

The Ways of the Arhat and of the Bodhisattva

Ken Holmes, March 2002

It is a great pleasure to be asked to speak to you today about the two main traditions of Buddhism: those of the so-called *hinayana* and *mahayana* : the *lesser way* and the *greater way*, the ways of Shravaka to become an Arhat and the way of the Bodhisattva to become a Buddha. ⁱ

Oh dear! Lots of foreign words -*shravaka, arhat, bodhisattva*- 30 seconds into the talk and you might already feel like going home!

Well, let's try to explain these terms simply, before going into the details. Most religions are about the relationship between you, the individual, and God or, in the case of some religions, between you and a whole series of Gods. This God or these Gods are believed to be the governing power of the universe: creator of the universe. Buddhism is different. It has no belief *at all* in a creator God.

All of Buddhism is about working with the potential that exists in the human mind. Not about a relationship with another being, a Supreme Being, but about understanding and changing oneself. It is about awakening to the possibilities of life and in particular about using this extraordinary thing -which is our own mind- to the full: to become a wiser, kinder, more peaceful person. Buddhism believes that there is a timeless, perfect purity, a profound love for all beings, a perfect peace and amazing wisdom deep within each and every one of us. Life's task is to discover it.

The Buddha taught very extensively about the nature of life and our human potential. He taught to thousands of people over a 45 year period. He taught each person according to his or her needs and capacities. Over the two and a half thousand years since he taught, all of those teachings of the Buddha have

given rise to two main ways of working with one's life, known as the Greater Way and the Lesser Way.

Those following the Lesser Way -Hinayana- want to find perfect inner peace and want to live in a kind, truthful and generous way in the world. They are sometimes called Shravakas: Shravakas means *those who heed the teachings*. They have a certain "been there, done that" feeling about most of the pleasures of this world and are no longer interested in them one bit. You know, the way you feel about whatever was the craze three years ago - it just doesn't grab you any more. These Shravakas see the world as obsessed with satisfying the senses to find happiness -seeing beautiful things, hearing nice sounds, smelling pleasant odours, tasting good food and seeking pleasant physical sensations. They consider such happiness too shallow, too fragile and find great inner strength instead in meditation. The end of their journey, their dream, their goal -the perfection of inner peace- is called the state of being an Arhat. Sometimes you can achieve that state in one lifetime of intense meditation, sometimes it takes many lifetimes.

Those following the Greater Way -Mahayana- are called Bodhisattvas: *bodhi - sattva* means *with a mind to be Buddha*. They are people who are also very aware of life's fragile happiness and the suffering that exists in most people. They are so moved by this suffering that they promise, from the depths of their hearts, to dedicate this life and all future lives to caring for other beings. They feel that the best way to care is to become just like the Buddha. Buddhahood is a state far beyond that of the Arhat. It takes hundreds of lifetimes -hundreds of reincarnations- to achieve. The bodhisattva way is based upon truthfulness, peace and non-violence but its main characteristic is not a withdrawal from the world into inner peace but an active engagement with the world, a development of incredibly deep loving kindness, compassion and care for others. In fact, from beginning to end, the Bodhisattva's way is the way of compassionate care.

So that you are clear about 'where I'm coming from', you should know I belong to the *mahayana* tradition and that I'll be teaching today's topic in the traditional way in which it is presented in the *mahayana*.

Please have a good look at these terms - they'll come up a few times in the talk. Please notice that shravakas and bodhisattvas are those following a spiritual path, and that the ends of those paths are the states of Arhat and Buddha.

Having introduced these two main strands of Buddhism very briefly, I'd like to go into them more deeply by talking about a topic traditionally called *the three types of valuable human being*, taught widely in India in the 11th century. They are called 'valuable humans' because –from a Buddhist point of view, in terms of Buddhist value judgements– they are really doing something with their lives: making a marked and definitive change to themselves, and perhaps other people, for the better. If you like, they can be considered the three sorts of audience for Buddhism or the three psychological types that Buddhist teachings address. This topic will help us understand where Arhats and Bodhisattvas fit in - they are the second and third types of valuable human- and help us define these words *hinayana* and *mahayana*.

