



~ Report of the 2nd General Meeting of ILAB ~

On December 5th 2009, the 2nd General Meeting of International Ladies Association of Buddhism (ILAB) was held in Kodosan temple, Yokohama. It was the nearest Sunday to the memorial day of the Buddha's enlightenment which is celebrated in Japan on December 8th. On this day, more than thirty members from India, France, USA, Australia, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Japan joined the meeting to learn about Buddhist teachings and culture.

OPENNING: Greeting by Chairperson



Firstly, Chairperson Ms. Rinko Okano briefly reviewed the life of Sakyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism.

Soon after Sakyamuni Buddha was born, he lost his mother. He was brought up as a prince, but he couldn't dispel the feeling of impermanence, and renounced the world at the age of 29. Then, he started Buddhist ascetic training. He studied under Uddaka Rāma Putta and other masters and went through intensive ascetic practices for six years. But he realized that those ascetic practices wouldn't lead him to the enlightenment. One day, he washed his body in the Ganga River, and received the offering of milk porridge from a girl named Sjahta. It recharged him with fresh energy and he started meditation under a Bodhi tree in Buddha-gaya for 49 days. Finally, he achieved enlightenment. Since then, he spent all his life to give teachings to people in order to liberate them from ignorance and sufferings.

It is said that there are 84,000 teachings of Buddha, including the four noble truths (reality, origin, cessation and path to cessation of suffering). Ms. Okano said she wished that we Buddhists would live in accordance with his teachings. It is easy to be egoistic in this conventional world, but love and compassion to others are more important. Though there are differences between Buddhist denominations, the base of Buddhism is always

the same. So all Buddhists, especially the young people, should study Buddhism to understand the diversity of this world and think about how we can contribute to the society.

PROGRAM 1: Basic teachings of Jodo Buddhism and walking meditation in Jodo style

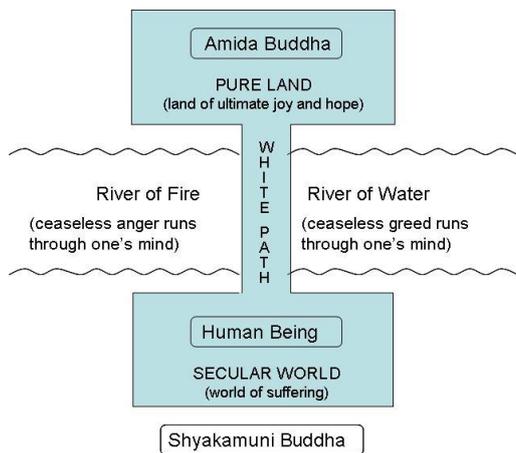
Proceeded by the recitation of "Homage to the Three Gems (Buddha, Teaching, Buddhist community)" in Pali language and "Heart Sutra" in Japanese led by Rev. Myosei Midorikawa, the first program of the day, "meditation in Jodo style", was presented by Rev. Ikuko Hibino (Priestess/Jodo sect).



~The Teaching of Two Rivers and a White Path~

Jodo is one of the Japanese Buddhist denominations. It weighs on the recitation of the name of Amida-Buddha. In Buddhism, we look at our own mind and try to find out where our suffering comes from. Some of the origins of suffering are ignorance and attachment. However, it is very difficult to remove them by oneself. Therefore, Jodo denomination tries to remove them by depending on the power of others, in other words, the power of the Buddhas (enlightened beings). Amida-Buddha is also called "Buddha with limitless light" or "Buddha with limitless life". When we are suffering in darkness, Amida-Buddha's enormous emanation of light illuminates our way. To call for Amida-Buddha, we can recite "NAMU AMIDABUTSU" to call him, anytime and anywhere.

Whether we are standing, walking, sitting, lying down etc.



This is a chart of “Two Rivers and A White Path” drawn by Chinese master Zendo-Daishi. The two rivers are Fire River and Water River which respectively represent our ceaseless anger and greed running through our minds. They are the origins of our sufferings. We have to walk on the white path without falling into the rivers in order to reach the Pure Land (Enlightenment). But the white path is so narrow while our surroundings are filled with darkness that it is very difficult to go across it.

