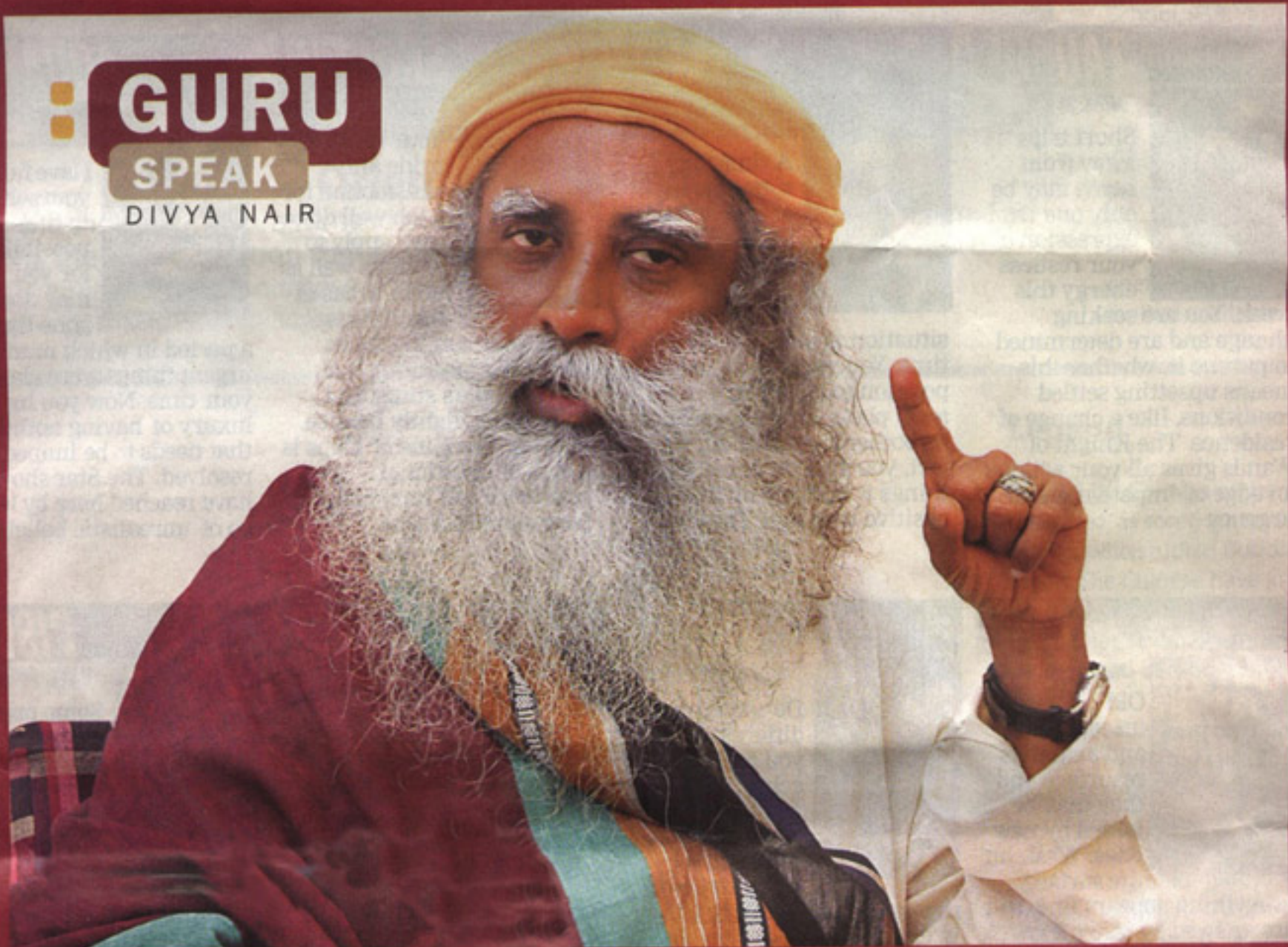


GURU
SPEAK
 DIVYA NAIR



His brand of yoga has attracted followers from India and abroad. An ET Madras Plus exclusive with Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev of the Isha Foundation

"I have never read a scripture before and still haven't," he says candidly. Strange! And that too, coming from someone who's known to be a mystic and a *yogi* and is called the *Sadhguru*, which translates into 'dispeller of darkness from within' in Sanskrit. But then again, that's what *Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev* is all about - surprises! So when you hear him say that he was 'a skeptic' before an experience of the self changed his life completely forever, you learn not to be startled. Jaggi Vasudev can easily be termed an unusual mystic because, for starters, he doesn't pay too much attention to customs and rituals. Transcending communal barriers, his scientific methods for self-transformation are both direct and powerful. And his tool? "Yoga," he declares. "And it's not about twisting your body in strange ways. In yoga, everything becomes one." He adds, "And all human effort is directed towards bringing oneness - physical, emotional and intellectual." "Unfortunately," he reflects, "people are constantly striving to achieve that oneness which they most often don't attain, and spirituality shows them the appropriate method."

He believes that yoga also enables you to get in touch with your inner self, which is a route to happiness. His reasoning... "Because eventually you realise happiness doesn't come from external factors like money. They only provide convenience. Happiness is sought from within. It's a cycle, and affluence helps people realise it. Which is what is happening in the West right now, and people in India are realising it as well."

"Though yoga has been in India forever, it took

Indians the West to bring it to their notice," he adds. The *Sadhguru* founded the Isha Foundation which is a non-profit organisation that has Yoga centres all over the country and abroad in addition to a medical centre and an orphanage. Isha foundation is essentially about yoga - 'Isha Yoga' which was developed by the *Sadhguru*. Having been involved in this science since he was 13, he understood the spiritual aspect of it, besides the physical and mental rejuvenation that most people are aware of. Besides having changed the lives of people through yoga and understanding of one's self, the Isha foundation has a number of other activities that reach out to various sections of people. The prison outreach programme, which was initially started for life-terminers, was extended to prisons in South India and even in a couple of prisons in the US in an attempt to uplift the poor (because "healthy, educated and focused people can make miracles in our country," according to the *Sadhguru*), a rural rejuvenation programme is also a part of the foundation, which aims to improve the overall health and quality of life of the rural poor. In addition, the Green Hands project, which aims at planting seven lakh trees all over Tamil Nadu, is an ambitious attempt to increase the green cover in the state.

Sitting in the heart of Kalakshetra, with the sea breeze blowing and the peaceful surroundings, everything lends an aura of divinity to this ostensibly simple man who speaks with no airs whatsoever. But then, that's what spirituality is all about. Harmonising and not sermonising!