

AMMA FACT SHEET

Full Name:	Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi
Description:	Spiritual leader and humanitarian
Born:	27 September 1953
Place of Birth:	Parayakadavu, Alappad Panchayat, Kollam Dt., Kerala, India
Language:	Malayalam
No. of People Embraced:	33 million
Date of First World Tour:	1987
Countries Programs Given In:	Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Dubai, England, Finland, France, Germany, Holland, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kuwait, Malaysia, Mauritius, Reunion, Russia, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, United States of America
Positions Held:	Founder, Embracing the World Founder & Chairperson, Mata Amritanandamayi Math Founder & Chairperson, Mata Amritanandamayi Charitable Trust Founder & Chairperson, Mata Amritanandamayi Mission Trust Chancellor, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham University Founder, Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences (AIMS Hospital)
Award Bestowed:	Doctorate of Humane Letters from SUNY (Buffalo, 2010) Prix Cinéma Vérité (Paris, 2007) James Parks Morton Interfaith Award (New York, 2006) Philosopher Saint Sri Jnaneswara World Peace Prize (Pune, 2006) Mahavir Mahatma Award (London, 2005) Centenary Legendary Award of the Int. Rotarians (Cochin, 2005) Gandhi-King Award for Non-Violence (Geneva, 2002) Karma Yogi of the Year (Yoga Journal, 2002) Care & Share Int. Humanitarian of the Year Award (Chicago, 1998) Hindu Renaissance Award (Hinduism Today, 1993)
International Addresses:	2013: 100 Birth Ann. Celebrations of Sw. Vivekananda (New Delhi) 2012: United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (Shanghai) 2009: Inauguration of Vivekananda Int. Foundation (New Delhi) 2008: Summit of the Global Peace Initiative of Women (Jaipur) 2007: Cinéma Vérité Film Festival (Paris) 2006: James Park Morton Interfaith Awards (New York) 2005: Rotary International, India (Cochin) 2004: Parliament of the World's Religions (Barcelona) 2002: Global Peace Initiative of Women Religious & Spiritual Leaders, UN (Geneva) 2000: Millennium Peace Summit, UN (New York) 1995: Int. Celebrations at the 50th Anniversary of the UN (New York) 1993: Parliament of the World's Religions 100th Ann. (Chicago)

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No. of homes Amma's organization Embracing the World* (ETW) has built for the homeless:	45,000 in 75 locations throughout India
No. of scholarships ETW provides to impoverished children:	41,000 currently provided, with a goal of providing 100,000
No. of families ETW has relocated from slums into new apartments:	1,600 families
No. of trees ETW has planted since 2001:	1 million (ETW is part of the UN's Billion Tree Campaign)
No. of people given 100% free medical care by ETW since 1998:	2.6 million
No. of poor people fed by ETW annually:	10 million in India, 100,000 outside of India (75,000 in US)
No. of widows and physically and mentally handicapped people provided monthly financial aid by ETW:	59,000 throughout India (target 100,000)
No. of orphans taken care of by ETW:	500 in India and 50 in Kenya
No. of poor women ETW is helping start home-based businesses:	more than 100,000 across India in more than 6,000 groups

Official Websites with more about Amma and ETW:

www.amma.org • www.embracingtheworld.org • www.amritapuri.org • www.amma-europe.org
www.aimshospital.org • www.amrita.edu • www.iam-meditation.org

*Embracing the World is a global network of charitable projects conceived by the Mata Amritanandamayi Math (MAM), an India-based non-governmental organization with special consultative status to the UN's Economic & Social Council and the UN's Department of Public Information.

THE HUMANITARIAN & EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS OF AMMA

EMBRACING THE WORLD (ETW) IS A GLOBAL NETWORK OF CHARITABLE PROJECTS CONCEIVED BY THE MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI MATH (MAM), AN INDIA-BASED NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION WITH SPECIAL CONSULTATIVE STATUS TO THE UN.

