Chapter 4

THE JOURNEY: MEANS TO THE GOAL
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Introduction

Having placed in perspective the end and the goal towards which both Gautama and Friar John strive, let us now proceed to the journey and the means by which this goal can best be attained.

Gautama Buddha

The general term comprehending the Buddhist moral code which is the means to the end described in the previous chapter is sila. Sila is a comprehensive term embracing the whole system of Buddhist morality and prescribing its general features as well as the particular details pertaining to thoughts, words, deeds, commissions and omissions. In this capacity it is co-extensive with the Astangamarga. The present chapter will make a survey of this Eightfold Path.

Buddhist morality works not only against moral corruption but also against all forms of mental corruption.

The means and method employed by the Buddha to arrive at the goal i.e. nirvana is the Astangamarga or the Eightfold Path contained in the Arya satyas or the Four Noble Truths.

The Four Noble Truths

The Four Noble Truths are called Arya Satyas.
Arya (Sanskrit, also ārya; Pāli: ariya) is a term frequently used in Buddhism that can be translated as “noble”, “not ordinary”, “valuable”, “precious”, “pure”, etc. Arya in the sense of “noble” or “exalted” is frequently used in Buddhist texts to designate a spiritual warrior or hero.¹

Paul Williams states: “The Aryas are the noble ones, the saints, those who have attained ‘the fruits of the path’, ‘that middle path the Tathāgata has comprehended which promotes sight and knowledge, and which tends to peace, higher wisdom, enlightenment, and Nibbāna’.”²

The term sacca (Sanskrit: satya) is a central term in Indian thought and religion. It is typically translated as “truth”; but it also means “that which is in accord with reality”, or “reality”. The four noble truths are not asserted as propositional truths or creeds; rather, they are understood as “true things” or “realities” that function as a convenient conceptual framework for making sense of Buddhist thought.³

The Four Noble Truths are called the catvāry ārya satyāni (Sanskrit) or cattāri ariya saccāni (Pāli).

The Noble Eightfold Path is called the ārya mārga (Sanskrit, also āryāṣṭāṅgikamārga) or ariya magga (Pāli).⁴

The Four Noble Truths arrived at by the Buddha while in contemplation under the Bodhi tree at Gaya were made known by him to his companions, the five ascetics, when he delivered his first sermon at Isipatana (modern Saranath) near Benares.⁵
They are:

1. There is suffering – *Dukkha*
2. Every suffering has a cause – *Dukkha-Samudaya*
3. The Cessation of Suffering – *Dukkha Nirodha*
4. The Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering – *Dukkha-Nirodha-Marga*

In Buddhism awakening from ignorance to full knowledge always implies the comprehension of the Four Noble Truths. The Enlightened One is called the Buddha simply because he understands the Truths in all their fullness. The Buddha devoted the whole of his first sermon to the formulation of these truths; for they are the essence of his teaching. “As the footprint of every creature that walks the earth can be contained in an elephant’s footprint, which is pre-eminent for size, so does the doctrine of the four Noble Truths embrace all skillful Dhamma”. He said, unless we fully comprehend these four basic realities which he called ‘Arya-satya’, there is no way to achieve peace or happiness in life. He thus directly touched the pulse of this sick universe.

The Four Truths are explained in detail and in diverse ways in the original Pāli texts, especially in the *suttas*. One cannot know what the Buddha taught for forty-five years unless one has a clear idea of the Truths. The entire teaching of the Buddha is just the understanding of *dukkha*, the unsatisfactory nature of all phenomenal existence, and the understanding of the way out of this unsatisfactoriness. The Buddha said: “Formerly (as early as the first proclamation of the *Dhamma* to the five ascetics) as well as now, monks, I make known only
suffering and the cessation of suffering” \textit{(dukkhamceva pannapemi dukkhassa ca nirodham)}.\textsuperscript{8}

If we understand this saying we understand Buddhism; for the entire teaching of the Buddha is nothing else than the application of this one principle. Piyadassi Thera says: “It seems to me that what can be called the discovery of a Buddha is just these Four Truths, and the rest are logical developments and more detailed explanations of the Four Noble Truths. This is the typical teaching of the Buddhas of all ages, peculiar to them and none else” \textit{(Buddhānam sāmukamsikā dhammadesanā)}.\textsuperscript{9}

