You have talked about attaining spirituality while being in the material world and enjoying its benefits. Is there anything one must give up to experience a higher state of being?

"These questions are always being asked. If I follow a spiritual path, can I live with my family? Can I wear good clothes and eat well? Distilling the essence of material and spiritual life has come from certain levels of understanding. When you breathe and the food you eat, are you material? The body itself is material. Can we separate your body from what you are? Can we separate the material and the spiritual?

What we need to change is not the content of our life, but the context of our life. If we change the way we experience our life, then we can follow certain principles. As far as I can see, everyone is striving for happiness, everyone is striving to be free. You mean every human being is striving to be free? Yes, it is not about changing our world, but about changing the way we experience it.

In times when not managing a front-row invite, the latest designer bag/ear or a fancy holiday stress out, how does one stay grounded?

"It is definitely time to stop and look at what is driving us crazy to possess more and do more, because it is the 'things' that we are after. Essentially, every human being is trying to experience a larger slice of life. If he knows only one thing, he is thinking of a little more money, if he knows power, a little more power; if he knows love, a little more love. But if you apply your awareness and look at it, you can clearly see that you are not seeking money, property, love or pleasure; what you are seeking is expansion. If you look at this, you can see that you are looking for infinite expansion. If you are looking for something better, it has to be non-physical. The moment you seek what is not physical, you are spiritual.

How can one align the mind, body and soul in a way that balances the three?

"In yoga, we look at the human body as five sheaths. The first sheath is called prana sheath or the 'spirit-body', because what you call the physical body is just a heap of food. The second sheath is called manas sheath or the mental body. These two layers can only function in connection with the third dimension, the energy body or prana sheath. You can compare this to computers today – there is hardware and software, but by themselves they cannot do anything unless you plug the computer into quality power.

Pramashe sheath is the dimension in which most of the yogic practices function. If you keep your prana sheath in perfect balance and fully activated, there can be no such thing as disease either in your physical or mental body. Keeping the energy body in full flow is not about doing healing. This is about building the foundational yogic practice that establishes your energy in such a way that your body and mind are naturally fine."

"Some practices have often termed 'new-age spirituality' as a fad. Your response?"

"Unfortunately, today, spirituality is the most misunderstood and misrepresented aspect of life. The way it is being presented worldwide, some of it is utterly ridiculous, a lot of it is crooked. Much more of it is well meaning but stupid. Sometime ago in the US, someone took me to a spiritual expo where they were selling spiritual bath soaps, spiritual toothpaste, and what not! This is like an Indian village showing where they sell you a rust that makes you invisible. People are desperately trying to make simple situations of life mystical. Any number of things have become spiritual except the human being – that's the whole problem. Spirituality is not about right and wrong or about God and heaven. Spirituality is about exploring the ultimate limits of who you are."

Do you think age-old spiritual wisdom needs to be replaced with a new approach to treat the maladies of our times?

"Yoga is an essential science of life. The fundamental process of yoga cannot be changed by anyone because the fundamentals of the life process..."
have not changed.
According to surveys, around 300 million people actively practice yoga across the planet today, and another 1.2 billion people are into some kind of yoga in a minor way. Yoga has spread across the world without any organisation or authority pushing it. Just by people's interest it has lived on for over 13,000 years because of its sheer efficacy. It is definitely the salvation for future generations on the planet.

**Work-stress is a universal problem. How should one deal with it?**

"It is not your lifestyle, your work, your family or the situations in which you exist which cause stress. The cause is your inability to manage your system — your body, mind, emotions and energy. It is your lack of understanding and your inability to use this system the way it should be used.

Stress is like friction in a machine. There is friction either because there is no proper movement of the parts or there isn't enough lubrication. The less friction you have, the more efficient the machine becomes.

I am not talking about how to manage stress or keep it under the surface. I am talking about how not to create it, because stress is your creation. If you start a simple yugic process, you will find your whole system begins functioning with a certain ease. If your ability to act becomes effortless, then naturally there is no such thing as stress.

**Divorces are getting common. How can we ensure that marriage can be a joyful experience?**

"Relationships have become a problem because we are not using it to enhance our lives, we are trying to fill the gaps in our lives. If relationships have to be really beautiful, it is very important that a human being turns inward and looks at himself/herself in a very deep way before looking at someone else. If you become a source of joy by yourself and your relationships are about sharing your joy, not squeezing joy out of someone, you would have wonderful relationships with anyone. Is there anyone in the world who would have any problem with you if you are going to share your joy with them? No. You are trying to extract joy from them, that is where the problem is."

