



Website FAQs

1. Who is Amma?

Sri Mata Amritanandamayi, lovingly known as Amma, or Mother, is revered throughout the world as one of the most outstanding humanitarian and spiritual leaders of our time. Her simple, profound message of love and service has inspired, uplifted, and united people of all nationalities and beliefs, awakening them to their fundamental oneness in Spirit. With her holistic vision, Amma works tirelessly to nourish individuals and communities through her spiritual activities and humanitarian projects.

2. What are Amma's spiritual beliefs?

Though she was born into a Hindu culture, and many of the external rituals and symbols are based in that tradition; Amma subscribes to no formal religion. Whenever she is asked, Amma says that her religion is Love. Through her life, work, and teachings, Amma is leading people towards this basic truth. "Love has no limitations of caste, religion, race, or nationality," Amma explains. "We are all beads strung together on the same thread of love. To awaken this unity – and to spread to others the love that is our inherent nature – is the true goal of human life. Indeed, love is the only religion that can help humanity rise to great and glorious heights."

3. What does Amma say about other religions?

Amma considers the underlying truth of all religions to be the same, realising that one Love shines through all traditions. She never asks people to change their religion or their beliefs, but to go deeper into their current paths. In fact, she does not even ask people to believe in God, but to enquire into their own true nature.

Amma says, "Viewing religion externally creates more and more division. We need to see and understand the inside, the essence of religion, from a spiritual perspective. Only then will the feeling of division come to an end. Where there is division, there cannot be any real spiritual experience; and where there is spiritual experience, there can be no division – only unity and love."

4. Why is Amma visiting the UK?

Amma visits the UK as part of her annual world wide tour, which covers the US, Europe, Latin America, Japan and Australia. Amma says there are two types of poverty in the world – material poverty and poverty of the heart. By travelling the world and bringing her simple message of Love and compassion and service to others, she inspires thousands of people to embody her teachings.

5. What is Darshan? Why does Amma embrace people?

Darshan is a Sanskrit term describing the experience of having an audience with a saint or sage. Amma's darshan takes the unique form of a tender, motherly embrace, an expression of compassion and empathy. Amma receives everyone in the same loving way, irrespective of religious faith or non-belief. She does this spontaneously to every single person, no matter who they are or where they come from. Amma sees everybody and everything in creation as Divine, and a never-ending stream of Love is offered to all who come to her.

6. Can I receive darshan?

Yes. Amma makes herself available to anyone who wishes to receive her darshan (her blessing) and does her utmost to accommodate everybody. She welcomes and blesses all people from all cultures, backgrounds and religious traditions. Priority is given to those meeting Amma for the first time.

To receive darshan, please collect a numbered darshan token as you arrive so that you know when it is your turn to meet Amma. As there are often many people this may mean waiting for a while.

7. I have special needs – Can I receive darshan?

Yes you are most welcome! If you need assistance, please ask for special assistance when you enter the darshan line. There are also dedicated seating areas at the front of the hall for people with special needs.

8. What will happen during each day of Amma's visit?

The morning programme begins at 10am when Amma enters the hall and there is a short guided meditation. After the meditation Amma begins to give darshan by individually receiving everyone who has come for her blessing.

The evening programme begins at 7.30 pm with a satsang (a spiritual discourse), followed by 90-minutes of bhajans (devotional music), then meditation, and darshan.

On the last evening The Devi Bhava programme begins at 6:30 p.m. Devi Bhava literally means "the mood of the Divine Mother". It is a very special event that celebrates the feminine aspect of God, and God's unconditional love and compassion for all humanity. It is a traditional, joyful celebration when Amma

gives darshan as the Divine Mother in the manner symbolized by the Hindu tradition.

The evening commences with an Atma Puja, a ceremony to promote peace and well being for the whole world. Following the Puja, Amma offers her darshan to everyone present, through the whole night and into the early hours of the morning. Once everyone has been received, Amma blesses all participants by showering flower petals on those gathered in a moving conclusion to the programme.

9. How do I ask Amma a question?

During the morning programme a certain number of people can ask Amma a question. It is best to arrive early (approx 9 – 9.30), and wait near the stage in the main hall in order to form a queue. If there are too many people, a draw will determine who can ask questions.

10. How will I know what to do at the event?

There will be a number of volunteers available who will be happy to answer your questions. There will also be a 'May I Help You' desk in the main hall.

Feel free to make yourself at home by sitting close to Amma, as space allows, or find a seat.

11. Can children attend – what facilities will be available?

Children are welcome to the programme, and can receive darshan with their family. A crèche facility is also available. During the evening programme, children are requested to be quiet while Amma gives her talk.

12. What practical contribution has Amma made to the world?

Amma's outreach takes two principal forms: first, the darshan programmes where she reaches out on an individual basis; and second, her humanitarian activities, which are designed to improve peoples' lives on a broader scale.

Teaching by the example of her own life, Amma blends spiritual awareness with practical social service. In India, Amma's compassion has inspired hundreds of thousands of individuals to volunteer their time and talent in order to assist those in greatest need, regardless of caste, language, or religion. This has led to the development of many major health, educational, social care and ecological projects. A few examples being:

- Educational and Vocational Programmes: Amma has established 53 schools, including those for tribal youth and children with speech and hearing defects. Her university includes schools of medicine, engineering, management, biotechnology, computer sciences, ayurveda and journalism.

- Health Services: Amma's super-specialty hospital, the internationally recognized AIMS and its four branch hospitals, provide free care to the poor. Two hospices care for the terminally ill, and one specializes in care for patients with AIDS.
- Housing for the poor: 30,000 homes built as of December 2007, with the goal of building 95,000 more. An additional 6,200 homes for tsunami victims is targeted.
- Lifetime Stipends: Amma has targeted 100,000 lifetime stipends to cover the essential needs of mentally and physically challenged adults and children, as well as for women who are widowed or the sole family breadwinners.

Amma actively encourages people to serve selflessly in their own countries and communities. In the UK a project has recently started in Oxford providing showers and food to homeless people.

More information on Amma's activities in India will be available from the 'Information India Table'.

13. What do other people say about Amma?

Over the past fifteen years Amma has received numerous invitations to address issues of religious difference, the environment, women's rights, and world peace. She is increasingly recognized by the international community for her deep spiritual wisdom and practical insight, and has been honoured with several international awards for her humanitarian work.

Awards have included the Gandhi-King Award for Non Violence in 2002, previously won by Kofi Annan and Nelson Mandela. In 2006 Amma received the Interfaith Centre of New York's James Parks Morton Interfaith award, also presented to the Dalai Lama. She has spoken at the UN on numerous occasions and is respected for her involvement in promoting religious harmony

14. What is appropriate dress around Amma?

While the dress customs in the West are more relaxed than in India, in honour of the sacredness of the occasion, people do dress modestly in the presence of Amma. Many people choose to wear the colour white, as in India it is considered to represent purity, and is also worn as a sign of respect.

