

To those of you who don't know me, my name is Jules Jallab, and I have been a student of Lama Jinpas for about 2 years. Between December 2019, and until March of this year, I was so graciously invited by the Venerable Khangser Rinpoche to travel to his monastery to live at the institute he founded, to teach young child monks living there the English language, as well as to study the Dharma.

Khangser Rinpoche is widely known around the world for being an incredible Vajrayana master, as well as for his innovative methods for teaching the dharma. Among his many accomplishments, he is known for being a best selling author in Taiwan, establishing the Dipkar Foundation which has so far provided 110,000 meals for the poor in Vietnam. He travels around the world to give his dharma teachings, and we were lucky enough to have him here at Lions Roar May of last year, and even now he continues to bless Lions Roar with his teachings which he now conducts from his monastery in Nepal, and of course, you can check the Lion's Roar calendar to get information for his next teachings he will be conducting in English. He is a tulku, and for those of you who do not know what that means, a tulku is a reincarnated emanation of a Buddhist master. So, our current Dalai Lama is the 14th Dalai Lama, which means he is the 14th reincarnation of this lineage. This current Khangser Rinpoche is the 8th reincarnation, and his predecessor is one of the few great masters who are responsible for identifying the current Dalai Lama.

Khangser Rinpoche founded the Thangkar Dechen Choeling Monastic Institute two years ago, Rinpoche founded this monastery to give orphaned and underprivileged boys in Nepal an opportunity to learn the dharma, as well as to be fed, and clothed, and be able to live in a warm home. Because Rinpoche had the idea to build this monastery and followed through with

his action, there are over 60 young boys who have been able to leave their lives of poverty behind, and be able to live in relative comfort and practice the dharma as monastics. One boy, named Gaden, was 3 years old when he was dropped off with only a bag of instant ramen at the monastery by his father bc he was no longer able to care for him. His cheeks were sunken in from malnourishment, and now one year later he is thriving and happy. Two boys around 13 and 17, names Migmar and Thoglam, who were picked up in a rural Nepali village after their older sister requested that they join the monastery, because their parents died so many years ago, and the sister could no longer support the growing boys. These are just examples of the children who I have gotten to know during my stay in Nepal, and these children have been directly benefitted by Rinpoche's incredible feat of establishing the Thangkar monastery in 2018. It goes to show that whenever you have an idea that can help other beings, you should pursue it because you never know who you could end up helping.

My time at the Thangkar Monastery was incredibly formative, not just as a dharma student, but as a human. My time over there has strengthened my bond with the dharma, the sangha, and my gurus, so now I will share some of these experiences with you, and I hope they will provide insight to monastic life, and that you can take something out of this talk to help you on your path.

I was so nervous in the weeks leading up to my trip, I remember just feeling so unworthy of having such an opportunity, I would always think, “Why?” Why me, there are so many others who are smarter, who are better practitioners, but for some reason, it was me who had this opportunity. There was someone who didn’t believe I deserved to go on this trip, and they made that very clear, so all these negative feelings I was battling inside myself became amplified. I

worried so much before getting to Nepal, up to the last few minutes as we were landing in Kathmandu. I just felt so anxious and I couldn't stop dwelling on all my shortcomings. For all those countless hours of worrying, the second I stepped foot on the monastery grounds, I felt at home. I was surrounded by people who didn't speak the same language as me, and who were so completely different from me, I was the only woman even living in the monastery which housed about 80 men and boys, and there was no logical reason as to why I felt so comfortable and calm. Upon reflection, I realize now why all of my negative feelings subsided so quickly, and that is because I had been overwhelmed with so much mutual respect, trust, and love, by so many beings around me. Brick by brick, I put up a wall built of self-doubt and self-loathing, and each brick was removed by the love of another person. Lama took a piece of that wall away when he spent hours preparing with me and making sure I was ready for monastic life. My parents each took a part of that wall away when their fear for me taking this journey so far from home transformed into excitement and pride. And of course, so many sangha members and cherished friends who smiled at me, told me they were excited for me, or teased me by saying they were jealous of me, all of you each took a piece of that wall away. Each of these wonderful people broke down a piece of the wall I built so rapidly, once I realized how much positivity each of you had given me. Kindness is powerful. Love is powerful. Buddha-nature is powerful. The value of each of your kindness and joy is truly a miracle, and the power of your action transcends time and space because your action is carried by another person in their hearts.

