

Himalaya Film Festival 2010 New York

ON THE ROAD WITH THE RED GOD: MACHHENDRANATH

Every 12 years, impassioned devotees pull a 65-foot tall unwieldy chariot in the Kathmandu Valley, its rider an enigmatic god worshipped by Hindu and Buddhist, on a months-long journey preceded by abundant ritual and animal sacrifice. The enterprise calls for extreme cooperation and rigorous observance of ritual in the building, sanctification and pulling of the rath. But the jatra is an arena of gritty reality, where conflict or solidarity can prevail. So every 12 years, the same question: will the journey succeed? Best embodying the sprawling jatra is Kapil Muni. He serves a god that was stolen from a demoness to save the Kathmandu Valley. In an intriguing inversion, Kapil performs rituals to ward off the demoness trying to retrieve her son, even as he yearns to be reunited with his own mother who left him as an infant.

Kesang Tseten
75 min.

