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Interview

‘Every Living Thing Has a Soul’ – Radical Peace, Liberation Struggles and Nonviolence: An Interview with Purushottama Bilimoria

Katja Utroša
Gmajna Cultural Association, Slovenia
katja.utrosa@gmail.com

An increasingly militarised world, where even resistance strategies across the political spectrum are sharpened and turning to violent means, reaffirms the need for normative ethics and modes of social and political resistance based on non-cooperation and nonviolence. As just agents for achieving political and social change, they have deep roots in tradition, advocated among others by Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Leo Tolstoy, Henry David Thoreau, Quakers, other Christian and Indian religious and philosophical schools. These ideas are still relevant in contemporary posthumanist liberation struggles, especially regarding animal and environmental ethics.

The interview with Purushottama Bilimoria, a philosopher and professor of law and international affairs, was recorded on June 24th, 2023, on the eve of Statehood Day of the Republic of Slovenia. We met at the cafe of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, not far from the Congress Square where the state celebration was to take place. Bilimoria had tea. He brought his own plant-based milk to go with it – an important detail. I stuck to my usual diet of coffee with regular milk and sugar and plenty of tobacco. The interview was planned to shed more light on classic Indian philosophy in the local academic discourse. However, it took a slightly different route.

While researching his work, I realised he teaches a course on Gandhi, nonviolence and civil rights with an emphasis on King Jr. and William E. B. Du Bois, two important social reformists and leaders from the US, who contributed significantly to the equal rights struggle of Blacks. I anticipated gaining some further insight into the Black emancipation move-

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ment, as I studied the militant abolitionist John Brown (1800–1859), who was (partly) connected to the American transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson and Thoreau. The conversation took off from there across a picturesque cast of people, institutions, and ideas that crossed paths, building a movement that successfully stood up to oppression and exploitation in different parts of the world.

Gandhi's efforts, based on three key ideas from the Indian philosophical traditions – *satya* (truth), *ahiṃsā* (nonviolence) and *tapasya* (asceticism), definitively contributed to the end of British colonial rule in India. His ideas and practices influenced Black leaders in the US during the Civil Rights Movement, resulting in what Bilimoria calls the 'Black Satyagraha.' The exchange between civil rights leaders in the US and Gandhi's work is the focal point of the interview. It weaves a transnational network of activists determined to change the *status quo:* Du Bois' newspaper reported Gandhi's activities; Marcus Garvey shipped Gandhi's forbidden papers to the West; Rosa Parks and James Lawson trained in nonviolent strategies; and King had an extensive collection of Gandhi's books and was taught by teachers who were familiar with Gandhi's work. Many Indian scholars and activists visited, lectured and worked in the US and in Europe, among them Indian Christian theologian Manilal Parekh, socialist Ram Manohar Lohia, and academic and Garvey's associate Haridas Muzumdar, who wrote on Gandhi and nonviolence.

The key idea of nonviolence or non-injury, which permeates Gandhi's work, is a cornerstone of several Indian philosophical traditions. It is present in Buddhism, Hinduism, especially in the epics, and in Jainism, an ancient Indian philosophical system and way of life, adhering to a teaching started around 500 BCE by Mahavira. The Jains prohibit any form of injury towards living and sentient creatures, prescribing strict vegetarianism. Jain monks and nuns carry soft brooms and wear mouth cloths so as to not (accidentally) step on, inhale, or harm any living creature, reinforcing nonviolence as an ascetic practice. In conclusion, the interview relates the idea of nonviolence to animal liberation and ecological movements that prescribe political and legal rights to animals, plants, and ecosystems, to the contemporary subaltern.

Martin Luther King Jr. is known worldwide as the leading figure of the Civil Rights Movement in the US. However, what is your view of the earlier, influential but perhaps a little less known leader, Du Bois?

Du Bois is a sociologist. I think he was the first Black man with a Har-

vard PhD. He started a paper called *The Crisis*. He was critical of the American policy and treatment of freed slaves.

He was active in the first half of the twentieth century and was actually a contemporary of Gandhi.