The Buddha’s method of exposition of the Four Truths can be compared to that of a physician. Like a physician, he first diagnosed the sickness, next he discovered the cause of the sickness, then he considered the removal of sickness and lastly he applied the correct remedy. Suffering \textit{(dukkha)} is the illness; craving \textit{(tanhā)} is the arising or the root cause of the sickness \textit{(samudaya)}; through the removal of craving the sickness is removed and that is the cure \textit{(nirodha =nibbāna)}; the Eightfold Path \textit{(magga)} is the remedy.\textsuperscript{10} The perfect comprehension of the Four Noble Truths is so important that the Master is called a Buddha. The Buddha says: “Monks, by the fact of understanding as they really are, these Four Noble Truths, a Thathāgata is called an Arahant, a Fully Enlightened One.”\textsuperscript{11}
1 - There is suffering - Dukkha:

The word *dukkha* is used in more than one sense in the early Buddhist scriptures – psychological, physical and philosophical according to the context. The concept of *dukkha* is very significant to those who try to see things as they are. It is the bedrock of Buddhist thought. Ignoring this essential concept is to ignore the remaining three truths, for the Buddha says: “He who sees suffering, sees also the arising of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path leading to the cessation of suffering”. Therefore since these truths are interconnected and interdependent, seeing one or more of the four truths implies seeing the others as well. Denying one single truth amounts to denying the other three as well.

As we saw in chapter two, the Buddha states the First Noble Truth thus: “Now, monks, this is the Noble Truth as to sorrow. Earthly existence itself is sorrowful. Decay is sorrowful. Disease, death, union with the unpleasing, separation from the pleasing is sorrowful; the wish which cannot be fulfilled is sorrowful; in brief, the desirous, transient individuality is sorrowful”.

Life according to Buddhism is suffering; suffering dominates all life. It is the fundamental problem of life. The world is suffering and afflicted, no being is free from this bond of misery and this is a universal truth that no sensible man who sees things in their proper perspective can deny. That does not mean that there is no pleasure or happiness at all. The Buddha never denied happiness in life when he spoke of the universality of suffering. In the *Anguttara Nikāya*, one of the five
original collections of Pāli, there is a long enumeration of the happiness that beings are capable of enjoying.\textsuperscript{15}

In answering a question of Mahālī Licchavi, the Buddha says:

“Mahālī, if visible forms, sound, smell, taste and tactile objects (these, as you know, are sense objects which man experiences through his sense faculties), are entirely subject to suffering, beset with suffering, and entirely bereft of pleasure and happiness, beings will not take delight in these sense objects; but, Mahālī, because there is pleasure and happiness in these sense objects, beings take delight in them and cling to them; because of this clinging they defile themselves”.\textsuperscript{16}

Through the sense faculties we are attracted to sense objects, delight in them and derive enjoyment (\textit{assāda}). But the fact is, neither the delightful objects nor the enjoyments are lasting. They suffer change. Now when we cannot retain or are deprived of the pleasures that delight us, we often become sad and cheerless. We dislike monotony, for variety is the spice of life; we look for fresh delights like cattle that seek fresh pasture. But these fresh delights too are fleeting and a passing show. Thus all pleasures, whether we like it or not, are prelude to pain and disgust. All mundane pleasures are fleeting, like sugar-coated pills of poison they deceive and harm us. A disagreeable dish, an unpleasant drink, an unlovely demeanour, and a hundred other trifles bring pain and dissatisfaction to us – Buddhist or non-Buddhist, rich or poor, high or low, literate or illiterate. Shakespeare gives voice to the words of the Buddha when he writes in \textit{Hamlet}: ‘When sorrows come they come not single spies, but in battalions’.\textsuperscript{17}
There are three aspects of suffering:

1. Suffering in its most ordinary form (dukkha-dukkhatā)

2. Suffering or the unsatisfactoriness of conditioned states (samkhārā-
dukkhatā)

3. Suffering caused by change (viparināmadukkhatā).

All mental and bodily sufferings such as birth, ageing, disease, death, association with the unloved, dissociation from the loved, not getting what one wants are the ordinary sufferings of daily life and are called dukkha-dukkhatā.

Samkhārā-dukkhatā, unsatisfactoriness of conditioned states, is of philosophical significance. Though the word samkhārā implies all things subject to cause and effect, here in the context of dukkha, the five aggregates (pancakkhanda) are meant. They are the aggregates of matter, of sensations, of perceptions, of mental formations and of consciousness.

Viparināmadukkha comes under the category of unsatisfactoriness due to impermanence. All the pleasant and happy feelings that we experience fade away and disappear. As the Buddha says, even the feelings that a yogi or a meditator experiences by attaining the four meditative absorptions (jhāna), come under the category of viparināmadukkha, because they are transient (anicca), dukkha and subject to change (viparināmadhamma). But the dukkha mentioned here is certainly not the pain and suffering that people in general endure. What the Buddha points out is that all things impermanent are unsatisfactory. They suffer
change every moment and this change brings about unsatisfactoriness; for whatever is impermanent is unsatisfactory (*yadaniuccam tam dukkham*).

