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### Stuck in the middle with yourself

*You have to get off the materialist bus to capture the message of spirituality, says **Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev**.*

There once was a man who lived in a forest. It so happened that a tiger stumbled upon his dwelling and, seeing the man in panic, went after him. The terrified man started running for his life. There were thorns and stones on the way, but somehow he kept running.

Right then, a flash fire started in the forest. The man had to run through the fire because, even as his feet burned, he knew that stopping would mean definite death.

Suddenly, the path the man was running along reached its end: a cliff edge. The man fell. He was hurtling towards the river below when, somehow, he managed to break the fall by grabbing the root of a tree. The man looked down and saw a crocodile waiting in the waters below.

The tiger, meanwhile, was also waiting, at the edge of the cliff. The man was just about holding on to the root for dear life. But the root was being bitten away on either side by a black and a white rat.

Above the man was a bee hive from which honey was overflowing. And the honey was falling into his mouth, drop by drop. If the man's desperate predicament rings a bell, you should know: you are leading a life like his, and your situation is no better.

The crocodile, with its mouth wide open, is death. The tiger is life. The black and white rats are night and day. As the rats keep biting away, the root gets closer to being snapped, and you get closer to plunging into the river with the deadly crocodile in it.

The occasional drop of honey falling into your mouth makes you happy and in this happiness, you forget death. The honey's sweetness gives you the illusion that everything is fine. It is not. The running is always there; your legs cannot escape the heat of the fire.

It is also when you realise you are stuck in a web of stupidity that the doors of spirituality begin to open. Spirituality will then automatically come your way.

Each individual has his own understanding about life. For some life is all about good food and fine wine. Others see meaning in emotional and material prosperity. Yet, despite achieving a lot, people still find themselves looking for happiness.

Life may give them all that they expected, but they remain dissatisfied. Instead, whatever they create to achieve happiness ends up taking their life. You end up losing the essence of living while on the road to convenience.

You are stuck in the material world. Your spouse, your children, your property — these are material pursuits. There are many ways to realise a world beyond the material one. Energy is immortal; it has no beginning and it has no end. The decision to either be with the perishable material world or with immortal energy is yours to make.

If your experience of life is beyond that of the material world, then you have understood spirituality. It is only then that you begin to live.

*(Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev is the founder of the Isha Foundation, an international public service organisation).*

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