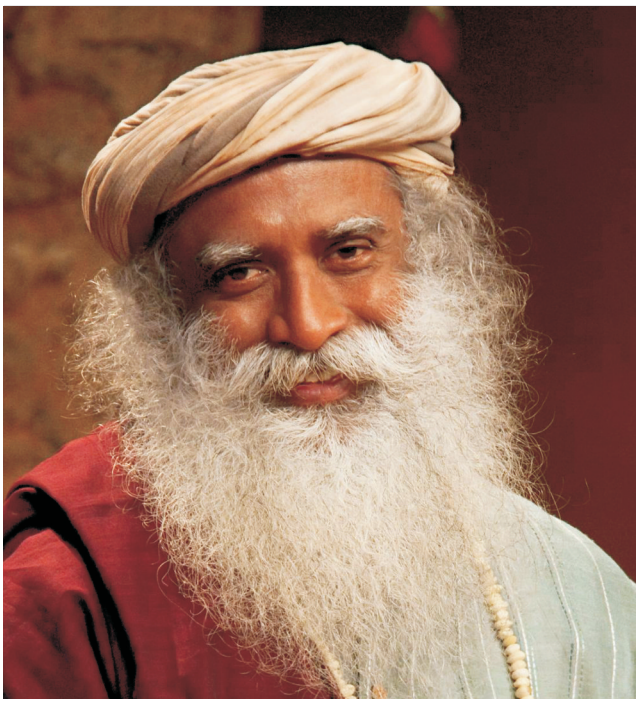


SADHGURU

Author, Spiritual Leader, and Yogi

Taken by the Editorial Board

YT: As a mystic and visionary, you have redefined the traditional concept of an Indian guru. But at first look, many are puzzled by a guru who rides sports bikes, wears trendy shades, and tees on a golf course. How do you reconcile your spiritual journey with those aspects of your personality?

SG: This image has spread everywhere that if you eat badly, dress badly, and live badly, you must be spiritual. A lot of people have this idea that spirituality is some kind of a disability. If someone says they are spiritual, the question is always, 'What are all the things you cannot do? Can you do this? Can you do that?' I confront this almost everywhere I go. People say, 'Oh, he drives his own car, what kind of guru is he?' If I have a chauffeur, will I become more spiritual?

This is one thing I want to make clear to everyone: spirituality is not a disability – it is a phenomenal empowerment of life. A spiritual process is about living strong, to be involved with everything in the world, but unentangled.

About riding bikes or playing golf, I am not inclined towards anything in particular. It is just that whatever I do, I do it in full rev. Whether I am conducting a program, driving a car or a motorcycle, or playing golf or football, I do it with utmost intensity, with absolute passion and involvement. Because I am involved with just about anything that is with me at a given moment, people think I am multi-faceted.

YT: Could you share how your environmental initiatives such as 'Rally for Rivers' and 'Save Soil' personally resonate with you?

SG: I am not an environmentalist. I am a worm on this planet. I have crawled on this planet for 65 years now, so I know my life and everything that affects my life. People will naturally say, 'Okay, everyone has lived on this planet.' No, they have not lived on this planet; they have lived in their heads – all psychological stuff. I do not have anything in my head, so I live on this planet. What supports life and what does not support life is always visible. If I just walk on the land, I know what is happening there – whether it is alive or not. Land is generally screaming in most parts of the world, but you do not hear it because your own noise is big.

According to the United Nations, in normal agricultural soil, the minimum organic matter to call soil as soil should be between three to six per cent. But in large parts of the world, it is well below one per cent. The United Nations agencies, with enough scientific data, are saying that the planet has agricultural soil only for another 80-100 crops. That means we would run out of soil in 45-60 years. If that happens, there will be a serious food crisis on the planet. What we are facing now is soil extinction.

This is why we have taken up the Conscious Planet – Save Soil movement, which is about bringing policy change that agricultural soil should have a minimum of three to six per cent organic matter based on regional conditions. The response has been fantastic. We have reached over 4 billion people. I addressed 193 nations at the UNCCD COP15 in Africa, where we suggested an incentive-based approach, and now, 81 nations are in the process of forming soil policies.

YT: Yoga has been an integral part of our Indian society for several thousand years leading people to live a more spiritually awakened and healthy life but it is only recently that the world has started giving Yoga its due credit. What according to you is the future of Yoga in the world and will it evolve as it travels the borders of various nations and traverses through different cultures?

SG: Today, nearly 2 billion people around the world are practicing some form of Yoga. It has lived for over 15 millennia because of its sheer efficacy. Over all these years, there was no campaign, papacy or enforcement. No one put a sword to somebody's throat and said, 'You must do Yoga!'

One reason for Yoga's growing popularity today is the large-scale transmission of education. We have more intellect on this planet today than ever before. Naturally as the intellect becomes stronger, people look for logical solutions to everything. The more logical they become, the more they become dependent on science and the outcome of science – technology. As the activity of the intellect becomes stronger in the world, more people will shift to Yoga over a period of time and it will become the most popular way of seeking wellbeing.

As there is a science and technology for external wellbeing, similarly there is a science and technology for inner wellbeing. Yoga is a technology for inner transformation on all levels, a comprehensive way of approaching the spiritual process through the body, through energy, through breath, through emotion and, of course, through intelligence. If you can simply look at this human system as an instrument and learn to use it as an instrument, it will become a powerful instrument. It can tell you everything about what is here and beyond.