Some thinkers have charged the attitude of the Buddha that life is full of suffering as unduly pessimistic by saying that it has a tendency to blacken what is dark and to darken what is grey. This, however, is not the proper appreciation of what the Master has meant. If a doctor points out to our disease and suggests a remedy we do not dub him as pessimistic. Disease can be removed and life can be made enjoyable, if you have a proper diagnosis and right remedies. Buddha showed the way to avoid sufferings and to obtain absolute bliss which brings undiluted happiness and joy. As Dr. S. Radhakrishnan puts it: “Buddha does not preach the mere worthlessness of life or resignation to an inevitable doom. His, is not the doctrine of a finer quality, an ‘Arhat’ state”.21

Venerable Piyadassi Thera, a Sri Lankan monk, a scholar and a well-known preacher makes the following beautiful observation:

… As the Buddha has pointed out, all beings crave for the pleasant and the pleasurable. They loathe the unpleasant and the non-pleasurable. The grieving ones seek pleasures while those already happy seek more and more… He who understands the true nature of life is the happiest individual, for he is not upset by the evanescent nature of things. He tries to see things as they are, and not as they seem to be. Conflicts arise in man when he is confronted with the facts of life such as ageing, illness, death and so forth, but frustration and disappointment do not vex him when he is ready to face them with a brave heart. …The man who
ignores the principle of unrest in things and the intrinsic nature of suffering is upset when confronted with the vicissitudes of life because he has not trained his mind to see things as they really are. Man's recognition of pleasures as lasting leads to much vexation, when things occur quite contrary to his expectations. It is therefore necessary to cultivate a detached outlook towards life and things pertaining to life. Detachment cannot bring about frustration, disappointment, and mental torment because there is no clinging to one thing and another, but letting go. This indeed is not easy, but it is the sure remedy for controlling, if not eradicating unsatisfactoriness.

The Buddha sees suffering as suffering and happiness as happiness and explains that all cosmic pleasure, like all other conditioned things, is evanescent, is a passing show. He warns man against attaching too much importance to fleeting pleasures, for they sooner or later beget discontent. Equanimity is the best antidote for both pessimism and optimism. Equanimity is evenness of mind and not sullen indifference. It is the reserve of a calm concentrated mind. It is hard indeed to be undisturbed when touched by the vicissitudes of life, but the man who cultivates equanimity is not upset… the advantage of a tranquil mind… is unshaken by loss and gain, blame and praise, and undisturbed by adversity. This frame of mind is brought about by viewing the sentient world in a proper prospective. Thus calm or evenness of mind leads man to enlightenment and deliverance from suffering.\textsuperscript{22}
2 - Every suffering has a cause - Duhkha-Samudāya:

Having diagnosed the sickness, the doctor must find out the cause of the sickness because the efficacy of the treatment depends upon the removal of the cause of the sickness. After establishing the fact that there is suffering, the Buddha goes a step further and points out the arising or the cause of suffering. What then, is the cause of suffering? The cause is not an external agency or a supernatural power; the cause is within the human person.

In the first sermon of the Buddha and in many other discourses in the early scriptures the Second Noble Truth is formulated in the following words:

*It is this craving (‘thirst’, tanhā) which causes re-becoming, re-birth, accompanied by passionate pleasure, and finding fresh delight now here, now there, namely, craving for sense pleasures (kāmatanhā), craving for continued existence, for becoming (bhava-tanhā), and craving for non-existence, for self-annihilation (vibhava-tanhā).*

How the Buddha himself expressed it is found in the *Anguttara Nikāya*:

“And what, monks, is the Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering? Dependent on ignorance arise volitional formations; dependent on volitional formations, consciousness… (and so on) … Thus does this whole mass of suffering arise. This, monks is called the Noble Truth of the Arising of Suffering.”

We must keep in mind that craving is not the First Cause as Buddhism does not accept one, but as explained in the theory of Dependent Origination, things are multiple-caused. Craving too is conditioned, interdependent and relative. It is
neither a beginning nor an end in itself. Though craving is cited as the proximate cause of suffering, it is not independent but interdependent. Dependent on feeling or sensation, arises craving; feeling arises dependent on contact and so on. Thus the doctrine of Dependent Arising makes it clear how suffering arises due to causes and conditions and how suffering ceases with the removal of its causes and conditions.

