Missionary with a Mission!

BY A STAFF REPORTER

He made a rather unusual picture with his mop of curls, orange turban, beige shawl and bushy beard sitting regally in a chair waiting patiently for everyone to arrive. Unlike celebrities who thrive on making late appearances, Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev was not only before time, he even spoke with journalists on subjects like Mumbai's annoying traffic snarls and the recent stock market scenario before he started his speech.

Sadhguruji, as he is more fondly known as, is the founder of the Isha Foundation, which is a non-political and non-religious organisation and doesn't endorse any particular philosophy, faith, race. Instead, it encourages inner well-being for world peace. Moreover, at a media interaction yesterday afternoon, Sadhguruji spoke about his work in rural India.

Today rural India has changed from what it was 25 years ago. And although today most villages have potable drinking water, electricity, automobiles and television sets; physically rural people aren't sturdy the way they used to be. Astonishingly 60 per cent of the men have not grown to their full size. It's a quiet tragedy that's taken place because of the shift from subsistence farming to cash farming, the nourishment levels have decreased drastically. Poets have claimed that India is a land of rivers and mountains but there isn't enough space to fit one billion of us on such little land. Especially if education rates are so dismally low. 60 per cent of the people in India contribute 20 per cent of the GDP; they are the ones who need to be taken care of, they reside in our villages in pathetic conditions. It's sad but most of our graduates aren't good enough to be hired as domestic help, said Sadhguruji with a good-natured chuckle.

Sadhguruji started an 'Action for Rural Rejuvenation' program where farmers are trained in modern techniques of agriculture. So far, 2432 villages are under this scheme and 470 herbal gardens have been planted in Tamilnadu alone. "We encourage home remedies, yoga, group games, where the entire village comes together as one. That is why we start a yoga centre, a gymna-