**A. The first type of valuable human being:
the person who lives wisely in the world.**

The vast majority of dedicated Buddhists (as opposed to people just born into a Buddhist culture and not strongly practising it) belong to this first type of valuable human being. They are not yet following the way of either the Arhat or the Bodhisattva. It is too soon. They are like children learning to walk. Shravakas and Bodhisattvas are like adults drive cars or pilot a plane. Unlike the Shravaka and Bodhisattva, this first type of valuable human is not yet ready to let go of its attachment to worldly things, in order to seek spiritual peace. The Buddha's teachings can nevertheless still help them greatly. So really today's talk could have been about three ways and been called *the ways of the worldly Buddhist, the Arhat and the Bodhisattva*.

How does the Buddha help the first sort of valuable human, the worldly Buddhist? By helping them live their lives according to principles based on the laws of *karma*. *Karma* means *action* and the laws of *karma* explain why things happen and how our actions determine our destiny. Everyone wonders why things happen. You know, you must have asked yourselves why you are you, different from the person sitting next to you. Why is there life's exquisite beauty? Why are there life's atrocious horrors? Most religions describe these things in terms of God's purpose: divine forces are pulling the strings and pushing the buttons of life. Buddhism, by contrast, says that events are not God-created but the long-term consequences of our own action: actions as individuals and actions as groups. Buddhism says our actions make us what we are and make our world what it is.

The Buddha taught that nearly all the things we do, say and think have long-term consequences for their doer. What we are doing now is shaping our own future, in this life and lives to come. What we are now has been shaped by how we acted and reacted in the past. Remember that Buddhists believe this life to be just one in a long chain of lives, as we reincarnate over and over again. What we do in this life generates all the details of our future lives: who we meet, the way the environment changes, our health, our suffering, our happiness. When we live in a harmonious, helpful and wise way with each other now, this generates happiness for later. When we live in conflict, self-centredly and unwisely now, it stores up suffering for later.

Thus, if we protect and save life -in this life- then we ourselves will be born with long life and good health next time round. If we are generous and caring now, we will feel satisfied with our lot in the future life and be cared for by others. If we lead what Buddhism defines as a respectful, responsible life in one's sexual relationships, we will find loving, caring and suitable partners in the next life and so on and so forth.

The Buddha gave many teachings about our actions - and in particular a very helpful list of the 10 main actions to avoid and the 10 to cultivate. These form the basis for Buddhist morality just as the 10 commandments do in the Judaeo-Christian traditions. I have listed these 10 in the printed version of this talk, which is also on the Web.

There is, of course, in the action of this first type of Buddhist, a fair degree of self-interest: a studied concern for one's own worldly future. These are not Buddhists who desperately want to leave all worldliness and find the lasting peace of nirvana. If we use Shakespeare's words, "To be or not to be..." then our first Buddhist customer is definitely not ready *not to be*. This person likes life, still wants to be someone, somewhere in the world but preferably would like to be a healthier, happier and more prosperous person in a better family and

social environment than at present. Even if that does not look likely in this existence, they try to live according to the Buddha's teaching on karma so that they will have a better time in the next life.

In teaching the laws of karma - the cause and effects of our actions - the Buddha was not only trying to help people help themselves but also trying to make for a better society: one in which there is less violence, less dishonesty and greater respect for others.

Furthermore, our other two types of valuable human being -those following the ways of the Arhat and the Bodhisattva- emerge from this pool of good people. One day, one life, it is said, there will dawn in their minds a profound awareness of the extent of suffering that there is in the world and indeed in one's own mind; then they become candidates for the ways of the Shravaka and the Bodhisattva.

**B. The second type of valuable human being:
the Shravaka, who shuns worldliness to attain nirvana;
the nirvana of the Arhat.**

Now we come to the **second type of Buddhist or second type of valuable human being**. These are people who –if we return to Shakespeare's *to be or not to be*– no longer want 'to be' someone, somewhere. They have understood that there is a deep, spiritual state of equanimity and peace, far more satisfactory than anything this world can offer. You know, it's as though you've been in a smoky, noisy, crowded room all your life and suddenly you discover

the vast, clean open spaces of nature. The crowded, smoky room is a busy, worldly mind. The purity and freshness is discovered in the inner space of meditation. It is a peaceful, infinite space which transcends personality and the cult of personality - you know what I mean by *cult of personality*, where ME, I is all important - a world in which you have to assert yourself, create territory, be beautiful, be intelligent, BE ...someone.

