



# prajna

## A DELICIOUS CAKE

There was once a reformist monk in Bhutan who criticized the established sangha for its rigid formalism and endless hairsplitting.

He urged a return to a more direct approach to awakening and to the enjoyment of true life. One poem reads: If you can enjoy a delicious cake with the same joy and delight as a bowel movement – you are wide awake (enlightened)! Such poetry appears throughout the Mahayana world from the Himalayas to Japan. Akin to but not the same as the mystic tradition in western religions, this experience of the present moment describes an almost unconscious delight in the present moment of paradoxes.

It seems to come from a beginningless past and extends into the an unending future – but is experienced only in the present moment. And that moment is but an instant in the view of the Mahayana, and especially in Jodoshinshu. Setsunametsu, born and extinguished in a single moment, in the interval of the snapping of one's fingers. Why are these moments so few and far between? Perhaps it is this very question arising in the mind that blocks it out. This calculating mind, needing to control what it really knows is beyond its control. This clinging, to the very last moment, that the Buddha says is the primal cause of our primal discomfort, unease, and pain. It is a dis-ease we are reluctant to give up – at least we know what it is, we know nothing about its absence, and yet have encountered it over and over again. We cannot choose to be happy. It is only when control is

taken away from us that we can appreciate what we have always had. And knowing this ahead of time does not help at all. As Shinran says, we are indeed perverse creatures – and yet, as we are, we float on a sea of tranquility.

What better thing can we do then, than to come together as a Sangha, enjoying each others company, whether working hard, relaxing, eating and drinking, dancing, playing, eating, chanting, eating, burning fragrant sticks, eating, catching up on each others lives and deaths, eating, etc.? That light shines regardless of our conditions, say thank you, enjoy, and die. Namanda, Namanda, Namanda.

Gassho,  
Rev. Mas