



Padmasri

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~ILAB Inauguration Ceremony~

On April 11th, the auspicious first general meeting of International Ladies Association of Buddhism took place in Kodosan temple, Yokohama. Amid the beautiful spring air, over fifty people from eight different countries – Thailand, Sri Lanka, Nepal, India, Burma, France, America and Japan – gathered to celebrate its inauguration and to participate in this special program. Honorable Guests included Mr. and Mrs. Phan Wannamethee (President of World Buddhist Federation), Mr. and Mrs. Thiary (Secretary General of WBF) and Family, and Madam Jasmine Palipane, spouse of the Sri Lankan Ambassador to Japan. Most of the participants were women who are keen to learn about the teachings of Buddhism and Buddhist culture.



Chairperson,
Ms. Rinko Okano

The first general meeting was initiated with an inauguration speech by chairperson, Ms. Rinko Okano. She said that “the Buddha’s teachings transcended the caste system and reached to different people in the society in his time. We, as followers of Buddhism, should also transcend various differences of our time. In this sense, ILAB has many tasks and responsibilities, especially in nurturing female Buddhists to become leaders of the society.”

She then explained about the function and goals of ILAB. She said that through academic and cultural activities of ILAB, we can learn from Buddhists of other countries and denominations about the extensive teachings of the Buddha. We can also deepen our faith by practicing Buddhism in our daily lives. Eventually, female Buddhist leaders can disseminate the Buddha’s message of wisdom and compassion, and contribute to world peace by overcoming differences.

Board of ILAB



Ms. Rinko Okano
(Chairperson)



Ms. Ann Sado
(Board Director)



Rev. Ikuko Hibino
(Board Director)



Ms. Hiroko Maruyama
(Board Director)



Rev. Myosei Midorikawa
(Board Director)



Ms. Karen Okano
(Board Director)



Ms. Kiyoko Suzuki
(Secretary)

[Part 1: Meditation session]

Samatha and Vipassana meditation in Tendai style

Before noon, we held a meditation session. It was led by Rev. Myosei Midorikawa in style of Tendai (a Japanese denomination.) She explained that there are two major aims of this meditation, to concentrate (in Sanskrit “Samatha”), and to see or analyze (“Vipassana”). These two are like wings of a bird: keeping a good balance of both techniques enables the mind to achieve deep concentration and to focus on the object clearly. On this day, she introduced “breath-counting meditation.”

After her clear explanation, the participants practiced the meditation. What a pleasant surprise that many of them seemed to be used to meditating! For 30 minutes, the Hall was filled with tranquility and peace.



People enjoyed peaceful moment in meditation.

[Part 2: Talk]

Brief History of Buddhism

After a delicious International vegetarian lunch, we proceeded to the second part of the program.

Reverend Ikuko Hibino gave a talk titled “Brief history of Buddhism” in Japanese, with English translation by Ms. Ann Sado.



Rev. Hibino (right) and Ms. Ann Sado (left).

Rev. Hibino talked about the background and development of Buddhism. She also told us how the Buddha’s teachings spread across the continents, and how it split into different groups in accordance with the disciples’ different views. With photos, maps, and images, Rev. Hibino gave a lively and clear talk. The historical atmosphere and the courage of the people of that time were revived in front of the attentive audience.

Closing ceremony

At the end of the program, Ms. Karen Okano gave a closing speech. She quoted a well-known Chinese poem from the Song Dynasty called “Admiring the Lotus”. She said, “the lotus is a symbol of wisdom and compassion. Like the lotus, women can become excellent female leaders, teachers and caring mothers of all the children even in a world of conflicts and confusion. Let us unite in making a brighter future based on peace and equality.”

As a finale, all the attendants joined in a prayer for peace by reciting the Heart Sutra in Japanese, led by Ms. Rinko Okano.

Voices from the participants

ILAB’s first general meeting was held in a friendly, educational, and inspirational atmosphere. Many participants said they enjoyed program. Here are some comments from the participants.

- *Congratulations, I believe this organization will help the women’s future!*
- *It was a very good program. Recruit many members to develop the association. Thank you*
- *It was a very educational experience. I learned a lot about the history of Buddhism.*
- *I thought it was a good opportunity to network the others.*

* * *

~ Announcements ~

★ **Autumn Excursion to Jindai-ji temple.**

Date: October 4th, 2009 (Sun)

※ For more details, please see the flyer.

★ **The second General Meeting will take place in early December.**

We are planning to hold a meditation session in Jodo denomination style, a talk on Tibetan Buddhism and experience of tea ceremony in our second general meeting. We look forward to seeing you there.

★ **We welcome you to ILAB membership.**

We have three types of memberships: Regular membership, Student membership and Associate membership. We sincerely welcome your application. ※ For more details, please see the application guideline.

What is International Ladies Association of Buddhism, or ILAB?

ILAB aims at offering opportunities for females to meet and exchange their views, to learn and practice Buddha's teachings regardless of denominations and nationalities, and to educate and support young female Buddhist students/academics. ILAB Chairperson is Ms. Rinko Okano (Vice President, Kodo Kyodan), and Board Directors are Ms. Ann Sado (Executive Director of social enterprises), Rev. Ikuko Hibino (Head Priestess of Kayadera Temple/Jodo denomination), Ms. Hiroko Maruyama (Lecturer/Waseda School of Environment), Rev. Myosei Midorikawa (Nun/Tendai denomination), Ms. Karen Okano (Wife of President of Kodo Kyodan). ILAB is a part of the activities organized by International Buddhist Exchange Center (IBEC), an independent academic organ of Kodo Kyodan. Program includes meditation, talk, introductions of Buddhist culture and rituals, debate, workshops, and contests, etc. At the moment, we are conducting two general meetings a year, as well as occasional outings and visits to Buddhist temples and sites. Our activities will be conducted mainly in English with Japanese translation when necessary.

(*Padmasri* is the name of ILAB's newsletter; It is a Sanskrit name meaning 'Divine Lotus'.)



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