In 1910, Du Bois founded the paper *The Crisis*. He called it 'a record of the darker races.' He was a prolific writer. He wrote a very good and powerful book, *The Souls of Black Folk,* in which he criticised the way the rights were not being given to the Blacks because they were not included in the Constitution as citizens of the New World. During the period of the Reconstruction the freed slaves were supposed to reconstitute their lives and rejuvenate their community in enterprising ways, but it was not in their favour. What the White masters used to do was to capture freed slaves, re-enslave them, and make them servants, as the British did with indentured labourers in the colonies. He wanted the Black people to come up. It was too early for him to be thinking in terms of equal rights but at least some recognition and dignity could be accorded. He was very aware of the concept of colonisation. In 1905, quite early on, he and some other Black leaders formed what was called the Niagara Movement and wrote Niagara's Declaration of Principles in which it is very clearly stated that people of dark races, Africans, Asians, and so forth are being colonised.

He also attended a congress in London, where he came across Gandhians, the Gandhian nationalists. That is how he got interested in Gandhi. He wondered who this man was. But it was not just from that conference. He was reading papers Gandhi was publishing in South Africa. He and some other American journalists wrote about the *satyāgraha* Gandhi staged in South Africa in 1906. Those papers, called *Young India,* came to America by boat and were distributed widely among African Americans. They were very aware of what Gandhi was doing. They were aware there was a movement to oppose the empire. The empire in the Indian case being the British Empire, but also America was highly involved with different imperial activities. He compared the state of the Blacks in America to the untouchables in India. How the British treated the colonised subjects and within that not doing anything about the caste system, and the so-named untouchables, was not dissimilar to how the United States had rendered their former slaves and their descendants to second-class, barely citizen, segregated status. He started to take very seriously the kinds of strategies Gandhi was using to question and protest against what we now call white supremacy and white domination. He wasn't committed to any

kind of revolution. He thought the process of reform should happen from the inside. The Blacks should empower themselves as much as possible and as part of reconstruction take on projects like industrialisation. It wasn't really industrialisation but any kind of industry that they could begin themselves. They could produce things and not be dependent on the dominant society.

There was another man called Booker T. Washington at about the same time. He started what was called the Tuskegee Institute. Tuskegee was separate. He didn't want any kind of integration into the White community. There was a bit of a debate and difference between Du Bois and Washington in a similar way you had arguments later on between Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. A little bit of that. It was about what kind of approach you take to education. Du Bois was educated at Harvard University. He thought there was no reason why Blacks couldn't go to White colleges even if segregation was still there.

How did Du Bois get into Harvard University?

That is a question I have not been able to find the answers to. He must have had a very strong recommendation. Later on in the 1930s, a young Black woman, Pauli Murray, tried to get into Harvard Law School and they would not take her because she was Black and a woman. But Du Bois somehow managed to get into Harvard.

If I remember correctly, Du Bois spent the closing part of his life in Africa, in Ghana.

Yes, the very last part of his life. He was so disillusioned that he left and spent his time there. He worked until very late. He was an academic. It wasn't until the 1960s that he left the US permanently, but until then he was very well-connected and worked very hard for the Blacks. He wrote some amazing things about how children should be brought up. He was in education. He also wrote storybooks for Black children.

In *The Crisis* he covered Gandhi's activities, especially after Gandhi returned to India in 1915. For a few years, Gandhi travelled, but in 1917, he started his activities in India, staging protests based on non-cooperation, i.e. not cooperating with the British rulers on the industries, demanding better pay and enhanced rights. Of course, he was also questioning the power base. He was tried and charged with sedition in 1922. He said to the British in that famous quote that if you are here illegally I am being tried by a system that is not legitimate, but if you want to, you can give me the maximum penalty, or, he said to the judge, you should resign from

your position in the Government. Du Bois reported all that in *The Crisis,* which was circulating among the Blacks and some White church leaders.

Some Whites were leading trade unions and wanted Blacks to be involved. There were church and social leaders, a man called John Haynes Holmes, who worked closely with the Blacks. A Dutch immigrant Abraham Muste, who was a pacifist, led a huge strike called the Lawrence Textile Strike in 1912 in Massachusetts. The White pacifists mostly came from the Quaker tradition, and some were Jewish.