Fortunately, Amida-Buddha in the Pure Land will guide us. He lights up the path with his bright radiance and lead us to the Pure Land. Therefore, we should focus our minds on Amida-Buddha by reciting his name again and again.

~Walking Meditation~

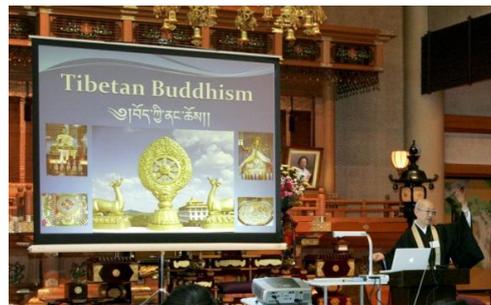
After the lecture, we experienced walking meditation in Jodo style. Following Rev. Hibino, we walked slowly and recited “NAMU AMIDABUTSU” in a solid voice. When we continue this mindful walking and recitation, our thoughts gradually ceased to arise. We could naturally focus on the movement of our body and we felt our minds became clearer. All participants experienced unusual freshness and tranquility.



PROGRAM 2: Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan Monasteries in South India

~Brief introduction of Tibetan Buddhism~

The second program was presented by Rev. Myosei Midorikawa (Nun / Tendai sect).



Buddhism was transmitted to Tibet from Nepal and India. King Songtsen Gampo in 7th century who unified the country placed Buddhism as the state religion of Tibet. He built the main temple in Lhasa, the capital city, which still stands today. Since then, many Tibetans underwent great hardship to travel to India and Nepal to gain Buddhism doctrines of sutra and tantra. They also invited saints from India. Many scriptures were translated into the Tibetan language. When Indian Buddhism was destroyed in 13th century, many great Buddhist masters and practitioners came to Tibet. They further deepened Tibetan Buddhism, and it finally became a main religion in the Himalayan regions, including Nepal, Bhutan, northern India (Ladakh, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh). It was also practiced in Mongolia, some parts of Russia and Northeast China as well.

In the wake of Tibetan uprising in 1959, many Tibetans escaped from the country. As a result, Tibetan Buddhism was also brought out of the country. It made Tibetan Buddhism widely accessible to the rest of the world. Since then, it gained great popularity in the western world as well.

~Four Religious Orders and Three Vehicles~

There are four main religious orders in Tibetan Buddhism. They are Ningma, Sakya, Kagyu, Geluk. All of them are of the Consequence School in the view of emptiness, and all have paths that are union of sutra and tantra. Tibetan Buddhism is categorized as Mahayana Buddhism, but they study all the texts from the three vehicles of Buddhism. The Three Vehicles are “Foundational Vehicle” which practices on the basis of scriptures; “Mahayana Vehicle” which is the path of Bodhisattva who has the determination to save others; and “Vajrayana Vehicle” which is a part of Mahayana Vehicle but has special meditation techniques.

~ Tibetan Monasteries in South India~

Then, Rev. Myosei presented photos of Tibetan monasteries in South India. After Tibetans took exile into

India, many traditional Tibetan monasteries were re-established in India. The photos showed huge monasteries, statues, and a large number of monks who are studying there. Through these photos, we learned about their simple lifestyles and how hard and seriously they are practicing Buddhism.



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After enjoying a delicious vegetarian lunch, we proceeded to the afternoon programs on Tea Ceremony.

PROGRAM 3: The Brief History of Tea Ceremony

Ms. Maruyama (lecturer/Waseda Univ.) gave a lecture on 'the Brief History of Tea Ceremony'.

Although the Tea Master "SEN Rikyu" (1522-91) is most renowned, there were actually two other important masters before Rikyu. One was MURATA Shuko (1422-1503) and the other was TAKENO Joo. (1504-55).



