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The Ultimate Goal for Buddhists is to Attain Buddhahood

By Rev. Shokai Kanai

It is the ultimate goal for Buddhist to attain Buddhahood. What does it mean to attain Buddhahood? If we do not know, then we cannot aim for it. It is to become a person of character who awakens from illusion and liberates from lust, worldly desires and karma, one who attains Buddha Dharma and one who is well-rounded.

All sutras preceding the Lotus Sutra limit only certain people in attaining Buddhahood. The Lotus Sutra that Sakyamuni Buddha revealed during his last eight years before his Great Nirvana teaches everyone's possibility of becoming a Buddha.

For example, Chapter Two says, "All Buddhas appeared in this world in order to cause all living beings to obtain the Buddha wisdom and to enter into the insight of the Buddha." In other chapters of the first half of the sutra (the historical Buddha's teachings) Sakyamuni gave assurances to all his disciples including women, and wicked man like Devadatta after their many births and deaths. There is one exception; the eight year old Dragon King's daughter who became a Buddha immediately.

In the last half of the sutra, Sakyamuni Buddha reveals his eternal existence, the Buddha explains the relationship between him and us. Because the Buddha exists now, everyone is able to attain Buddhahood by practicing Bodhisattva's Ways; which are the Six Paramitas. A Bodhisattva always seeks his own salvation from all sufferings, worldly desires, and karma, but he also help other people with their salvation. We should try to make others happy and delighted as much as possible.

The Six Paramitas are

1. **OFFERING** (your offering to the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and your ancestors),
2. **PRECEPT** (to practice rules as Buddhists, in Nichiren Buddhism it is to chant "Namu Myo-ho Ren-ge Kyo"),
3. **PATIENCE** (not to get upset, try to control your lust, to bear hardship),
4. **DEVOTION** (your daily practice in Buddhism),
5. **MEDITATION** (to maintain calmness or quiet state of your mind) and
6. **BUDDHA WISDOM** (attaining the reality of all things).

Nichiren Shonin gave us a remedy, "NAMU MYO-HO REN-GE KYO." You don't need to make effort to practice the above mentioned Six Paramitas. Why is that? It is because when you chant it, you will act the Six Paramitas without knowing. You will become patient, be able to overcome hardship, get some sort of wisdom because your mind is calm.

To chant “Namu Myo-ho Ren-ge Kyo” means “I vow to follow the righteousness and to follow the rules.” “Ho” means Buddha Dharma, the universal laws, the rules, the constitution. “Ren-ge” means the lotus flower, a symbol of cause and effect. When you follow the righteousness or rules, deities protect you, because “Namu Myo-ho Ren-ge Kyo” is deities’ vows to protect you. Even if you do not know the meanings of the Odaimoku, if you chant the phrase; you will act the Six Paramitas and cleanse your bad karma little by little just as a baby drinks milk without knowing the nutritional value. Therefore, it is better to chant it as many times as possible.

Desire

Rev. Shoda Douglas Kanai

Introspection is very difficult. Our minds wander through the various lower worlds, always craving, always fighting, always selfish. We only think for ourselves and live for the moment without cause or concern how we affect others. Pride and ego get in the way. We do not want to see our true selves in the mirror of who we really are since deep down we know that we will scare ourselves. To escape, we tend to harm ourselves and others.

In the news recently, Tiger Woods apologized for his actions. He did mention that he was a practicing Buddhist and how Buddhism taught temptation and desire causes unhappiness. Unfortunately he did not practice patience (one of the Six Paramitas) and restraint. He is a public figure of which his rise and fall is like a Greek tragedy. But we can learn from his mistakes. Since it is difficult to look into ourselves and be truthful, we can start by relating ourselves with others. Of course our transgressions will never equate with Tiger’s but lust can be of anything, from shopping, drinking, food, power, wealth and fame.

What desires do you have that is causing suffering? Are you wishing for material gain, revenge, that one extra drink, not letting go of a relationship? These are all kindling that is stoking the fire of ignorance.

The ego is the greatest enemy. We only act and think for ourselves. When we give in to temptation, it only leads to suffering. How do we release our bonds from suffering? By following the Eight Fold Path of Right Understanding, Purpose, Speech, Conduct, Livelihood, Endeavor, Thought and Meditation. We also can release suffering by having faith in the Truth which is the Buddha Dharma.

There is an old saying, “The truth shall set you free.” The Buddha Dharma will awaken your eyes to see things as they are, to see the true nature of reality. We can then see who we really are, our causes of suffering, which leads to introspection. If we know the cause, we can find the remedy to fix it. Have faith in the Truth and chant the

Odaimoku. These are the remedies that can help release us from the bonds of our desires and temptations. It is only when we are calm, that we are centered to be able to practice the right way and be able to follow the six Paramitas.

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