At that time, what was the role of the Unitarian church, which is connected to progressive social movements? We find Unitarians among the abolitionists in the nineteenth century.

Actually, Haynes Holmes was a Unitarian.

In *The Crisis,* Du Bois has pictures of Gandhi and he even has several swastikas identifying with the Indian tradition – before the Nazis appropriated the swastika; then he removed it. He would say: There is only one man in the world when he sneezes, the whole British Empire shakes, and when he fasts all of India fasts with him and would back him for the things he is doing. He almost compares him to a mystic, a mystic leader, a social Jesus, which is a term that Martin Luther King Jr. later used. Du Bois was instrumental, as was Washington, who was in correspondence with Gandhi. He was asking him: How are you running your ashrams? These were cooperative movements Gandhi had started. He started the spinning of *khadi,* producing your own clothing, and so forth. Tuskegee wanted to do something very similar. They invented many things at that time. The Blacks were very industrious. They likewise had schools, industries, and farms.

Several Gandhians visited the US, including Reverend C. F. Andrews, who was an English priest and a friend of Gandhi and Tagore. Gandhi sent him to spread the message of nonviolence and non-cooperation to people who were oppressed. Andrews was very instrumental. About that time two or three people from Gandhi's circle visited – an English woman Madeline Slade, known as Mirabehn, came, Manilal Parekh, and Ram Manohar Lohia. They spoke at Black colleges, like Oberlin College and Morehouse College. They would talk about Gandhi. There were others, academics, about half a dozen Indians who had migrated and had jobs in Berkeley and other places. They were involved in setting up mutiny groups training Indians to stage a possible mutiny in India. In earlier stages, they were still kind of violent, they didn't understand Gandhi's idea

of nonviolence, and it was not until later that some of them converted to Gandhi's way because they saw the message that violence may not be the productive way to go in the long run. Their efforts to take the mutiny to India failed; so they started to form nonviolent activist circles with the Blacks and the Jews. The Jews were also second-class citizens in the US at that time and they needed to fight for their rights. Some of the support that came commercially was from a number of Jewish philanthropists.

From my account, Du Bois was instrumental in getting Gandhi recognised as a very important leader of the Coloured people, indeed as an exemplar that the Black folks could follow. He didn't say straightforwardly much about nonviolence but he did talk about Gandhi's strategy of protest and non-cooperation.

I studied some other things related to the American Civil Rights Movement and the earlier emancipation struggle, and that is how I came across Du Bois. I was not aware he had a significant connection to Gandhi.

In his papers, he covered both Gandhi and also Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore, who had won the Nobel Prize in Literature, also toured the US He too visited Tuskegee. I don't know if he met with Du Bois, but Du Bois wrote to him and asked: Do you have a message for my people?

There was another guy. He was a bit of a maverick, Marcus Garvey. He was a Caribbean and owned a shipping company. He would bring over some of Gandhi's papers because the British would not allow them to come. He had some issues with Gandhi, but he did correspond with him. He thought anything that would work to bring down the empire was worthwhile looking at. He was aware Gandhi was being successful in India. Whether that strategy would work in the US or not, he had some doubts about that, but he had a very close connection with a Gandhian who was an academic, by the name of Haridas Muzumdar. They were both deported from the US. Garvey was not deported because of his political campaign but on some other trumped-up commercial charge, like not declaring his income and taxes. Muzumdar returned to India to join Gandhi's Salt March in 1930, and later took up an academic post as a sociology professor in a small liberal college in the Midwest.

I have the names of all these people who came around, gave lectures, and wrote books on Gandhi. A Jewish woman, who had married an Indian, called Gertrude Stein, wrote articles for the *New York Times* on Gandhi. Gandhi's books and some local books were being reviewed. At that time, papers like the *New York Times* were quite pro-Gandhi because they had nothing to do with Britain basically. Yes, they fought together in

the First World War, and by now the Second World War had started, but after the war, it wasn't really important.

