

## **Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi (Amma)**

Spiritual leader and humanitarian Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi (“Amma”) is known throughout the world for her selfless love and compassion. Her entire life has been dedicated to alleviating the pain of the poor and those suffering physically and emotionally. Amma inspires, uplifts and transforms people from across the world through her loving motherly embrace, her spiritual wisdom and her volunteer organization, Embracing the World (ETW).

### **AMMA’S EMBRACE**

Perhaps the most personally accessible spiritual leader in history, Amma has directly listened to more of the world’s poor describe their experience than anyone else alive today. Offering a compassionate ear and a shoulder to cry upon is something that has always come naturally to Amma; she began doing so when she was just a child during her daily trips into her home village to collect vegetable peels and other food-waste to feed to her family’s cows and goats. This is a tradition that continues to this day, with Amma spending the majority of each day, receiving all those who come to her with encouraging words and heartfelt motherly embrace. In this manner Amma has embraced more than 39 million people throughout the world, giving spiritual programs not only throughout India, but also throughout Europe, the United States, Japan, Africa, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia and other countries.

### **AMMA’S VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION: EMBRACING THE WORLD**

Amma’s volunteer organization, Embracing the World, is focused on helping to the world’s poor and needy attain their basic needs. It is especially focused on meeting those needs in the aftermath of major disasters, having dedicated more than \$75 million in disaster-relief work since 2005. After the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004, Amma acted quickly, providing concrete homes for the homeless within six months after the disaster. Since then, Amma has done similar work in response to flooding in Mumbai, Gujarat, Chennai and Bihar, Uttarakhand and Jammu-Kashmir, as well as in response to earthquakes in Kashmir, Nepal, Haiti and Japan, cyclones in West Bengal and the Philippines, and hurricanes in the United States.

Through Embracing the World’s hospitals and other healthcare programs, the organization has provided totally free medical care to more than 4.7 million people since 1998. It has built more than 47,000 homes for the homeless throughout India and has provided financial aid for more than 100,000 people unable to care for themselves. ETW is providing scholarships to more than 50,000 impoverished students annually, and also offers vocational-training, literacy-training, runs orphanages, hospices and elder-care homes. ETW volunteers serve more than 10 million meals to the homeless and hungry each year, including 150,000 meals in 50 cities across North America.

### **AMMA’S ENVIRONMENTAL WORK**

Augmenting these efforts, Embracing the World works in the fields of environmental conservation and sustainability to help protect the future of the planet. It has planted more than one million trees as part of the United Nations’ Billion Tree Campaign. It regularly cleans rivers and other public areas as part of its environmental campaigns, and it teaches and assists poor villagers in remote areas to build their own toilets. In 2015, ETW donated \$15 million to support a project of the Indian Government to clean the Ganges River. ETW is also currently undertaking an additional \$15 million-worth of toilet construction

and other environmental endeavors in its home state of Kerala; as part of this it has already constructed more than 12,000 toilets in Kerala.

#### **AMMA'S AWARDS & INTERNATIONAL ADDRESSES**

Amma has delivered addresses at the United Nations several times and has spoken twice at the Parliament of the World's Religions. Among other accolades, she has received the Gandhi-King Award for Non-violence in Geneva, the James Parks Morton Interfaith Award in New York, and an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from the State University of New York and from the University of Mysore. In 2014, at the invitation of His Holiness Pope Francis, Amma was one of 12 religious and spiritual leaders to travel to the Vatican to sign a joint declaration against modern slavery. In her talks, Amma offers words of wisdom and guidance on both personal fulfillment as well as the most pressing matters of our time. From climate change to terrorism, cross-cultural tensions to poverty and women's rights, Amma's addresses focus on awakening a spirit of service-mindedness and a focus on universal values in society.

#### **AMMA, THE CHANCELLOR OF AMRITA VISHWA VIDYAPEETHAM**

Amma also serves as chancellor of the five-campus university, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham. As chancellor, Amma has guided the university along a path that stresses both modern educational excellence as well service-mindedness—a combination that has led the university to being ranked as the fourth best university in all of India by the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) in 2020, and the No. 1 private university in all of India by the *Times Higher Educational Supplement*. In 2015, Amma addressed researchers representing 93 leading international universities at a conference co-hosted by Amrita University and the United Nations Academic Impact at the UN in New York. Stressing the importance of research aimed at uplifting the poor and needy, she said, "Today, universities and their researchers are ranked mainly based on the amount of funding they receive, the number of papers they publish and their intellectual caliber, but along with this, we should take into consideration how much we have been able to use their research to serve the lowest and most vulnerable strata of society." Through Amrita University, researchers are innovating new means of delivery of goods, knowledge, information, energy and healthcare to get help to those in need wherever they are.

#### **AMMA'S ASHRAM**

Amma's birthplace in Kerala is today the headquarters of Embracing the World. It is home to more than 3,000 residents, who have dedicated themselves to imbibing Amma's teachings, studying the spiritual scriptures, practicing meditation, and dedicating themselves to Amma's humanitarian projects.

When asked where she gets the energy to help so many people while also building and running a massive humanitarian organization, Amma answers: "Where there is true love, everything is effortless. Love transforms."