**Who is a good human being. What are his primary duties towards himself/herself and society?**

"As a human being, your only duty is that you grow to your full potential. If you grow to your full potential, your very way of being is absolutely useful. The best things will happen around you; there is no need for you to do any duty.

These days babies are born with iPads and mobile phones next to them. What is your opinion of this generation?"

"Today, there are so many forces influencing children — friends, Facebook advisors, televisions; three-year-old kids are glued to the screen and we don’t know what they understand or take in.

Would you give a sharp knife to an infant? No. I am telling you, the technology that you have today is sharper than a knife. You must choose an appropriate age and level of maturity before a child handles it. Technology has no quality of its own. How we use it can make or break us. It is left to the individual and the culture to bring this awareness into the child that technology is made for our wellbeing, not to destroy ourselves."

**How does one evoke happiness from within?**

"As there is a science and technology for external wellbeing, there is a science and technology for inner well-being. Yoga is an inner technology. When I say yoga, don’t think in terms of impossible physical postures or twisting yourself like rubber bands. This is a deeper understanding of your own body, mind and energy, and about creating an inner situation where you are joyful and peaceful by your own nature. Being peaceful and joyful is not the ultimate goal in life; it is the most fundamental thing in a human being’s life. If you cannot be peaceful and joyful, you are incapable of exploring any other dimension within yourself. It’s a science."

**How does one get rid of fear, especially fear of disease, death and material loss?**

"Fear has become so fundamental simply because your experience of life has not gone beyond the physical. If we had explored and established ourselves in other dimensions of experience, the body would not be such a big issue, the body becomes an easy thing to handle. Life or death won’t make much of a big difference."

**Do we control our destinies or does destiny control us?**

"There is no such thing as destiny. Whatever you call destiny is something you have created unconsciously. You are doing more things unconsciously than consciously. I would say, for most average, educated, intelligent human beings, only about two percent of their life is conscious. The whole effort of all spiritual processes is to create your life consciously. If you have mastery over your physical body, 15 to 20 per cent of your life and destiny will be in your hands. If you have mastery over your mind, it goes up by 50 to 60 per cent. If you have mastery over your very life energy, 100 per cent of your life and destiny will be in your hands."

**Crimes such as rape and murder are on the rise. Leaders have blood on their hands. Can individual effort change the fabric of society?**

"It has become a fashion to talk about how horrible the politicians are, the police etc. They are one among us who came up to do something. Now, for whatever reasons they have become the way they have become — and we cannot generalise that because you do not know how many have become like that and how many not. If you are driving in your city, and there is no policeman, how many of you will stop at a red light? Not even 10 per cent. So if I make you the Minister, what kind of Minister will you be? We only have the kind of leaders we deserve. No better, no worse. Only when people are actively involved in implementing government policies, those in power will also be in line. Democracy is a people’s government. It cannot be a spectator sport, it is actually a participatory process."

TEXT: SANGHITA SINGH
INNER RADIANCE
ISHA YOGA CENTRE, KOIMBAORE

Founded by the famous yogi and spiritual master Jaggi Vasudev Sadhguru, Isha Foundation is a volunteer-run, international non-profit organisation dedicated to cultivating human potential. Snuggly set in the lush rainforest at the base of the Velliangiri Mountains in Coimbatore, the core of the Foundation’s activities is a customised system of yoga called Isha Yoga, which uses powerful and ancient yogic methods for physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing.

Must Try: The Sadhguru’s introductory program, Inner Engineering, can be quite appealing and fascinating for metoo city dwellers. Offered as an intensive program for personal growth, it establishes the possibility to explore the higher dimensions of life and offers tools to engineer one’s self through the science of yoga. And for those seeking professional and personal excellence, this program offers the key for meaningful and fulfilling relationships at work, home, community, and most importantly, with oneself.

Recently Spotted: Thronged by thousands everyday, one name that has stood out in recent times is filmmaker Shekar Kapur who has been a regular visitor at the ashram. He recently collaborated with Sadhguru on a fourpart DVD series called My Conversations with the Mystic where Sadhguru and Shekar talk about love, life and spirituality. “I love doing yoga and meditation. One has to do these things to experience how all the stress, worry and anxiety goes away, and gives rise to a positive state of mind,” he was earlier quoted as saying. “This is not the first time I have visited this place. I just love it here. Isn’t it better even otherwise to take off for a few days from one’s routine to just be with one’s self?” he added about the Foundation.

Havens to heaven

Loaded with data, on call in a 24/7 economy with 24/7 technologies, the human mind has never been so over-stimulated in the race’s collective history. As the summer months arrive, HELLOI cues you to a host of spiritual oasis, designed to restore the mind-body-spirit balance.