

'Tidbits from Tibet'

Buddhist's teachings help people maintain happy, spiritual lives

By Georgia Geis
The Arizona Republic

Tibetan Buddhist Lama ZaChoeje Rinpoche recalls an ordinary childhood playing with the bamboo, spiders and animals on his grandparents' farm at a Tibetan refugee camp in India.

Rinpoche's life changed with the arrival of a letter when he was 17 years old and attending a college-prep boarding school.

His father traveled 35 hours to hand-deliver a letter addressed to Choejor Dondup, which was his birth name. It was from the 14th Dalai Lama, who recognized Rinpoche as the sixth reincarnation of ZaChoeje Rinpoche, a Buddhist lama of eastern Tibet.

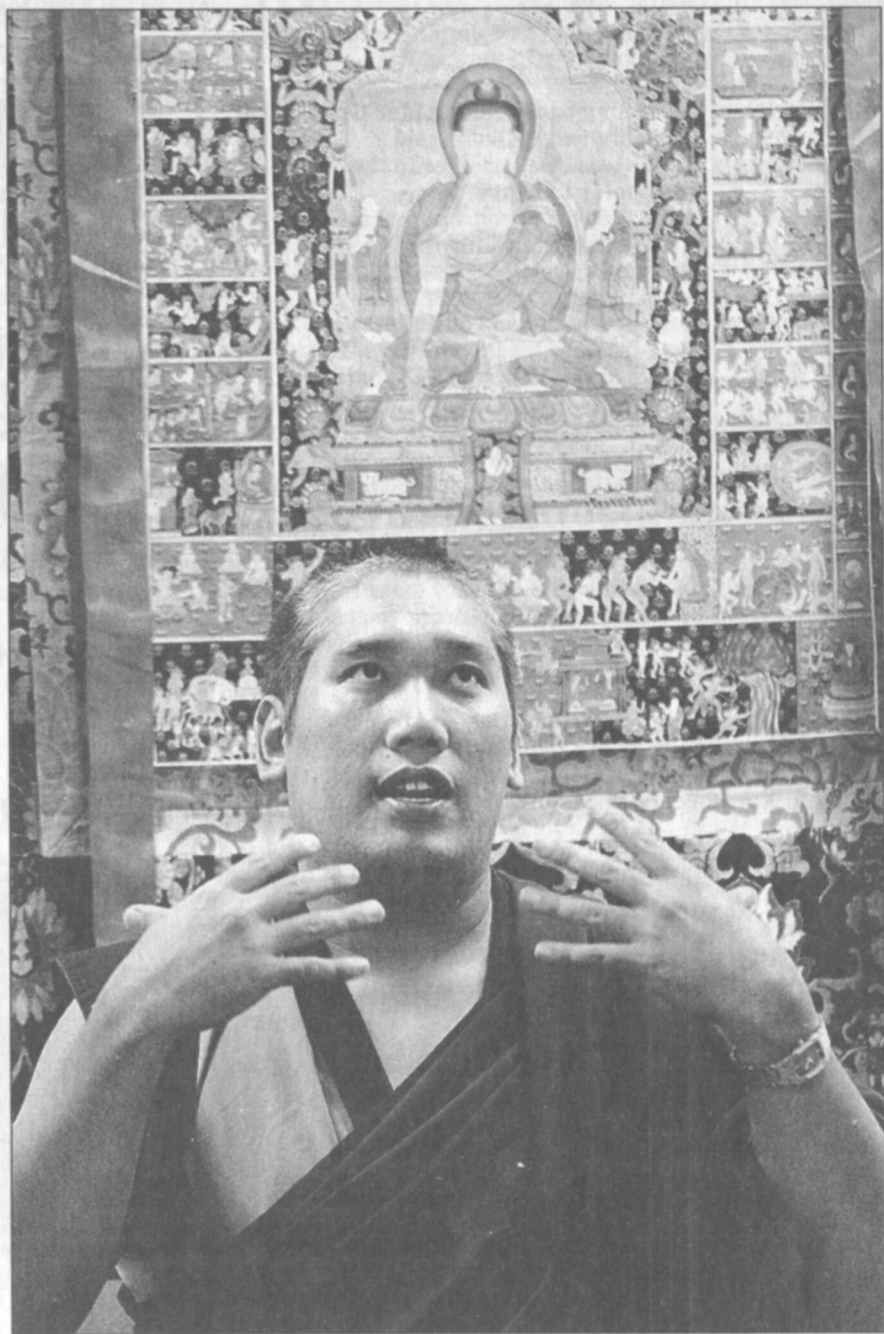
"It was very unexpected. I never expected to grow up a spiritual master in my society," he said.

Now 34, Rinpoche is the spiritual adviser to the non-profit Scottsdale-based Emaho Foundation, which was created to share Tibetan Buddhist culture with the West and offer humanitarian aid to Tibet. Emaho is a Sanskrit word meaning joy and wonder.

Immediately after receiving the letter, he was initiated as a Rinpoche, which means "precious jewel."

"My old self was dead. My grandparents kneeled in front of me with respect. My friends all ran away because they were intimidated. I had high self-esteem. I felt I could do anything," he said over coffee at a popular coffeehouse chain in Tempe.

Rinpoche graduated with the



Geshe Lharampa degree after 10 years of study at the Drepung Loseling Monastery.

Rinpoche now makes his home in Scottsdale and teaches in Arizona, Colorado and Washington as well as around the world. He fondly refers to his teachings as "tidbits from Tibet" and hopes to help people live happier, more spiritual daily lives.

In 2001, Michael Harris, a business research analyst living in Ahwatukee Foothills, and a couple of other Valley residents felt it was necessary to create a non-profit foundation to support Rinpoche's teachings and aid him in some humanitarian efforts here and in Tibet.

Rinpoche teaches regularly in the Valley and in Flagstaff and Sedona.

Tibetan Buddhist Lama ZaChoeje Rinpoche teaches the art of chanting at the Scottsdale Mustang Library. A public talk will be held here Tuesday.

The next public talk will be from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Scottsdale Mustang Library, 90th Street and Shea Boulevard.

There is also a new meditation practice at 7 p.m. Wednesdays at the White Buffalo Healing Arts Center at 16th Avenue and Camelback Road in Phoenix.

"Just a mere 45 years ago, before the Chinese invasion of Tibet, if we wanted to study this kind of tradition, we would have had to quit our jobs, fly there, learn Tibetan and prepare to go to the monastery for 12 to 15 hours a day," said Harris, executive director

of Emaho.

"But to have someone here that has learned our language and understands our psychology is really precious and rare."

Besides offering Tibetan Buddhist teaching in the West, Emaho Foundation is embarking on a project to bring education and health care to Tehor, a remote region in Tibet.

It is negotiating with the Chinese government on a plan. Closer to home, it plans on offering meditation classes to inmates in a federal penitentiary.

Information: (623) 889-7797 or www.emahofoundation.org.