HUMANITARIAN AID

Disaster Relief

- LPG Tanker & Fireworks Factory Explosions (2012): aid packages to families of dead and injured
- Japan Earthquake/Tsunami (2011): \$1 million U.S., focus on children orphaned in the disaster
- Haiti Earthquake (2010): Medical supplies, blankets, providing scholarships to 30 students
- Floods in Karnataka & Andhra Pradesh (2009): \$10.7 million relief package including medical care, food, supplies and 1,000 homes for displaced refugees
- Cyclone Aila, West Bengal, (2009): Medical care, food and supplies
- Floods in Bihar (2008), Gujarat (2006), Mumbai (2005): Over \$1.5 mil. in medical, food, supplies and shelter
- Earthquake, Kashmir (2005): Food and supplies
- Hurricane Katrina, USA (2005): \$1 million U.S. to Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund
- Tsunami, India and Sri Lanka (2004): Provided a value of \$46 million in relief (built 6,200 tsunami-resistant homes, 700 new fishing boats and an evacuation bridge, provided vocational training for 2,500 victims).
- Earthquake, Gujarat (2001): 1,200 earthquake-resistant homes

Other Aid Projects

- Completion of 45,000 homes for the poor throughout India
- Providing 41,000 scholarships for children of impoverished farmers, with a goal of 100,000
- Empowering 100,000 women by providing start-up capital, vocational ed and access to microcredit loan
- Organic Farming Initiative supporting 10,000 impoverished people to grow organic vegetables on their own land.
- Orphanages for 500 children in Kerala and 50 children in Nairobi
- Yearly feeding over 10 mil. poor inside India and 100,000 outside, including 75,000 in USA via soup kitchens
- Pensions for 59,000 destitute women and the physically and mentally challenged, with goal of 100,000
- Four care-homes for the elderly in India
- Hostel providing secure housing for women
- Prisoner-welfare project in U.S. provides solace for prison inmates

SPIRITUAL, CULTURAL

- Amritapuri Ashram (Kerala, India) is the international headquarters for Amma's service work, which is carried out through hundreds of branch centers and service groups world-wide
- IAM® Technique (Integrated Amrita Meditation Technique®) taught free throughout the world
- AYUDH helps youth "Be the change you wish to see in the world" via community-outreach projects
- GreenFriends cultivates reverence for Nature and has arranged and inspired planting 1 mil. trees since 2001

THE HUMANITARIAN & EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS OF AMMA

HEALTHCARE

Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences (AIMS)

- Not-for-profit 1,300-bed hospital (210-bed ICU) provides free care to the poor
- 12 main specialty institutes, 51 associated medical departments, 24 operating theatres
- More than 2.6 million patients have received completely free treatment

AIMS Community Service

- Telemedicine for hospitals and more than 40 remote centers across India and in parts of Africa
- Free health screenings in remote areas providing preventative healthcare
- Training of hundreds of tribal villagers as healthcare workers
- Five branch hospitals (three in Kerala, one in Karnataka and one in Andaman Island) provide free care
- AIDS care-home in Trivandrum and cancer hospice in Mumbai
- Free palliative in-home care for the terminally ill
- More than 100 free medical camps annually throughout India
- Ayurvedic medicine through the School of Ayurveda's 160-bed hospital
- Providing 100,000 women with training to become in-home nurses in more than 6,000 self-help groups

EDUCATION

Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham (Amrita University)

- Five campuses with Schools of Engineering, Medicine, Nursing, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Business, Journalism, Ayurveda, Education, Biotechnology and Arts & Sciences
- Amrita Research Labs and other Research Departments are continuously developing innovations in communication, e-learning, educational technologies, computer sciences and biotechnology
- 30 leading universities worldwide, including Stanford, MIT, NYU, EPFL in Switzerland, VU in Amsterdam TU Munich, Roma Tre, ETH Zurich and the University of Tokyo cooperate with Amrita University to enhance higher education and research in India
- Institute of Peoples' Education provides job-training and community development
- UN-commended literacy-training program for tribal populations
Elementary and Secondary Education
- 47 schools throughout India with a values-based, holistic approach to learning
- A school for hearing-impaired children in Kerala

Mata Amritanandamayi Math • Amritapuri P.O., Kollam District • Kerala 690525 • India •
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MA Math is registered as a public charitable trust fully dedicated to serving humanity without distinction of nationality, caste, race or religion. Its headquarters are at Amritapuri, Kerala, India.

