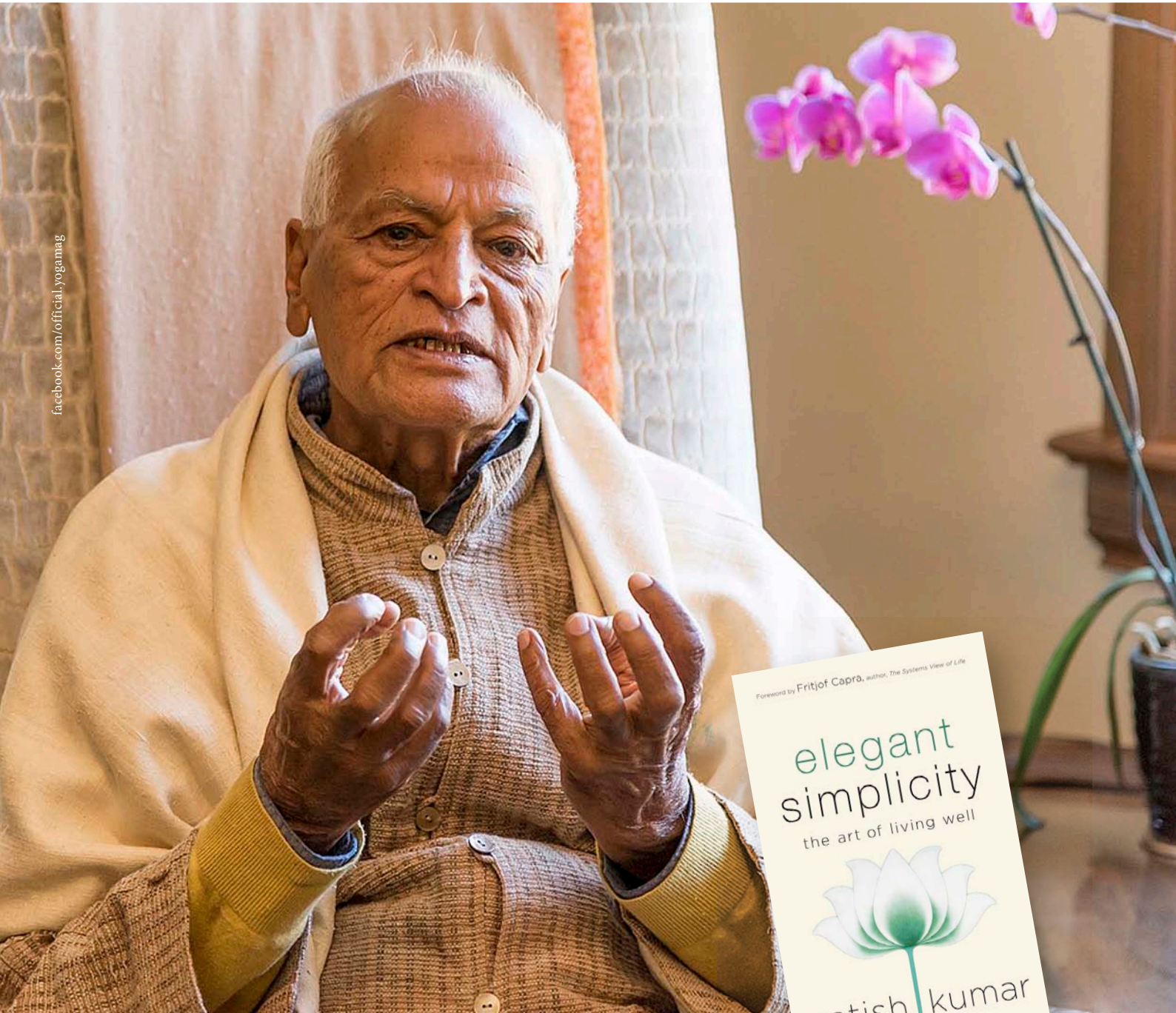


SATISH KUMAR



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YOGA Magazine caught up with a renowned peace pilgrim, pioneer of Indian spirituality in the West, and one of the major trailblazers of the UK environmental movement.

Q: The “House of Yoga” is an interesting metaphor, what do you mean by that?

