



## ~ The 4<sup>th</sup> General Meeting of ILAB ~

On December 4<sup>th</sup> 2011, the 4<sup>th</sup> General Meeting of International Ladies Association of Buddhism (ILAB) took place in Kodosan Temple. About 40 people from USA, Taiwan, Australia, France, and Japan joined it. Many members of Kodosan temple also joined the meeting. On this day, we had two special guest lecturers. Rev. Zen Yu from Taiwan talked about the twelve links of dependent origination or causality (cause and effect), the essential teaching of Buddhism. Mrs. Mizutani, a prominent calligrapher of Japan, kindly gave an experiential lesson of *Shabutsu*, —copying the image of Buddha.

### Greeting from ILAB chairperson,

**Ms. Rinko Okano.**



“Welcome to the fourth general meeting of International Ladies Association of Buddhism. ILAB was established in April 2009 with the aim of deepening our understanding of Buddhism. We organize two general meetings and a few outings annually. All our activities are designed to learn and experience the essence of Buddhist teachings and culture.

We have regular membership for Buddhists and associate membership for people who has an interest in Buddhism. We hope that the daily lives of our regular members will be an embodiment of Buddhist teachings and will eventually contribute to the society. ILAB would like to support all of you by providing guidelines of Buddha’s teachings through our events and activities.

Another aim of ILAB is to unite people from different nations and denominations of Buddhism.

Recently, I feel that a religion with tolerance is the key to solve many conflicts in the world. In order to overcome the difficulties we face nowadays, we need to apply compassion and wisdom to our thoughts and actions as the Buddha taught. We need to establish closer relationships and better understanding of each other. In order to achieve our goal on an international basis, the ability of language is essential. For this reason, ILAB uses English as our medium during meetings.

Buddha attained enlightenment in *Bodh Gaya* in India after intensive meditation. He reached the realization of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Noble Path. They are ultimate truths that can stand any time and place. As we are successors of his precious teachings, we should understand the essence of these principles, and actualize them in the society through our words and activities. That is what ILAB aims to achieve.”

### Program1: Talk by Master Zen Yu

Master Zen Yu was born in Taiwan, immigrated to USA in 1980 and ordained in 1995. He established temples in USA, Taiwan, Singapore, and Indonesia.

In this program, he talked about the fundamental teachings of Buddhism to identify and eliminate suffering. He reminded us that Buddhist teachings are very logical and analytical in search of reality. That may be the reason why Buddhism is called “science of mind” in the western world.



attachment immediately occurs. Everything becomes the target of our attachment.

### Twelve cycles of causality and conditioning

According to the Buddha, we go through complicated processes before we come to have *self-attachment*. The process is called “*twelve cycles of causation and conditioning*” and it is a process of unknown (無明) – action (行) – consciousness (識) – forms and names (名色) – sensory organ inputs (六処) – touch (觸) – perception (受) – attachment (愛) – take (取) – have (有) – birth (生) – aging and death (老死).

### What is the cause of suffering?

The primary purpose or the goal of Buddhism is to eliminate suffering. In order to eliminate suffering, we need to understand “*why we suffer?*” “*who is actually suffering?*” and “*how suffering occurs?*” To know the answer to these questions, we must understand the basic formation of life.

Buddha said that every life has a seed of consciousness. When the seed is given the right conditions such as father, mother, womb, etc, it starts to grow and forms a body which endowed with six sensory organs; eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, consciousness. (名色) (六処) When sensory organs are formed, they start to perceive and recognize external phenomena. (觸) Then, in comparison to the external phenomena, the notion of “I” occurs. When the consciousness encounters with external objects, definitions occurs. “This is red,” “That is beautiful”, etc. (受) According to the definition, attachment occurs. “I like it,” “I hate it”, etc. (愛) Then, action follows. You may take it, eat it, etc. (取) Every one of these processes of attachment and action are recorded into the seed. (識)



Buddhists do not believe in the punishment of God. We think our suffering comes from internal sources, not from the external. Then, the composition of these internal sources is what we call “*self-attachment*” in Buddhist term. (The word *self-attachment* means not only ‘attachment to oneself’, but it also indicates our misunderstanding of the nature of reality, or how things exist. Actually, things don’t exist as we see them.)