In the Dependent Arising it is clear that the proximate cause of craving is feeling or sensation. All forms of appetite are included in tanhā (craving). Greed, thirst, desire, lust, burning, yearning, longing, inclination, affection, household love are some of the many terms that denote tanhā which according to the Buddha leads to becoming (bhava-netti). And it is our experience that becoming manifests itself as dukkha, as suffering, frustration, painful excitement and unsatisfactoriness. Venerable Piyadassi Thera says: “The enemy of the whole world is lust, craving, or thirst through which all evils come to living beings. It is not only greed for or attachment to pleasures caused by the senses, wealth and property and by the wish to defeat others and conquer countries, but also attachment to ideals and ideas, to views, opinions and beliefs (dhamma-tanhā) which often lead to calamity and destruction and bring untold suffering to whole (all?) nations, in fact to the whole world.”

Craving arises and takes root where there is delight and pleasure. Now there is pleasure in the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind because it is through these
avenues, these five-fold bases that we recognize the sense objects, the external world and through the mind door, as the sixth, that we entertain ideas and thoughts. Forms, sounds, smells, tastes, bodily contacts and ideas are delightful and pleasurable and there craving arises and takes root.\(^{28}\) That which is pleasant and delightful always attracts us and we run after it and little do we realize that no amount of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles and mental objects or ideas will ever satisfy our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. The Buddha was very emphatic against this mad rush and cautioned:

“Pleasure is a bond, a joy that’s brief,  
Of little taste, leading to drawn-out pain.  
The wise know that the hook is baited.”\(^{29}\)

And the poet Robert Burns echoes the Buddha’s words:

“Pleasures are like poppies spread,  
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;  
Or, like the snow fall on the river,  
A moment white, then melts forever.”\(^{30}\)

Craving is conditioned not only by pleasant and delightful feelings but also by unpleasant and unhappy feelings. All those who are suffering crave for happiness, pleasure and solace. On the other hand, those who are experiencing pleasure, crave for more pleasure. Thus this craving, this thirst is insatiable and people pursue fleeting pleasures. Their greed is inordinate. Only when consequent suffering comes does one realize the viciousness of this poisonous creeper of craving which
winds itself round all who are not Arahats or perfectly pure ones who have uprooted its tap-root, ignorance. The more we crave the more we suffer.\textsuperscript{31} As the Buddha says:

“From greed comes grief,
From greed comes fear,
He who is free from greed
Knows neither grief nor fear.”\textsuperscript{32}

And also: “Dig up the root of thirst” (\textit{Tanhāyamulamkhanatha}).\textsuperscript{33}

Or again:

“As a tree even though it has been cut down,
Is firm so long as its root is safe, and grows again,
Thus unless the feeders of thirst are destroyed,
This pain (of life) will return again and again.”\textsuperscript{34}

3 - The Cessation of Suffering – \textit{Dukkha Nirodha}

After having shown that life is full of suffering and that suffering has a cause in the first and second Noble Truths respectively, the Buddha points out that there is a way out, an escape from suffering. It is the escape from sorrow that is highlighted in the Third Noble Truth. Seen in the light of the Third Noble Truth, the Buddha’s teaching becomes one of liberation from suffering. The first two Noble Truths become meaningful only in the light of the Third Noble Truth:
“And what, monks, is the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering? Through the complete cessation of ignorance cease volitional formations; through the cessation of volitional formations, consciousness… (and so on), the whole mass of suffering. This, monks, is called “the Cessation of Suffering.”35

So the Third Noble Truth – the cessation of suffering is known as Nibbāna or Nirvana. Nirvana is an eternal state of being. It is where the laws of Karma and Samsara cease to be. Nirvana is not a place, but rather a state of being. You can be in Nirvana while living the present life. It is the end of suffering and desire. It is the end of individual consciousness. Speaking to his disciples, the Buddha described Nirvana thus:

“There is Disciples, a condition, where there is neither earth nor water, neither air nor light, neither limitless space nor limitless time, neither any kind of being, neither ideation nor non-ideation, neither this world nor that world. There is neither arising nor passing away nor dying, neither cause nor effect, neither change nor stand still.”36

4 - The Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering - Duhkha-Nirodha-Marga

Right from his first discourse after his enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, Buddha is said to have proclaimed the Astangamarga or the Eightfold Path as the method and means of liberation from the slavery of the passions and desires.

The Eightfold Path is arranged in three groups: Wisdom, Virtue and Concentration (Panna, Sila and Samādhi).37 First come Right Understanding and
Right Thought; then Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood; and thirdly, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.

The Eightfold Path is said to have been called the middle path by the Buddha himself because it avoided the extremes of excess on the one hand and defect on the other. Interestingly, this may remind many students of the approach of Aristotle to the moral virtues, from whom the scholastics derived the principle *virtus est in medio* i.e. virtue lies in the middle or in the right measure.

