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Amma first Indian to bag US varsity honour

April 4th, 2010
DC Correspondent

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April 3: Hugging saint Mata Amritanandamayi Devi will soon become the first Indian to be conferred an honorary doctorate in humane letters by the State University of New York (SUNY), USA. She will receive the degree at the university's campus in Buffalo on May 25.

Only two other world leaders, including the Dalai Lama have been bestowed with this highest honour in the university's 164 -year- old history. "We are awarding her this honorary doctorate in recognition of her wide ranging humanitarian contributions spread all over the world," Dr Stephen Dunnett, vice chancellor, international affairs, of the university said in a video conference from Buffalo on Saturday, explaining that only those with outstanding contributions to society are chosen for this honour.

The university, which has a tie-up with the Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham University in Bengaluru, to offer a dual masters degree in management and business, plans to do more research in collaboration with it in future, he revealed.

"It is estimated that the Amma has hugged over 25 million people. On some days she has hugged upto 50,000 people in a day, often working for nearly 20 hours," says Dr Venkat Rangan, vice chancellor, Amrita university.

Abhayamrita Chaitanya, pro-chancellor, Amrita university points out that Amma has received international recognition before. She received the Non-Violence Award in 2002 at the United Nations and the recent award for Global Peace Initiative. "Her numerous charitable homes, orphanages, hospices, and widow pension scheme have helped the poor all over the country," he adds. Her reaching out to help the victims of natural calamities like the Haiti earthquake and the floods in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh in the recent past too have won her great appreciation.

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