

Thousands line up to hug Indian HOLY WOMAN at AUSTRALIA
Victoria Gurvich

Hugging is certainly something Mata Amritanandamayi has mastered.

Known as AMMACHI or Amma or Mother, her followers say she has hugged many millions of people around the world and last week she was in Melbourne hugging several thousand more.

Revered by many as a living saint and an Indian holy woman, she has been coming to Australia since the late 1980s and last week's venue was Moorabbin's Kingston City Hall.

Ammachi has started many charitable projects in India. She is the head of an International charitable trust that provides medical services, education and pensions for destitute women.

She travels the world giving her legendary hugs to spread love and compassion.

The diminutive woman of 48 walked through Kingston City Hall on her way to the stage with a radiant smile, which barely left her face all night.

After speeches, music and meditation, queues formed. Ammachi sat on a comfortable chair and strangers knelt before her to receive their darsan, or healing hug.

She spent several seconds with each person, often whispering into people's ears. Many were visibly moved by the experience; some were in tears.

Asked by The Age why she HUGS PEOPLE, Ammachi, who speaks little English, said through Swami Amritasvarpananda, that the question or a river flows.

Humanity lives for love, she said, and life is for love. Only by sharing love can we awaken or can our awareness level grow. She said. Asked if she ever tires of hugging, Ammachi said that in more than 30 years of hugging, she has never cancelled a program because when there is love there is no exhaustion.

Peter Button 69 and his wife Anne, 58, from The Basin, attended the Wednesday program.

He said it was a great experience to find a person prepare to give love to anybody and everybody without expectation.

She said : "There seems to be so much strife in the world at the moment, it seemed like a nice thing to come and join with a whole lot of people and express love and peace."