Gautama seems to have discovered for himself after the practice of extreme asceticism that the measure of reason was more beneficial than any excess.

In the Astangamarga, attention is paid to some important mental factors, dispositions and qualities which should take precedence in the government of the senses, passions, desires, appetites and instincts. Gautama insists that the key to the harmony and cooperation between the attitudes and dynamics of the Astangamarga is the right understanding.

“O Monks, it is through not understanding four things (*dhamma*) that we have run so long, wandered on so long in this round of existence, both you and I. And what four? Virtue, Concentration, Wisdom and Deliverance. But when these four things, O monks, are understood and penetrated, rooted out is the craving for existence, destroyed is that which leads to renewed becoming, and there is no more coming to be.”

He says further:
“Concentration (meditation), O, monks, supported by virtue brings much fruit, brings much advantage. The mind supported by wisdom is wholly and entirely freed from the intoxication of sense desires, from becoming, wrong views and ignorance.”

These sayings of the Buddha explain the function and the purpose of cultivating virtue, meditation and wisdom. Deliverance means living experience of the cessation of the three root causes of evil – greed, hatred and delusion or ignorance (lobha, dosa and moha), that assail the human mind. These root causes are eliminated through training in virtue, meditation and wisdom.

Let us now deal with eightfold path or the astangamarga in detail.

1. **Right Understanding:**

   The first factor of the path is known as right understanding which means to understand things as they really are and not as they appear to be. It is important to realize that right understanding in Buddhism has a special meaning which differs from that popularly attributed to it. In Buddhism right understanding is the application of insight to the five aggregates of clinging and understanding their true nature – that is, understanding oneself.

   Right understanding is of the highest importance, for the remaining seven factors of the path are guided by it. It ensures right thoughts, it coordinates ideas. Right understanding, as already mentioned, is the main key to the operation of the other seven features of the Astangamarga. At first sight, it appears to be almost identical with Platonic and Aristotelian prudence (phronesis) the queen of the
moral virtues. So right understanding discerns between right and wrong effort, chooses what is right in strivings and also in mindfulness. The next step which sometimes follows and sometimes accompanies right understanding, effort and mindfulness is concentration.

To be noted is that right understanding is introduced into the mind of the disciple partly through listening to the Good Law and then appropriated by the disciple through personal assimilation in meditation. The second condition requires constant awareness in day to day living. Reflection is needed to go beyond appearances and grasp the inner nature and essences of things.

It is said that Gautama’s desire for right understanding led him to pursue clarity and distinctness of ideas almost in the fashion of Descartes. Right understanding may be mundane or supra-mundane corresponding to its being cultivated by the world ling or by the Noble One.

2. **Right Thought:**

Right thought is thoughts of renunciation, of good-will and of not harming or compassion. Evil are those thoughts that lead to hatred, harm, ill-will and all kinds of negative feelings. Right thoughts are those that lead to benevolence, good will, peace, compassion etc. and finally to Nirvana. It is right thought that leads to removal of hatred, lust, harm and all that is destructive of self or others.
Lust sometimes appears to be love but right understanding and right thought can distinguish between selfish love and the benevolence of universal love.

Lust and hate so blind the mind that it is impossible to see things clearly. Renunciation and detachment may be considered dispositions for the attainment of the highest truth.

Thoughts of compassion and universal brotherhood are right thoughts because they promote harmony and welfare as well as good health. They are known as boundless states probably because they are applicable without boundaries. Right thoughts are to be meditated upon so that attitudes of loving kindness and compassion may be fostered and promoted. Right thoughts are conducive to peace and happiness.

*Mettā*, friendliness or loving kindness and *Karunā*, pity or compassion are important aspects of right thought. In his exhortation to Rāhula, the Buddha says: “Cultivate, Rāhula, the meditation on loving kindness; for by cultivating loving kindness ill-will is banished. Cultivate, Rāhula, the meditation on compassion; for cultivating compassion harm and cruelty are banished.”

*Karunā* is defined as “the quality which makes the heart of the good man tremble and quiver at the distress of others … the quality that rouses tender feelings in the good man at the sight of others’ suffering”. The compassionate person, who refrains from harming and oppressing others and endeavours to relieve them of their distress, makes them feel secure.
Gautama Buddha was the Great Compassionate One (*Maha Karunika*) both in his teachings and example. His actions always flowed from compassion. If you remove *karunā* from the teachings of the Buddha, you remove the heart of Buddhism; for all virtues, all goodness and righteousness have *karunā* as their basis. All the virtues that a bodhisatta or one striving after enlightenment cultivates are initiated by compassion. Compassion is tenderness, a quality of the heart while understanding is hard and penetrative. Compassion should be guided by understanding and understanding by compassion. They go hand in hand and are the back-bone of Buddhism.\(^{47}\) “The disciples of Gotama are always well awake, and their mind day and night always delights in compassion”.\(^{48}\)

Another quality closely related to compassion is gentleness (*muditā*). Compassion (*karunā*), gentleness (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*) are the effects of right thinking.

