

## Changing Tibet showcased through the looking glass

A five-day festival of Tibetan documentary and feature films that began at the Indian International Centre here Saturday offers viewers a glimpse of the complex mosaic that makes up the land of the exiled Dalai Lama.

Stripped of the usual inaugural trappings, the festival, organised by the Foundation for Universal Responsibility opened with the screening of the 'The Lion's Roar', a classic portrait of the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, one of the most revered spiritual figures in Tibet.

The Karmapa, born in 1924 in the eastern Tibetan province of Kham, is believed to be 16th reincarnation. His was a political voice - one that helped mitigate a political crisis between Tibet and China in 1955. The warring factions agreed on a five-year truce after the Karmapa intervened.

'Travellers and Magicians' directed by senior lama, Ven Khyentse Norbu, portrays the journey of man who seeks the land of his dreams. The 108-minute feature film shot in stunning locations in the remote mountains of Bhutan and the mysterious valleys of the Himalayas is an insight into the ambivalence that modern-day Buddhist societies are coping to come to terms with globalisation.

The lama, who dons the hat of a director, is also a commentator of sorts in the film - capturing the conflict between the aspirations and bucolic lifestyles of the villages in the remote terrains of the Buddhist nation and offering 'solutions' through his absorbing stories - mostly local myths.

Storytelling, as one realises in course of the movie, is indispensable to the monastic and village life in the Himalayas. Myths and religious lore are the staple of a spiritual discipline and land that initially flourished in splendid isolation, but later had to brave a political and cultural assault from China.

Tibet and its communities exiled abroad, as the festival showcases, is in the process of change like all other historical societies that are evolving with time and changing economics.

The young and impetuous, who have been exposed to the western way of life outside their country post exodus, dream of the west as a solution of the economic ills, shrinking opportunities and insulation.

'If the Chinese can risk their lives to go to America, then why can't I go to the land of my dreams,' says the young protagonist in 'Travellers and Magician'.

The monk, however, urges the aspiring lot to rein in their ambition and stay back in their villages to save dying traditions and family trades.

In contrast, the animation feature film, 'Tintin in Tibet', brought the western fascination with the religion steeped in mysticism, mysterious and magical rites, meditation and the Himalayas.

In this case, it was German cartoonist Herge, the creation of the iconic animation character, who paints his young hero and his dog Snowy with the colours of Buddha - bravery, loyalty and a good heart.

Tintin undertakes a dangerous trek in the avalanche prone Himalayas to rescue his Chinese friend,

the lone survivor of an aircraft crash. And even meets a Yeti, the fearful and abominable snowman of the Himalayas with a human soul deep down in course of his adventures.

The 'Spirit of Tibet', directed by Matthieu Ricard portrayed the life and the spiritual world of Tibet's most revered 20th century teachers - Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, while 'Mystic Tibet' and the 'Saltmen of Tibet' were spun around ancient Buddhist lores. The 'Saltmen of Tibet' stood out for its spectacular cinematography and locales.

It narrated the myth of an ancient nomadic community who invoked the deities of nature for 'the good of humanity' through the lives of four men who travel to the daunting holy lakes in northern Tibet to fetch 'the tears of Tara', salt from the Himalayan pools.

Tara, according to Buddhist theology, is a female Bodhisattva (incarnation of Buddha) born of the tears of the deity Avalokitesvara and is known for her compassionate nature.

The highlights of July 6 are the 'Kundun' directed by Martin Scorsese and the 'Dalai Lama Renaissance' directed by Khashyar Darvich and narrated by Harrison Ford.

Bernardo Bertolucci's acclaimed 'Little Buddha' will be screened July 7 and the 'Tibet Cry of the Snow Lion' will be the movie to watch out for July 9.

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