Our second type of valuable human being has had enough of seeking the pleasures of the senses and of having a happiness that always depends on external things: on other people, on the weather, on food, on sights, on sounds, on success at work, on human affection etc. They are shocked by the fragility and impermanence (*anicca*) of such happiness and by the price-tag of suffering (*dukkha*) that goes along with it. They know that the Buddha and the Arhats of the past managed to stop being reborn into lives of mixed happiness and suffering. How did they do it? By stopping doing the harmful actions -*karma*- that generate rebirth. How to stop these harmful actions? By getting rid of their cause: anger, jealousy, pride, ignorance and desire. How to get rid of all those? by destroying their cause: the illusion of self, of ME of I.

These saintly beings cleanse their mind of all these unhelpful emotions, feelings and illusions and instead cultivated very natural states of inner peace and harmony. The advantage of this inner happiness is that it does not depend on other people and external things. It is a state of constant well-being which does not depend upon the up-and-down world of personality and feelings. It is self-contained. It is free of suffering. When it is perfected, it will remain forever. It is called *nirvana*. This is what the Shravaka hopes to achieve.

At this point, I think it will be useful to clarify the meaning of this word *nirvana*. Nirvana is not something in particular: not something that *is*. Nirvana means "suffering transcended". In other words, it is defined by what it isn't: it isn't suffering. It means that you have got free from suffering forever. It is like

saying, "got out of the fire". One is no longer being burnt by the sufferings of life. But this does not tell us where we actually are: in a swimming-pool, up a mountain, in a space-capsule. It only tells us that we are out of the fire. So this word *nirvana* can cover many possibilities. This will become important when we look at the way of the bodhisattva. We will find that the bodhisattva is trying to achieve a much higher nirvana than that of the Arhat. Both are *nirvana* inasmuch as both have gone beyond the suffering of the world because both have ceased creating the *karma* that causes suffering. But the bodhisattva aims to become a Buddha and a Buddha has far more qualities than an Arhat and has removed more blockages from the mind.

To give an analogy: if we think of worldliness as the planet Earth, the Arhat has gone beyond the Earth's gravitational field and is floating in the space of meditation. The Buddha has also gone beyond the Earth's gravity but has reached the heart of the Sun of Wisdom.

Now let us return to the way of the Arhat. It consists of the Triple Training: Conduct, Meditation and Wisdom. I think you may know these. The basis for the Arhat's path to the Arhat's *nirvana* is a very pure ethical and moral conduct in all one says, all one does physically and also in one's profession. In one respect, it is similar to the careful attention to *karma* of the first type of valuable human being. But the motivation is different. Here the pure conduct is aimed at switching off the video of life, not at making it into a better film! This different motivation channels things differently. It is like earning the same amount of money but investing it in another account. The Arhat's good karma is not paying the worldly mortgage - it is going in to the permanent retirement fund.

On this basis of pure conduct, *nirvana* is achieved through the skilful combination of two things: meditation and wisdom. Let us first examine meditation.

Concentration meditation is the way in which those becoming Arhats overcome their passions, angers and other agitations of the mind. Concentration meditation cultivates inner peace. As the peace develops, desires, aggravations, and all these other things naturally diminish. As the peace grows, worldiness diminishes. It is like water. Let's just think together for a minute. Has everyone seen a turbulent ocean? Try to imagine it: those vast, powerful, rolling grey-green waves Brrrr! You can't see into it, it is busy, dangerous and it reflects nothing clearly. That's the worldly mind: very agitated, very busy with itself, very short-sighted and very endless. Now let's think of clear water - a very calm loch. Got the image? As water becomes calm, the waves subside. When water is calm, you can see all the fish and plants in its depths and it reflects the sky by day and the stars at night. The meditation mind is very still, clear and beautiful, like a very calm ocean. It has far-seeing wisdom.

As anger, desires and so on diminish through meditation, the peace becomes more lasting and more stable. This reveals levels of thought and subconscious activity of which one was not previously aware. Again and again, one refines the process of inner peace, until the mind is exceedingly clean and pure, knowing nothing but happiness and equanimity. A great, calm ocean of peace. Meditation requires careful training in mindfulness, concentration and channeling one's effort.