The importance of right thinking is evinced in the very first verse of the Dhammapada:

“All that we are is the result of what we have thought: It is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him as a wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage.”\(^{49}\)

The Dhammapada also has other beautiful verses regarding right thought:

“As a fletcher makes straight his arrow, a wise man makes straight his trembling and unsteady thought, which is difficult to guard, difficult to hold back.”\(^{50}\)
“Let the wise man guard his thoughts for they are difficult to perceive, very artful, and they rush wherever they list: thoughts well-guarded bring happiness.”

“If a man’s thoughts are not dissipated, if his mind is not perplexed, if he has ceased to think of good or evil, then there is no fear for him while he is watchful.”

“Be not thoughtless, watch your thoughts! Draw yourself out of the evil way, like an elephant sunk in mud.”

3. Right Speech:

Anyone who has some experience of men and matters can understand the importance of Buddha’s teaching on right speech. Falsehood, slander, harsh words and gossip as we have experienced wreak havoc in society, in personal relationships and at times even between nations and international relations.

Gautama Buddha drew attention to four types of wrong speech while enjoining right speech:

1. Falsehood
2. Slander
3. Harsh words
4. Gossip

In the context of right speech, the first virtue is to abstain from falsehood and speak the truth. Such a person, as the Mettā sutta says is straight, nay transparently straight (uju, suju). He is sincere, upright and dependable. He does
not stray from the truth to win fame, or to please another. He may seem strict, but
‘truth is one, for there is no second.’

In a conversation between Gautama and his own son Rāhula reported in ancient
text, Gautama Buddha is represented as holding the view that person who tells lies
is capable of doing any evil. Lies are not to be told even in jest. ‘Rāhula, thus
indeed should you train yourself: “Not even for fun will I tell a lie.”’

Regarding slander he says:

“Let us then avoid tale-bearing and slander, which destroy friendships. Instead of
causing trouble, let us speak words that make for peace and reconciliation.”

A man’s speech very often is indicative of his character. A harsh word, an
unpleasant gesture, a crooked smile, may turn a good-natured person into a
criminal, a friend into a foe.

Regarding harsh words he says:

“They who speak harshly will themselves receive the same treatment. Angry speech
is painful, blows for blows will touch thee.”

The story is told of Bodhisatta whose mother used to speak harshly that once when
he had gone on an outing with her they heard a jay screech so harshly that all who
were present closed their ears with their hands. But after a while the group was
delighted with a soothing song of a cuckoo. The Bodhisatta seized the opportunity
to draw his mother’s attention to the pleasant tone of the cuckoo so that she would
avoid any harshness in the speech.
Regarding the avoidance of frivolous talk and idle gossip Gautama is said to have advised his monks that when they gather together they should either speak about the dhamma or just keep silence.

“When, monks you have gathered together, there are two things to be done, either talk about the Dhamma (the Doctrine) or keep nobly silent.”

Buddha is said to have been very critical of idle chatter and rumour: “Even though a speech be a thousand (of words), but made up of senseless words, one word of sense is better, which if a man hears, he becomes quiet.”

In the Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrine we read:

‘Much talking is a source of danger,
Through silence misfortune is avoided.
The talkative parrot in a cage is shut,
While birds that cannot talk fly freely’.

Finally, there is a discourse on ‘Good Speech’

“The good say;

1. Noble speech is apt;
2. Speak the Dhamma not a-dhamma:
3. Say what is pleasant, not unpleasant;
4. Speak what is true, not lies.

Speak only words that do not bring remorse
Nor hurt another. That is good speech, indeed.

Truth is immortal speech, it is ancient law.
In truth, weal and Dhamma, the sages are established.

The Buddha’s words of peace to Nibbāna lead,

To suffering’s end. Such words are good indeed.”

4. Right Action

Right action in conformity with right understanding and right thought has negative as well as positive connotations. The negative connotations, as can be noticed at first sight correspond to the Biblical commandments forbidding murder, stealing and wrong sexual behaviour: “You shall not kill. Neither shall you commit adultery. Neither shall you steal. Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbour. Neither shall you covet your neighbour’s wife; and you shall not desire your neighbour’s house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbour’s.”