If you want to know what kind of a person Rinpoche is, I arrived in Nepal on New Year's Eve, on that night, Rinpoche was so kind and took me out to celebrate New Year's Eve with him and two of the other Lamas residing at the monastery, even though this isn't a holiday they

celebrate. We walked down the streets of Kathmandu, visiting shrines and seeing the street that Rinpoche's parents lived on when he was a child, we moved through the bustling streets of Kathmandu to have dinner at a restaurant, where Rinpoche ordered us traditional Nepali Thali for dinner. For those of you who are unfamiliar, Thali is a traditional Nepali meal comprised of several small dishes in metal bowls, as we enjoyed our food, I forked a small bowl of greens, of what I thought was a small cucumber. Rinpoche was explaining my responsibilities at the monastery as I stuck the whole thing in my mouth. As I started chewing, I slowly realized that I did not just eat a cucumber, what I actually ate, was the spiciest pepper I ever had in my life. Here I am, my first day in Nepal, sitting across one of the greatest Buddhist masters in our age, having New Year's Eve dinner, and I'm dying of a capsaicin overdose. I was trying to pay attention as I silently thought of how I could get rid of the burning inferno in my mouth in the most inconspicuous way possible.

I decided against spitting into my napkin and swallowed the thing whole. The spice level would just keep getting worse as I was sitting at the table. Meanwhile, Rinpoche was telling me about how I would be helping some of the teachers with technology when the tears started flowing, he looked at me surprised, and I said "I'm not crying because I have work to do, I'm crying because I just ate the spiciest chili pepper of my life." He and the other Lamas laughed and Rinpoche asked me why I didn't spit it out when I realized what it was, and I said through laughter and tears of pain that I was trying to be polite. Rinpoche then asked me which pepper I ate, and I pointed to it on his plate. He proceeded to pick up the pepper and eat it as well, so I wouldn't be the only person at the table suffering because the gates of hell opened in my mouth. He started tearing up as well and said that he never tried a pepper that spicy in his life. While that

is such a funny moment at dinner to look back on, I think it says so much about Rinpoche's character. His reaction when he saw that I was nervous and embarrassed because I ate the chili pepper by mistake, was to also inflict the same kind of feeling on himself. His kindness and humor, go hand in hand with his wisdom and compassion.

While adjusting to monastic life was quite easy for me, many luxuries are not there. I had to wash all of my clothes by hand for three months, in the blistering winter cold. I lived in a private room in the dormitory with the other students and teachers, but I still woke up to kids loudly challenging each other to yell mantras at 5:00 every morning. A lot of the time, I didn't have access to wifi and I couldn't contact others from back home, but quite honestly, none of that stuff mattered to me. I know that some people may find facing these things difficult, but those small luxuries that we are so used to, are just luxuries. It's not how most of the world lives, so when we encounter something that feels difficult when we travel, it's important to remember that this is the norm. Something, however, that did prove to be an adjustment for me, was the fact that I was the only western woman living there with many monastic monks and children who were very shy around me and it took some time for us to find our footing and build a relationship together. When I first saw all these small children dressed in those red monastic clothing, behaving so quietly and politely. I was in awe. It was something out of a movie.

These kids seemed so enlightened and sweet-natured. I compared them to kids back home and seeing them from an emotional distance, they seemed so serene. As I started teaching English to them, they were so shy and nervous to speak with me. I was this stranger, the only young woman they had seen for many months, and the first western woman living there for an extended period. It must have been a difficult adjustment for them to accept me as their teacher.

To be strict with them and try to teach them proper grammar in a traditional academic way would have been fruitless. So I decided that the best way to get them comfortable with speaking English would be a balance of learning proper grammar and pronunciation, mixed with playing games and watching some movies in English. Appealing to them in a playful manner was successful, and they quickly wanted to participate in class. Slowly, I began to learn about each of their individual personalities. Some of the kids were sweet, some mischievous, some were gifted but wanted to play, some were funny, some were awkward, some were studious. But they were all just kids! No different from the ones growing up here in the US. Looking back I feel so silly that I so quickly made the judgment towards them being somehow different from other kids, especially when on the last night of my trip, a 14-year-old boy named Pharchin asked when I was leaving. I told him I was leaving tomorrow, and his face looked so sad. I tried to joke with him and say “Aw Pharchin, are you happy I’m leaving tomorrow?” He somberly replied, “No Miss, I am sad, I am so sad.” I felt so touched until a few moments later he turned his face up at me and said “Miss, can I have your iPad when you go home?”