Garvey is known for his Pan-Africanism.

Garvey founded the UNIA, Universal Negro Improvement Association, supported African nationalism, and declared himself to be the provisional president of all African people.

But he is Jamaican.

Yes. He was flamboyant. He was very important. People tend to dismiss him, but he had a lot of influence on setting up trade union movements for the Blacks. He helped them quite a lot. He participated in one of the Pan-African Congresses, where he criticised Du Bois. There were a series of them being held in Paris, Brussels, Manchester, and London. There were always representatives from the African American community in the leadership, and a good number of Gandhians, too.

From about the 1930's African American leaders started to travel to India. But even before they went, there was a man called Richard Gregg. He was White, very educated, and a psychologist. He spent some months in Gandhi's ashram studying nonviolence, its psychological ramifications, what it means to be a nonviolent fighter, and also how powerful that method can be. He wrote a book, *The Power of Nonviolence,* which in a later edition has a foreword written by Martin Luther King Jr. The book was published and circulated in the US.

In the 1930s African American students were able to go to India, go on missions, and be exposed to all that was going on. Then a man called James Lawson – he is still alive[1] – goes to India in the 1950's. He spends time in the ashram of Gandhi's associate Vinoba Bhave, who was still alive and one of the most powerful people in Gandhi's time. Gandhi had his ashram not far from there, near Patna. Lawson had gone to do missionary work in a Christian school in the same town, but he gets so interested in the idea of nonviolence that he trains himself as a nonviolent activist.

I was not aware there was so much back and forth between Indian activists and the ones from the US. But it is an expected exchange in the context of their shared struggles against systemic oppression.

They were inspired. From Du Bois, there was another man called Alain Locke, who was also an academic. He wrote extensively about nonviolence and issues of civil rights.

[1] James Lawson passed on June 9th, 2024.

In about the mid-1930s, some other important people go to India. They are Howard Thurman and Sue Bailey Thurman. They made 8mm movies. They were on their way to visit Tagore, but they wrote to Gandhi, who invites them to his itinerant location, they come and interview him, and that interview was published in a book. It had one of the last photos of Gandhi before he stopped posing for cameras. The last beautiful photo of Gandhi and Sue Bailey Thurman, the original of which is in Emory University in Atlanta. After the Thurmans, a couple of other people go, Mordecai Johnson and others. Right up to the time when India had its independence in 1948. There is a delegation of African Americans who are there for it. I don't know whether the US. government sent a delegation or not but the African Americans are there. A delegation of Blacks also come for Gandhi's funeral upon his assassination.

Thurman, Johnson, and others were teaching at Spelman College, Morehouse College, and Howard University, which are Black colleges. Howard University is the place where Kamala Harris and Angela Davis studied. It becomes the very stronghold of the civil rights movement at one time. So, the teachers of Martin Luther King Jr. were people who had visited India. He attended their lectures, heard about Gandhi, bought his books, and had one of the largest collections of Gandhi's books in the US They are all in his archives at Stanford University. He writes notes on them. He is looking at how Jesus was doing something very similar. He was looking for social justice because it was important for him. But he is still training to be a pastor. He goes to Boston University, where he wrote his PhD on Christian aspects of social justice. I don't think there is any Gandhi in it. I haven't read the thesis. I should one day.

Then he goes to Birmingham, Alabama, to be a pastor. That is about the time Rosa Parks refuses to get off the bus. There is a bus strike now – the Montgomery Bus Boycott. It was a very big strike. For two months, the Blacks are not getting on buses. They are walking. Big protests are being mounted called the Selma to Montgomery marches, crossing the bridge in Selma, Alabama.

There was a movie called Selma, directed by Ava DuVernay, about these marches a decade ago.

They are looking for a leader. They go down, including a very young man at that time, John Lewis, who becomes a very important and powerful congressman later on. A whole group of people called the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee persuaded King to lead the march.

He is reluctant because he just wants to be a pastor. But when he gave a speech down at the church, people were convinced he was the one who stood out to lead them. So, he becomes their leader.

