visions that she was not an ordinary child, and her astrological chart indicated that she would dedicate her life to serving humanity.

As a child, Sri Karunamayi was always inclined toward charity. Once her grandmother had prepared some food to be offered to God, but Amma knew of some people who had not eaten in several days. So, she gave the food to them as a divine offering. When Amma's grandmother heard what she had done, she praised her by saying, "Today you have done a noble act, for you have offered the food to the God within each of us."

Even at a young age, Amma always impressed people with her universal outlook. As a child, she enjoyed helping her mother by making flower garlands by hand to be used in the worship of Lord Rama. She also delighted in hearing Sanskrit prayers and verses sung by her father. Though she had never studied Sanskrit, she would often surprise her father with spontaneous insights into the inner spiritual meaning of the verses. When Amma's parents invited learned scholars to their home to give

teachings, these scholars were often shocked and amazed to hear the original thoughts that flowed spontaneously from Amma. They had never heard of such a young girl discussing the spiritual essence of the Sanskrit prayers with such expertise.

As she grew into a young woman, Amma felt an inner urge to begin spending more and more time in the family worship room, immersed in prayer and meditation. When she began college, the only way she could continue this practice was by sleeping less, since she had to devote a great deal of time to study. As her meditations deepened and intensified, she also began reducing her intake of food. These meditation sessions grew in length until one day she locked herself into her room and remained there for one month. Though her family members were perplexed, they did not dare to disturb her, having witnessed the profundity of her previous meditations. When she emerged, she seemed like a different person. Though she still showed the same sweet affection to which they were accustomed, her demeanor now expressed a more impersonal, universal love. Determined to fulfill the sacred purpose of her life, Amma gently told her mother that it was time for her to go into seclusion in the sacred Penusila Forest, to meditate there in solitude. Always respectful of her daughter's divine nature, and trusting completely in God, Amma's mother did not try and stop her from going.

In the year 1980, at the tender age of twenty-one, Amma left the comfort and security of her home and traveled by foot to the remote and sacred Penusila Forest, where a number of India's ancient Vedic sages had meditated for many hundreds of years. Once there, she was free to live according to their principles. Rising at 2:30 in the morning, Amma would bathe with cold water from a pure river. Wearing only a simple cotton sari, she would go to one of the forest's many sacred groves and remain there absorbed in meditation for days, or even weeks at a time.

Amma never felt that these meditations were done for her own benefit, as she was following the example of India's ancient Vedic sages, who had meditated in order to discover the best teachings for all of humanity. Through Amma's austerities, she determined which of the Vedic teachings and practices would be of greatest value to people living in this difficult modern age. After performing such intense tapasya for ten years, Amma decided that it was time to share her knowledge with all those who desired true spirituality, wherever they may live in the world.

Emerging from her relative seclusion, she was invited by a devotee to stay in Bangalore, where a simple building was constructed to house a temple, as well as living quarters. She began giving public discourses on

various aspects of Sanatana Dharma, India's ancient spirituality, and she conducted sacred ceremonies to promote world peace and universal well-being. As these discourses began attracting more and more people, she also began working toward fulfilling her dream of bringing medical care to the villagers of the Penusila area by arranging for medical camps, which initiated the construction of a hospital.

In 1995, Amma was invited to come to America to give public programs, and, since then, she has returned to the U.S. every year to give teachings and blessings, hold meditation retreats, and perform sacred fire ceremonies for the benefit of the world. During her visits to each city, people come by the hundreds to express their worries and problems and to request her blessings and guidance. Amma's feeling, as she comforts each person like a mother, is that even her sari has become sacred, because she has used it to wipe away the tears from her children's eyes. Amma often likes to say that her only work in this world is to remove the suffering from the hearts of her children. This she does through her kind, loving words of spiritual guidance and encouragement, her healing touch, and her divine knowledge and insight. Today, Amma divides her time between the U.S., Europe, and India, fulfilling her life's mission of providing comfort, solace, and spiritual guidance to all who come her way.

Sri Karunamayi gives us reason to rejoice, in our efforts to rebuild the world on the principles of kindness, respect, and love for others, ourselves and the earth. Hope is the sacred aspiration of a pure heart. Thus, we should never let doubt ruin our outlook, just because the task at hand seems insurmountable. Amma believes that we should never waver in our commitment to compassion, and, as children of light, we must always give and receive unconditional love, for anything is possible with this unending, undying, amazing grace.