In all seriousness though, the bonds we cultivated together were built slowly over time, but they became strong. At first, when I would circumambulate the temple and do my walking meditation, the kids would look at me curiously through the windows or turn away. As we got to know each other, they became more comfortable playing with me, and whenever they saw me walking alone during their free time, they would catch up to me and either do mantra with me, or they would ask me to practice English with them. We would walk together and just talk, I would listen to them tease each other, we would race with each other, or play chess. Rinpoche asked me to come to Nepal, to teach these children English. In return, they gave me so much love and

warmth. While we may be from different parts of the world, approaching each other with humor and light-heartedness allowed us to share an unconditional bond.

One particular moment I would like to share with you is that one day, I brought in my bag full of prayer books with the Lions Roar logo and photograph on the back, as well as framed pictures of Lama and Geshela. I let them rummage through, and when they saw the picture of our own Lions Roar temple in the back they got so excited and asked me if this was my temple back home. I told them that it was, and they proceeded to share the prayer books and comment on the temple. A young boy named Tharpa pulled out the photographs of Lamala and Geshela from my bag and immediately started laughing hysterically. “Miss! Miss! This is a foreign man!” He said laughing as he pointed to the picture of Lamala. “Why is he dressed like a monk? He is white like you!” I laughed along and explained to him that this was our dharma teacher back home and that he used to be a monk, but they still couldn't get over seeing a foreigner wearing the same clothes they do every day. As Tharpa looked at the picture of Geshela he said “Miss! Miss! This is a Nepali man! Like us!” I laughed and said, he's not like you, he is foreign too, from Mongolia. “He is Mongolian Man?” Tharpa replied, “No, I think he looks like Nepali man.” When I explained to him that this man, was our Geshela, the kids visibly became impressed. They each passed the photograph of Geshela to each other, examining it quietly. They understand how much hard work goes into becoming a Geshela, how many years of studying, memorizing, theorizing, and debate goes to earn the title of Geshela. It is a dream for many of these young monks to earn the title of Geshe, and the respect they had was apparent from their reaction.

Many, if not most of these children, grew up without a formal education. Rinpoche's monastery was only established about two years ago, and for the few 18-year-old boys there. Their education started at 16. Rinpoche founded his monastery not only with the intent to educate the young monks to the highest standard of learning the Dharma but also to have a traditional, formal education. This is quite different from many of the other monastic schools, which usually only focus on dharma studies. The kids there learn math, English, science, Nepali, and Tibetan along with their dharma course work, and their relationship with education is extremely admirable.

Some of the younger students, under 9 years old, are silly and some don't want to study so much, but the kids over the age of 10 or 11 are extremely studious, because thanks to Rinpoche, they now have the opportunity to have an education, an opportunity which they did not have before. Seeing this, it becomes extremely apparent how blessed we all are to have the privilege of formal education, to be able to learn new things off the internet, to read books so leisurely. Education is a privilege that not many people get to receive.

During my three months in Nepal, Rinpoche was so incredibly generous with his time with me. We would go to the city together and he would show me some beautiful architecture and Buddhist monuments and discuss the dharma with me, but some of the most profound teachings came from watching his interactions with others. During my first week in Nepal, we were walking from a Shakyamuni Shrine in Kathmandu, when Rinpoche stopped near an elderly street peddler with a scale. He struck a conversation with the peddler in Nepali and laughed with him, he paid him a few rupees and got on the scale to check his weight. Initially, I thought this was a bit silly, to pay a street peddler some money to check your weight. But as I put my

judgment aside, I noticed that his shoes and clothing were worn, and his hands were calloused, and he was visibly exhausted. Still, he smiled at Rinpoche and held a conversation with him for a few minutes. After Rinpoche said goodbye to him, he turned to me and told me that these street peddlers often spend their days outside because they need to earn a small amount of money to feed themselves or to feed their families. They do not have jobs and this is their only means of survival.

Now, I think about all those other people who are less fortunate than I am, and how I passed them as I was walking without a second thought, or even the homeless men and women who I passed a few bills to outside the crack in my car window. Rinpoche proceeded to give money to the poor peddlers nearly every time we left the monastery together, but he never just handed them a few bucks and walked past them. He stopped and he spoke with them, for a few moments, it was just Rinpoche and that person who he was speaking to. He treated them with respect, with humor, as if he was speaking to an old friend. Many of us, can do the minimum and spare our change to give money to someone hungry, but we must go further, and take the step to show the person who is helping respect, to treat them as our genuine equal, and not someone who should be treated with fear or even with pity. Compassion goes beyond charity, compassion is taking your time to truly connect with another person.

