



Siddhartha Gautama was born and raised in a republic, not a kingdom. He grew up in the area north of Ganges River where at that time republics were the common form of government. These republics were later to be swallowed up by hereditary kingdoms. When Siddhartha became the Buddha, he tried to maintain a Sangha of monks who were self-governing based upon the Dharma he preached. From that time on the Sangha has been self-governing and based on consensus. As Buddhism traveled through kingdoms and dynasties of absolute power, they have struggled to maintain this ancient democratic Sangha. Thanks to Shinran Shonin, Lay-oriented Jodoshinshu is perhaps one of the strongest consensus Sanghas around. What this means is very simple – no single person in the Sangha is indispensable – Not the minister, not the komon advisor, not the board member, not the affiliated organizations, not all the myriad helpers and mainstays of the temple. Everyone can and is replaced sooner or later – and this is the lesson of what being a member of a Sangha is. At Senshinji, anyone who says “It’s either my way or I hit the highway” – It’s “Sayonara”. A temple Sangha is made up of volunteers for the purpose of mutual help by mutual consent in all its social and cultural activities based on the spiritual activity of the discovery of “my” ego, and in so discovering – letting it go. Senshinji is a place to discover and let go of the ego, not a place to indulge it and exercise its need to be in control.

Whether through chanting, bowing, and burning incense; whether preparing otoki; whether setting up for Bon odori, rummage sale, ohsoji, etc., etc., it is the attempt at and mindfulness of egolessness which enables the Sangha to do gigantic tasks with ease and harmony. “Naka yoku – group wellness” is a definition of the Sangha, and its pivotal core is the emptiness of self.

Nam an dab y’all

*Rev. Mas*