Invest in education for a better tomorrow

He's known for discourses that are replete with witty anecdotes, nuggets of wisdom from real-life experiences and practical advice. Sadguru Jaggi Vasudev, founder of Ishana Foundation, is also a firm believer in the power of education. In a conversation with Radha Venkatesan, he points out that India's one billion people are its greatest resource — but they need to be educated and inspired. Besides the challenging of teaching India, the spiritual guru spoke about...

The state of education

Our education system is far better than many developing countries, but the quality of education is extremely poor. The southern states, including Tamil Nadu, have built schools and continue well but not other parts of the country.

India's economy is growing, not because we struck gold or oil, but because we have educated, English-speaking people. This is something of which we should be both proud and ashamed. There is a lack of leadership, which means we do not reach our full potential.

We talk in terms of millions of graduates, but by international standards, they are not. Employable. We have IITs and I IMs that produce internationally acclaimed graduates. But you see, we're in a mixed bag. We have the capability to cross the economic threshold we are at, but only with the right kind of focus and inspiration.

For this to happen, we must focus on the 70% population in rural India where educational infrastructure is abysmal. Election politics ensures that no state brings education to the masses. If India is to be a world player, it is crucial that the masses learn English. This is not against any language, which has to be nurtured and preserved — but for our survival and economic growth. English gives us an edge. Compulsory education can work but one needs to provide economic development in the rural villages before enforcing it.

We have so many industrial houses in the country. They should come forward. Human resources will be the biggest problem tomorrow, so corporations must invest in education today. It is not charity but business sense.

Technology in the classroom

Education has become purely providing information with no inspiration. Information without inspiration is damaging.

At Ishana Vidya, we are training people to create a happy classroom environment, and they just have to play DVDs to teach. One good teacher can teach millions of children through technology. The teacher should just inspire, and use interactive electronic media to teach science, geography and other subjects. The corporate sector should come forward to provide teaching software. Investing in education is not service but business. Human resources will be the biggest problem tomorrow, so corporations must invest in education today.