Positively, right action will foster and promote goodness, compassion, relief of suffering, pleasantness, peace and universal brotherhood. Right action, therefore, implies compassion to all living beings; taking only of things that are given; and living a pure and chaste life.

It is very important to cultivate a certain amount of mental discipline, for an untamed mind can easily lead to evil in word or deed. Listen to what the Buddha says: “When the thought is unguarded, bodily action is also unguarded; so are speech and mental action.”

Further he says:
“A fool is known by his actions and so is a sage. By conduct is knowledge made bright.”

“One endowed with three qualities should be known as a fool. With what three? With wrong bodily behaviour, wrong speech and wrong thought. A fool should be known as one endowed with these three qualities.

“One endowed with three qualities should be known as a sage. With what three? With right bodily behaviour, right speech, and right thought. A sage should be known as endowed with these three qualities.

“So, monks, you should train yourselves thus: We shall live having given up the three things endowed with which a man is known as a fool, and shall practice three things endowed with which a man is known as a sage. Thus, monks, should you train yourselves.”

Conduct builds character; each one has to labour hard for it. As William Hawes says, “A good character is, in all cases, the fruit of personal exertion. It is not inherited from parents, it is not created by external advantages, it is no necessary appendage of birth, wealth, talents or station; but it is the result of one’s own endeavours.” In the training of character the first thing necessary is to practise restraint (samyama). All religious teachers and psychologists will agree that if a man gives himself up to sense pleasures, his good conduct and character will fall away. Restraint comes by reflecting on virtue and its advantages; an unrestrained mind dissipates itself in frivolous activity. It is interesting to see how the Buddha trained his disciples. The dialogue between the Buddha and Kesi, a horse-trainer
clearly tells us that the Buddha did not believe in imposing commandments on his followers, but as a compassionate teacher he pointed out to them what was right and what was wrong and the consequences.\textsuperscript{69}

One must translate into action the precepts one has undertaken voluntarily. The first precept to abstain from killing and to extend compassion to all beings does not entail restriction. ‘All beings’ implies all living creatures all that breathe. All that live, human or animal, love life and loath death. Life is sacred and precious to all; their one aim is to preserve from harm and to prolong it as much as possible. Even the smallest creature that is conscious of being alive is precious. We read in the Dhammapada:

“He who seeking his own happiness, punishes or kills beings, who also long for happiness, will not find happiness after death.”\textsuperscript{70}

The happiness of all creatures depends on their being alive, hence it implies to make others happy is to let them live. The Dhammapada says:

“All men tremble at punishment, all men love life; remember that thou art like unto them, and do not kill nor cause slaughter.”\textsuperscript{71}

And the Samyutta Nikāya states: “As I am so are they, as they are so am I; Comparing one with others, neither slay nor cause to kill.”\textsuperscript{72}

“Those who kill suffer often in this life and may come to a terrible end. After this life, the karma of their ruthless deeds will for long force them into states of woe. Should such destroyers of life be born in prosperous families with beauty and strength and other bodily attributes, still their karma will dog them to an early
grave.” Whereas “Those who show pity towards others and refrain from killing, will be born in good states of existence and if reborn as humans, will be endowed with health, beauty, riches, influence, intelligence, etc.”

The second precept under right action is to abstain from stealing and to live honestly, taking only what is one’s own by right. To take what belongs to another may not be so serious as to deprive one of one’s life, but still a grave crime as it deprives a person of some happiness. This precept is easily violated by those in trade and commerce, because all kinds of fraud and dishonesty come under this precept. A man can use both his pen and his tongue with intent to steal. There can be no peace or happiness in a society where people are always on the look-out to cheat and rob their neighbours.

The third precept of right action is to abstain from wrong sexual behaviour. In the opening discourse of the Anguttara Nikāya we read:

“Monks, I know not of any other single form by which a man’s heart is attracted as it is by that of a woman. Monks, a woman’s form fills a man’s mind.

“Monks, I know not of any other single sound...

Monks, I know not of any other single smell…

Monks, I know not of any other single flavour…

Monks, I know not of any other single touch…by which a man’s heart is attracted as it is by that of a woman. A woman’s sound, smell, flavour, and touch fill a man’s mind.
“Monks, I know not of any other single form, sound, smell, flavour, and touch, by which a woman’s heart is attracted as it is by the form, sound, smell, flavour, and touch of a man. Monks, a woman’s mind is filled with these things.”

The Buddha describes sex as the strongest impulse in man. Even the most powerful person may become a weakling if one becomes a slave to this impulse; even the sage may fall from a higher level to a lower one. The sexual urge is a fire that needs careful handling. “There is no fire like passion, there is no shark like hatred, there is no snare like folly, and there is no torrent like greed.” It is said ‘passions do not die out: they burn out’.

