

Prajna

LIGHT OF COMPASSION

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e Americans have always been suckers for the occult, always have been, always will be. In fact we have shopped around the world for, reassembled, and recreated a "new spirituality" for almost every generation of Americans. The common thread running through them all is the need or desire to have some control over the unknown; to be able to predict the future, or at least avoid trouble and illnesses. We make offerings to the gods, beseeching them, praising them, cajoling them, bribing them, in an effort to have our lives run more smoothly – more in the way we want it to run. Life is a serious matter and you have stroke and stroke, even swim upstream if you have to. But a man swimming upstream, or even just swimming for that matter, has very little time to notice himself and his surroundings. Problem solving, multi-tasking, relevancy, helping the poor and powerless, controlling the rich and powerful, being active, speaking your mind, knowing what you are and what you want, etc., etc. are things you do while swimming upstream. Buddhism is about floating down the stream, merrily, merrily, merrily. In the treadmill world of Samsara, there is, at the same time, nothing to do but notice and enjoy. But the urgency of the former always seems to block out the latter. It is either one or the other, you can't have both at the same time.

But Jodoshinshu, the Nembutsu, is saying exactly that: The former is the latter, and the latter is the former; namo is amidabutsu, and amidabutsu is namo, you cannot have one without the other – even though they contradict each other. In Namu, life is a problem to be solved, and control is the key. In Amidabutsu, life is a beautiful paradoxical wonder to be enjoyed, and yielding and floating is the key. Swim and then float, swim and float, float and swim, floatswim, swimfloat, swoat, flim.

Happy Hanamatsuri!

Rev. Mas