

WHAT A CONCEPT: Buddhahood
Fully Awake, Fully Human
By LISA JONES, Staff Writer

The whole point of practicing Buddhism is to attain Buddhahood. But how will we know when we've succeeded?

Nichiren Daishonin says that the attainment of Buddhahood is “nothing extraordinary” and a certainty for all people. But he also says that it's a rarity and “to attain Buddhahood is difficult indeed.” Paradoxical as it may sound, these are not contradictory statements.

Buddhahood is a state of life that implies absolute freedom, happiness and compassion. It's a state in which we are awakened to the ultimate truth that manifests itself in all things. In this life-condition, we have the ability to perceive the workings of good and evil, and our wisdom and courage are limitless.

Buddhahood is one of the Ten Worlds — the other nine are Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Rapture or Heaven, Learning, Realization or Absorption, and Bodhisattva.

SGI President Ikeda explains: “The Ten Worlds are also called the Ten Dharma Worlds. *Dharma World* indicates the universe, the entirety of phenomena. The entire universe expressed as the Ten Worlds is a great entity of life, a great Buddha whose life is without beginning or end and who continually acts with compassion. For precisely this reason, all beings, whichever of the Ten Worlds is their dominant tendency, are one with this Buddha. When we realize that our lives are one with the great and eternal life of the universe, we are the Buddha. The purpose of Buddhism is to enable all people to come to this realization.”

In other words, if we are alive, we can manifest all the qualities inherent in Buddhahood. But doing this isn't easy. The Daishonin urges us to have faith and chant wholeheartedly, to struggle against the darkness and evil that exist in the world (and in our own hearts). This is the way to strengthen the basis of our Buddhahood and illuminate our fundamental darkness.

It brings to mind a story: Shakyamuni Buddha was walking down a road in India. He looked so wonderful — he had such a glow and an atmosphere of freedom and happiness around him — that people not only stopped and stared at him, they came running from all over to get a glimpse. People asked him: “Are you a king? A god? An apparition?”

“No,” he answered.

“What are you, then?”

“I am awake.”

Buddhas aren't angels or superhuman beings. Rather, Buddhas are those who are fully awake, fully human, whose innate Buddhahood is fully developed.

Nichiren Daishonin writes, “The common mortal is the entity of the three properties, or the true Buddha” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 90). President Ikeda comments: “In essence what he is saying is that the common mortal is the true Buddha. I would like to interpret this as the ultimate declaration of the ‘humanization of Buddhism.’”

Ten in a series

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