THOUGHTS OF NOTABLE WORLD PERSONALITIES

“Amma has done more work than many governments have ever done for their people... her contribution is enormous.”

Prof. Muhammad Yunus, 2006 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Founder, Grameen Bank

“Amma is truly such an enormous fountain of energy and love and compassion. I think if all of us were to get even a fraction of it within our own beings, there would be only joy in the whole world... Whatever little I can do with her inspiration, I will strive my best to accomplish it.”

**Dr. Rajendra K. Pachauri, Chairman, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
(IPCC was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 while Dr. Pachauri served as IPCC Chairman)**

“Amma presents the kind of leadership we need for our planet to survive. This is the most heroic person I’ve probably ever met. Because she is sitting there hugging people. This is the most heroic thing that any of us could do now. Because shooting each other is not heroic. The most heroic thing is caring, and she does that.”

Alice Walker, Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction

“I want to share with you what I have learned from Amritapuri [Amma’s ashram]: Giving. That is the message I get from Amritapuri. Go on giving. You can give. It’s not only money. You can share knowledge. You can remove the pain. And you can even go to the person who is suffering. Every one of us—the rich and poor—can give. There is no greater message than Amma’s giving to all the people of this region, and Kerala, and India, and to the world.”

Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, PhD former President of India

“I believe that she stands here in front of us—God’s love in a human body.”

Dr. Jane Goodall, PhD, primatologist, anthropologist and UN Messenger of Peace

“I was very struck by how much of what is generated, how much of the money that is mobilized, actually goes and benefits directly those in need. This is remarkable. It was very striking for me how she managed to get that formula right. ... International NGOs and UN agencies have something to learn from the work of Amma and what she has been able to build.”

Olara A. Otunnu, former Under-Secretary General of the United Nations

“A type of force emanates from her. I think it cannot be defined by our analysis.”

Dr. Madhavan Nair, PhD, Chairman, Indian Space Research Organization

“Her hug has a wonderful power. ... Amma’s teachings can be put into practice in every country, and with her hug she brings consolation to many people.”

Riitta Uosukainen, former Speaker of Parliament of Finland

THOUGHTS OF NOTABLE WORLD PERSONALITIES

“It is my honor as Michigan’s U.S. senator to be here and simply say, ‘Thank you. Thank you, Amma, for who you are. Thank you for your spirit. And please continue to bless us and help us bring peace and healing.’”

Debbie Stabenow, United States Senator of Michigan

“Amma shows us that, whatever our path is, we should become better in that. She helps us to become better Christians or Jews.”

Rabbi Leah Novick, author of *On the Wings of Shekhinah: Rediscovering Judaism’s Divine Feminine*

“When I think of Amma and her life of devotion and service, I see a shining example for all of us of the spirit of reverence, compassion and care.”

Dr. Steven C. Rockefeller, PhD, philanthropist, educator and social activist

“The people of [Embracing the World] are working day and night to serve the flood victims. In fact, I wonder if they are even sleeping at night! We are very thankful to [Embracing the World] for accepting our appeal and rushing to help us in this time of need.”

Avdesh Narain Singh, Minister for Labor of Bihar (in response to Embracing the World’s Bihar-flood relief work in 2008)

“I have seen the contribution that you made during the tsunami. I have seen the humanitarian action that you have been involved in. I have seen your presence in education. I have read about your presence in health. And I have seen that, when history is written, it will be said if you that you served God and served man.”

Dr. P.L.O. Lumumba, PhD, Kenyan human-rights activist

“What I cherish about Amma is that she not only ‘talks the talk’ and is the embodiment of unconditional love, but she expresses that love in action. She ‘walks the talk.’ Mahatma Gandhi urged us to ‘be the change we wish to see in the world.’ Amma is the change she wants to see in our world. She is a profound living example for all of us.”