Towards the last 4 weeks of my trip, Rinpoche directed me to go on a solitary retreat. We initially planned to go into seclusion away from the monastery, but the coronavirus fears were just picking up, and for safety reasons, we proceeded the retreat at the monastery. Rinpoche instructed me to turn off all my electronics, and not to watch any tv shows or do any reading or listen to music. Even doing things such as cleaning must be done with absolute mindfulness.

“Even when you pick up a cup, you cannot do this on autopilot, you must think about your action with absolute mindfulness.” The only person I could contact at this time was Rinpoche, and only for discussing any dharma questions that came up during meditation. I was not allowed to interact with any of the children at this time. Meals were taken in my room, alone and in silence.

On the first day of my retreat, I noticed so many distractions that came into my mind. Thoughts of the past. People who hurt me. Feelings of regret, anger, and sadness. I took note of all these feelings and thoughts and approached him the next day. Rinpoche then instructed me to conduct an analytical meditation session which involved finding the positives of each person who hurt me. The most constructive and transformative method of this was to write everything down on paper. As I wrote about the positive qualities of each person, I felt myself become lighter. With each stroke of my pen, I learned to forgive myself for harboring negative feelings that obscured my buddha nature. It was not directly the harm that was inflicted by others which hindered my peace, but it was the negativity I carried which was the direct harm for my peace. Right now, we are dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. We are all struggling with our mental health and spending so much time alone with ourselves. Even if we find ourselves with our families, there is still a sense of isolation. During this time, if you are struggling with periods of depression or negativity, or even if you notice yourself having flashbacks of remembering bad times in your life. I encourage you to sit alone with yourself and examine the truth of the situation. The truth is, you are not being harmed in the direct moment. If you find yourself quarantining alone, I hope you spend some time with yourself without any distractions. No form of media or activity whatsoever. And that during this time, you can take accountability for the thoughts that come into your mind. Reflect on what thoughts influence you when you are alone.

Any negative thought you have about yourself or another person, take note of it. Realize it. Acknowledge it. Then, transform it into a positive one. This is the easiest way to transform yourself to be a more peaceful person who lives in the present.

Later in my solitary retreat, Rinpoche asked me what animal I feared most in the world. I told him that it was a crocodile. We both share a deep-rooted fear of crocodiles. Rinpoche explained to me that in his childhood after he was recognized as a tulku, his master took him to the Zoo and had him meditate on the crocodile and bless it with mantras. The next step in my retreat was to practice analytical meditation on the crocodile and then to select a person who I have deep-seated feelings of hate for and meditate on both.

So my next day of meditation, I had to meditate on a crocodile and Jeffery Epstein. Not exactly a blissful day! So as I sat and mediated, initially, I was filled with feelings of repulsion. Repulsion towards crocodiles for how they viciously kill their prey, and repulsion towards Jeffrey Epstein for all the harm and pain he caused so many people for his pleasure. However, the more and more I meditated on it. The more feelings of sympathy I had. The crocodile kills in such a way because it's in his nature to kill in that way. The crocodile has no choice because his own karma gave him such a rebirth. Like the crocodile, we are helpless in who we are born as. This is why human life is so precious. It is because we have the conscience choice to create positive karma.

Like Shantideva said in his text, the Bodhisattva Way of Life. "Just like a blindman discovering a jewel in a heap of rubbish, likewise by some coincidence An Awakening Mind was born within me. " Focusing my mediation on Jeffrey Epstein, I realized that his human life was wasted because he caused so much harm to others, and like that we also cannot waste our short

time on this earth. Regardless of the harm a person, an animal, or any other sentient being causes today, we cannot lose faith that in their future lives, they will have the power to be positive beings. In the same vein, we cannot forget how blessed we are to have this life today, because we have undoubtedly caused so much harm to others in our past lives. Whatever you hate or fear most in this world, you must recognize that it is so likely that you embody exactly what you dislike in a past life. This is why tantra is so important. We can live our lives blindly and happily, in ignorant bliss. But it is more powerful to truly and deeply examine the negative feelings which are brought alive so easily with just a little bit of prodding.

