

“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

Avi Sion



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Table of Contents Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism

1. Understanding the eBook Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism
 - The Rise of Digital Reading Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism
 - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
2. Identifying Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism
 - Exploring Different Genres
 - Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
 - Determining Your Reading Goals
3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
 - Popular eBook Platforms
 - Features to Look for in an Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism
 - User-Friendly Interface
4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism
 - Personalized Recommendations
 - Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism User Reviews and Ratings
 - Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism and Bestseller Lists

5. Accessing Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism Free and Paid eBooks
 - Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism Public Domain eBooks
 - Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism eBook Subscription Services
 - Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism Budget-Friendly Options
6. Navigating Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism eBook Formats
 - ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
 - Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism Compatibility with Devices
 - Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism Enhanced eBook Features
7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
 - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism
 - Highlighting and Note-Taking Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism
 - Interactive Elements Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism
8. Staying Engaged with Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism
 - Joining Online Reading Communities
 - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
 - Following Authors and Publishers Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism
9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism
 - Benefits of a Digital Library
 - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism
10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
 - Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
 - Minimizing Distractions
 - Managing Screen Time
11. Cultivating a Reading Routine Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism
 - Setting Reading Goals Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism
 - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time
12. Sourcing Reliable Information of Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism
 - Fact-Checking eBook Content of Lotus In The Stream Essays In Basic Buddhism
 - Distinguishing Credible Sources
13. Promoting Lifelong Learning

- Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
- Exploring Educational eBooks

14. Embracing eBook Trends

- Integration of Multimedia Elements
- Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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