‘If you live a material life, you will need spirituality even more’

Uttarika Kumaran

Fresh after his recently-concluded annual trip to the sacred spot of Mount Kailash along with his followers from Isha Foundation, yogi and mystic Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev was in the city recently to conduct a satsang. DNA spoke to Sadhguru about his thoughts on Mumbai’s spiritual condition.

Must one necessarily visit a place like Mount Kailash to feel spiritually blissful? Isn’t it possible to feel that way living in Mumbai?

Kailash is Kailash. You cannot substitute it with Mumbai. Yes, you can pursue a spiritual process in Mumbai but you’re going to Kailash because of its mystical nature; to get a taste of that mysticism. You see something that does not fit into the logical framework of your life become a living reality before your eyes. And that gives a strong impetus to the spiritual seeker.

In this city, there are some sections who strongly believe that they’re defined by the place of their birth. What is your view on this?

The biggest malady that human beings suffer from is that they try to get identified with things that they're not. And the moment you do that, you’ve lost the perspective of life. It may help to survive, to start a certain social unit, like a family or a nation. These are identities we have taken on for practical purposes, which is perfectly fine. But believing you are these identities — it's a very debilitating disease. It's made human beings so small and they could have been so big. You identify with your body, your language, your gender, caste or creed. And the more you do that, the narrower you’re becoming. Essentially, you’re a piece of life and that’s the way you’re supposed to exist. If you cannot be flexible, I think in many ways, humanity is doomed.

Do you see yourself creating a yoga centre like the one in Coimbatore in Mumbai?

We may create wellness centres which will work wonderfully well. But to consecrate a space, to create an atmosphere of self-transformation requires more than just a building and some people inside it; it requires a different level of involvement. I don’t see that happening right now.

What if you were given administrative control of Mumbai?

What would you do with that power? The city creates a number of hurdles for people from fulfilling their full potential. People spend half their time on the streets commuting, meaning half the things they could do in their lives is replaced by sitting and fretting about, say, the traffic. I'd like to identify these hurdles which block people and remove them whichever way I can.

What do you feel Mumbai needs right now to become more spiritually aware?

Improve the weather! It's too muggy. (laughs) But seriously. People think, oh, I live a material life, why do I need spirituality? How well a race car functions on the tracks depends on how well it is maintained in the pits. When you’re living a fast-paced life, it's even more important to maintain yourself at the highest spiritual level. You have no choice in it. It's not dependent on your desire; it's dependent on your competence and your capabilities.