At the first protest he led, violence was very likely from the Whites, from the state. He calls that off. It goes all over the country. He says we are committed to nonviolence. We cannot have violence perpetuated on us. They reorganised – because they also didn't have a permit or something like that. The next protest is organised much more effectively. There are people from all over the country. There were two young eight-year-old girls who marched with King. I met later one of them. Sheyann Webb became a soprano singer and Bettie Mae a gospel singer. That was the first time a mass hand-to-hand protest of the kind Gandhi had been doing in India happened in the US. By that time, television was around. The Kennedys try to dissuade him. From that point on the Kennedys and the FBI started to track King because he was going to become a very important leader. From Selma, he moves to Atlanta, and many things happen from there. He has some very close people who he works with – Philip Randolph, Ralph Abernathy, Andrew Young, John Lewis, Bernard Lafayette, and Bayard Rustin. They are all training. Even Rosa Parks attended a school where African American women trained people on nonviolent strategies. The bus boycotts were happening earlier. They were being staged by students but they didn't make headlines until the Rosa Parks one that led to the boycott and mass protests.

Then Jim Lawson comes back. He and a young student Diane Nash lead what is called the Freedom Rides. They get on the bus and go on protest. They get off in towns where there are stores that also have a cafeteria and where Blacks are not allowed. Even if the Blacks were serving, they wouldn't serve the Blacks. The students go in and sit, and they do not move. The police come, beat them, and they all surrender. The jails were full. Busloads of African Americans came. One of the buses was burned by the Whites, by the Ku Klux Klan.

Were there casualties during the Freedom Rides and the burning of the bus? Were there people on that bus?

They escaped, but they were injured. John Lewis was burned and injured quite badly. Great man, I met him. Robert Kennedy intervened. He sent the National Guard to protect them, get them out of there, put them on a flight, and get them safely away. The Whites were waiting in towns as the buses arrived. They would attack and not let them through. The atti-

tude of the Whites was very nasty. But it made international news that the Blacks were mounting something with nonviolence, and the nonviolence was winning. They would be beaten, hosed down with water hoses, and dogs were being put after them, but they just stood and took it. It changed the violent attackers; not so much the local people, but they disarmed the police. The people were not reacting. When somebody is seen to react or resist, that is when they get angrier, and more violence happens.

The influence of nonviolence on the civil rights movement is intriguing. I am more familiar with the events of the nineteenth century that led to the American Civil War – for example, with the militant abolitionist John Brown. The philosopher Henry David Thoreau wrote in defence of Brown. Are you familiar with this story?

Yes, Brown worked with Mary Ellen Pleasant, the woman who funded him. They were trying to raise a mutiny.

Yes, an armed mutiny. They wanted to arm the slaves so they could defend and emancipate themselves. There was a raid at Harpers Ferry, where there was a federal armoury. The army stopped it. Robert E. Lee was involved, the later leading Confederate general. Brown was in jail or already hanged when Thoreau wrote two letters of support for him. Not only Thoreau but Victor Hugo wrote to the editor of the London News *and the Polish poet Cyprian Kamil Norwid wrote poems in his name.*

I have to look that up. I didn't know Thoreau wrote in defence of that. He influenced Gandhi because of his nonviolence, actually, civil disobedience more than nonviolence. It was a passive act: don't pay poll taxes and don't cooperate. Gandhi got non-cooperation from Thoreau and the nonviolence and pacifism from Tolstoy. Tolstoy had a lot of influence on Gandhi. The pacifism: turn the other cheek. But Gandhi wasn't so much a pacifist. He said: you must have a sense of protest. You don't just turn the other cheek; you give both cheeks or you take the beating, but you try and bring out justice in that situation. That was the difference with Tolstoy. What Gandhi started was something very new. No one had quite done that. It might even provoke, in the sense it might provoke violence from the other side. But let them see the pointlessness of their violence. We are standing for justice and when we stand for justice in our nonviolent boots we are not moving. We are not going to budge. We are not going to go away. We will keep moving with that until justice is meted out. That was a very powerful way of doing it.

