

It turned out to be a full circle for Dr Sanduk Ruit. His passion for restoring eyesight of hundreds of poor people took him to Olangchungola, a remote village in Nepal, the very place where he belongs. For Dr Ruit and his co-ophthalmologist Dr Geoff Tabin, it's a lifetime mission to relieve the people from what is being termed as 'needless blindness', meaning loss of vision which is curable. Now with his first feature documentary - 'Out of the Darkness', photographer turned filmmaker Stefano Levi also joins the same noble mission.

The scenic beauty of the Himalayan state would be any photographer or documentary maker's favourite destination, but the tenacity with which Levi and his team travelled with Dr Ruit to the difficult terrains of Nepal only demonstrates the filmmaker's commitment to such a social cause.

The excellent photography coupled with the melody of the indigenous Nepali tune would evince interest among most viewers, especially those who have some idea about the place and the extent of the agony that blindness brings to human lives and the people surrounding them in the developing world.

Freedom from blindness is like being re-born and as Dr Ruit himself says, living without eyesight is like leading half a life. The director has aptly depicted this freedom through demonstration of joy, from a child and her parents to the elderly person who longed to see her daughter after restoration of eyesight. Levi thus has tried to play up the human emotions to highlight the miseries of blindness, especially for the poor people living in the fringes of society.

'Out of the Darkness', may be Levi's first feature documentary but the director has shown some level of maturity in terms of the technicalities of the film as well as in his comprehension of the subject. However, the one area where Levi stood lacking was in the narration of the story he tried to communicate. Dr Ruit, Dr Tabin and their team might be doing a great job for the society and it is worthwhile celebrating that, however, the narrative rendered the film boring as though it lacked dynamism.

'Out of the Darkness' turned out to be mostly a monologue of Dr Ruit, with rare interjections from Dr Tabin and the American writer David Oliver Relin. The film never seemed to be telling enough about those who were being taken out of the physical darkness and emotional gloom that they might have encountered in real life. Rare glimpses of emotions would probably provide an unfulfilled taste, thereby making the filmmaker's interactions with his viewers incomplete and unsuccessful.

Nevertheless, 'Out of the Darkness' is testimony to some of the genuine concerns of a conscious filmmaker in his endeavour to make the world a better place to live. As David Oliver Relin says, the role of a writer is to bring up the stories of the powerless to the powerful; similarly Levi through his first feature documentary has highlighted the plight of hundreds of poor people living in the difficult terrains of an impoverished country. Levi's ultimate success would depend on the decline in the number of people living in darkness with blindness.

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