Ms. Yolanda King, Daughter of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., former Director, MLK Jr. Center for Non-Violent Social Change

QUOTES OF AMMA

“Today, there are thousands who are ready to die for their **religion**, but none who are willing to live by its principles.”

“In today’s world, people experience two types of **poverty**: the poverty caused by lack of food, clothing and shelter, and the poverty caused by lack of love and compassion. Of these two, the second type needs to be considered first because if we have love and compassion in our hearts, then we will wholeheartedly serve those who suffer from lack of food, clothing and shelter.”

“With modern weapons, targets can be pinpointed with deadly accuracy. If only we could reach out compassionately to **the poor**, the hungry and the homeless with that same precision!”

“If, in any part of the world, thousands of people are dying of hunger or suffering in **poverty**, it is a matter of shame for all nations.”

“Simply transferring the world’s nuclear weapons to a museum will not in itself bring about world **peace**. The nuclear weapons of the mind must first be eliminated.”

“There are two types of **education**: education for a earning a living and education for life. When we study in college, striving to become a doctor, a lawyer or an engineer, that is education for a living. But education for life requires an understanding of the essential principles of spirituality; it is about gaining a deeper understanding of the world, our minds, our emotions and ourselves.”

“This **world** is like a flower. Each nation is a petal. If one petal is infested, it will soon affect all the other petals, and the life and beauty of the flower will be destroyed.”

“In God’s creation, men and **women** are equal. But over the centuries, the sad condition of women has not significantly improved. Women, who give birth to humankind, should be assured an equal role in society.”

“The essence of **motherhood** is not restricted to women who have given birth; it is inherent in both men and women. It is an attitude of the mind. It is love, and love is the very breath of life.”

“To ignore the world condition in the name of spirituality is wrong. **Enlightenment** means the ability to recognize oneself in all living creatures. We should be able to help others and love them as if we see ourselves in them. That is the goal of spiritual practices.”

QUOTES OF AMMA

“**Love** is a universal religion. It is what society really needs. It should be expressed in all of our words and deeds. This perfect love is already within us. Life and love are not two separate things; they are one and the same.”

“As long as there is enough strength to reach out to those who come to me, to place my hand on a crying person’s shoulder, I will continue to **embrace** people. To lovingly caress people, to console and wipe their tears until the end of this mortal frame—this is my wish.”

“When I **embrace** people, it is not just physical contact taking place. The love I feel for all of creation flows towards each person. This purifies their minds and awakens within them love, compassion and the qualities associated with motherhood. It is these qualities that maintain harmony in society and are so severely lacking in today’s world.”

BIOGRAPHY OF AMMA

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 THROUGH HER PHYSICAL EMBRACE, HER SPIRITUAL WISDOM AND HER WORLDWIDE VOLUNTEER SOCIAL-SERVICE ORGANIZATION.

Amma was born into a simple family of Kerala fisher-folk in 1953. Even as a small girl, she drew attention with the many hours she spent in deep meditation on the seashore. She also composed devotional songs and could often be seen singing to the divine with heartfelt emotion. Despite her tender age, her compositions revealed remarkable depth and wisdom.

Amma’s parents could not understand her. Amma explains, “In India, women are expected to remain in the background. It is said that ‘Even the walls should not hear them.’ My family could not understand my way of reaching out to people; they had no idea of the basic spiritual principles.”

Amma’s mother became ill when Amma was nine, and Amma was withdrawn from school in order to help with household tasks and the care of her seven siblings. As she gathered food scraps from neighbors for her family’s cows, she was confronted with the intense poverty and suffering of others. Amma brought these people food and clothing from her own home. Her family, which was by no means wealthy, scolded and punished her. Amma also began to spontaneously embrace people to comfort them in their sorrow. It was not permissible for a 14-year-old girl to even touch others, especially men. But despite adverse reactions by her parents, Amma followed her heart, later explaining, “I don’t see if it is a man or a woman. I don’t see anyone different from my own self. A continuous stream of love flows from me to all of creation. This is my inborn nature. The duty of a doctor is to treat patients. In the same way, my duty is to console those who are suffering.”