Now let us consider **wisdom**. As meditation improves, the quietness and clarity of mind enables great precision in the mind's self-knowledge. Just as our modern science pierces the secrets of the material universe through very fine investigation into the atom and into the human genome, the science of concentration meditation investigates the complex workings of the human mind and this knowledge is very helpful in transforming the mind and bringing it to stability and wisdom.

This wisdom ends up being real insight into the Four Noble Truths, which lie at the very heart of the Buddha's teaching. When I say 'real insight' I mean that the Four Truths are no longer ideas but things vividly, directly experienced as true, direct insight into life itself, without the need of thoughts. This gives you the "right view" of things -the right perspective- and provides the right intention for instructing other people.

I don't want to get too technical in this talk. The Buddha's own teachings –called *sutra*– on this topic of the way of the Arhat fill dozens of books. We could –for example– examine extensively the real meaning of the Eightfold Path that I have just describedⁱⁱ.

We could also explore (if we had time) how meditation actually changes the mind, bringing freedom and peace as well as the emergence of saintly qualities, which are quite extraordinary; miraculous.

Also, given time, we would explore the nature of wisdom in this path, seeing how it is *anatta* - a complete de-masking of all the delusions of self that the human mind can fabricate, whether it be a personal self or a cosmic self in the form of a God or a series of gods. This wisdom also recognises *anicca* - the totally transient, or impermanent, nature of the various phenomena of the worlds of mind and matter and understands in detail how they come together and trigger each other into making the events we perceive as life, with all of its suffering; *dukkha*.

The Hinayana mental journey of purification is a voyage deep into the inner peace of one's mind. There are four main stages on the journey, with Arhat being the final stage.

1. *Stream-entrant* when one has profound faith in what one is doing because the results are emerging and the process is very obvious. If we compared the path of meditation to unblocking a drain, it is at this stage that –after poking for ages with the rods– the blockage clears and the water starts to flow swiftly.
2. *Once-returner* when one has purified so much of one's mind and *karma* that there will be only one more rebirth in the world.
3. *Non-returner* when one is living that last life in which one becomes an Arhat
4. *Arhat* the final achievement when every trace, gross or subtle, of ego-delusion and its subsequent desires, anger, jealousy, pride and confusion are all irreversibly eliminated from the mind and the mind will rest continuously in deep, far-reaching meditation.

At this stage, I would like to sum up so far. We have looked at two types of what are called *valuable human beings*. Together, they make up what is known as the *hinayana* or the smaller way. I must make it clear that the term *hinayana* does not refer to the Buddhism of any particular country. It refers to the Buddhism suitable to a certain psychological type: a person who is working first and foremost for his or her own well-being. That person could be in Tibet, Sri Lanka or Scotland, following any school of Buddhism. Such people are not without love or compassion for others. It is just that they feel –quite pragmatically– that, in the end, we cannot change other people that much but that we can change ourselves and that self-transformation is our prime duty as human beings. So much of the world's problems come through people trying to change each other but being unwilling or unable to change themselves.

Hina means smaller or lesser and *Yana* means the power to carry. Because these first two types of valuable human being can, at best, only take one person to

liberation –that person being oneself– then their way is called the lesser way. It's like a car with only one seat. We will see that the greater way aims to carry many people to liberation. It's like a jumbo jet.

**C. The third type of valuable human being:
the bodhisattva, who works within the world, in order
to attain the 'non-situated' Nirvana of the Buddha**

The bodhisattva shares absolutely all the positive points of the hinayana follower: he or she recognises the futility and suffering of worldliness (samsara) and also knows that there is a much more elevated state to be achieved. But instead of wanting to make the Arhat's journey deep into the mind's peaceful recesses, the bodhisattva wants to become a Buddha, so as to be able to help thousands of other people free themselves from suffering. A Buddha is not only a great guide and friend for living beings: a Buddha's attainment - the Buddha's Nirvana- is far purer than that of the Arhat. It is in understanding the difference between their two "nirvanas" that one can clearly understand the different paths of the bodhisattva and the Shravaka.