According to Buddha, there are 84 moments in a second, and we go through 84,000 *twelve cycle of causation and conditioning* in each moment. A huge amount of information is taken into inside of me every moment. (行) Even after one’s life comes to an end, the seed inside will remain. (有) When right conditionings are given to it, the seed again takes a birth. (生) (識) Then, it starts to grow and forms a new body of the next life. (名色)

*Self-Attachment* grabs the outside phenomena, and put them into the inside of ourselves. For instance, when we see a color, we take the color into our memory; when we hear a sound, we take it into our memory. We call this action ‘*attachment*’. Whenever we make contact with external phenomena,

When a new life is created, who decides the characteristics of the baby? It depends on the inputs which were recorded into the seed during the previous lives.

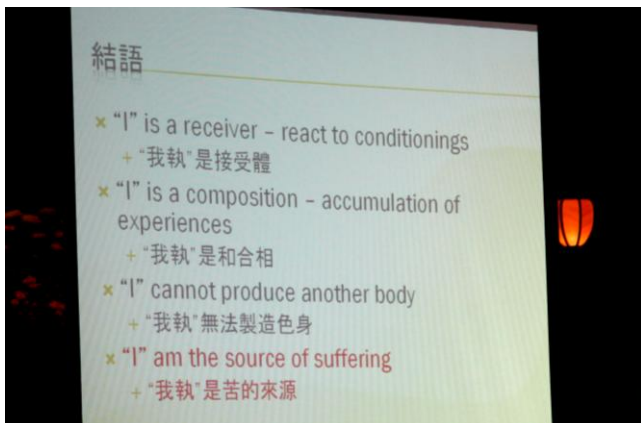
### Fault of following sensory perceptions

When we like and enjoy something, we want it more. When we hate something, we wish them go away.

These are natural tendencies of humans. It shows that we live just on the surface of our sensory perceptions, or we just simply react to the sensory perceptions. But these attitudes are dangerous, because they can lead us to suffering. It happens because we don't know the real way how our "self" exist or the reality of the composition of life. (無明)

The wisdom to see the truth of the reality is called *Prajna Paramita*. In order to obtain it, we need to understand the formation of life correctly, in other words, we should get the Buddhist realization.

You may say that we can develop intelligence to control ourselves, like "Oh, this brings me suffering, and I shouldn't be attached to it too much." However, our intelligence is often biased with prejudice or stereo type. In Buddhism, intellects are also categorized as *self-attachment*.



When you have too much of *self-attachment* (wrong view), they will cover your own self and you will feel that the *self-attachment* is your true self. That is wrong. We must find our real self. *Self-attachment* is the source of pain and suffering. Though we must accept that we have *self-attachment*, we should not allow them to lead our lives.

After death, we cannot bring money, fame and achievement to our next lives. What we can bring is only memories and input of our experiences which are recorded into the seed.

For instance, there was a rich man who can never be satisfied. He always thinks "I don't have enough." When his life comes to an end, where will he go in his next life? He goes to the world of "I don't have enough." That is the realm of hungry ghost. It is the result of his everyday input to the

seed.

Here is another example. Let's say, someone hits you on the face without reason, but you were so patient that you succeeded not to react to him. Yet when you came home, you recalled it again and again, and the feeling of anger came up to your mind repetitively. In this case, you are the one who created anger again and again after coming back home. And the anger is recorded into your seed many times. The result of such inputs will be brought about in the future.

So, we should take time to investigate ourselves carefully. We should be aware what we are doing, avoid creating causes of suffering, and be careful what you input into your mind seed.