There were a couple of women during the Emancipation period to be mentioned: Sojourner Truth and Ida Wells. They had some ideas about

not committing any kind of violence. They were influenced by the Quakers. There was a pacifist way of using the legal system, going to Lincoln and so on. Am I not a woman? I deserve to be respected. This kind of thing. They worked with the suffragettes, the women who were fighting for women's rights, even if they knew that Black men did not have votes. What chance do then Black women have? But they were supportive of the idea: if White women get votes, they will support us to get votes sometime, too. There were a lot of bits and pieces that happened at that time that were very important.

Are you familiar with the abolitionist editor William Lloyd Garrison and his newspaper The Liberator? *I believe it was first primarily focused on the emancipation of slaves, but it supported women's suffrage, too.*

Yes. That is right. Garrison was very influential, liberal, and progressive for his time.

But coming back to civil rights, there was segregation. Kennedy had written the legislation but wasn't pushing it through. He was holding back. They were very frightened of King because he had too much power. Malcolm X was coming up. The Whites were confused: What were these people doing? There was the Black Panther movement. The militant Blacks. Black Panthers might have been a little bit later. There were converted Black Muslims, Elijah Mohammed and the Black Muslim league. Malcolm X fell out with them. He didn't want all-out violence. He wanted votes. He said: the ballot or the bullet. That was his famous speech. But he wasn't like some others who were being influenced by other Muslim revolutions outside and were prepared to be more violent. Probably, he was assassinated by Elijah Mohamed or the FBI. Nobody knows.

Some speculate Malcolm X was assassinated by Elijah Mohammed and the FBI in collusion.

A recent book that has come out in America says that they both worked together because Malcolm X was more of a threat to the American nation than King was. Because any kind of violent revolution – they would be scared of that.

They would. The American Civil War that led to the emancipation was very bloody. It was part of the industrial age with more advanced weapons coming into the dynamic.

Whites had the weapons.

To continue, after Gandhi was assassinated, King went to India together with Coretta Scott King in 1959. He wants to feel the spirit of Gandhi. He gave some wonderful lectures on Gandhi. He said, my faith in Indian

philosophy has grown stronger after I've come to India, my faith in nonviolence. He uses the word Indian philosophy. Although I don't think he read any classical Indian philosophy that is how he put it in his speech in India that is publicly available. It is called 'King's speech to the All India Radio.' He gave two speeches, actually, very powerful. We have wonderful liberal radio stations in America. They archive them and make them available. It is among one of his famous speeches. He really thinks that being completely nonviolent is the only way. Then the March on Washington happens. He, John Lewis, and other people organise it. There he gives that speech: I Have a Dream. Again, he stresses nonviolence and says: One day, I can see my children and White children walking hand in hand.

Desegregation came from the Supreme Court. But whenever Blacks would walk into a college the Whites were in huge protests. Kennedy had to send in guards to help the Blacks go to the rooms in colleges and start studying. Desegregation and civil rights were big achievements. There was a Civil Rights Act in the nineteenth century, but it was overturned by a court ruling. Civil rights didn't really happen, but there was a civil rights act.

Would the mentioned Civil Rights Act of 1875 have given equal rights to African Americans?

It would have given them some recognition of the rights of citizens. The 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments tried to bring in rights for Blacks, but there was a lot of opposition to them. There was Plessy v. Ferguson, a Supreme Court ruling, which said that the Constitution does not confer equal rights to every person. It dampened it. That is why there had to be amendments. It was a very slow process. Even after the amendments, segregation was still on. You could have equal rights but also have segregation. Whites have to go on the bus where the White schools are, and the Blacks should not be on the same bus – those kinds of Jim Crow regulations.

