



## ~ Outing to Kamakura~

ILAB members joined the autumn outing to Kamakura on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010. Kamakura was the capital city of Japan from 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> century, where *samurai* warriors took power and ruled the country. On this day, about 30 members of ILAB met at the Kamakura station. We cheerfully rode on a microbus and started the tour under clear blue sky.

### Komyoji Temple



The first place we visited was Komyoji Temple which was established in 1243. It is the head temple of Jodo denomination in Kanto area and the teachings of Jodo denomination spread all over Japan from this temple. The main teachings of *Jodo* denomination is that if you chant the name of *Amida* Buddha with sincere faith, you will be saved and reborn in the Pure Land of *Amida* Buddha. Recitation of Buddha's name is called

"*Nenbutsu*". The famous "o-juya" (ten days and ten nights of *Nenbutsu* recitation) also originated in this temple.

ILAB members sat in the main hall and recited *Nenbutsu* to the rhythm of the *Mokugyo* (ceremonial wooden drum). Then we were invited to walk up to the altar; we chanted a prayer and offered incense to the Buddha statue.



Under the courtesy of the Chief Abbot, the monks of the temple kindly performed *Soban Nenbutsu ceremony*, which is usually performed only once a year on a special occasion. After the ceremony, the venerable Rev. Shogen Miyabayashi, the 112<sup>th</sup> abbot of the temple, gave us a talk.



He said there are three kinds of practices: practices of the body, the mouth and the mind. *Nenbutsu* is a practice of the mouth, but practice of the body and the mouth will lead us to practice of the mind. When you recite *Nenbutsu*, your mind becomes one with *Amida Buddha*. When you repeat *Nenbutsu*, the sound and vibration goes from mouth to ear again and again, and penetrates into your mind. Then your mind will be purified. So, whenever you have time, please recite *Nenbutsu* with wish and faith, he said.



After his talk, we were invited to a special room of the temple for tea. We had the opportunity to talk directly with the great abbot.

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### Hilltop Restaurant

We had lunch in a soba restaurant “*RAITEI*”. The building of this restaurant was originally built as a residence of a rich peasant in 1643. It is located on the top of a hill and we enjoyed the beautiful scenery of its huge garden.

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### *Kotokuin Temple and the Great Buddha statue*

The second place we visited was the *Kotokuin Temple*. This temple is one of the most popular sites in Kamakura. The famous *Daibutsu* (Great Buddha) statue of this temple is like a symbol of Kamakura. ILAB members lined up in front of the *Daibutsu*, and recited *Nenbutsu* together.



On this day, Mrs. Michiko Sato, mother of the temple’s abbot, kindly showed us around and inside the temple. She explained about the temple and the statue.



She said that many facts about *Daibutsu* are still unknown. It is said that *Daibutsu* was built in the middle of 13<sup>th</sup> century, under the wish of *Inadano -tsubone*, a servant of the first *Shogun* of *Kamakura*, *Minamoto Yoritomo*. When *Shogun Yoritomo* visited the old capital city of *Nara*, he was so impressed by the huge *Daibutsu* statue there that he wished to make one in *Kamakura* too. Young *Inadano -tsubone* heard this story from him, and she wished *Yoritomo’s* dream would come true. Time had passed and when she was 80 years old, she finally made it happen. Rev. *Joko* collected donation and organized *Daibutsu* construction project. Recent research shows that the money he collected was also used for the building material of *Daibutsu*.

Originally, the color of *Daibutsu* was golden, and it was situated inside the temple building. However, in

around 1497, a huge earthquake and tsunami destroyed the building. Since then, the Buddha statue has remained outside without a roof. There are people who worry that air pollution will damage the statue, and the Cultural Affairs Agency made a research on it. The result was they will wash Daibutsu with water once a year, and let the statue stay outdoors as it is. Mrs. Sato said that she feels good to see the *Daibutsu* surrounded by the beautiful nature as it is now. We all agreed with her.



In the end, we had the honor to recite *Heart Sutra* and *Nenbutsu* with gratitude to the temple and a wish of wellbeing of all living beings in our heart.

## ~ Announcements~

### ★ 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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