SK: The profound meaning is in the word itself. Yoga means to unite, to connect and to bring together. Modern, Western science and philosophy is dualistic. They have created a world of fragmentation and separation. Humans and nature are seen as separate. There is separation in the name of religions, nationalities, classes and races. This philosophy of separation gives birth to division and conflicts, which leads to disharmony and unhappiness. Deep yoga heals this division by seeing the world and creation as a dance of diversity.

This shift from seeing division to seeing diversity is one of the most beautiful gifts of deep yoga. A yogic mind and a yogic culture preserves and celebrates diversity.

A non yogic mind distorts diversity into division and gets entangled into perpetual conflicts, class struggles and exploitation. So, the house of deep yoga is a house of harmony, peace and happiness.

Q: This sounds very nice and idealistic. But in the real world how do we achieve such a yogic mind?

SK: I have explained this in greater detail in my book, which includes a chapter about karma yoga. Here I have stated that the individual person is an integral part of human community. Therefore we need to learn to live like a yogi.

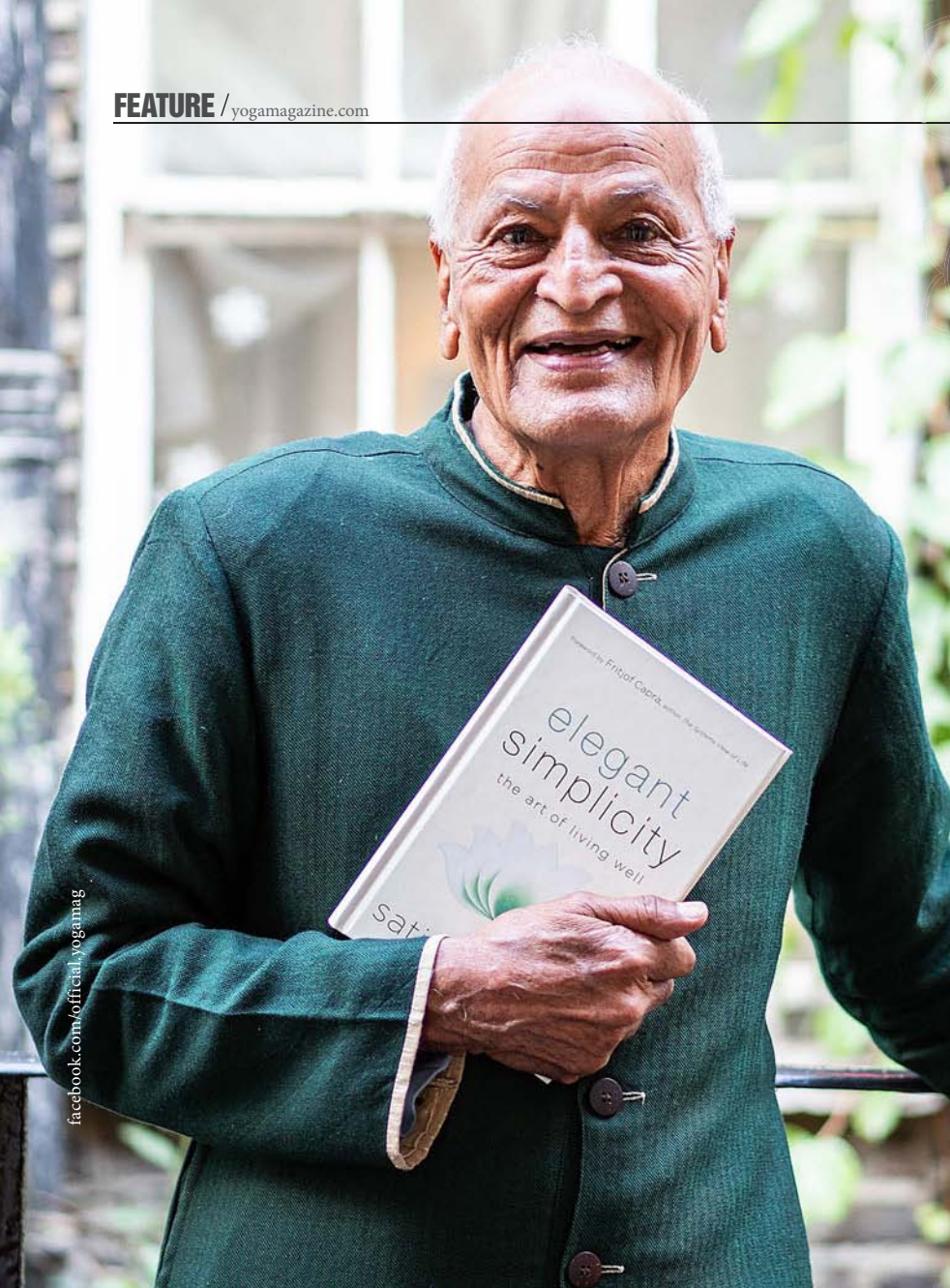
We need to perform all our actions in the service of human communities and the Earth community and not for personal gain or individual success. In the Bhagvad Gita, Lord Krishna teaches the warrior Arjuna that “you should act without any desire for personal gain, you should act with pure heart and do not wish to achieve any success for yourself. Act only with a sense of service and for the benefit of humanity. By acting thus you will be rewarded a sense of fulfilment. So, seek not success, seek fulfilment through service.” In my view this is the royal road to the house of deep yoga.



