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The mother of all hugs embraces Sydney's love

by Phillipa Walsh

Indian spiritual leader Mata Amritanandamayi said she feels like a big honey bee when she hugs her followers, and she is here to hug Sydney.

"Just like the body needs food, the soul needs love to grow," she said when she arrived from a retreat on the gold Coast to the open arms of followers yesterday.

The holy mother, or Ammachi, has hugged an estimated 11 million in her ministry of love, which she started as a little girl.

She believes people need true love to waken them to life.

"God has given us everything, so don't be egotistic about it. We have free will, but do not to misuse it. We all have freedom to drive our cars on the road, but we must follow the road rules," she said.

Ammachi, 48, is considered to be a living saint by her followers and conducts extensive charity work in her native southern India.

She is in Australia to conduct programs of spiritual teaching, singing and hugging, which began in the Petersham Town Hall last night and continues today.

Ammachi will hug every follower at the event evens if it takes 12 or 13 hours – when she is on tour she hugs between 1500 and 10,000 people each day.

On her last birthday, followers estimate she hugged 20,000 people over 17 hours.

"I feel just like a honey bee. I feel the light and goodness in every human being," she said.

When you act with your intelligence, you will be able to act in the world with the right actions. Then the future will automatically become righter."

Ammachi grew up in a poor fishing village where she was confronted with both wealth and poverty as she went from house to house.

"Mother always wanted to know the cause of sorrow. If there is a cause, then there is a way to eliminate it," she said.

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