Book Review: SMALL WORLD BIG IDEAS edited by Satish Kumar

Fourteen eco-activists have written sections of “Small World Big Ideas. They all seek change in our ways of living. It is a book well worth reading.

It is edited by **Satish Kumar**, who is also the Editor Emeritus of Resurgence and Ecologist, as well as being a peace activist and ecologist. He has written both the introduction to the book and, also the first chapter, where he describes an activist as a person with vision, who has an inner calling and a purpose in life, which leads to action. An eco-activist is someone who works towards the future of planet earth in the light of climate change.

In his early years, Satish Kumar, an Indian, was a peace activist. He walked 8,000 miles across fifteen countries trying to persuade world leaders to seek peace not war. As he walked. He observed the damage that we humans have done to nature. And this led to his work as an eco-activist. Now his life is a pilgrimage towards peace and the health of planet earth in the light of climate change

The second contributor is a British film maker, **Franny Armstrong**, who is also a climate change campaigner. She directed a documentary, “Rivercide”, which was presented by George Monbiot. It investigated the state of Britain’s rivers as a result of increased pollution. She describes how a visit to a farm led

to her becoming a vegetarian. More importantly, as she worked in film making, she realised that she could use her skills to inspire audiences to take climate change seriously, and so change their ways of living. Her film, “The Age of Stupid” became a box office winner.

Bob Brown, an Australian Green Politician and Environmentalist, qualified as a doctor, but changed direction twelve years later when he helped found "The Wilderness Society", which successfully fought against the building of a dam, which would have blocked two rivers as well as flooding a huge area of rain forest. Now, a leading Green politician in Australia, he believes that the world should change from capitalism to an environmentally friendly way of life.

Helen Beynon is an environmental activist, who lives in rural Norfolk. She is a writer and ecologist. She describes Twyford Down, a chalk hill, which in the early 1990's was covered in wild-flowers and was home to many insects, including bees. The government had decided to extend the M3 motorway and Helen took part in protests because the road would cut through the natural beauty of the Down and harm the river, which flowed through. In spite of protests, the road works proceeded, destroying areas which had been designated as Sites of Special Interest. Her article demonstrates the need for local people to get together to try to prevent further damage to nature, which is already being depleted at an alarming rate.

Deepak Chopra is a Mind-body Healing Pioneer, born in India, but now living in the USA. He is a qualified doctor specialising in health, well-being and the use of alternative medications. In his article, he describes his work and founding of the Chopra Foundation, which aims to improve health, sustainability and peace throughout the world.

The next contributor is **Tim Flannery**, an Australian explorer and ecologist. He is head of Australia's Climate Change Commission. He writes about the harm done to the natural world in Australia in his life- time, the resulting climate change caused by human action and his work to try to persuade all of the population to recognise the need for a different lifestyle.

There are few people who don't recognise the name of the late

Jane Goodall, Scientist and Conservationist. Most of us will remember her TV series of her work and life with Chimpanzees in Africa. In Small World Big Ideas, she writes about her desire, from childhood, to go to Africa and to live with animals.

Reading her article, about her experiences in the 1960's, brings back vivid memories of the delightful scenes on our TV screens and her research into the behaviour of Chimpanzees.

In contrast. **Roger Hallam**, an environmental activist, launched the Extinction Rebellion Movement. He is a true rebel and his warnings of the results of climate change are dire. He believes that by 2030 more than a quarter of California will be lost to forest fires every year. Roger Hallam describes many forms of rebellion, usually carried out by young people and he encourages the youth of today to rebel against the lack of government action to fight against a likely apocalypse.

The late **Polly Higgins**, who sadly died at the age of 51, was an international environmental lawyer, who campaigned to make ecocide a crime.

In her article, she describes how she came to believe that not only people were harmed and ill-treated, but so was the earth. She fought for the rights of the life of Mother Earth and saw pollution – and its resulting destruction – as a crime which can affect native communities. Her words and ideas are truly inspirational.

Caroline Lucas is well known as a Green Politician and was the first to gain a seat in our Parliament, having been an MP now for15 years and an activist for many more. As a student she took part in the CND protests and later, she was influenced by Jonathan Porritt's book, "Seeing Green", when she began to work towards a sustainable future. Like our founder, Horace Dammers, she saw the need for a change in lifestyle. As she explored the modern aims of parliament and the style of

politics, she felt the need for an alternative way of governing. Her article is devoted to the development of her ideas and gives much food for thought.

Bill McKibbin is an American environmentalist who was awarded the Gandhi Peace Award in 2013. He is a firm believer in climate change and has led international days of Climate Action. He is known as a writer, but he gradually began to realise that writing was not enough and that he needed to be an activist, encouraging others to join him. Within three years he involved 181 countries in climate change political action and two years later he led a mass civil disobedience action, which protested against plans for a giant pipeline from Canada. He was one of 1,253 protesters who were sent to jail. Bill McKibbin's life has changed and many supporters have joined him. Maybe, his article will persuade even more to join in the fight to reverse climate change.

Italian, **Carlo Petrini**, a "slow food" activist, believes that food should be produced, processed and distributed in a sustainable way. The slow food movement was created because of concerns about the increase in fast food and fast lives. People were encouraged to think about their food and how it was grown. Small areas of land were, and are, used to grow local produce and those who cook it taught how to use up "left overs". Carl Petrini describes how his small movement has spread all over the world and how it helps to feed those who starve because of extreme poverty.

In India, **Vandana Shiva** is an ecofeminist and environmentalist. She founded "The Earth University", which is run in partnership with the "Schumaker College". She strongly believes that the world needs to change from consumerism to conservation. Vandana Shiva is one of a growing number of activists who ask us all to change from greed to caring, especially for Mother Earth.

The final contributor in this enlightening book is **Greta**

Thunberg, whose speech in our UK Houses of Parliament on 23rd April 2019, was given when she was just 16 years old and is reproduced in “Small World Big Ideas”. Her concerns about climate change are well known and her speech was already reviewed along with her book, “No-one is too Small to Make a Difference.”

This is a book for all those concerned about consumerism and climate change.

Book Review by Helen Robson – Life Style Movement