To update the conversation: how do you view colonial and post-colonial studies today? Your bibliography covers several topics, for example NGOs *and feminism, gender justice and ecology, etc.*

I can talk about gender justice and ecology, the work which was done by my late wife Dr Renuka Sharma. She passed through cancer. She was a doctor, psychiatrist, philosopher, and feminist. I've continued her work. She was very concerned about women's rights and justice. I'm just putting

out Volume II of Indian Ethics. It's called *Companion to Indian Ethics: Women, Justice, Bioethics, and Ecology* (Routledge 2024). It is dedicated to my wife. We have two volumes. *Companion to Indian Ethics: Women, Justice, Bioethics, and Ecology* (Routledge 2017), which you have seen, is also my work that is theoretical. It includes theories of *dharma* and practical ethical thinking of Sri Aurobindo and Vinoba Bhave, whom I mentioned earlier. I also have a chapter on animal ethics and ecology in India.

Animal ethics is another subject I wanted to speak to you about.

I have a much longer chapter on animal ethics in Volume II. It also includes issues of bioethics and how it impacts on women, surrogacy, infanticide, the impact it has on female children, amniocentesis when they abort female foetuses because they are not desirable, and the role of the state and its complicity, including questions of abortion. I have a chapter on euthanasia. The volume covers a lot of things. There is a chapter on ecology, environmental ethics, animal ethics, and biotechnology.

You are also an expert on the Jain tradition. They have a very radical and focused position towards animals, nonviolence, and animal ethics. Audiences in the West are maybe not so familiar with it. It is a school of religion, so their standpoint on nonviolence is influenced by that.

Their commitment to nonviolence is a philosophical position, but it possibly has a religious origin, too, because any kind of violence to any animal hurts the soul. It creates karma. It retards, blocks your chance of being enlightened and becoming omniscient at some point. To avoid karma one must avoid hurting. That is where it starts. But now the Jains have taken after animal liberation, the issues of animals and factory farming, and the huge amount of violence. They have become morally concerned about these issues. They are turning into vegans as well. Some of them wouldn't use milk because there is violence involved in the production of milk with the cow. The calf is deprived of its milk.

But are they looking at the issue only from the perspective of the idea of nonviolence or are they considering the animal as a subject?

Yes, they have souls. That is why. Every living thing has a soul, including the two-cell amoeba, any sentient being. In more recent work in marine biology, and philosophers are looking at this as well, it is not sentience as defined in the 1970s and 1980s, which was a response to pain. It comes from the Jains in India. People are now thinking that the amount of intelligence animals like octopuses or even shells and corals have is extraordinary. They are looking at consciousness as more than just a response to

pain. Looking at how these bio-systems are purposeful in their own right, they have intentionality, they have a purpose, and they want to achieve that. Some critters and creatures they find might only live for one day, but they have such an amazing sense of their purpose, and of what they need to achieve. They also often cooperate with other creatures. They are not all eating each other. An Australian philosopher Peter Godfrey-Smith goes deep down in the sea with marine biologists, and he has been studying with them and looking at these tiny creatures. He was on a philosophy programme and was asked: Has your moral attitude changed as a result of your study? He said: Yes, to quite a degree. I can't just dismiss these creatures, who we don't know or even see, that are amazing. Shells maybe we could eat, but some other 3 cents creatures are living things, they have life, and they have intelligence.

Trees and other plants also have some intelligence. Studies show they cooperate.

They all have it, too. People have talked about the communication that trees have underground. They can distribute water among themselves and warn if a predator is coming. They can warn other trees and produce some kind of fluid to kill the threat.

What is your view of contemporary ecological movements that focus on global warming? Young people are organising worldwide and demanding things like climate justice.

They are coming at it from a different angle, of course. I call my chapter 'Animal Justice and Moral Mendacity.' I was there when animal liberation started with Peter Singer. I am not just coming from Indian philosophy. My chapter has a fair bit of discussion about the threat to the species that we are losing and just the sheer number of animals killed every year. It is exploitation by human beings. It is a post-colonial perspective on the subaltern. It is not just human beings that are subaltern. That is what subaltern meant: under the lowest of lowest beings. That was the original use of subaltern. Now, of course, it is used politically for people – subaltern people. One of my papers is: 'What is the Subaltern of the Philosophy of Religion?' I used the term playfully. Subaltern is a term used in post-colonial studies for the marginalised and disadvantaged. They get it from Antonio Gramsci, he was using it, but he took it from biology – subaltern, underneath, underground, or in the water.