

“being one with the Dharma body of the Buddha.” The term “Dharma body” has many meanings. For now, it is sufficient to understand Dharma body as “the body of the enlightened Buddha.”

The *Lion's Roar of Queen Shrinmala Sutra* says, “The Dharma body is the great nirvana body of the Buddha.”

Nirvana is the “Dharma realm of all Buddhas.” It is the deepest *samadhi* of all Buddhas. It is a “paradise of self-purity” that only a Buddha has fully realized.

The *Lotus Sutra* says, “Only the Buddha realizes the great Bodhi. Complete and perfect wisdom is called nirvana.”

Nirvana is the Buddha nature that all sentient beings possess and have always possessed. When the Buddha first became enlightened under the Bodhi tree he exclaimed, “How wonderful! How wonderful! All sentient beings everywhere possess the wisdom and merit of the Buddha! It is only due to their delusion and clinging that they do not realize this for themselves. The moment they free themselves from delusive thinking, perfect knowledge of all things will come to them naturally.”

This quote shows very well why Buddhists conceive of the process of becoming enlightened as a process of reducing and finally eliminating impurities. Buddhists say becoming enlightened is like having the dirt in a pond settle until the water becomes perfectly clear, or like clouds covering the moon being blown away to reveal its shining disk. What was always there—the water and the moon—but could not be seen because it was blocked by impurities can now be seen. Enlightenment is not conceived of as an accumulation of many facts or ideas; it is conceived of as a “settling down” of all defiled thinking. For this reason, Buddhists frequently use metaphors of settling down or disappearing to describe the way to become enlightened.

Shakyamuni Buddha taught the Three Dharma Seals to help us eliminate our defilements. Contemplation of the Three Dharma Seals helps us overcome our attachments to delusion because the Three Dharma Seals unhinge delusion at its three primary points. The Three Dharma Seals teach us to understand that all things are impermanent and devoid of a self-nature. At the same time they teach us that contemplating these truths should not lead us to despair because all things also are in nirvana.

In the *Lotus Sutra*, the Buddha says, “I teach the Dharma Seals to benefit sentient beings.”

Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism

H. Martin



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