

# Missionary with a Mission!

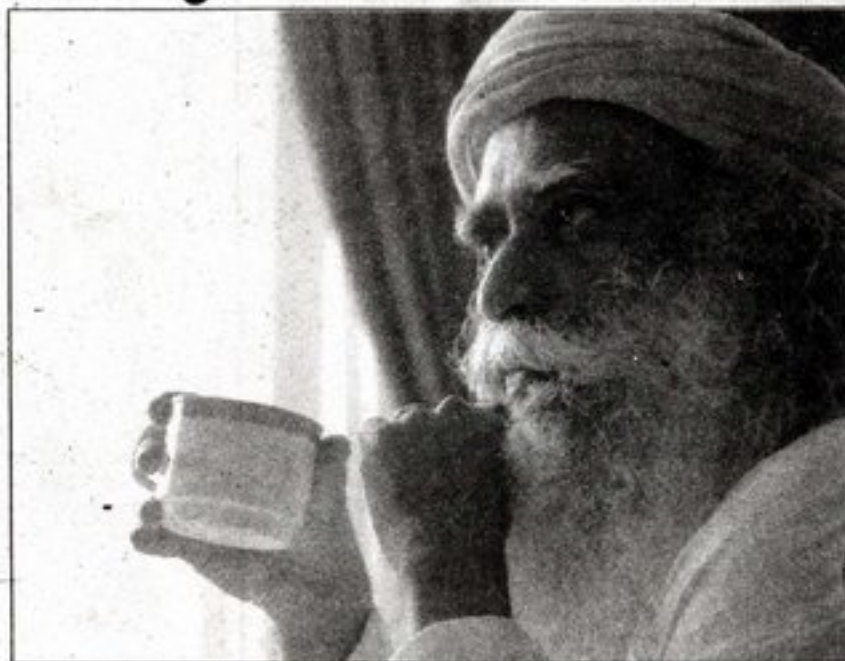
**Sadhguru Vasudev encourages inner well-being for world peace**

BY A STAFF REPORTER

He made a rather unusual picture with his mop of curls, orange turban, beige shawl and bushy beard sitting regally in a chair waiting patiently for everyone to arrive. Unlike celebrities who thrive on making late appearances, Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev was not only before time, he even spoke with journalists on subjects like Mumbai's annoying traffic snarls and the recent stock market scenario before he started his speech.

Sadhguruji, as he is more fondly known as, is the founder of the Isha Foundation, which is a non-political and non-religious organisation and doesn't endorse any particular philosophy, faith, race. Instead, it encourages inner well-being for world peace. Moreover, at a media interaction yesterday afternoon, Sadhguruji spoke about his work in rural India.

"Today rural India has changed from what it was 25 years ago. And although today most villages have potable drinking water, electricity, automobiles and television sets; physically rural people aren't sturdy the way they used to be. Astonishingly 60 per cent of the men have not grown to their full size. It's a quiet tragedy that's taken place because of the shift from subsistence farming to cash farming, the nourishment levels have decreased



drastically. Poets have claimed that India is a land of rivers and mountains but there isn't enough space to fit one billion of us on such little land. Especially if education rates are so dismally low. 60 per cent of the people in India contribute 20 per cent of the GDP; they are the ones who need to be taken care of, they reside in our villages in pathetic conditions. It's sad but most of our graduates aren't good enough to be hired as domestic help,"

said Sadhguruji with a good-natured chuckle.

Sadhguruji started an 'Action for Rural Rejuvenation' program where-in farmers are trained in modern techniques of agriculture. So far, 2432 villages are under this scheme and 470 herbal gardens have been planted in Tamilnadu alone. "We encourage home remedies, yoga, group games, where the entire village comes together as one. That is why we start a yoga centre, a gymnasia-

sum, library, computer and craft centre in each village so that villagers have some reason to stay back there. If they all leave villages and come to the city, food resource in India will be in grave danger," said Sadhguruji.

Sadhguruji also believes that without inner strength, change will be painful. "Whenever there is change, the rural people are the ones who're most affected. I believe that untrained intelligence can be dangerous and therefore must be trained. We have to capitalise on our growth as soon as possible or it'll be too late," he emphasised.

The Isha Foundation also has 10-day programs for prisoners in several central prisons of South India as well as in some of the prisons of Pennsylvania and Kentucky, in the United States because of which, considerable changes in the prisoners' behavioural patterns and disciplinary levels are observed. "We don't preach religion. Instead, we try to bring about inner peace through simple meditation and yoga. Living in a prison can be a very painful; even the air is too painful to breathe. Therefore, we encourage them to engage in sports and yoga. Next year Isha Foundation will be completing 25 years and we are planning to plant 25 million trees in India. This land has nurtured us for so many generations, how can we just finish it like that!" he ended with a smile. ■