KAMEA MEAH presents

A QUEST FOR MEANING

A JOURNEY ABOVE AND BEYOND OUR BELIEFS

A documentary by Nathanaël COSTE and Marc DE LA MÉNARDIÈRE

With: Vandana SHIVA - Thrinh XUAN THUAN - Satish KUMAR - Pierre RABHI - Frédéric LENOIR - Hervé KEMPF - Bruce LIPTON - Cassandra VIETEN - Marianne SEBASTIEN

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(...) This film is like the road-movie of a lost generation in search of wisdom and common sense (...)

Lac Atitlan, Guatemala

Navdanya, Deradhun India

DIFFICULT TO FIT A QUEST FOR MEANING INTO A SPECIFIC CATEGORY...

A Quest For Meaning is neither an environmental film nor a movie about travel, neither totally fictional nor absolute nonfiction, personal but not overly intimate... It's like the road-movie of a lost generation in search of wisdom and common sense. In drawing together the messages of an urban gardener, a cellular biologist, an itinerant shaman, and a singer-turned-CEO, Marc and Nathanael invite us to join them on their soul-searching quest, calling into question our vision of the world.

Synopsis

When Nathanael goes to visit Marc in New York, it's been 10 years since they've last seen each other and their lives are totally different: Nathanael has just finished an environmental film in India, and Marc exports bottled water for a global corporation...

But one day, a small accident brings his "American dream" to a halt. Stuck in bed, he decides to watch a bunch of documentary films on globalisation, that Nathanael had left behind. From that moment on, his conscience will not leave him alone. Marc goes to join Nathanael in India where they will begin their improvised, epic journey.

Full of moments of doubt, moments of joy, and incredible testimonials, their journey is like an initiation into a whole new way of viewing the world and living life. They invite us to join them in reconsidering our rapport with nature, happiness, and the purpose of life. 87 minutes to help us regain confidence in our ability to effect change within ourselves, and within society.

The Main Themes

Kausani, Uttarakhand, India

Progress and the Modern World

What are the limitations on the ideas of "Progress" and the "Modern" world?

Does the progress of a society depend on the growth of its GDP, or do we need to redefine our definition of prosperity? How can we introduce a new way of life that will preserve tradition and heritage while also embracing the developments of the modern world?

Our Vision of the World

Industrial society is built around the idea of a mechanical world in which competition reigns supreme and in which man – a selfish and materialistic being – needs to face the harsh realities of a hostile natural environment.

Today, we live in a world based on this way of seeing things. In light of recent scientific discoveries on the nature of man and the world he lives in, how can we go about creating another vision of the world?

Self-Awareness

The Ancient Greek philosophers once said that before changing the world, one has to first know, and transform, oneself.

To succeed in transforming society, then, isn't it necessary to first question one's own personal beliefs, and examine one's own personal hidden fears, doubts, and frustrations?

The Ecological Crises

The ecological crises we are experiencing stem from our vision of the world and our relationship with nature.

Is the Earth just a collection of resources to be exploited? Our home? A hostile environment? A source of life and wonder? Are we actually separate from it?

The power of "ordinary" citizens

Does power come from above, or from below?

Are the current political powers capable of responding to the environmental and social crises? Can ordinary citizens, with their new-found expertise, take us towards a new world vision?

(...) We felt the call of the road, and felt certain that together, we'd be able to accomplish something special (...)

The Creators

MARC DE LA MÉNARDIÈRE

Fresh out of business school, at age 26, Marc becomes a Business Developper in Manhattan. After a small accident, just before the 2008 crisis, he begins to question his whole way of life and the economic system he's a part of. He embarks on A Quest for Meaning, which will radically change his perception of himself, and of the world.

NATHANAËL COSTE

Originally trained as a geographer, Nathanael makes independent documentaries dealing with the relationship between man and nature, and on the social and cultural effects of globalisation. In 2008, he decides to visit Marc, after having lost touch over the previous years. For Nathanael, this reunion will mark the beginning of an exciting human adventure: rich, enhancing, and totally unpredictable.

The Interview

What pushed you to make this film?

Nathanaël :
After cutting short his career as a water salesperson, Marc joined me in India during the presentation of my film at a cinema festival.

We were both in the middle of a major life transition, you know when you realize that you want to realign your actions with your inner beliefs. We felt the call of the road, and felt certain that together, we'd be able to accomplish something special.

When I began filming, I never imagined that I would be making a full-length movie for the cinema. You can never be too sure of anything! It's when we returned from India and viewed the footage – especially the footage of Vandana Shiva and Satish Kumar – that we realized how profound the message was, and that we just had to keep digging and exploring right to the very end.

So we bought a better camera, took to the road once again, and continued gathering messages of wisdom throughout South America, North America, and then Europe. Some of our interviews were planned, and some of them just kind of happened along the way.

