

# Is Another World Truly Possible?

## A Proposal for a Humane and Viable Alternative

Are you someone who is looking to do something meaningful with your life? Are you someone who believes that the world should be a better place? Are you someone who wants to make a difference? There are many of us who would answer all of those questions with an emphatic ‘YES!’ – yet the choices and opportunities put before us by our society, education and culture often seem to be very inadequate in helping us translate our intentions into meaningful practice. We are all faced with numerous questions and issues in all facets of our own lives, as well as that of society at large, to which there seem to be no answers in sight:

- Are exploitation, poverty, injustice, discrimination and war an inevitable part of human society or is it possible to have a just and equitable society?
- Are development and ecological sustainability always going to be at loggerheads with one another, or is possible to utilise technology for the benefit of humanity, without disturbing the ecological balance of our planet?
- Is the education of children just about rote, memorisation and eventually getting better jobs, or is it possible to have an educational alternative that not only helps children become thinking individuals but also better human beings?
- Are human lives bound to be an endless struggle just to meet one’s material needs, or is it possible to meet one’s economic requirements as well as lead intellectually and emotionally fulfilling lives?
- Are relationships between human beings bound to be full of conflict, differences, inequality, emotional distress and unhappy compromises, or is it possible to have extremely happy, contented, meaningful interpersonal relationships?
- Is unhappiness, meaninglessness and discontent an inherent part of human existence or is it possible for all human beings to live purposeful, meaningful lives?

The long history of mankind has seen numerous attempts to answer the above questions. While many religious and philosophical schools of thought have put forth ‘solutions’ to some of the above problems, their answers have often been mystical and unable to change the inequitable and exploitative structures of society. Moreover, these very ideas have been used as a means to justify religious and communal violence for many centuries. Postindustrial society has seen an intensification of the above problems and questions. Consequently, numerous ideologies, socio-political movements and social experiments have sought solutions in the form of equality of

opportunities, freedom from injustice and exploitation, the creation of classless societies, equal access to natural resources, as well as protection of the environment. Undoubtedly, these attempts have had some impact on the society we live in. However, apart from having their own share of supporters and detractors, no ideology, movement or experiment has been able to show any definitive outcomes. As a consequence, many of us have come to believe that no conclusive outcomes, results or solutions are even possible. We often work with the assumption that a meaningful life and a truly just, equitable society are utopian ideals that can only be dreamt about or aspired towards, but never actually realised or concretised.

Yet the need for answers/solutions remains. In fact, it is far greater than ever before. We are faced with a rapidly globalising world, with increasing inequalities, intensifying ecological imbalance, heightening war and violence and sharpened fundamentalist identities. Moreover, a materialist-consumerist culture and way of life is spreading in all parts of the world. The irony of this socio-economic structure/way of life/culture is that while it creates large numbers of ‘have-nots’, the people who are at the bottom of the pyramid and are struggling for survival; the very ‘haves’ who are at the top (and higher end) of the social pyramid are struggling with the meaninglessness and hollowness of their lives. Our current way of life seems inhuman and unsustainable from all perspectives.

So the question still remains – is there any alternative to the existing social, economic, cultural order? **Is there any philosophy/set of ideas/worldview that creates the possibilities of a meaningful way of life, and a humane, just and sustainable society?** Is it possible for all human beings to have all facets of their lives harmoniously interconnected – be it the personal, inter-personal, social or ecological? What we want to do now is to go beyond a general hopeful vision and a few promising small-scale experiments to a deeper, clearer, and more specific understanding of how such a way of life, and society could actually be developed. Any such ‘understanding’ would have to be universal; that is, it should satisfy the needs and requirements of all human beings. Any such philosophy that seeks to provide answers has to be one that can be examined and analysed by each individual, that is, it has to be free from any sectarianism, mysticism or spiritual leaders.

[Excerpted from a write-up by Atishi Marlana]

**Come to the workshop and you’ll learn how another world is possible!**