The Guhyasamaja Buddhist Center
by Mersina Grljevic

For my last field trip of the semester, I decided that I wanted to visit a Buddhist Meditation Center as I felt as though meditation would help me get more in touch with myself. With finals approaching at the end of the semester as well, learning the proper way of meditation could go a long way and I could hopefully use the techniques in the future. The only meditation I have done that may be similar to the Buddhist religion is yoga. I was eager to explore the difference in mediation from these two practices. The Buddhist Meditation Center that I visited is called The Guhyasamaja Center located 10875 Main St, Fairfax Va on November 22. The meditation on Sunday started at 10:30 am and finished at noon. The service was called Buddhism in a nutshell with Venerable Tendrol. Ven. Tendrol was the facilitator for the morning. One of the many interesting facts I leaned about her was that she specifically likes to share the Dharma with teenagers. I think this is because teenagers are more open to new learning and findings, and that learning Dharma may influence their lives in the future.

Upon my arrival, I expected to see a fairly large temple with statues of Buddhism surrounding the building. However, the location was much more different than I had imagined. It wasn't a Buddhist temple at all, but a regular building with three-floored overlooking balconies. This building reminded me of the buildings that doctor offices have where there are different rooms for different occupations. Once I found the Buddhist center listed under a directory, to my surprise it was just a small room where no more than 30 people can fit comfortably. As soon as I opened the door to the room, I was in complete awe as I saw bright lamps illuminating the room, colorful tapestries and paintings on the wall. On top of the table cloths were candles lit as well as Buddhist statues, or Dharma crafts meditation supplies in other words. Portraits of monks as well as different flowers and plants giving off a sense of peace and calmness. The monk was kind enough to take a picture of me next to the six foot tall statue when I walked in. I was one of the few who were there early. There were also about five rows of chairs that were set up for the service. In the middle of the floor were different colored pillows and one of the pillows that was more towards the front of the room had a microphone in front of it. The room overall was serene and absolutely quiet until people filled the chairs.

Venerable Dondrub led the introduction and he informed us that the center was opened in 1994 and has had many locations and spaces since then. He told us that meditation is a way to make an individual wiser and more affectionate. He went on about meditation and how everyone should experience it at least once in their lives. There were approximately 15 people in the room, an even ratio between men and women. What had intrigued me was that the crowd was very diverse since it was an introduction class. The ages in the room...
were all above 21 as I observed. One of the monk who sat in front of the microphone had asked for five volunteers to sit in front of the class on the pillow to practice meditating. They turned off the main lights with only the two lamps lighting the room, giving the room a more calm feeling. With no hesitation, my arm shot up and the next thing I know I was sitting crisscross in front of the room with four other people, listening to the monk speak about meditation. We were handed books so that we could follow along and look through it if we liked but I just He gently rested my eyelids, and formed two small circles with my thumb and first finger and listened to two monks chant in Tibetan. One of the monks held a bell in his hand and would ring it going from speeds slow to fast throughout the meditation. Although I could not understand the language, the rhythm of the chant was different from the prayers in Islam; it had an ongoing chant that sped up and slowed down at some parts with no specific rhythm. The chant lasted close to an hour and I found it fascinating how they kept their composure the whole time without looking and sounding the least bit exhausted.

After the meditation, we were free to ask any question toward the presiding official since it was introductory class. After the questions, they asked for donations, as the other two religions did (Christianity and Islam) that I previously wrote on. I thanked the monks for enlightening me on the meditation and went on my way. •

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