

# WHY I CHOSE THE PATH TO BECOME A TIBETAN TRANSLATOR

BY LUCIA VIDELA



*"I simply could not stop crying. I felt at home."*

In 2011, my dad asked me if I was interested in attending a teaching that was being held by Gerardo Abboud in his Buddhist center in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

I was 15 at the time and I wasn't thrilled about it, to be honest. I don't remember what that first teaching was about, but I do remember that I did not understand what was meant by "to transcend," so my dad and I discussed that for a while after we had left the teaching.

Shortly after that, I heard that a retreat was going to be held by a Rinpoche in Buenos Aires. My dad was going, so I asked if I could join. He was a bit surprised but he said of course.

That Rinpoche was Tsoknyi Rinpoche and that was my first ever meeting with him. I mostly remember his smile and thinking there was something so special and different about that way of smiling.





After that retreat, I continued to attend retreats with Rinpoche every time he came to Argentina. In January 2017, he was planning to teach a month-long retreat in Argentina. Gerardo was translating into Spanish and he offered me to translate from Spanish into English, simultaneously. I came very close to not doing it, but in the end I decided to do it.

It was an incredible experience. Shocker, right? I felt so happy translating and I felt such amazing support from the crowd that was listening to my translation. Some of the most endearing people I've ever met, I met in that retreat.



A bit less than a year after that, I traveled to India for the first time with a friend. My dad suggested we include a bit of Nepal in our schedule and stop in Kathmandu. We did as he suggested and while in Kathmandu we rented a bike then went off to Pokhara. After Pokhara, we decided to go to Chitwan. On our way back from Chitwan, something magical happened. My sense of direction is straight up horrible and upon seeing many stupas, I guessed we were in Boudha. So I pulled out my phone to check, but it read "Chobar" instead.

I had recently learned about the nunnery Rinpoche was building, and he suggested we stop. We stopped the bike and as we looked to the side of the road, we realized we had parked exactly at the entrance. A small yellow sign read "Tsoknyi Gechak Ling". So we got off the bike, went up, and I can't really describe what happened then. I simply could not stop crying. I felt at home.





The Principal was Fionnuala, who I had met in August of that same year in Rinpoche's Crestone retreat. She welcomed us with milk tea and talked to us about Tsoknyi Gechak Ling. I asked her if I could stay there sometime and she said that sadly not at the moment. But she did say that if I was interested in spending some more time in Nepal I should get in touch with someone called Anya, who was running the Translator Training Program (TTP) at Rangjung Yeshe Institute (RYI). After we left, I got in touch with Anya, who sent me all the info about the TTP.

After that experience there was no doubt that I wanted to spend some time in Nepal. In August 2018, I ended up going to Crestone where I finalized my plans, received amazing advice, and decided to ask Rinpoche if I should indeed go to study in Nepal. He said he thought that I should and the adventure started.



I moved to Boudha in August 2019 and started my BA in Buddhist Philosophy and Himalayan Languages at RYI because of suggestions that it would be best to start by diving deeper into Buddhist philosophy and the Tibetan language before attempting to learn Tibetan strictly in the context of translation. In March 2020, RYI moved its classes online. Although Nepal was in lockdown, I stayed there up until December 2020 when I decided to go back to Argentina and have been studying remotely since. I am so thankful that I can still study. It's bittersweet though, because I really miss Nepal and my friends from Boudha, the on-campus experience, sitting in on pujas...

Studying at RYI has helped me both in an academic way, a professional way, and as a practitioner. My wish is to become a translator in order to help spread the Dharma. I can only hope that I can be of good help with Rinpoche's projects. I still have a lot of studying to do, but luckily I've always been keen on studying. And when it comes to studying these topics, I can whole-heartedly say that it has been a life changing experience.