



Kamalashila Initiative's Visiting Scholars Program has been one of the greatest experiences I've had at UC Irvine. It was my freshman year that I discovered this organization. Coordinated by Bibi and her husband, this organization brings Tibetan monks from Nepal, India, and other parts of the world on an exchange. At UC Irvine, this program gives monks accommodation and English education. In exchange, students and faculty are able to attend their dharma talks. It was here, my perspective of Buddhism opened up. Although I was raised Buddhist, the extent of my knowledge for a long time was that there were temples and statues of Buddha of whom we respect. The idea of enlightenment felt like an analogy to Jesus' reincarnation- it just happened. To see the depth of Buddhism and how I can apply it to my daily life is what I truly treasure from this program.

In the evening spring air, I hurriedly walked every Tuesday to attend the lectures. The format of the lectures was well thought out. Starting with meditation to clear and calm the mind before the dharma talk, made it easy to absorb the material. Although at times it was difficult to understand due to language barriers, it was always refreshing when the monks and translators would try to simplify the message for us. The monks spoke simple and relatable analogies that connected to all of us, which increased our curiosity and understanding. With a question and answer session to end the lecture, the audience had the opportunity to ask questions about the lecture and our own personal questions. Every time I came out of lecture, I felt a sense of liberation as I walked towards the student center. It was much easier to smile. I am grateful for Kamalashila Initiative also because it had exposed me to Tibetan culture and language. One of the monks kindly taught me and my mother some Tibetan language when he was free. Undoubtedly, it's a hard language for its accents.

When 2019's cohort of monks came, I had many interactions with them, including an unforgettable farewell party. We ate food, took walks in the sunset, played music, and had a Q & A section. I am now inspired to visit them in their respective countries. As I prepare for a trip to Nepal, I look forward to observing the role of Buddhism in Nepalese society. Nonetheless, this Buddhist exposure demonstrated the importance of compassion and mindfulness in daily practice.

During the last lecture of Spring 2019, I couldn't help but ask if they were sad to leave UC Irvine. With a soft smile, he said, "all good things must come to an end". I couldn't help but embrace the sunset for its impermanent nature, as we departed. Even this post must come to an end.

Thank you again to Bibi, her husband, and the monks for these profound experiences.

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