### A simple practice

In the end, I'd like to introduce a simple practice which you can try at home.

We should have ability to make our heart feel warm. Warm feeling is the only gift we can give to ourselves. If we don't have warmth in us, we cannot give it to others. Happiness, wisdom, is also the same. So, I encourage you to practice to create the warmth inside you.

When you wake up in the morning, sit quietly. Then feel deep gratitude for what you already have. You have this human body, eyes, ears, etc. Make yourself feel free. Let's go of the attachment, let's go of social boundary. Give yourself freedom to feel warmth and happiness.

It is very easy and simple to bring happiness to yourself. You can allow yourself to take a rest when you are tired. You can give food to yourself, when you feel like to eat. Just enjoy a cup of coffee.

You don't need to make yourself stressed. Make yourself happy. Let ourselves feel warm. Develop a righteous character, righteous integrity. Our integrity results in our healthiness. Only when we could create happiness and warmth inside of us, we are capable to help others, as a Buddhist.

## Program2: Copying the image of Buddha



In the afternoon session, we learned *Shabutsu* (copying the image of Buddha) under the guidance of Ms. Hiroko Mizutani, a prominent calligrapher. Using a brush and *sumi* (special ink for calligraphy), we copied an image of *Kannon* Boddhisattva, the embodiment of Buddha's compassion.



All participants started their *Shabutsu* with intense concentration. The room became totally silent. Ms Mizutani explained on certain techniques to draw with *sumi*. Beginners found that drawing a smooth line was unexpectedly difficult. Some lines became too bold and others became too weak. It was as if the lines we were drawing reflected the state of our mind. We learned that concentration and well-balanced mind were needed to draw beautiful smooth lines. Also, when we drew the image of Buddha, we felt like we had to understand and feel the world of Buddha which we were drawing. Through our experience, we discovered that *Shabutsu* is one form of a training our mind in Buddhist culture.

In the end, we showed our “masterpieces” to each other. It was an enjoyable time.

## Announcement from ILAB Board

### (1) About the term of Board directors



The term of board directors is two years. Regarding to it, Ms. Maruyama (ILAB board director/member of Nomination Committee of ILAB board directors) suggested that the current board directors should continue their role in the next term as well. The reason is that ILAB is still in the first stage of its establishment and continued efforts made by same board directors are more effective for the development of the association. Members attended the meeting agreed to this suggestion. As a result, it was officially decided that the current board directors will continue to serve for two more years.

### (2) ST Group starts from 2011



Ms. Alberte Rabiller announced that ILAB Study Training Group (ST) will start from January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011. ST is an opportunity to study and experience Buddhist teachings and cultures in more details with a smaller group of people.

ST will be held every two months on the first Sunday of the month. Regular members are free to attend, and associate members and guest are requested ¥500. Venue will be either Kodosan Temple in Yokohama, or Kayadera temple in Kuramae.

## ~ Announcements~

- ★ On March 11<sup>th</sup>, Japan was hit by a catastrophic earthquake and following tragedies. In this situation, ILAB decided to have a mini-seminar, "**Buddhist Spirit for Relief of Deep Suffering in Japan**," in our 5<sup>th</sup> General meeting on April 24<sup>th</sup> (Sunday). By joining this seminar, let's find a constructive way to help all people, men and women, young and old, to live a life of light and hope again.
- ★ ILAB Spring Outing to Asakusa on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011 (Sunday). We will visit refurbished *Sensoji* temple and *Kaneiji* temple. Why don't you join ILAB's reputable one day excursion?
- ★ Next ST Group is on June 5<sup>th</sup> (Sunday). Please note that the date of the next ST group is changed from May 8<sup>th</sup> to June 5<sup>th</sup> (Sunday). Details will be sent to you later.
- ★ You are welcome to ILAB membership. We have three types of memberships: Regular membership and Student membership for Buddhists, and Associate membership for non-Buddhists. 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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