In the printed version of this talk, I have spelt the Buddha's Nirvana with a capital *N* and the Arhat's nirvana with a small *n*. The Buddha's nirvana is called *non-situated* Nirvana, because we cannot situate it:

1. either in *samsara* - the world
2. or in the profound inner peace of the Arhat's *nirvana*.

The Buddha's Nirvana –with a capital *N*– is therefore said to be *neither samsara nor nirvana (with a small n)*. Here I'd like to remind you of the all-important point made earlier: *nirvana* simply and only means that all suffering has ended but not all nirvanas are the same.

Like all nirvanas, the Nirvana of the Buddha has transcended worldly suffering and the necessity of rebirth as someone, somewhere. But it is much, much more than the profound peace of the Arhat's nirvana. The Buddha's Nirvana is the total discovery of the timeless, perfect, heart-essence of the universe. It is everywhere and in everything and everyone. It is a natural, brilliant world of peace present everywhere (once you know how to recognise it), not the peace of withdrawal into an inner sanctum. It is something naturally sacred, ultimately pure and radiant with immeasurable qualities of universal love, universal compassion and an incomprehensible outreach, helping beings to the farthest ends of the universe. Because it is so sublime, so far-reaching and so much beyond the imagination, we call it the *undefinable* or *unlocated* or *non-situated* Nirvana which we can locate neither in the things of this world nor in the peaceful meditation of the Arhat's nirvana. The Arhat's nirvana we can, by contrast, define very clearly, in terms of concentration meditation.

I really hope that as you come to understand this point about the difference between the two nirvanas. If you do, it will clear up the confusion created in books about Buddhism, in which they say that the bodhisattva renounces nirvana in order to help other beings. It sounds almost like somebody giving up their holiday in order to stay at home to help the family. Or like someone in prison who could be released but somehow has to commit more crimes to stay inside and help the inmates. This really is a misunderstanding. It is true that the bodhisattva abandons one sort of nirvana (the one with a small 'n', that of the hinayana path - the inner peace) but this is because he or she is taking a quite

different route towards a different Nirvana: that of the Buddha: the peace of the compassionate, totally-wise mind. Nirvana with a capital N.

The only way to reach this Nirvana of the Buddha –often called *buddha nature*– is through perfect compassion. Compassion involves being in living contact with the suffering of the world, facing it and doing all one can to eliminate it. Furthermore, here one is not shutting off the senses but liberating them. There is a very good expression in Christianity which explains exactly what the bodhisattva is doing: *being in the world but not of the world*. Take the work of primary school teachers, for example. They need to skilfully enter into the world of 5 and 6 year-olds. They give these tiny children the magnificent skills of literacy and numeracy. It doesn't mean that they have to become childish themselves and renounce their adulthood. They operate in the world of small children but are not themselves of that world.

Someone who dedicates this life and all future lives to attaining this universal essence which is Buddhahood and helping millions of beings alleviate their suffering is called a *bodhisattva*. *Bodhi* means *Buddha* and *sattva* means *mind*, in the sense of a determined and courageous mind. Thus a bodhisattva is *someone with the courage and determination to become a Buddha*. The word *Arhat* means *the one who has conquered the enemy*, the "enemy" being the delusion of personality and all the desires and adversities it produces.

What does the bodhisattva's path involve? First, all the same mind-purifying work of the hinayana path. Whichever Buddhist path one follows, every trace of selfish desire, anger, jealousy, pride and confusion must be eliminated from the mind. But the way in which these are eliminated by the bodhisattva is different. You will remember that –in the hinayana way– it is done by going ever more finely into the tranquil depths of concentration meditation. The mind draws away from the senses, draws away from all that is worldly and goes deep inside. The

bodhisattva does not need to withdraw from the world but instead faces the world and learns through the world and through his or her own reactions to it. It is not so much a path of escape as one of transformation. Anger is transformed into love. Jealousy is transformed into a sincere joy, which rejoices in the achievement of others. Pride is transformed into an awareness of the sameness of us all, before what is eternal and so on and so forth.

This work -of transforming emotions– is made possible by meditation, as only meditation gives clear insight into how the mind works. You know, if you want to fix something you first need to know how it works. Meditation helps us discover how the human mind works. The bodhisattva's meditation practices are structured differently from those of the hinayana path. Also, there are many more of them. As mentioned before, the bodhisattva is avoiding the nirvana (with a small 'n') of the hinayana path and the bodhisattva is very careful not to be drawn into its beautiful inner peace of meditation's tranquillity. One of the main tools for doing this is *right thought* or prayer.

