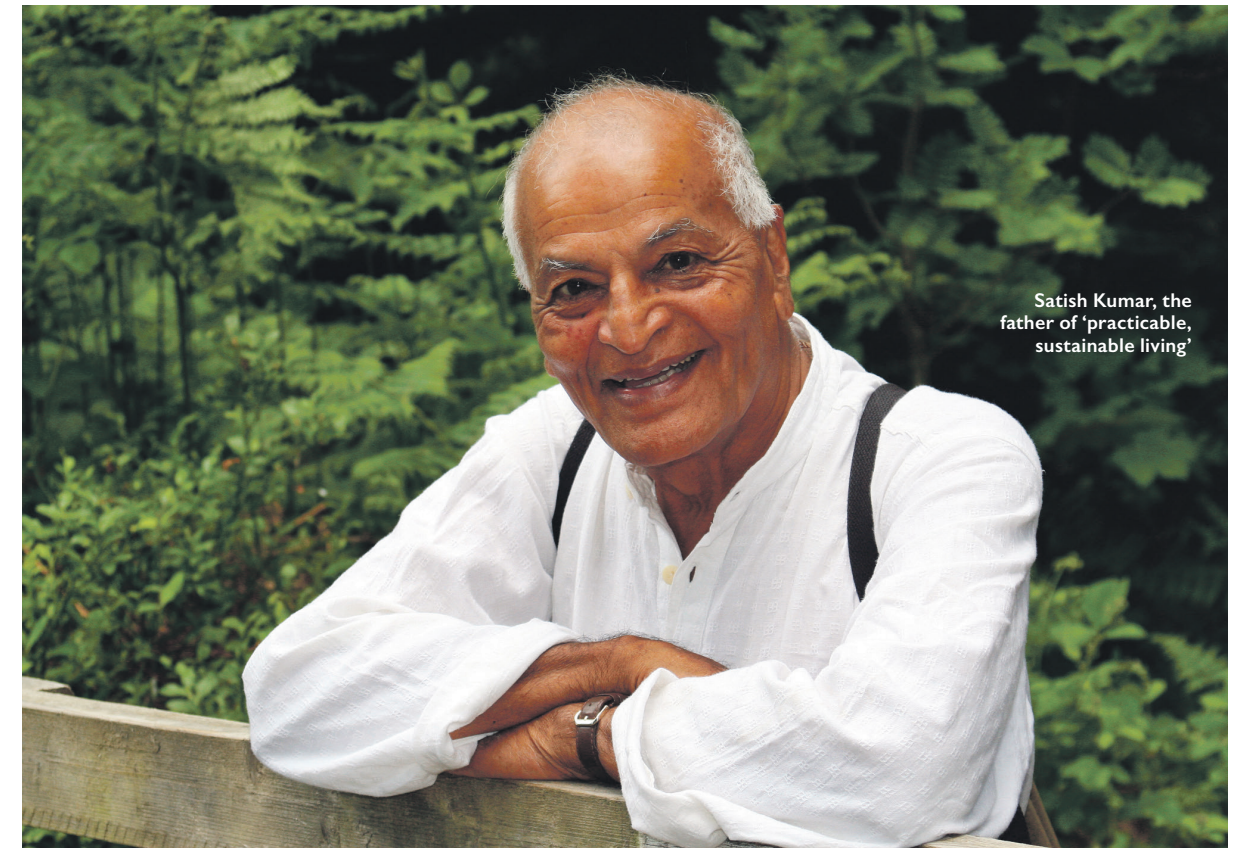


BE THE CHANGE

Peace and environmental activist Satish Kumar shares 10 ways we can all effect change and create wellbeing

It's not rocket science that there's more to life than economic growth. A sense of wellbeing is what really matters, and it should be at the heart of all politics. So how do we create greater wellbeing in our world? It's up to each and every one of us to effect change and make our voices heard. Any political and corporate change will always remain superficial and inadequate without personal change. Without individual action, these larger changes can't – and won't – occur.

Political change will only happen when large numbers of people practise what they believe in. Only then will there be a sufficiently large groundswell of opinion and action to coerce governments to bring in laws and structural transformations. Gandhi said, 'Be the change you want to see in the world'. Based on my own personal experiences of practicable, sustainable living, I would like to share 10 ways we can all, as individuals, help to effect this change.



