

BARAKA

Is the story of the evolutionary process of birth, life, destruction and inevitably, death. This film has used absolutely no verbal dialogue to tell the phenomenal story of our planet's beginning and the evolution of its peoples. The images used are strong, yet unusually inviting. We fly into unknown worlds overflowing with religions, cultures, environments and people extremely different to what we label as 'normal'. It is only when you see a film such as BARAKA that you truly comprehend that the millions of people in this world cannot be entirely different to each other, that there must be at least one aspect of, for example a Cambodian's life, which we understand and go through just as they do.

BARAKA begins with the image of troupe of monkeys sitting in a naturally heated spring. This troupe is like a homosapien family which we all are part of. This section begins with an extreme close-up of the fur of one of the monkeys, so this form is not immediately obvious to the viewer until the camera pans out to show the entire troupe. The shot then shifts an image of a man walking through a street in Nepal. After this image we begin to jump from continent to continent, venturing into countries such as Brazil, Cambodia, Kuwait, India, Tanzania and Iran.

When visiting each country we are plunged into their culture and religion as if we were always meant to be a part of it. We see images of various religious groups, such as Buddhists, Muslims, Jews and Orthodox Christians. Additionally, the viewer also gets an insight into native tribes from across the globe, like Australian Aborigines and the Masai tribes of Africa.

We are confronted with images of nature using a technique called 'Time Lapse' photography. During this section, the sky grows dark in seconds and stars appear, leading us to ponder just how many planets, like Earth, are there and how many diverse creatures do they possess. This planet has the sky, mountains, trees, and us. We have no concept of what the rest of the universe may have to offer.

The film 'BARAKA' gave the audience the opportunity to ponder the age-old question concerning the 'meaning of life'.

Although the techniques used by director Ron Fricke to shape our opinion and evoke a feeling of sympathy for 'the old ways' were non-verbal, they were no less effective than the spoken word. In this way, the far-from-subtle techniques used (such as slow and mournful music) shape our responses effectively to evoke a feeling of regret concerning the price we pay (in terms of the destruction and 'replacement' of 'the old ways') for technological improvements.

'BARAKA is an ancient Sufi word with many forms in many languages. It is simply translated as a blessing, or the breath or essence of life from which the evolutionary process unfolds . . .'