

LET US ALL REACT, BUT WITH COMPASSION

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At times like these, the mind reflects. Reflections bring to fore one's own personal sentiments and the norms accepted by society as necessary for peaceful co-existence. If the first is hurt, it still does not matter so much. But, when the second is hurt, then the first too is necessarily hurt and the wound is very deep.

In Buddhist thought, a two-fold path is recognized: method and wisdom. By working with a meditating in accordance with this two-fold path, one achieves the two Bodies (*kaya*) of enlightenment. I do not propose here to enter into a detailed discussion of the doctrines of the two truths not of the two *kayas*. I wish to highlight just the basic idea. From the method aspect we achieve *Rupakaya* or Form Body of enlightenment and from the wisdom aspect we achieve the *Dharmakaya*, the Truth Body. These are final attainments.

Wrote the Buddhist master Gyalwa Genden Gyatso (the second Dalai Lama):

*This then is an easily understood explanation.
Of the glorious practices of higher being.
That plant the imprint of the two Buddhakayas.
I urge you to practice it.
The pure essence of the great Mahayana.*

It is said that *Dharmakaya* and *Rupakaya* are to be obtained simultaneously; one cannot be obtained without obtaining the other. They have the relation of the container and the contained, where *Rupakaya* is the container. *Dharmakaya* is non-physical while *Rupakaya* is of the body. It is for this reason that in Buddhism emphasis is place on the generation of wisdom and merit, without neglecting one or the other.

Of the two, *Rupakaya* is often preferred for it is visible while *Dharmakaya* is a mental attribute and may not be visible to the layman. It is also not possible to attain *Dharmakaya* without attaining *Rupakaya*. Since the ultimate purpose of the Bodhisattva is to serve sentient beings, *Rupakaya* is more useful. The Bodhisattva dedicates whatever merit he has accumulated to the happiness of all sentient beings.

There are many artistic and ritualistic symbols of the forms of attainment. In the present context, it is of relevance to remind the people of the symbolism of the stupa and the statue. The symbol of *Dharmakaya* is the stupa. The symbol of *Rupakaya* is the statue. The symbol of *Rupakaya* is the statue. A statue in addition to representing the physical body of the historical Buddha also presents a symbol of the Form aspect of enlightenment. It is well known that the manner in which the idol is represented has even more detailed symbolism. In Buddhism, idols are not worshiped as is understood in common parlance. But Buddhists do make offerings to statues, so that through them they make offerings to the Buddha, the Enlightened One. In Mahayana Buddhism there are transcendental Buddhas. They are also Rupakayas.

When I heard of the destruction of the Buddha statues in Bamiyan, the thoughts that came to me were all the above and more. The sense of hurt was and is deep. The hurt however does not stop there. As a Buddhist, my grief may be personal, and such feelings may be limited to

certain sections of the society. But as human beings, the grief belongs to all of us. To all those who have been helpless witness to this atrocity. Not everybody needs to pay respect to the Buddha. Not everybody would pay homage to an idol. To the pilgrim, those statues represent a continuity of tradition and are a symbol of their heritage. To the tourist they are wonderful sites to visit and take pictures of to remember them by. Culturally they represent stages of mental evolution and the myriad influences operating during those times artistically they mark a certain period in the aesthetic development of man. All this makes the statues a global heritage, a common cultural heritage. What hurts me most is that the action represents an attempt to erase history. Not even a thousand golden Buddhas of the same size, made now to undo this terrible mistake will be able to compensate the loss.

As a Buddhist I try to remind myself that all sentient beings possess the *tathagatagarbha*, the essence of Buddha. One simple way of understanding the doctrine of the *tathagatagarbha*, is that no matter how ferocious the being, such as a beast for example may be, even they have the seeds of compassion in their mind. This is the seed of *Dharmakaya*. It is too powerful and cannot be destroyed by any weapon. So while it is natural that people should react to this vandalism, it is necessary to react with compassion. Compassion, not in a passive sense but with idea of benefiting a large number of sentient beings, mainly to prevent such atrocities from happening again. One should think of long-term measures for preventing such a thing from happening again and not just react in anger, to forget a few days later.