Q: Yoga has become very popular in the West, yet most people think of yoga as a form of physical exercise. In your book, *Elegant Simplicity*, you talk about yoga in a much broader and deeper sense. Could you please explain to us what “Deep Yoga” is?

SK: I have no problem with the physical aspects of yoga. I would like to see people living a physically healthy life. But I suggest that through physical yoga or “asanas” you can enter the house of spiritual yoga.

When the house is open for you and when the house is welcoming you then why remain on the threshold? So living, enjoying and feeling at ease in the spacious and luxurious house of yoga is Deep Yoga!



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Q: But isn't it a natural human desire to want and strive for personal success?

Our job and our responsibilities, we are told, are to seek personal success and achieve personal glory. We are encouraged to engage in perpetual competition with others and win at the expense of the others.

But the path of deep yoga is to develop shared values, shared vision and shared pursuit for the wellbeing of people and the planet earth. A yogi cooperates with others for a joyful and blissful life for all. For a yogi there is only Connect.

SK: What we think of human nature is really human conditioning. We have been educated, almost brainwashed, from childhood - by our parents, schools, universities, the media and our culture - that we are

separate, disconnected and isolated individuals.

Q: To live such a blissful life, what do we have to do?

SK: We have to live a life of Elegant Simplicity. We have to practise material simplicity as well as spiritual simplicity. Our homes and workplaces are cluttered with stuff which we hardly use.

We work hard to earn money to buy things, then we work hard to look after our possessions. We hardly have any time left for our friends, for our family, for meditation, for poetry for walking in nature, or for just being. Our lives have become too complicated.

A life of a yogi is a life of moderation, simplicity and frugality. The people in the Western world have a huge amount of material possessions yet there is little sign of contentment, satisfaction and happiness.

Q: But without the adequate living standards where basic needs of food, shelter, education and medicine are met, the yogic way of life might just remain a pipe dream!

SK: The idea of Elegant Simplicity is not to advocate poverty or deprivation. There is a middle way. Basic human needs must be met. But endless demand and pursuit of economic growth is creating many environmental problems of pollution and waste. We are faced with urgent climate crisis and environmental emergency.

We cannot have infinite economic growth on a finite planet. Therefore Elegant Simplicity is a prerequisite for sustainability and ecological integrity. The yogic way of life is a simple way of life. Ecology, spirituality and deep yoga is a trinity for a happy, healthy and sustainable future for humanity and for the wellbeing of our planet Earth.

Q: Planetary wellbeing is all very well, but at the moment large numbers of humans are suffering from material deprivation. The message of Elegant Simplicity is surely irrelevant for them?

SK: My message is not for materially deprived people. My message is for the societies which are indulging in over consumption. I say to them - live simply so that others may simply live. Elegant Simplicity is a prerequisite for social justice.

If few of us have too much, many will have too little.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "There is enough in the world for everyone's need but not enough for everyone's greed". Elegant Simplicity is a principle of meeting the needs and not chasing the greed.