MURATA Shuko is known as the founder of Tea Ceremony "Wabi-Cha" (elegant simplicity). He studied Buddhism of the Zen sect. Before Shuko, tea gatherings were a kind of entertainment, but Shuko brought a spiritual path to tea gatherings. Shuko suggested that the preparation process and the appreciation of tea could be an expression of the Zen belief. Shuko left these words: "A moon which is not behind clouds is disagreeable", meaning that a moon that appears and disappears behind the clouds is more beautiful than a brilliant full moon. This aesthetic sense of deficiency is essential to the "Wabi-Cha" that Shuko created.

MURATA Shuko's concept of Tea was to be further developed by TAKENO Joo, who was an influential citizen of the prosperous mercantile city of Sakai. Joo also studied Zen and received the words "Chazen Ichimi" (Tea and Zen are one) from the Zen priest Dairin Soto.

Finally, SEN Rikyu accomplished the establishment of

"Wabi-Cha", which means "the taste of elegant simplicity." Rikyu was a son of a wealthy merchant in Sakai. He also studied Zen. Rikyu's aim was to remove the element of "play" or entertainment as much as possible, and to achieve Tea Ceremony that was centered on spiritual exchange between people and had a corresponding intensity.

Rikyu's grandson, Sotan, had three sons. They established three Sen families of Tea Ceremony, Mushanokojisenke, Omotesenke, and Urasenke in the beginning of the Edo period (17th century). These three families have been taking active parts to carry the tradition of Tea Ceremony not only in Japan but also in the world. The development of Tea Ceremony had profound connection with Buddhism, especially Zen. The tradition continues even today.

PROGRAM 4: Architecture of the Tea Room

Then everyone moved to the Tea House "Jakusho-an" (the name means "glowing in tranquility"). Ms. Karen Okano explained architecture of the tea room and thoughts behind each element. Hearing her thorough explanations, we came to know that every small details of tea room have meaning, and they are designed with sensitive consideration. Influences from Zen Buddhism were also seen everywhere.



For example, *Nijiri-guchi*, the entrance to the tea room is only 60cm high. *Nijiri* means to move on your knees. It is a gesture of humility and a sign of respect for the host and the other guests. Another purpose of the *nijiri* entrance was to avoid warriors bringing their swords into the tea room which would destroy the peaceful atmosphere. She also explained about materials of ceiling, pillars, walls and etc. Ms. Karen concluded as follows. The essence of a tearoom is to show hospitality and consideration (*omoiyari*) in the simplest and most refined way that requires exquisite craftsmanship of the highest level. The architecture of this "straw hut" (as called by Sen Rikyu) can be in fact as finely built as a grand palace. That is why one can always forget about the troubles and get positive energy in a tearoom by enjoying the quiet and special moments. In other words, through tea ceremony, we are applying Buddhism in our

daily lives by relieving others from pains and troubles, and by showing compassion and consideration to others.



Rev. Ikuko Hibino demonstrated the etiquette of Tea Ceremony to be observed by a guest.



Ms. Alberte Rabiller showed us how to enter the tea room through the Nijiri-guchi entrance.

Finally, Ms. Ann Sado demonstrated tea making. The

participants were enchanted by her beautiful movements. The elegance of the process of tea making depends on simplicity, which means there are no unnecessary actions at all. In the end, we enjoyed green tea and sweets. Everyone was satisfied with the taste of authentic Tea Ceremony.



~ Announcements ~

★ The 3rd General Meeting of ILAB on April 24th, 2010.

The 3rd General Meeting of ILAB will be held on April 24th (Saturday) from 11:30 to 14:45 at Kodosan.

We are planning to provide a meditation session, lectures on Buddhism teaching and culture. We are looking forward to your participation!

★ We welcome you to ILAB membership.

We have three types of memberships: Regular membership and Student membership for Buddhist people, and Associate membership for non-Buddhist people. 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. It also aims 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), Ms. Alberte Rabiller (Teacher/International school), Ms. Jayanti Minato (translator). 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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