Will Yoga evolve as other cultures take to it? The practices may get distorted and commercialized and many other things may happen – they are already happening. But I feel we are at a phase in the world where we should let Yoga happen to everyone. Later on, corrections can be easily done. Even with the most distorted form of Yoga, people may not be getting enlightened but at least their backache is going away! For someone who is suffering from backache right now, that is the biggest thing in the universe. If that goes away, they think that is all Yoga is about.

It is like, if I give an airplane to a local peasant, they will think the two wings are a problem, chop them off and put two bullocks onto it and drive. It is a tragedy but at least he has something to ride, maybe in a very minimalistic way but still something to ride. Later, we can talk to them about attaching wings to it.

YT: Your endeavour, Isha Foundation is known for its work in spirituality, education and environmental services. In addition to its existing initiatives, are there any new initiatives planned to achieve an even broader impact?

SG: In 2024, we will be launching a global movement called Conscious Planet because there is only one problem on the planet - the human being. If this human being is a little more sensible, so many problems would disappear right now.

What is the problem with the human being? Human being is the peak of evolution on this planet, the most intelligent, competent and capable, but one big mess, because once you attain to this level of intelligence and capability, everything that you do is supposed to happen consciously. The moment you do the same things compulsively, unconsciously, humanity is a disaster. That is where we are right now.

People are expecting some aliens to come and trouble us, but we are capable of destroying ourselves totally out of our own silly nonsense. What we need is a Conscious Planet. Conscious Planet does not mean the planet is going to glow with a halo. It is you and me. Human beings have to become conscious. So, in this direction, we will be launching this movement, where we want at least three billion people to have one simple 12-15-minute long spiritual practice that they can do every day for their wellbeing.

YT: The tendency to work relentlessly for long hours is a considered to be a positive attribute by society. Are humans actually made for the 9-5 corporate job lifestyle and how can one better balance their work and life?

SG: There is no such thing as work and life, it is life and life. Your work has to be lived, and your life has to be worked at. Do not make a demarcation that there is something called as work and life. There are different aspects of life, and they need to be dealt with. I work seven days a week, 365 days – but I do not need a vacation. If you really do what you care for, your whole life is a vacation. So, make your life a vacation by creating what you care for. Above all, the most important work is to work upon yourself.

YT: With evolving times, our focus has shifted with us becoming severely materialistic, running towards money and other such materialistic goals. This shift is more significant amongst the current generations. What are the ways that you can suggest that can help us strike that balance in life?

SG: If you look back 25 years ago, 15 years ago, and today, the bar of survival has constantly been raised in society. In every segment of society, survival has been raised to a place where even billionaires are struggling to survive among their community. I have, at close quarters, seen multi-billionaires still behaving like beggars. Their mindset is that of a beggar who sits on the street every day, thinking, 'How many more pennies can I gather?' The numbers are different but the experience of life is still the same because you raised the bar of survival.

In your life, you must fix the bar somewhere – this is what I need for my survival. You should not keep raising the bar constantly. You must fix it now, not after 25 years: 'This is my survival. After that, what do I want to do? What is it that really matters to me in my life?'

The essence of life is that we are able to explore as much as we can when we live here, to know and experience everything possible that is there in this piece of life that you call 'myself'. If that does not happen, you are just running on the treadmill. You may get exercise but it does not get you anywhere.

YT: Receiving the Padma Vibhushan is a remarkable achievement and testament to your exceptional contributions. How has this recognition influenced your ongoing work and aspirations, particularly in relation to the impact you aim to create in your field?

SG: I am not someone who thrives on recognition but at the same time, I respect this award because it is significant that the government is beginning to recognize the spiritual process as a powerful process in the world. Another reason is that Isha is a volunteer-run organization. Volunteers work seven

days of the week, 365 days. No one is remunerated for anything. For all of them – over 5700 full-time volunteers and over 17 million part-time volunteers – who have done many things, spending money from their own pockets and investing significant time and effort, this is a wonderful acknowledgement that the nation has not ignored them.

YT: We at St. Xavier's are really inspired by your ideals and your approach to much needed initiatives. Can you give a message for us college students to live a better and balanced life so that we can remain focused on our goals and do not lose ourselves in the pursuit of it?

SG: At this stage in your life, do not think in terms of what job to take or what education to do. The important thing is life. For everyone, their life is precious. What do you want to invest this precious life into? If you look at it this way, you will find something truly worthwhile to do. If you think in terms of how to earn a living or get something, then you will do something silly that you will regret for the rest of your life.

Most people are a regret, which is why they are going around joylessly – they are not doing what they want to do. Instead of creating what really matters to them, they are doing something for a living. Every creature – worm, insect, bird and animal – is earning their living. When an earthworm can earn its living, is earning a living an issue with such a big brain?

One thing that every young person should do is to stay by themselves for at least two or three days without the influence of their peers, professors or parents and look at what they want to invest this precious life into – however big or small, it does not matter. If you see that something is truly worthwhile and you invest your life in that, this will be a life of fulfillment.

Ranked amongst the fifty most influential people in India, Sadhguru is a Yogi, mystic, visionary and a New York Times bestselling author. Sadhguru has been conferred the Padma Vibhushan by the Government of India in 2017, the highest annual civilian award, accorded for exceptional and distinguished service. He is also the founder of the world's largest people's movement, Conscious Planet – Save Soil, which has touched over 4 billion people.