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The Guhyasamaja Buddhist Center

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For my third field trip, I decided to attend a Sunday service at a Buddhist center. The name of the center is, “The Guhyasamaja Buddhist center,” located in 10875 Main Street, Fairfax, VA 22030 in unit 108. I visited the Buddhist center on November 29th roughly around 1 pm during the visiting hours. The name of the presiding official, present at the time, is Venerable Dondrub (Losang Dondrub).

Coming up to the place where the center is located didn’t seem like much, especially from the outside. Guhyasamaja is located in an office complex, so everything outside of the area was basically city, apartments and offices. As soon as I found room 108, I was greeted by a woman, who allowed me in. Once inside, I felt transported to a total different era. The room itself was small, but everything inside fit very snug which gave a very soothing environment. Looking around I saw many small statues on tables placed on the side of the room. These small statues were of the color gold, and they were accompanied by different ornaments such as flowers. Alongside the statues and ornaments there were also many candles that were lit around the room, adding a very warm aroma to the atmosphere. In the end, what hit me the most about this place was how small it was, and how it still managed to keep a freeing environment full of statues that seemed to be staring down at you.

Once inside, I noticed that there was only around 4 more people inside the room, which in my opinion helped for the calmness of the environment. I sat down in one of the chairs near the middle and just watched along how other people had their eyes closed and just sitting restfully. I didn't think much of it at first, because I felt so new to the whole religion, but as some of the minutes kept passing on I started just feeling the energy and going with the atmosphere. I decided to go through with it, close my eyes and just meditate and think about life in general. At first, I just thought about the place I was in, and over analyzing the difference in culture I put myself in.

No one really explained to me what was going on, or what I was supposed to do. However, something I’ve come to understand is that some things are better left as a surprise. At this Buddhist center, I had to be very observant in the beginning, but once the people started meditating, everything took off.

I started sensing more peace, and I also started feeling a little more sleepy but I was awake enough to just let my mind wander around. Personally, at this point, I just started thinking about my own life, my own stress that I deal with at school, and my own perception of what was going on around the room. Regarding my life, I thought about the present, and my family, and how lucky I feel that this semester I had to go home every weekend to go to work. In the other hand, I also felt unlucky, because work combined with school made me a very
busy student, who doesn’t just worry about academics this semester.

The meditation made me feel as if I had so much clutter to deal with in my head, but it also did teach me something about myself. It taught me that no matter how unlucky a situation may seem, there are two sides to a story. I was choosing to be pessimistic about my situation, when I can just be optimistic and live happier with the way I am.

What I loved most about the first part of this service, was how critically the meditation made me think. Maybe I was supposed to just clear my head, and think about nothing, but I actually found the over analyzing to be very rewarding towards myself, and my own future. After the meditation, there was a short period of time where I actually met one of the officials, Venerable Dondrub, who actually ended up being very helpful at explaining the main purpose of the Buddhist center, and what he believes in.

Venerable Dondrub, explained to me that the center was actually founded in 1994 but had been in many different locations. One of his goals was to teach more and more people how meditation can be very helpful and it can be something that people can take away to their daily lives, to help them become more affectionate, wiser, and overall more in tune with who they really are. Venerable Dondrub also told me that the Buddhist center also offers, many introductory classes (as well as advanced classes) to the teachings of the Buddha.

Overall, I found the presence in the Buddhist Center to be filled with plenty of positive energy. The statues, and some of the art work that was hung on the wall was very intriguing, in a sense that it was something different, something I never experienced before. The opening of the service can be described as very casual, since I showed up during visiting hours.

After speaking to venerable Dondrub, I pieced together the whole point of meditation (or my own form of it). Maybe the whole clutter that was going around in my head, is needed there for now. Maybe it’s a puzzle that I need to solve by meditating. Maybe the clutter, is just layers and layers of what I really want to live for in life. This caused me to leave the Buddhist center with many answered and unanswered questions.

Overall I found my experience to be very rewarding, and throughout the field trips I’ve taken to many different religions and beliefs, I found that a service can be captivating with as much noise as a train, or as soothing as the waves crashing on an isolated island. •

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