

Film Review: My Reincarnation

Effective though flawed film works as both revealing documentary and moving family drama.

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-By Eric Monder



For movie details, please [click here](#).

If Deepak Chopra rewrote *The Jazz Singer*, you'd have something like *My Reincarnation*, a spiritually flavored father-son melodrama. But, of course, that doesn't do justice to Jennifer Fox's new release, which concerns the very real tensions between a high Tibetan Buddhist master and his son when the son wishes to break away from the father's religious traditions. Fox and the distributor's innovative "Kickstarter" crowd-funding and marketing platform should widen audience interest.

Impressively, Fox spent much of the last 20 years filming Chogyal Namkhai Norbu and his son, Yeshi Silvano Namkhai, tracing the story of how the Tibetan-born Buddhist found himself exiled at a young age, living in Italy. When his first child (Yeshi) was born (in Tuscany), Norbu expected he would follow in his footsteps since Yeshi had been declared the reincarnation of a legendary spiritual master. But as a grownup, Yeshi had other ideas and distanced himself from his "destiny." The question remains until the end: Will Yeshi become like his father or something entirely different?

As with Fox's last film, *Flying: Confessions of a Free Woman*, *My Reincarnation* exhibits a personal, intimate quality. Unlike *Flying*, however, Fox takes herself out of the story and focuses very narrowly on the two main characters. The setup is perfect for fiction, slightly less so for a documentary, since much of the struggle between the men is internalized and must be expressed over the free-style *cinéma-vérité* footage as a voiceover track.

Though concise and to-the-point, there are drawbacks to the strict concentration on only two characters. Given the feminist theme of Fox's previous work, it seems odd that she favors a patriarchal attitude. Perhaps because of Norbu's oncoming illness, there is also an emotional slant toward him over Yeshi (affirmed by a cameo by the Dalai Lama), but it never feels quite fair. On the plus side, our protagonists are appealing and we learn much about Buddhist teachings from both of them.

Best of all, *My Reincarnation* peeks into a little-known world and seems (despite its omissions) like an honest attempt to understand an age-old conflict played out as a modern-day family crisis.

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Flying: Confessions of a Free Woman