

2015

Ekaji Buddhist Sangha

Nizama Dervisevic
dervisevicn@vcu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/rels108>

 Part of the [Religion Commons](#)

© The Author

Downloaded from

<http://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/rels108/56>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the School of World Studies at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in RELS 108 Human Spirituality by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.

Ekaji Buddhist Sangha

by Nizama Dervisevic

On Wednesday, November 18th, I attended a Richmond Meditative Inquiry Group on 3411 Grove Ave, Richmond, VA, 23221. This service was held at the Ekaji Buddhist Sangha, which holds many different Buddhist groups and practices. This particular Meditative service is held twice a week: on Sundays, 7pm-9pm, and on Wednesdays, 12pm-1pm. The 'presiding official' that day was Kirk Brown, who helped lead the meditation practice.

Before attending the meditation service, I had to get in contact with either Mr. Brown or Mr. Bryant. Both of them help run the meditation service at the Ekaji center. Because the Ekaji Buddhist Sangha has many different groups that practice there, there is no head priest or official. The founder of the Ekaji Buddhist Sangha was Reverend Kennryu Tsuji, who passed away in 2004, and since then there hasn't been a resident priest at Ekaji. However, priests and teachers from other temples or practice centers regularly visit to support the practices at Ekaji.

The outside of the Ekaji Buddhist Sangha looks like any regular house on Grove Avenue. Once you enter, the different rooms are designated for the different services. The Ekaji Buddhist Sangha center welcomes anyone who is interested in their services, no matter what religion or background. You have to contact the people who are in charge of the service you are interested in before you attend, this information can be found on their website, and for the

meditation service it was Mr. Brown and Mr. Bryant. It was very comfortable sitting in on a service because you have to meet with the person leading that day before you attend, they make sure to inform you on anything you might need to know. Once they go through the basic information, you are set.

Because it was open to everyone who was interested, it was very easy to sit in on. It was very diverse with the people who were at this Wednesday service, but it was an older crowd because of the timing. The service wasn't really meant for talking so everyone said hello but mainly kept to themselves, which is what I expected. There weren't many people at this particular service but it was very enjoyable and relaxing.

Once the service started it was a sitting meditation, which took about thirty minutes. Everyone was quiet and in their own space within the room. There was calming music in the background but they focused on the idea of us keeping quiet and meditating. Other than the 'presiding officials' I did not talk to anyone during, before, or after the service.

Everyone that showed up to the meditation seemed to have been there before. They smiled but didn't talk much, and just sat down waiting for the service to begin. Once Mr. Brown began the service, he seemed very calming and happy, and started the meditation by turning on quiet, relaxing music for

background noise and having us sit and get comfortable. It was very casual, and reserved. It felt very ritualistic and calming with everything that was happening. It helped everything that happened during the day disappear because they wanted nothing but empty minds when the meditation started. Once the service ended it felt like a load was lifted from the shoulders because it was so relaxing. Walking out of the Ekoji center I felt more relaxed and free, more than the other services I've attended. They did not push or force any religion 'down my throat', not that any of the others did, but they didn't question anyone's current religion. The main focus was the fact that you were there and that you were trying to meditate and experience the environment. I wasn't aware of any rituals that occurred during the service, but once I looked up typical Buddhist rituals, I realized basic meditation is actually a ritual in their beliefs. Buddhists believe that meditation is about the mind and its purification. The purpose of meditation is to calm the wandering of our minds. The room was decorated very simplistically because it wasn't supposed to be distracting, but there were smaller statues of Buddha around the room. •

Written Fall 2015. © Nizama Dervisevic.