One of the other more profound experiences of my trip is that during the first week of February, Rinpoche held a weeklong retreat for his students, so we had about 80 visitors from Taiwan, Mongolia, and Vietnam. All of the staff and students there went through so much preparation to have so many visitors coming, and even when they were there, there was this sense of anxiety because of the coronavirus, and at the time we still didn't know anything about it. So we all tried to be as careful as possible, and Rinpoche had the retreat with everyone wearing facemasks as they meditated for hours. Rinpoche displayed a really elegant sense of concern for others, even while myself and others kind of just downplayed everything. Rinpoche always made sure all of us were taking the correct precautions, and he took on a sense of compassion and concern on behalf of all our wellbeing, which to this day is so inspiring.

I remember even myself, we were talking about how the coronavirus was picking up and how Rinpoche believed that it would potentially affect the whole world, and I was just like "Oh, the media over sensationalizes things all the time, we had swine flu, and SARS and its never gotten that bad!" Instead of arguing with me, Rinpoche just smiled and laughed and proceeded to make

sure I and everyone else wore a mask. He was able to communicate his point in a nonverbal way, and time, of course, proved him right, and me wrong. To use skillful means like that is such an effective way to communicate with others. With everything Rinpoche does or says, there is always a very inspiring sense of humility where he doesn't feel the need to prove himself right, he just behaves in a way of a true Buddha.

The participants of the retreat themselves were all so incredibly generous, good-natured, and accomplished people. They approached me with such kindness and open-heartedness, and it reminded me of our own lion's roar sangha here in Sacramento. They approached me without labels. Without any sense of ego, and it surprised me to hear later on about the accomplishments of so many people. One man is a professor of Physics at USC, one woman is a Harvard educated attorney who is now a high ranking government official with the Vietnamese government, another woman is a professor at Harvard Law School, the people who I connected with there, did not approach me with their titles, or behave as though they were of a different social class than I was.

They knew nothing about me, but approached me as a Sangha member. The man who is a professor of physics at USC, his name is Mr. Chau, actually came to class with me to help me teach the older class. He treated the students with so much love and care, even though it was his first time meeting them. He would ask them questions in English, and I watched them respond and maintain a conversation with him, and I saw how confident they felt with their language skills. As their teacher, it filled me with such pride and happiness. Mr. Chau praised them, and he told them that if they study hard, the whole world will be open to them, and how one day they could even be able to travel to America and meet us there. I looked at the boys and I felt this

overwhelming sense of community, I told them “There are Sangha members who love and support you, and you haven’t even met them yet!”

At that moment, it got through to me that Sangha is not just the people who attend the temple with you. The Lion’s Roar Sangha is not limited to those who attend the Sacramento dharma center, it reaches the ends of the Earth. We have an immediate connection with dharma practitioners all over the world. I have only met a small fraction of these people during the retreat, and maybe you haven’t met them yet, but I guarantee you, there are dharma practitioners all over the world, who may not speak your language, but they still love you and care for you based on the bonds of our practice.

I knew as I was living it, that this part of my life was the happiest I had ever been. While I was sad about leaving, I never felt like it was the end of a trip or experience or anything like that. I cried after my last class with the children, not because I didn’t think I would never see them again, but I cried because I didn’t want them to grow up too much while I was gone. When I went to give my last khata and formally say goodbye to Rinpoche, I also presented him with a card which I wrote my gratitude for him, because I knew it wouldn’t be possible to verbalize it. Sure enough, as soon as I opened my mouth to say thank you, I started bawling. Rinpoche just laughed, wrapped a khata around my neck, and told me that we would see each other soon and if I ever needed him, day or night, to just call him and he would always pick up the phone right away.

There are no words, for the immense sense of gratitude that I feel to this day, there is no way I can every repay Lamala and Geshela, for their teachings and for how they prepared me for this trip, to Lama for telling Rinpoche about me. And there is no way I can repay Rinpoche for

the magnitude of his kindness, his trust in me, and for all that I learned from him. Lamala, Geshela, and Rinpoche are some of the greatest masters a person can ever imagine. If you listen to them, and I mean really listen to them, not with your ears, but with your heart-mind, you will realize (if you haven't already) that every single action, every single word, is a teaching.

The only feasible way we can start to pay back these beautiful masters who so generously give their time for us is to dedicate ourselves as their students. It doesn't mean just being scholars and memorizing texts, it doesn't mean buying expensive statues or offering bowls to put on an altar, to be a dedicated dharma student, means you rise to the challenge of living your everyday life. It means to consider every action you take. It means holding yourself accountable for each time you engage with another being. It means pushing yourself to be compassionate when it is so easy not to be. And it means to recognize how much of a struggle it is to truly dedicate yourself to moving against samsaras current and to attain Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings.