

Buddhism: a spiritual experience essay examples

[Religion](#), [Buddhism](#)



Introduction

One of the side trips in California brought me to an unexpected, yet pleasantly surprising place. Considered as the largest Buddhist community in the Western hemisphere, The City of Ten Thousand Buddha is situated in Talmage at Mendocino County, California. The trip was intentionally a visit to a friend, but somehow I found myself in a center of one of the most profound and oldest religion in the world. The place is collectively a community built around the Buddhist monasteries founded by Hsuan Hua. The place is a typical of a Buddhist community with temples and elaborate statues of Buddha adorning the altar. However, the experience is rather more surreal than the site's encompassing charm.

The Sights

The Ten Thousand Buddhas greet its visitors with a Chinese inspired mountain gate with Buddhist scriptures written on its archways. The place is composed of a main monastery and several other infrastructures that the community settlers established during the development of the area including a University. In general the entire areas is considered as a Buddhist community more than being a place of worship. Among the structures built within the Ten Thousand Buddhas, the Jeweled Hall of 10, 000 Buddhas is considered as the community's religious central. The Hall is decorated with banners and lamps to graze the presence of a 20-foot Buddha statue. Basically the Hall us used as the main prayer Hall in the community while the traditions and rituals are being held in other part of the monastery such as the Hall of no Words and Tathagata Monastery. Even though the Buddhist

community was built in a Western setting surrounded by a contemporary socio-cultural discourse, the Buddhist community was still able to preserve the traditions and rituals of a Buddhist life.

There are common misconceptions about Buddhist traditions including the “gasho” in which the hands are put together and bow the head. Most people think that such gesture means praying for good fortune all the while it means an expression of gratitude, humility and to wish the other person well.

Furthermore, the Buddhist traditions and belief encompasses spiritual core values drawn from the virtues of morality and good conduct. One of the notable customs in Buddhism that can be observed in the Ten Thousand Buddhas is the offering of incense. Others believe that more expensive incense are better than the ordinary, but the Buddhist tradition particularly in Ten Thousand Buddhas, personal offerings of incense should not be based on its monetary value. In fact, one stick of incense is enough to be offered to the whole monastic group because one is as valuable as giving a dozen or more and being greatly appreciated by the monks.

Personal Note

I was lucky to have experienced a morning service in the Hall of No Words in the morning of my second day of visit. As I enter the entrance of the hall a monk greeted me by placing his hands together and bowing. I did the same and asked if its ok to use the camera inside the hall, taking pictures inside the hall during the service is ok as long as I disable the flash. As I walk in, I had the feeling of reverence and I can feel the seriousness of the place in itself. Although the hall is packed with people attending the service, there is still almost a complete silence and all the artificial lighting were turned off

and the only source of light in the hall comes from the candles in the altar. Now I understand why flash photography is not allowed inside the hall, the flashing light might distract the mood of the service and the solemnness of the occasion.

At the end of the service after the chanting, meditation and reading of the sutras (teachings of Buddha) I came into epiphany that Buddhism is one serious religion, that no matter how long it would take, endurance and discipline are the key to absolute enlightenment. From a practical standpoint, the worship and religious practices in Buddhism is not so different from other religion such as Protestantism. Buddhism encompasses a lot of sutra reading, which puts emphasis on applying the teachings of Buddha into daily living. Similarly, the protestant faith also believes in the same practices, with a lot of readings of the Bibles and insinuate practicing the values of the religious teachings into daily living. During the experience, I only had one question, to whom are the Buddhist prayers being offered to? At first I assumed that all the prayers are being offered to Buddha himself because my notion about the religion is that Buddha represent the God of the religion. However, I learned that there is no God in Buddhism; Buddha himself is not a God for his followers, but a great teacher. The religion believes in reality, living every moment of their life in its own time and uses the teachings of Buddha to guide them through. The questions that I have at the beginning was answered by opening myself to the experience and absorb everything that is going on wound me at that particular moment. It also helped to have a few monks to have a conversation with that told me most of the things that I have mentioned herewith.

Conclusion

In all honesty, I would not take away anything from the experience because not all religious explorations that I had left me a profound impression of surrealism and spiritual uplifting. Having said that, I would look forward to visiting the place again or if not find a chance to visit other Buddhist temples instead in places that I'm would be travelling to. The great experience is something that I could recommend to my friends not only to open their eyes to what Buddhism would reveal, but also as a form of cultural, social and spiritual reflection.