In other religions, people pray to a God or to several gods, asking for their help. In Buddhism, prayer is not addressed to an external, other, being. Prayer is an organised way of changing the mind. By repeating good thoughts, sincerely from the depths of one's heart, over and over again, they become habitual ways of thinking. They change the mind. In the end, the way one reacts to life's situations will be made very different, just through constant prayer. The main prayer of the bodhisattva is a commitment to help all beings, by achieving the perfection of Buddhahood. Why is this? The Buddha was just one person. All he had were three robes, a begging bowl and one or two small objects. Yet, through his purity and deep wisdom, he was able to help many tens of thousands of people personally during his own lifetime and many thousands of millions after his death, through his extensive teachings, which show people how to help themselves. The bodhisattva remembers this over and over again. One

person helps millions simply by attaining a perfect mind. The Bodhisattva knows that the finest way to help others is to become totally pure, totally wise and totally skilful in guiding others on the path, just like the Buddha. Many times a day, the bodhisattva dedicates his life to this end, in prayer, and tries to do every daily task –even making a cup of tea– with a mind filled with compassionate love for all other beings and a deep longing to attain buddhahood.

But longing to achieve something is not enough. One must actually do the work. I can stand here for years, longing to go to Hawaii, but I won't budge an inch. One needs to earn the money, buy the ticket, buy the baggy shorts, get to the airport, catch a plane and so on and so forth. What the bodhisattva has *to do* in order to really become a Buddha is usually described through six things. These are like six parts of a puzzle. When they are all complete and perfectly put together, the puzzle of Buddhahood is complete. What are they:

1. Perfect generosity.
2. Perfect right conduct.
3. Perfect forbearance (you could call this one patience or tolerance).
4. Perfect diligence.
5. Perfect meditation.
6. Perfect wisdom.

The six are called the six *paramita* or six transcendent perfections. You will have noted that I have tried not to use Pali or other foreign words in this talk. We only need to use them when we have no equivalent term in English. I know a lot about this as my own life's work is translating scriptures from Tibetan. Your school examiners may want you to know words like *anicca* or *dukkha* but I cannot see the point too much. We have perfectly good words for these in English –impermanence and suffering– and why should you learn the Pali words, rather than the Sanskrit or the Japanese or the Tibetan? Anyway, *paramita* is a

word without a direct equivalent in English and so it is useful to use the Sanskrit. It literally means "gone to the other shore". This is because when all these six qualities have been brought to an absolute perfection, one has crossed the ocean of worldly existence (samsara) and attained the other shore of Buddhahood. We can look at it another way. What is a Buddha? Someone in whose mind these six things are totally, immaculately perfect.

Why does the bodhisattva work with his or her mind in a different way from the hinayana follower? Let us compare this universal essence –of love, compassion and wisdom which is everywhere and which we call buddha nature– to a bright light. Although this light is in each and every one of us, it cannot shine because it is covered up, blocked off. There are two layers of blockage:

1. The first is called *klesha* in Sanskrit. This is often translated as *mind poisons* or *cankers* or *defilements*. I have mentioned it a couple of times already today: it consists of selfish desire, aggression, jealousy, pride and ignorance. All of these feelings arise through the negative delusions of personality –the harmful ways in which one defines oneself– *I must have, I can't stand, I ought to have what he has, I'm better than she is* etc. In the hinayana path one removes all such deluded ideas about self and this removes this first covering on the light of truth. By simply doing that, one no longer needs to act selfishly, therefore there is no bad karma and so one stops the cycle of rebirth after rebirth into worldly existence (*samsara*) and eventually become an Arhat.
2. The second covering, blockage or veil is something much more subtle. For simplicity, we can call it "duality". It is the split-second by split-second play of our minds, which is constantly defining not only ourselves but also the world around us. It is like a piece of mind-programming which produces, second after second, a two-sided movie: me and you, self and other, ours and theirs, my body and the world in which it moves, my mind and my body etc. etc. It

