The creator of the Isha Foundation, Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, was celebrating his village reform movement in Tamil Nadu. More than 500,000 people had turned up in Coimbatore for the village festival. When the state governor Surjit Singh Barnala, who was viewing the rally with Sadhguru, saw the sea of people — all of them dressed in simple village attire, by bullock cart, cycle, motor and bus — he turned around in amazement and remarked: “Such things used to happen only when the Mahatma was there!”

The Sadhguru replied the Mahatma had a greater advantage; he had an external enemy, an outsider to rally people against. “Bastardise you to believe these people have come for this reason,” he told the governor. “And one thing I’ve constantly selling them to know their enemy, please note the only country your lethargy, your prejudice, or whatever else it is, is your ignorance or the self-deception that there is none other.”

As Sadhguru spoke about the incidence of ‘the enemy within’ during a recent interview, your columnist was reminded of the classic verse from the Bhagavad Gita (aavrutam jnanam etena), about knowledge constantly being enveloped by ignorance like fire encircled and hidden by smoke. So what’s the solution? The Sadhguru reckoned “the whole reform-of-the-washing-just-this-way-steps which people in this country have been taking is not about changing dozens and hundreds. It’s about changing somebody else. Wanting somebody else to change is a human problem. Mother-in-law wants daughter-in-law to change and son wants father to reform; this is an age-old problem. That’s not revolution. Revolution starts with oneself. That’s the modern challenge, we’ve launched when millions have joined up, believing ‘silent revolution of self-realisation’ is on a spiritual plane,” Sadhguru added. “But without a social movement the spiritual dimension will not reach the common people. So we take up projects on ecology, entrepreneurship, health improvement, education, food security, handwoven bandhini, planting trees, a pujya or a drumstick tree are bringing revolution.”

The journey of a billion souls does start with one step you take.

Vithal C. Nanavati