



## 29 Perfect Tranquillity

**“Subhuti, if anyone should say that the Tathagata comes or goes or sits or reclines, he fails to understand my teaching. Why? Because he who is Tathagata comes from nowhere and goes nowhere and is therefore named Tathagata.”**

When the sixth Patriarch heard a verse of the Diamond Sutra and saw into his true nature, it was because he knew that the true nature came from nowhere and went nowhere.

If Tathagata comes or goes, then he would be in the cycle of birth and death and therefore not Tathagata.

We sentient beings are always going somewhere or wanting something- possessions, knowledge, spiritual progress and so on. When we talk of reaching Nirvana, going to Heaven or reaching the other shore, we continue to make the same old mistake of thinking there is something to gain or somewhere to travel to, and this is contrary to the teaching of this Sutra.

Any Nirvana which is imagined or projected is not Nirvana, as Nirvana is nowhere, just as Tathagata, the true self, goes nowhere and comes from nowhere.

How can we find this true self? It cannot be sought directly as we might look for lost car-keys or search our memory for a forgotten word or phrase. Buddha has said that Buddhahood is not what we see and hear. The “marks” or form of Buddha, even the words he is said to have spoken are not the reality we seek. So we can drop the sights and sounds of Buddha.

This true mind should be seen as eternal and not of the transitory things of this world. It is hard for us to grasp as it has become, for us, mixed with the dust of illusion, and most of the time, we move like sleep-walkers. The word “Buddha” simply means awake. Not God or any divine being, just someone who has woken up.

So how to find this true mind? Ultimately it is with the only means that we have – this illusory, transitory world. Tranquillity is to be found here, right in action itself, and nowhere else. The illusory world and the true world are in fact one, but for now we are living in a dream. Knowing that we dream constantly is the beginning of awakening.

A familiar concept in Buddhism is that of the finger pointing to the moon not being the moon itself. It is very relevant to this Sutra which stresses that words about enlightenment are not enlightenment itself.

Another image is that of the moon reflected indistinctly in running water. Not the true moon, but for us sentient beings maybe the best we can manage for now, as with our ordinary mind we search for the true mind.

The senses are the doors to the true mind which exists before the senses and before thought. They are the means by which, through practice, we approach our Buddha-nature.

More often, though, we allow ourselves to be led by objects. For instance, we may think a mountain huge, but the mountain doesn't say so. It is we who project the idea of huge size onto it. In fact, it is just as it is. Some people may feel compelled to climb it, and feel the illusion of conquest. Which

is not to say that we shouldn't climb mountains, or engage in a multitude of activities. Where we go astray is when we follow objects and let them control us, so that we cease to be the "boss" of ourselves.

There was a zen master who frequently repeated the words:

*"Boss, boss - Yes sir, yes sir?"*

*Wake up – Yes sir, yes sir.*

*Don't allow yourself to be cheated.*

*Yes sir, yes sir."*

We cheat ourselves when we live with duality and the running mind.