is through these conscious and subconscious processes that we define ourselves and our world: our parents, friends, enemies, every detail of life. Each of us has his or her totally unique way of seeing and defining the world. We each move in our own unique universe. In the mahayana path, one needs not only to see *anatta* - that our delusions about ourselves are devoid of truth - but also to see how our delusions concerning other people and other things are also devoid of truth. Piercing through the illusions and seeing the raw truth of the cosmos is called discovering its *voidness (sunnyata)*. We say *voidness* because we discover that other people and other things are *devoid of* the illusions we have been projecting onto them - like suddenly realising that a mirage is just an optical illusion and not real water on the road or like realising that someone you have been assuming was uninteresting is in fact pretty cool. Part of the discovery of voidness concerns the non-ego (*anatta*) discovered in the hinayana path. But it is only a part. By only uncovering *anatta*, one becomes an Arhat. By uncovering the whole truth about everything, *sunnyata*, one becomes a Buddha.

One simple way of putting things may be this: the Arhat overcomes all illusions concerning himself and is therefore totally at peace with himself. The Bodhisattva is overcoming all illusions not only about himself/herself but also about all other people and the entire universe and is therefore at peace with everything. By destroying all illusions, the bodhisattva becomes a Buddha, knowing everything there is to be known. The Buddha is omniscient. The Arhat is extraordinarily wise but not omniscient.

In the six paramita, the main work of discovering voidness is accomplished through a combination of the meditation paramita and the wisdom paramita. The second of these –wisdom paramita– is called *prajnaparamita* in Sanskrit. It is exceedingly important in mahayana Buddhism and there are many gigantic philosophical texts elaborating the meaning of voidness. Although there are so

many texts, the truth of voidness can only be discovered directly, in meditation, as it transcends all thought and philosophy.

As the six paramita - generosity, right conduct, forbearance, diligence, meditation and wisdom – come to completion, the real meaning of the word Buddha becomes apparent.

At the start, Buddha simply meant someone: an historical figure who gave us the Buddhist teachings. But as time goes by, one realises that the historical Buddha Sakyamuni simply achieved something that everyone, one day, in one life or another, will achieve. What he discovered is inside each and every one of us. It is our true nature, our Buddha-nature. This does not mean that each of us is really, at heart, an Indian prince! It does mean that there is perfect love, perfect compassion, infinite wisdom and a great ability to help and guide others, locked up in each and every one of us. It is the inner light. We just need to find it and to remove all the layers of illusion covering it and blocking off its power.

This timeless light, universal peace or cosmic wisdom manifests in three ways, known as the three *kaya*.

1. This Buddha nature, just as it is and as only a Buddha will ever know it, is called *dharmakaya*. Dharmakaya is formless: that means it has no shape, colour, sound, smell or form whatsoever. It is a vast, cosmic wisdom: the wisdom of voidness.
2. Bodhisattvas who are very saintly, who are no longer reborn in human worlds but have bodies of light, experience this buddha nature through the filters of their senses. Though it is formless, they see it as thousands of different Buddhas in various pure paradises. They hear it as deeply moving teachings expressing the universal laws of truth. The whole experience of their senses is an uninterrupted mental 'movie' of transcendent perfection. The way

Buddha-nature appears in these bodhisattva's minds is called *sambhogakaya*: the *enjoyment body*, meaning the visions and experiences of purity *enjoyed* by saintly bodhisattvas.

3. More ordinary beings, who are still in the world of rebirth and suffering, also have an experience of Buddha nature. They will have religious experiences, perhaps see a Buddha or a being of light in a vision and so on and so forth. This happens in moments when the mind is pure and open. It doesn't last and is not nearly so pure or so accurate as the experience of the bodhisattvas mentioned just now. The bodhisattvas' experience is constant, never interrupted. Nevertheless, when worldly beings have experience of the Buddha mind, it is usually a remarkable moment which changes and shapes the whole of their life. This aspect of Buddha-nature or Buddha mind is called *nirmanakaya*: the emanated body.

Today, I have spoken briefly -and very quickly- about the three types of valuable human being. Of course, this does not mean that other beings are worthless. It is just that these three types live lives which help themselves mature as human beings and they help the world. When the Buddha came to our planet, he came, like all great spiritual teachers, to help everyone, not just Buddhists.

