

26 *The Body of Truth Has No Marks*

"Subhuti, what do you think? Is it possible to take the thirty-two marks and thereby contemplate Buddha?"

Subhuti answered: "That is right, the Tathagata may be contemplated in that way."

Then Buddha said: "Subhuti, if the Tathagata may be contemplated by such marks, then the Wheel-turning Holy King may be taken as Tathagata."

Subhuti then said to Buddha: "World-honoured one, as I understand the meaning of Buddha's words, the Tathagata may not be contemplated by the thirty-two marks."

Whereupon Buddha delivered this verse:

If anyone by form sees me,

By voice seeks me,

This one walks the false path,

And cannot see the Tathagata.

Buddhas are said to have thirty-two distinguishing marks. But so too do the great Kings of ancient India, who are referred to as The Great Holy Wheel-turning Kings (Chakravarti). If we depend on these thirty-two marks (or any other physical attributes) we cannot tell a Buddha from a worldly king.

Any body whatsoever is composed only of the five Skandhas which are all impermanent. The four line gatha which Buddha delivers tells us that if we seek for Buddha by physical form or by the words



he is said to have spoken, we will not be able to see the Tathagata. Buddha is not seen as form, but as true nature.

When Buddha identifies himself with Tathagata, it is not self-glorification since Tathagata is the true mind and has no self.

If we cling to form and the six senses we will never come back to Tathagata, to the true mind.

A master said that thirty years before, he saw mountains and rivers as mountains and rivers. Then he saw no mountains or rivers. Now, he sees those as mountains and rivers.

At first the master, as a lay person before his awakening, clung to differences, as we usually do. He saw things as good and bad, big and small; he was in the world of duality and preference, of birth and death.

Then he saw the emptiness of all things. He knew that all the world is impermanent and without characteristics. Had he gone no further than this, he might have become pessimistic and believed that all existence was meaningless.

But his insight led him to recognise his true self. Now he lives without projection of the ego, without the four characteristics and with no birth and death. He lives with equanimity though in truth he has gained nothing new. Once again there are mountains and rivers just as they are, and he just as he is, and this is the place of Tathagata.