Satish Kumar, the father of 'practicable, sustainable living'

10 STEPS TO WELLBEING

1 LIVE SIMPLY
Any fool can make life complicated; it requires genius to make it simple. A high living standard, measured by wealth and material acquisition, has become the be-all and end-all of modern society. For an eco-friendly life we need to seek quality of life. We need to live more simply so that others may simply live.

2 CHANGE OF ATTITUDE
Our industrial culture is human-centred and utilitarian. We value Nature because of its usefulness to us; we believe that we're in charge and can do what we like with the world's natural resources. If we want a sustainable future we need to change this mindset: we need to recognise that all life has intrinsic value. Without this shift in our personal attitudes towards the natural world, no sustainable lifestyle can be achieved. In place of the utilitarian calculus, a reverential, respectful world-view is required, so we will destroy less, poison less, kill less.

3 CONSUME LESS
As Gandhi said, 'There is enough in the world for everybody's need, but not enough for anybody's greed.' 50 years ago the world's population was three billion. Now it has doubled to six billion and humans, at their present rate of consumption, are exceeding the capacity of the Earth – something

we all have to take personal responsibility for. Someone living in the west consumes 50 times more than a person in a developing nation, meaning the western population is, effectively, multiplied 50 times. Therefore, live more lightly, taking from Nature only what is needed, so as to make a smaller footprint on the Earth.

4 WASTE NOT
Waste is a sin against Nature. Every day, millions of tonnes of waste are thrown into the natural world, which it simply can't cope with. The pile of old cookers, washing machines, fridges, computers and TVs is now accumulating at several million tonnes a year, and most of it ends up as landfill, wasting resources and posing risks to health and the environment. Millions of plastic bottles and bags are cluttering and clogging the system, polluting rivers and oceans. Reusing, mending and recycling must be seen as great virtues. Waste-makers simply cannot call themselves responsible citizens.



Use less harmful products when cleaning the house and washing clothes. Reuse plastic bags, or take a cloth bag when you go shopping. And rediscover the old maxim 'make do and mend', to resist the temptation to replace utensils such as old cookers and washing machines and furniture when the old ones will do just fine.

5 WORK LESS
In spite of mass production, industrialisation, automation and mechanisation, Westerners are overworked, often to the point of exhaustion. Too often by the time people come home they have no energy to do anything other than sit in front of the TV. In spite of our wealth and unprecedented economic growth, our work makes us slaves. For a sustainable future we need to work less, do less, spend less and be more. From simply being will emerge relationships, celebrations and joy. Sustainable living is joyful living.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCKPHOTO

6 WALK
Our lives have become dependent on cars – even for short distances. We live in homes, drive around in machines and work in offices; we hardly ever come into contact with the natural world. But if we do not know, see, and experience Nature, how can we love it? And if we do not love Nature, how can we protect it? Walking in Nature, taking walking holidays and walking to work can be a real doorway to wellbeing.

7 BAKE BREAD
Proclaiming the virtues of simplicity, Gandhi advocated spinning and weaving cloth at home as a way to defy consumerism and reconnect with tradition. For some of us, making our own bread can serve that purpose. Bread is an essential ingredient in the western diet. When we bake our own bread mindfully, using organic wholemeal flour, we're aware of the quality of the ingredient, we're able to slow down and pay attention, to share and celebrate. If it's not home-baked, then our bread should come from a local bakery.



8 MEDITATION AND PRAYER
Our lives have become too busy and stressful. The pressure of work and to succeed, the pressure to cope with excess information – pressure all around. To restore the balance we must take time to replenish ourselves and to develop soul qualities, for reflection and for our proper relationship with the natural world and the Creator, to develop and grow. Every day, for at least half an hour, we need stillness and silence, so the rest of the day is founded on spiritual tranquility.

9 PROTEST
Vested interests will always find ways to fool people and seek profit and power which damage the Earth. Therefore we need to be awake and alert to the exploitative actions of others. But such protests cannot be made alone; we have to be in solidarity with organisations working for a sustainable future, such as Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and Christian Aid. Choose an organisation that suits your temperament and work with your local community; form a local group and take an interest in local politics.

10 BE INFORMED
No one can lay down a blueprint for green living; each of us has to develop our own ideas. But we have to build on all the new thinking in this field. There are books, magazines and courses to help us. We need to make time to study.



FIND OUT MORE

- Satish Kumar will be giving a Resurgence Talk at 42 Acres, London on 24 January 2018
- Details of other events in the Resurgence Talk series, including talks from Jeremy Leggett and Soil Association's Helen Browning, are at resurgence.org/talks
- A short biography of Satish Kumar is at resurgence.org/satish-kumar