Did these messages have an impact on you even after your trip?

Marc :
Definitely. That's how we managed to hold our ground and spend so much time finishing the film.

It's because of the incredible light and energy emanating from the people we interviewed, and the power of their words, that we never gave up on the project. Each message is like a tree that hides a whole forest. Behind each concept, there's a whole field of investigation on the meaning of life, man's place in the universe, ecology, and the human condition.

The people we interviewed work in totally different disciplines: Science, Biology, Ecology, Activism, Philosophy... But they all bring a piece to the same puzzle, and shed light on things in a different way.

What do you think will impulse change?

Marc :
As Bruce Lipton says in the film, citing Einstein, "You cannot resolve the problem with the same thinking that created the problem." The first step to change is realizing that the crises we're experiencing stem from the way we see the world.

According to the people we interviewed, in the last 200 years, Western civilization has built itself around a materialistic and mechanical vision of the world. This vision has separated man from nature, the body from the spirit, and has denied the internal dimension of things, the mystery of life. It has turned competition into a natural law, greed into an attribute for the economy, and the accumulation of material possessions into the objective of all human existence.

Questioning the truth of these dogmas, as well as their consequences, is what will make personal transformation and societal change possible!

Nathanaël :
The great revelation of our trip was understanding that man and the biosphere are part of a whole, intimately interconnected and totally interdependent. According to this theory, as the ancient sages also believed, we are all cells of a great, living organism. Today, our ignorance of this concept has led us to self-destruction.

It was a huge discovery for us to see that scientists, yoga instructors, and spiritual mystics all share this same vision of the world. And they all share the same indignation that ensues, expressed perfectly by Vandana Shiva when she says: "The real emergency, is to preserve the conditions of life on Earth!"

The most important thing for our generation today is to find a way to transform this anger into something positive and to succeed in moving forward.

What would you like to say to those who look at the world and wonder what they can do?

Nathanaël :
When you set out with conviction and determination, you will definitely achieve something. Each one of us can search for our aspirations in our own way, ask ourselves what it is that means most to us.

Today, a lot of our choices are dictated by fear and conformism. Our education system prepares us to fill specific roles, but doesn't take enough interest in who we really are.

Of course, the search for purpose is personal and intimate, but we wanted to open the debate and say: "it's no big deal", everyone has questions. I think it's actually really healthy for us to discuss these questions all together.

Santa Cruz, Road 1, USA

Why did you opt for self-distribution?

Marc :
We weren't sure at first. We had found a distributor, but while we were drawing up the contract we realized that it wasn't in synch with the spirit of our project... So we decided to hand the film over to the public instead, and let them create their own events and organize their own showings.

That way everyone gets involved. Also, our film isn't meant to be "consumed" alone in a dark theatre. It's meant to connect people, to create a kind of synergy among the spectators in the exchanges afterwards, or even to encourage and facilitate social initiatives.

Nathanaël :
We knew that we'd succeed in following the project through right to the end. It took exactly 5 years! Now, we're hoping that people will take hold of the film and pass it along to others. It will take on a life of its own, and then we'll return slowly to our regular lives, even though our lives will never be quite the same as before.

How did you finance the film?

Nathanaël :
We payed for the trip with our savings. For the editing and the post-production, we approached a few producers who contacted a number of television channels.

We waited a year before they finally told us "this doesn't really fit anywhere". So we decided to start a co-funding campaign, asking ordinary citizens to help us finish the work. And we managed to raise three times the amount we had asked for!

So we were able to finish the film in the best possible conditions, to pay professional technicians and, most importantly, remain independent throughout the whole process. What really helped us along, was seeing how many people out there are working to introduce a new way of life, based on a more sensitive vision of the world.

More than just a movie - a community project !

Presentation for our Co-Producers at the Atmosphères Festival in Courbevoie (France), May 2014

In the making of this movie – filmed in the best way possible with the means at hand – the creators managed to remain totally independent throughout the production and distribution process, thanks to the support of hundreds of internet surfers.

The film was co-produced on the internet by 963 campaign holders who gave us their support a year before even being able to see the film. The help that was graciously offered by dozens of musicians, translators, technicians, graphic artists, and other volunteers allowed us to complete the project with very high, professional standards.

The showing in movie theatres (which wasn't even in the plan, originally!) was organized entirely through the collaboration of spectators, who began showing the film, as well as a number of partnering associations who also joined in the adventure.

The Colibris movement incorporated the film into its social campaign "An Inner (R)evolution" ["une (R)évolution intérieure"]. After each movie showing, and with the help of special activity facilitators, Kamea Meah and Colibris organize an exchange among the spectators, focused on the main topics of the film, such as personal transformation or societal change.

