

The joy of being

Madhavi Tata

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His is a laughter that starts at the bottom of his belly sending vibrations of mirth across his being, and a kind of ready wit that charms you instantly. "I am sure you want me to pose on a rock now," he tells the photographer as he smiles guilelessly at the lens.

Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, who has millions of followers in a trance with his Ananda Ala programme and his easy-to-follow tips on inner happiness, is quite "a normal, ordinary man" as he takes pains to emphasise. "I haven't read any scriptures, I don't preach any particular religion and I certainly don't have any illusions of greatness," Sadhguru says in an American drawl that throws you a bit.

"Most people have this impression that spirituality is a path chosen by those who have failed at everything else.

You would be surprised to know that we have a slew of successful businesses that sponsor our Isha Foundation programmes," he reveals.

The mystic, as the Isha Foundation brochure calls him, says he that he is waiting eagerly to play a round of golf in Hyderabad. "I love sports though this must only be the 47th time that I am playing golf and I don't know anything about technique. I just hit the ball." Sadhguru says that he even owns a hand glider but does not find too much time to go gliding these days. "I used to ride motorbikes on the Tibetan border too. It was great fun," he says, his eyes twinkling at the memory.

The guru who preaches that a spiritual path is attainable while fulfilling one's responsibilities towards family, work and society explains that being spiritual is "complete involvement with one's body and its psychological process." "Whether you can run 100 m in 8 seconds or not, whether you become famous or not, the idea is that one must experience life in a pleasant way," he says. And this, explains the Isha Foundation head, is possible only through deep involvement. "Unless you are completely involved in a situation, it will not yield to you," stresses Sadhguru.

Explaining that his Ananda Ala programme is meant to create a segment of people who are blissful by nature, he asks, smiling, "When the whole world is striving for happiness, is it not a crime to walk about with a miserable face? As far as external situations are concerned, we have no control but we can control what's within ourselves." Sadhguru regrets that in the name of morality and religion, we have tried to produce so called 'good' individuals. "But if you begin to assume that nobody is alright or good except for you, then it is not goodness, it's madness," he says, the drawl more pronounced.

On his appearances at the World Economic Forum summits, Jaggi Vasudev says that many people at the summit were resentful wondering what a mystic was doing at an economic summit. "Well, the business of economics is the wellbeing of humans. Mine too is the same business." Sadhguru recalls that when he was 14, he had leant heavily towards Communism. "I read Das Kapital and would get all fired up listening to fiery speeches of Communist leaders. But then I realised that Marx knew too much about economics and too little about human nature," the guru laughs.

Talking against something (a system) is easy but creating something is difficult, he feels. "Unfortunately, Capitalism, however tyrannical it may seem, is the only thing that has worked. So my efforts are to bring about a gentler form of Capitalism and inclusive economics." Jaggi Vasudev says that WEF is a summit where 2,000 leaders meet and they control 80% of the world's wealth. "Hence, if I were to bring about some human consciousness in these leaders, the world would be a better place," says Sadhguru explaining that it is not a pipe dream but quite possible.

Talking about his experiences at Davos, the spiritual guru remembers how a Harvard medical professional spoke for 22 minutes about the need for insurance cover for a second open heart surgery for his people. "I was enraged. When my turn came, I got up and explained that in my country, children die of something as minor as diarrhoea. Women in villages die of urinary tract infections. And here was this man talking about insurance money for not the first but a second open heart surgery," his eyeballs bouncing about in disbelief.

About the recent spurt of crimes against women in Andhra Pradesh like acid attacks and stabbing incidents, Sadhguru regrets that generations of poverty have led to an erosion of values.

“Right now, we seem to have a fractured culture. It is a conflict of old values and new freedom. A part of the reason can be blamed on the skin show that is descending into homes through television.

People seem to be in excited hormonal states which they cannot control.” Sadhguru emphasises that a serious effort needs to be made educate both men and women about treating each other with respect. Coming back to the topic on ‘Ananda’, Sadhguru says every individual is equally endowed as far as inner capabilities are concerned. “We are all perfectly capable of experiencing the ecstasy of life. All it takes is you.

Once we realise this, we will stop trying to extract happiness from others,” he says with a smile.

Speaking about the importance of ecological conservation, Sadhguru reveals that the Isha Foundation, through its tree plantation programme, has helped increase the green cover in Tamil Nadu by four per cent.

Later, as he walks into his host’s living room to sip on a glass of iced tea, letting loose his rumbling laughter every now and then, the thought strikes, ordinary maybe and yet, quite extraordinary.

madhavi@epmltd.com

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