

# Los Angeles Times

## MOVIE REVIEW

### AN INTIMATE, MOVING LOOK AT TIBETAN LIFE

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**I**s it a great deal to expect that Americans, and bustling Southern Californians in particular, can adjust to the hypnotic rhythms and chants of inner Buddhist life without a firmly guided tour?

Perhaps, "Tibet: A Buddhist Trilogy," today and Tuesday at the Nuart (and June 29 at the Rialto), emerges as both an astringent and illuminating guide to the Tibetan culture in exile. As a complete novice in these matters, I can report that it is possible to be profoundly moved by this intimate look at Tibetan life, and especially by the cumulative effect of the serene and gentle rituals of the Tibetans' everyday existence.

Since the Chinese occupation of Tibet in the 1950s, enormous numbers of Tibetan Buddhists have lived and practiced their contemplative religion in resettlement camps high in the mountains of Northern India.

This almost four-hour-long, independently made British production, is a three-part documentary. The first two sections, which comprise the first half of the program, introduce us to the present Dalai Lama and to

a day in the lives of the monks and farmers in the remote village of Ladakh in Northern India. The first half ends with that community's response to a death in its midst. During this ritual, the five seated, chanting priests give a reassuring call to the dead spirit not to be afraid but to pass beyond this stage ("a dream state in which you may feel persecuted and powerless") to another, more evolved level. It is an extraordinary testament, simple and very compelling.

The second half of the program is a two-hour study, almost without explanation of the detailed preparations for a ritual called "A Beautiful Ornament," a Buddhist ritual for protection.

Admittedly, this may be a specialized program. Its very lack of expected, step-by-step, structure may be a challenge. Yet, at least to this outsider, it is a soothing and absolutely fascinating excursion.

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#### 'TIBET: A BUDDHIST TRILOGY'

A production of Thread Cross Films Ltd., England, 1979. Writer-director Graham Coleman. Producer-photographer David Lascelles. Lighting and still photographer Michael Warr. Sound recorder Robin Broadbank. Editor Pip Heywood.

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