THIS FILM IS:

An informative, revolutionary, and slightly crazy road-movie

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The best of 80 hours of footage filmed on 3 different continents

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Generously funded by 963 internet surfers

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A tool to share with others, and encourage questioning

-

Self-distributed by the association Kamea Meah

THIS FILM IS NOT:

A preachy, aggressive, anxiety-producing documentary

-

A journalist's report or investigation

-

Written ahead of time

-

Meant to give answers, but rather to ask questions

-

A reason to quit your job!

"You cannot have unlimited growth on a limited planet. We have to learn from nature and create a cyclical economy."
Satish Kumar

The Main Players

DR. VANDANA SHIVA

"Identifying ourselves as consumers is part of the problem. Rediscovering our identity as creator-producers is part of the solution."

Vandana Shiva, Physicist, Epistemologist, and Doctor in Philosophy and Quantum Theory, is one of world's greatest advocates of Anti-Globalism. She and Satish Kumar are the founders of *"Navdanya"*, an association dedicated to the preservation of agricultural seed traditions.

SATISH KUMAR

"You cannot have unlimited growth in a finite world. We have to learn from nature to create a cyclical economy."

Once a Jain monk, Satish undertook a march for peace, more than 12000 kilometers long and with no funding, in 1961. He is now Editor in Chief for the magazine *"Resurgence"* as well as Program Director at *Schumacker College*.

TRINH XUAN THUAN

"We are interdependent on the stars and the Cosmos."

World-renown American Astrophysician Trinh Xuan Thuan has become known to the general public through a number of books including *"The Cosmos and the Lotus"*. He was awarded the *Unesco Kalinga Prize* in 2009, and aims to familiarize the general public with the Universe and the philosophical questions it involves.

PIERRE RABHI

"We have to innovate and, at the same time, renounce the fundamental ideology that created the old world."

Originally from Algeria, Pierre Rabhi is one of the pioneers of Agricultural Ecology. His unusual life experience led him to write about his relationship with happiness and with the modern world. In France, he began several social movements including *Terre & Humanisme*, and *Colibris*.

FRÉDÉRIC LENOIR

"Descartes considered the world an inert mechanical being that could be utilized; this represents the total domination of the mind over nature."

Philosopher, Sociologist, and Religious Historian, he has been Editor of the specialized magazine *"The World of Religion"* ("Le Monde des religions") for a number of years. He is the author of more than 40 books, translated into more than 20 languages, and writes also for the theatre, the cinema, and for a number of comic strips.

CHATY SECARIA

"There are so many spiritual paths – which one is the best? Whichever one will make you a better person, nothing less nothing more!"

Chaty Secaria is the founder of a meditation centre open to travelers from all over the world, who come to rediscover the forgotten texts of the great spiritual traditions. For a number of years, she has presented a daily television program about happiness on Guatemalan television.

JULES DERVAES

"We are the guardians of the planet, not the owners."

Jules and his family have been cultivating a 400m2 garden behind his house since 1994. Through this intensive organic agricultural project, they produce 3 tonnes of fruit and vegetables per year, allowing them to be 90% autonomous during the summer.

DR. BRUCE LIPTON

"What's wonderful about it, is that all of the beliefs on which our civilization is founded now have to be put into question."

A Doctor in Biology, Dr. Bruce Lipton's research on the cellular membrane have played a pioneering role in the development of Epigenetics, a "new science" that studies the influence of the external environment on the genetics of an organism. He is best-known for his book *"The Biology of Belief"* dealing with the impact of the psyche on the human body.

MARIANNE SÉBASTIEN

"There can be no exterior personal development without inner personal development."

With a triple education in Social Work, Teaching, and Literature, Marianne Sébastien is a model of excellence in her career as Vocalist, Voice Therapist, and CEO (Female Entrepreneur 2007). She founded *Voix Libres*, a small NGO that works with the children of the mines and the underprivileged populations in Bolivia.

HERVÉ KEMPF

"We are experiencing a historical transition. We are in the process of changing to another era, and passing on to another state."

Hervé Kempf, journalist and writer, has been a long-time contributor to the *"Environment"* pages in the French newspaper *Le Monde*. He is most interested in supporting the ecological movement through a clear, lucid interpretation of the powers that be. In his books, such as the famous *"How the Rich Are Destroying the Planet"*, he encourages us to rethink our rapport with wealth and democracy.

EN QUÊTE DE SENS

If you are a journalist, blogger, and would like to write about the film,
propose a partnership, or organise an interview,
please contact us at the following address:
presse@enquetedesens-lefilm.com

If you are a cinema or festival coordinator and would like to insert the film into your calendar of activities, please contact us at the following address for details:
international@kameameahfilms.org

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