Land of the mystique

DVD ‘Kashi, The Eternal City’ captures every aspect of the holy city vividly.

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Unanswered questions and ambiguous thoughts become comprehensible and clear to the ordinary mind as you watch ‘Kashi, The Eternal City,’ the DVD brought out by Isha Foundation and Moser Baer Entertainment.

Kashi is a place where ratiocination and rituals, legend and logic, and tradition and science co-exist, without the dichotomies turning into debatable issues. A city projected as a mathematical marvel designed to perfection, you begin to think of Kashi with a sense of yearning.

City of life

“It is not for nothing that people flock to Kashi to live or die there,” says Jaggi Vasudev in his interaction with lyricist and script writer Prasoon Joshi as the two walk through the city that is “stacked with layers and layers of energy.” Such is the energy and vibrancy that people who come to Kashi never wish to return. It is as much a City of Life as it is a City of Death (‘Kashi is the ultimate cremation ground.’) a City of Light, not Darkness, you are told.

‘Kashi...’ showcases day-to-day rituals religiously followed in its 468 temples, daily chores of burning the dead, the city’s hoariness and much more. Fascinating facts about the temples situated symmetrically in perfect geometrical patterns, each built with a purpose, make the DVD a worthy watch. Interestingly, Benares, as a hub of art, culture and Mathematics, even before Athens, Egypt and Rome came into existence, is said to be older than history itself!

The myths and realities of Kashi are discussed threadbare in simple English. It’s disheartening to note that the greatness of the city, extolled by savants and saints, litterateurs such as Mark Twain, and philosophers, is being eroded. It’s impossible to create another Kashi; at least, let’s not destroy what’s left of it, is the message.

The DVD has its light-hearted moments too -- like when Jaggi Vasudev, with a chuckle, refers to Kashi as the summer resort of Lord Siva. The story of Siva being forced to exit Kashi, and his re-entry are engaging inputs. Every aspect of Kashi is brought to the fore, under different titles. The 468 temples that dot Kashi aren’t random constructions. They are mathematically calculated and meticulously created structures. The DVD explains very lucidly the logic behind the number!

Kashi draws the godly and the lay, and is believed to be above every other place on this earth – on Siva’s Trishul! Another significant number touched upon is 108, which again comes with a logical explanation.

The rest houses built for pilgrims centuries ago are still intact, as you see. Also, the Panch Koshi Yatra, which lakhs of pilgrims undertake annually, in the month of April, and which begins with a dip in the Ganga, has been well-captured.

The legend of Kala Bhairava, with Anita Ratnam acting out the salient parts of it vividly, is yet another segment that stays with you. Finally, the treatise on death makes you ponder over the importance given to the mere-physicallity of life, when there’s so much beyond! It isn’t life and death, but life and life. “Death is a fiction of the ignorant,” is the proclamation. You begin to feel that the phenomenal possibilities that Kashi offers makes it a doorway to liberation.

When ‘Kashi, The Eternal City,” closes with the entrancing ‘Bhaja Viswanatham...’ you begin to miss the place even before you’ve actually been there! Such is the impact.