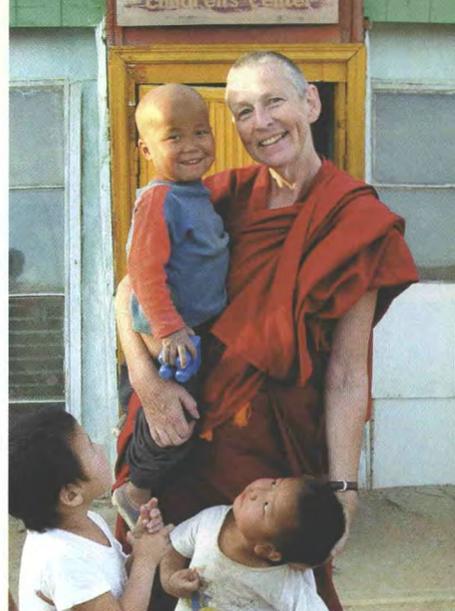


from mozart to mongolia

ANI JINPA left behind the Australian arts world where she worked as an administrator to become a nurse, primarily in palliative care and with “especially dear” dementia patients (“I could be any one of those suffering beings”). Although not a Buddhist at the time, she wondered why some people died calmly and peacefully, while others left clinging, angry and unresolved. She traveled to India, spent time in an ashram, and sought work that would extend her. She has found it in the Lotus Children’s Centre in Ulaan Bataar, Mongolia.



Ani Jinpa with her charges

Photo: Ueli Minder

One week in, the teachings [at the Kopan course] on the Precious Human Rebirth had such a profound effect on me that I knew I couldn’t waste a minute! It was everything I had been waiting to hear, and it was breathtaking to realize this knowledge had been there all the time and I hadn’t known it. It was also a relief – I began to feel my life unfolding. I took refuge with Lama Zopa Rinpoche, with the desire for ordination powerfully motivating my future plans.



My ordination in December ’99 was the most joyful experience of my life. The door opened to much happiness – and many painful experiences too – as I began to learn more about this treacherous mind and the great gifts our precious teachers offer to guide us in overcoming our obstacles.

For several months now I have worked at the Lotus Children’s Center. I’m sure the greatest benefit so far gained in my Dharma practice from this and the hospice work is my increased awareness of the impermanence of this life, seeing the resultant suffering from inner causes and mistaken ways of thinking and being able to meditate more fully on these, learning to identify the loving-kindness that can exist without attachment. The six perfections that are so clearly there to guide one’s every thought and action are a constant basis for reference – my fail rate can be fairly high some days!

Morning practice prepares me for the day that lies ahead. There is a recently ordained Mongolian *getsulma* [nun] at the FPMT center but I am the only Western nun in Mongolia. There is always the thought, “Will this work create obstacles to my practice?” but every day the challenges give me the opportunity to practice Dharma – formal sitting and active practice simply blend. At burn-out point, having a quiet day with sitting, reading and meditation, not to mention a good sleep, is restorative. I also teach basic English three nights a week to our four prospective Mongolian nuns – with some hilarity.

At the Lotus, cultural difference and not having a common language cause problems to arise quickly under stress, and immediately I bring to mind the perfection of patience, that they are my benefactors.

The Lotus Children’s Centre isn’t exactly an orphanage, although there are some children living there who have

no known parents. Mostly their backgrounds are impoverished families who can’t afford to keep them, unreliable parents who are affected by alcohol, those who live on the streets, mothers working as prostitutes, young girls who leave their babies when the responsibility becomes too much, children found by the police or referred by the district officer, babies of women from the prison or asylum – and most recently eight children from a government center, several who are disabled with cerebral palsy and mental deficiencies.

The children arrive emotionally deprived and usually malnourished. Vitamin deficiencies cause many problems including delayed development, rickets and respiratory difficulties. I am observing the benefits, and obstacles, which arise in this area of service, ultimately to produce an informed assessment for establishing an independent care facility according to Rinpoche’s wishes. My work involves the general care of the children, from a baby of four weeks to many toddlers, schoolchildren and teenage girls, about fifty in all. There is a Mother and Child nurse from Australia to work with and we are there also for mothers who call in, requiring assistance with hygiene, feeding problems, medication and food for their babies.

On any day one can be mixing formula, sterilizing bottles, feeding, cooking, going to the clinic, changing nappies, bathing, haircutting and delousing, treating skin infections and the constant tummy complaints. We play games, sing songs and try to give the amount of love and cuddles needed, which are never enough. I enjoy ‘specialing’ some of the most needy children, often arriving home with little kids and grateful for the chance to share these days with them.

Already there has been experience of severe illness and death and the privilege of being included in a very poor family’s funeral for their young girl. My favorite words are “May my deeds never reach a limit, may my qualities of excellence become boundless.” To sit with these thoughts brings awareness of how far one still has to journey with the mind, transforming it to consistently live life with the good heart for the benefit of others. ☸