

# The story of Satish Kumar

## Editor of *Resurgence* for 43 years

Born in India in 1936, Satish Kumar renounced the world when he was just nine-years-old, joining the wandering brotherhood of Jain monks. Aged 18, he left the monastic order and became a campaigner for land reform, working to turn Gandhi's vision of a renewed India and a peaceful world into reality.

Fired by the British philosopher Bertrand Russell's willingness to go to jail for his nonviolent resistance to the atomic bomb, Satish, at the age of 26, then undertook an 8,000-mile peace pilgrimage, walking with a friend, E P Menon, from India to America without carrying food or any money, through deserts, mountains, storms and snow. During the perilous two-year adventure, he was thrown into jail in France and confronted by a loaded gun in America - yet triumphing against adversity, he was to deliver packets of 'peace tea' to the leaders of the world's four nuclear powers in Moscow, Paris, London and Washington D.C.

Travelling to England in 1969, Satish co-founded The London School of Non Violence in tribute to the centenary of Mahatma Gandhi's birth, where he and others lectured and provided practical training centred on the theory of *Satyagraha* (nonviolent resistance). Following the outbreak of war in Bangladesh in 1970 when millions of refugees poured into India, Satish was then sponsored by Christian Aid to stage an exhibition about Bangladesh in London; here he met his future partner June Mitchell, a supporter of the movement for the freedom of Bangladesh. Moving to London to live with June, Satish then travelled to Stockholm to attend the first UN conference on the environment in 1972.

In March 1973, John Papworth, founding editor of *Resurgence*, by then working in Zambia as an adviser to the President, suggested that Satish might replace him in the editor's chair. At the time, Satish had planned to return to India to work with the Gandhian movement - but persuaded by eminent *Resurgence* contributor, EF Schumacher, that India had enough Gandhians, Satish ultimately agreed to take up the editorial role and bring the values and wisdom of the Gandhian movement to the West.

After a couple of years of editing *Resurgence* in London, Satish began to look for somewhere rural to live where he and June could move (with their two small children, Maya and Mukti) and combine the intellectual work of editing with the manual work of growing food. Moving to Wales, they founded a small land based community inspired by the ideals of ecological farming and practical self-sufficiency, later moving to Devon in 1979, where to this day the magazine is produced from Satish's home in Hartland by a small team.

Satish soon became the guiding spirit behind a number of other ecological, spiritual and educational ventures. He founded the Small School in Hartland (1982), a pioneering "human scale" secondary school which integrates ecological and spiritual values into the curriculum. And in 1991, he co-founded Schumacher College, near Totnes, a residential international centre for ecological and spiritual studies, of which he is a Visiting Fellow.

In his 50th year, Satish undertook another pilgrimage in celebration of love, life and nature – again carrying no money, walking 2,000 miles to the holy places of Britain — Glastonbury, Canterbury, Lindisfarne and Iona, meeting old friends and making new ones along the way.

In July 2000, Satish was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Education from the University of Plymouth, and an Honorary Doctorate in Literature followed in July 2001 from the University of Lancaster. In November the same year, he was presented with the Jamnalal Bajaj International Award for Promoting Gandhian Values Abroad.

His autobiography, *No Destination*, first published in 1978, has sold over 50,000 copies. Later books include *You Are, Therefore I Am: A Declaration of Dependence* (2002), *The Buddha and the Terrorist* (2004), and *Soil, Soul, Society* (2013). In 2008, Satish presented *Earth Pilgrim*, a 50-minute documentary for the BBC TV Natural World series, introducing the Dartmoor sights and wildlife that most inspire him and contemplating the lessons they hold for humanity. The programme was watched by over 3.6 million viewers. He regularly appears in the media, including

presenting BBC Radio 4's *Thought for the Day* and as the 'castaway' on *Desert Island Discs*, and he was the subject of an award-winning 2015 Radio 4 documentary, *No Destination*.

Satish is on the Advisory Board of Our Future Planet (an innovative online community enabling people to share ideas and affect global change), and he is a vice-president at The RSPCA in recognition of his commitment to animal welfare and compassionate living.

In this momentous year in which *Resurgence* inaugurates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Satish Kumar celebrates his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday on 9th August 2016. He continues to teach, lecture and run workshops internationally on reverential ecology, holistic education and voluntary simplicity.

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