

## **SUNDAY HERALD SUN**

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### **Bliss is in the arms of Mata**

**By Bryan Patterson,**

The Mother of Bliss has bruises on her arms and legs from clasping hundreds of followers to her breasts. Still she draws them forward, rocking them like children in her arms, murmuring words of love, kissing their hands and dropping rose petals on their heads.

It takes more than three hours for about 300 devotees and admirers of Mata Amritanandamayi to be given the Darshan blessing at Ormond Hall in Prahran.

Followers, who call the visiting 42-year-old Hindu holy woman, Ammachi or Mother say the unconditional embrace is religious experience that opens up the soul. Certainly there is peace in her presence.

An attendant swami, clad in orange, says Mata has hugged more than 10 million people worldwide. He has seen her hug thousands in a 24-hour session. "She will not leave until she has seen and touched them all," he says.

Mata was born in a fishing village in southern India to parents who did not understand her spiritual behavior. According to legend, she was thrown out on the street to starve. A cow came and gave her milk, a dog brought food packets, and a cat meditated with her.

In a vision she heard the voice of God telling her to awaken mankind. She then became known as Mother.

She is now a major Indian spiritual leader who addressed heads of state gathered in New York for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the United Nations last month. She is in Australia for a series of seminars and blessing sessions – the last today at Lord Somers Camp, Somers.

The embrace that has become her trademark is, she says through an interpreter, a "transmission of spiritual energy".

When asked if she considers herself divine – as some of her followers claim – she shakes her head but says that she has come to know her own "true nature", and that nature is God. True happiness, she says, is possible by diving deep into yourself to find God.

"Your just have to realize that you are dreaming. You have to come out of the dream; to awaken yourself to realize what you and God are".

**(Courtesy of 'Herald and Weekly Times)**