

May Discussion Topic – On attaining Buddhahood

Before we encountered Buddhism, most of us probably never thought about whether we wanted to attain Buddhahood or not. Buddha means ‘awakened one’. Buddhahood is a life state of boundless wisdom, life force, courage and compassion. In that sense, we could say that attaining Buddhahood simply means becoming a person who exhibits these qualities, a person who is deeply happy and fulfilled, and strives to help others to become happy.

Through the power of faith, we can overcome the negative functions of our inherent fundamental darkness and manifest the positive functions of life that are one with the dharma nature, our Buddha nature. Through the chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, we replace our negativity with our Buddha nature .

Attaining Buddhahood does not refer to a transcendent state. Also, it doesn’t mean that after we die, we go to some pure realm far removed from this world. ‘Attain’ means to open or reveal. So, attaining Buddhahood means opening and revealing the Buddha nature which already exists in our lives. It is within the realities of daily living that we build a life state of absolute happiness¹, which cannot be influenced or destroyed by external circumstances.

Then, even though we might encounter big difficulties, or we battle an illness, none of those circumstances will discourage us, and we will experience a life state of joy, fulfilment and satisfaction. That is absolute happiness. To attain Buddhahood means not to be swayed by problems but rather to use these problems in order to purify and strengthen our life. It is about living the kind of life that gives us the courage and confidence to develop our independence, build a strong personality, and create a life state of unlimited happiness.

Nichiren Daishonin says: “If you wish to free yourself from the sufferings of birth and death you have endured since time without beginning and to attain without fail unsurpassed enlightenment in this lifetime, you must perceive the mystic truth that is originally inherent in all living beings. This truth is Myoho-renge-kyo. Chanting Myoho-renge-kyo will therefore enable you to grasp the mystic truth innate in all life.” (WND-I, 3)

- What does attaining Buddhahood mean to you?
- Why is it that we activate our Buddha nature when we make efforts for kosen-rufu?

¹ Absolute happiness does not depend on changing circumstances. It is unchanging, a feeling of fulfilment and satisfaction at the deepest level of our existence. Relative happiness, on the other hand, that is fleeting and transient, and arises from circumstances such as wealth, success, beauty and health, can easily change when our circumstances change.