In countries such as India, Nepal and Tibet, it is traditional to honor someone who expresses extraordinary compassion and wisdom as an embodiment of divinity. In India, such a person is referred to as a mahatma [great soul], but Amma herself has never laid claim to this or any other title. “I offered my life in service to the world long ago,” Amma says. “When your life is an offering, how can you make any claims?”

When asked if people worship her, Amma says, “No, it is the other way around. It is I who am worshipping them. I don’t believe in a God who lives up on some throne in the sky. All living beings are my God. I believe in loving them and serving them.”

In India, the divine is ultimately described as ‘beyond name and form’ and is considered the substratum of life itself. In order to explain this, Amma often uses the analogy of golden jewelry: “The earring, the bangle, the nose-ring and the necklace—in essence, all are gold alone; only their appearance is different. Similarly, it is one all-pervasive divinity appearing as this diverse world of names and forms. When one truly understands this truth, it is reflected in all of his or her thoughts, words and actions as love, compassion and selflessness.” According to Indian spirituality, this understanding is referred to as ‘enlightenment’ and is the ultimate goal of human life.

BIOGRAPHY OF AMMA

Every year, more and more people are drawn to Amma. Her fame has spread far beyond India. In 1987, Western devotees invited her to the USA and Europe. Today, she travels throughout India, Europe, the United States and Australia, as well to Japan, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Canada, Africa and South America, and her programs involve a crew of approximately 200 volunteers.

With the help of countless volunteers, Amma has built a vast and ever-growing charitable humanitarian organization, Embracing the World (ETW), which serves all people regardless of caste, social status or religion. With this goal in mind, ETW has provided free medical care to more than 2.6 million people. It has built more than 45,000 homes for the homeless throughout India and provides financial aid for more than 59,000 people unable to care for themselves with a goal of 100,000. It is also providing vocational-training, literacy-training, running orphanages, hospices, old-age homes, scholarship programs, planting trees and much more. In India, ETW's projects are managed by the Mata Amritanandamayi Math, an NGO with that has had consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and the UN's Department of Public Information.

After the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004, ETW acted quickly and provided concrete homes for the homeless within six months. ETW received praise from many government officials, from Kerala politicians up to the president of India for helping all of those in need, regardless of such aspects as religious persuasion. Since, ETW has done similar work in response to flooding in Mumbai, Gujarat and Bihar, as well as in response to earthquakes in Kashmir, Haiti and Japan, cyclones in West Bengal, and hurricanes in the United States.

Amma has received international recognition. She has delivered addresses at the United Nations several times and has spoken twice at the Parliament of the World's Religions. She has also received the Gandhi-King Award for Non-violence in Geneva and the James Parks Morton Interfaith Award in New York, among other accolades.

Today, Amma's birthplace in Kerala has become the headquarters of Amma's worldwide volunteer social-service organization. It is home to more than 3,000 residents. There they imbibe Amma's teachings, study the world's scriptures, practice meditation and dedicate themselves to Amma's charitable service projects.

Throughout her life, Amma has embraced and comforted more than 33 million people. 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."

THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE EMBRACING THE WORLD AND THE MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI MATH IS THE AMRITAPURI ASHRAM, LOCATED IN A SMALL FISHING VILLAGE IN THE SOUTHWESTERN COAST OF INDIA (PARAYAKADAVU VILLAGE, ALAPPAD PANCHAYAT, KOLLAM DISTRICT, KERALA STATE). IT WAS OFFICIALLY FORMED IN 1981 AND HAS BEEN BUILT UPON AND AROUND THE TINY HOUSEHOLD PROPERTY WHERE AMMA WAS BORN.

Amritapuri is currently home to an international community of more than 3,000 residents, including formally initiated monks, monks-in-training and householder families. It is here that they imbibe Amma's teachings, study the world's scriptures, practice meditation and dedicate themselves to Amma's charitable service projects.

Amritapuri is also an international center for people searching for solace, inspiration and inner peace. Thousands of people—from all countries, all religions, all ages and walks of life—come to the *ashram* daily to experience Amma's love and compassion, and to study *yoga*, meditation and other traditional spiritual practices.