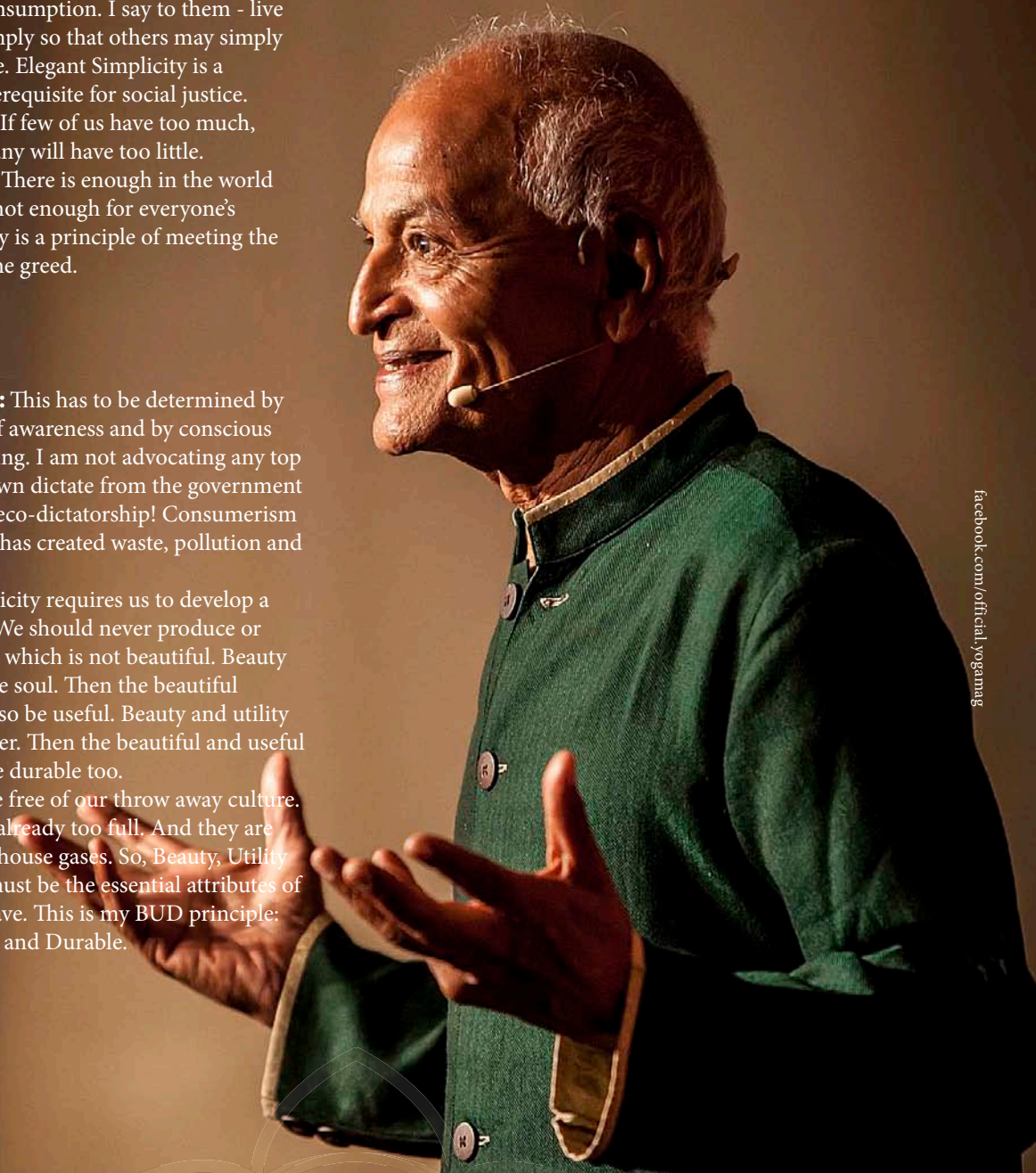
Q: But who is to determine what is the need and what is the greed?

SK: This has to be determined by self awareness and by conscious living. I am not advocating any top down dictate from the government

or some kind of eco-dictatorship! Consumerism and materialism has created waste, pollution and ugliness.

Elegant Simplicity requires us to develop a sense of beauty. We should never produce or possess anything which is not beautiful. Beauty is the food for the soul. Then the beautiful objects should also be useful. Beauty and utility should go together. Then the beautiful and useful objects should be durable too.

We need to be free of our throw away culture. The landfills are already too full. And they are producing greenhouse gases. So, Beauty, Utility and Durability must be the essential attributes of everything we have. This is my BUD principle: Beautiful, Useful and Durable.



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MORE INFORMATION

Satish Kumar has been the key force behind Resurgence magazine, the UK's longest standing green magazine. Author of many books, his new book *Elegant Simplicity: The Art of Living Well* is now available for £10.99 from Amazon and in all quality bookstores and online retailers. For more information on Satish Kumar visit www.resurgence.org/satish-kumar.