

BORN AGAIN BUDDHISTS

One Hour Documentary



Krishna taught it; Plato believed it; Freud rejected it. Through the centuries, great minds have been fascinated, entranced or troubled by one powerful idea: reincarnation. As bizarre or supernatural as it sounds, reincarnation is still a living practice and a very real way of life in the last Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan where young reincarnates are still recognised everyday.

Believing that highly-evolved lamas choose to be reborn to lead the rest of us to nirvana, Bhutanese children born at auspicious times are carefully watched for signs of being a reincarnate and are usually identified at a young age by their precocious-ness, their incredible religious knowledge and identification of things and people from their former lives. These special people are called trulkus or reincarnated lamas - the most famous being the Dalai Lama.

In recent years however, the reincarnate tradition in Bhutan has taken a curious turn. Suddenly it seems more and more children are claiming to be born again lamas. The situation is so worrying that the Bhutanese government has stepped in to oversee the ancient process of identifying reincarnates. Born-Again Buddhists turns the spotlight on the world's foremost reincarnation hotspot to unravel the mysteries of this centuries-old Himalayan belief. Is reincarnation for real? How can the real incarnates be separated from the fake? How will government involvement impact this age-old spiritual tradition? Meet some of Bhutan's most revered reincarnate children and others WHO aspire to be like them. Featuring interviews with the world's foremost Buddhist scholars: Robert Thurman (Professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies at Columbia University), Françoise Pommaret (National Center for Scientific Research, Paris) and Karma Phuntso (Department of Anthropology, University of Cambridge), we go in search of the answers in the isolated Buddhist kingdom of Bhutan.



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