Understanding that we are each unique, he taught everyone he met according to their individual needs and, in general, he helped the three psychological types I have spoken of today as the three sorts of valuable human being: the everyday Buddhist and those deeply committed to the paths of the Arhat and the Bodhisattva. It is not that one way is better than the other. They are just different way suited to different people.

Today I have not spoken about the "sociological" side of Buddhism: its different temples, different customs for marriages etc. These are simply the outer shell of a faith. They are the clothes it wears. The actual faith is a series of beliefs and attitudes towards life, towards oneself and other people. They form the real body

of the religion. It is true that some Buddhist countries accentuate some of these ways, while others have dropped into the background or disappeared. I could have spent the whole lecture describing the geographical and historical development of Buddhism. Instead I have chosen to sketch the psychology of these main strands of Buddhism and tried to explain how the Buddha was trying to help everyone through these three approaches.

The Buddha often used the analogy of a doctor to describe himself. His teachings are like medicine, our mind's impurities and our karma are like the sickness. These three ways are suited to different types just like different medicines are suited to different diseases. Can we say a heart medicine is better than medicine for rheumatism? Of course not. Would there be any point in giving the rheumatism medicine to the heart patient? Of course not. These three ways of living one's life and meditating suit different types of people. When someone comes to our monastery in Dumfriesshire for training, we use all three types according to the individual.

In fact, when you look closely, you will see that -besides denoting types- these three psychologies often exist side by side in nearly all of us. One part of us wants very much *to be*, another part seeks a peace beyond the passing pleasures of this world and another part of us seeks the way to truly serve and help other beings find their way to liberation. I would like to conclude by expressing my profound respect for all the goodness achieved by all three types of valuable human being and by saying that I think the Buddha was extremely wise and broad-minded in providing such an immense spectrum of advice concerning these three ways, teachings filling over a hundred books, during the 45 years of his teaching.

ⁱ *The following was removed from the beginning of the lecture (not enough time) but may be of interest <<It is very important that you be objective, open-minded and critical in your studies. Before the main lecture, I would just like to clarify one or two things about Buddhism that may be helpful in this respect:*

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- 1) Buddhism has developed over the last 2,500 years. Most of the traditions existing today originated in the first 1700 years of Buddhism. Each of these great Buddhist traditions naturally feels that it has 'the real message' of the Buddha and so relates its own history and origins accordingly. You should take any claim to 'original authenticity' with a fair pinch of salt, as the actual historical evidence is very complex. You are fortunate inasmuch as you don't need to bother with this question *Which was the original form?* Just know the main points of each tradition and realise that each sincerely thinks itself to be most authentic. Furthermore, remember that religion is a living thing. Origins are, of course, very important. But so also is what happens as the centuries go by.
 - 2) It is helpful to remember that the doctrines of all the Buddhist traditions evolved and lived side by side in India for over a thousand years. Then, in the 11th and 12th centuries, Buddhism was largely wiped out in India. It had to survive in the other countries it had reached. Although *mahayana* Buddhism is rightly called "Northern Buddhism", because it flourished in Tibet, China, Japan and Korea, all its origins happened in India, just as those of the Theravada or "Southern Buddhism" of Sri Lanka, Myan Mar and Thailand had its origins in India.
 - 3) Tibetan Buddhism is sometimes presented as being almost a third sort of Buddhism: a *lamaism* that is something different than either hinayana or mahayana. This is very wrong and I feel obliged to explain and defend it. Buddhism went to Tibet between the 8th and 12th centuries, at a time when all the traditions of Buddhism were really flourishing in India. The entirety of the *hinayana*, of the *mahayana* and of some other teachings, known as *vajrayana*, were meticulously carried to Tibet, which shares several thousand miles of frontier with India and which had key access to the great Buddhist monastic universities in Kashmir, Bihar and Bengal. Tibetan Buddhism is actually the most complete form of Buddhism existing today. In it you will

find all the teachings and techniques of Theravada, Zen, Ch'an, Pure Lands and the other traditions. They are all used on a daily basis, according to the needs of the follower.>>

ⁱⁱ as in overhead used in lecture, the 8 are grouped as follows:

The foundation, **RIGHT CONDUCT**: right speech, right action and right livelihood

MEDITATION: right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration

WISDOM: right view and right intention