It may be recalled here that since the Buddha was a practical philosopher he did not expect his lay followers to lead ascetic lives. Being well aware of man’s instincts and impulses, his appetites and urges, he did not prohibit sexual relations for the laity as he had done for the monks. But he warned all against wrong ways of gratifying the sexual appetite. He recommended the observance of eight precepts with special emphasis on the third one for the laity especially during the days of retreat (uposatha).

Bhikku Sīlācāra (Mr. McKechnie) writing on the third precept says:

“At every moment, it is our minds that make us what we are and in this matter of sex, mind plays a very important part: indeed, we might say that if the mind were completely under our control here, there would be little or no need for vigilance elsewhere. “If we look about us, we can see to what a pass lack of mental control
in this matter of sex has brought the human race. Consider the ‘lower animals’ as we are pleased to call them, and their sexual behaviour. Which really is lower here, the animal or the man? Which acts in a normal, regular manner as regards sexual behaviour? And which runs off into all manner of irregularities and perversities? Here it is the animal that is the higher creature, and man that is the lower. And why is this? It is simply because man who possesses the mental capacity which, rightly used, could make him master over his sexual impulsions, has actually used his mental powers in such deplorable passion as to make himself more a slave to those impulsions than are the animals.”

Two verses from the *Dhammapada* would summarize the Buddha’s teaching on right action: “He who destroys life, who speaks untruth, who in the world takes what is not given him, who goes to another man’s wife; And the man who gives himself to drinking intoxicating liquors, he, even in this world, digs up his own root.”

Describing the state which those who inflict pain on innocent people will come to, the Dhammapada says:

“He who inflicts pain on innocent and harmless persons, will soon come to one of these ten states: He will have cruel suffering, loss, injury of the body, heavy affliction, or loss of mind, or a misfortune coming from the king, or a fearful accusation, or loss of relations, or destruction of treasures or lightening-fire will burn his houses.”
Further it says:

“An act carelessly performed, a broken vow, and hesitating obedience to discipline (Brahma-Kariyam), all this brings no great reward.” And in conclusion, we can say:

“An evil deed is better left undone, for a man repents of it afterwards; a good deed is better done for having done it, one does not repent.”

5. Right Livelihood:

Buddhist monks being mendicants, the question of livelihood did not initially apply to them. However, subsequently when the question arose of lay people attaining liberation especially in Mahayana Buddhism, right livelihood did become an issue.

In Buddha’s time the modes of earning a living were limited, farming and animal husbandry being the chief means of livelihood.

Gautama Buddha spoke not only to the common man on the evil consequences of wrong living and the advantages of right living. We find in the Nikāyas, sermons on the life that a ruler had to lead. The Buddhist ideal of a good ruler included ten qualities:

- Generosity (dāna)
- Morality (sīla)
- Self-sacrifice or unselfishness (paricca)gā)
- Honesty (ajjava)
- Gentleness (maddava)
Not being given to luxurious living (tapa)
Self-restraint / no anger (akkōdha)
No-violence (avihimsa)
Patience (khanti)
Agreeability (avirōdha)\textsuperscript{84}

As the Buddha points out, it is the ruler who should first establish himself in the Dhamma, piety and righteousness and lead by example.

“If he who is reckoned best among them does not live righteously, need we speak of the others? They will follow suit. If the raja is unrighteous, the whole realm lives in woe… If he lives aright, the others emulate him and the whole realm lives in happiness.”\textsuperscript{85}

King Asoka who may be regarded as one of the most just, wise and benevolent rulers of all time, followed the advice of Buddha for the righteous administration of a country and was acclaimed as Asoka the Great because of his exemplary life and came to be known as Dhammasoka or Asoka the Righteous. H. G. Wells wrote: “Amidst the tens of thousands of monarchs … that crowd the columns of history the name of Asoka shines, and shines almost alone, a star”.\textsuperscript{86}

John Walters in his book Mind Unshaken says “In this modern world right livelihood can be one of the most difficult rules to obey. So many kinds of work are harmful to society and are unworthy of a true Buddhist. There are the arms and nuclear warfare industries; the drink trade; occupations involving the slaughter or vivisection of animals; yellow journalism; dishonest advertising and publicity; and
business that includes usury. Buddhism is not a narrow-minded religion. It regards human frailties with understanding and sympathy. Yet the sincere Buddhist cannot profess one code of morality and earn his livelihood in an occupation with another, debased code.”

Right livelihood brings true happiness to the individual and to the society; it promotes unity and right relations among all. It is selfishness and greed that tempt a man to go after wrong and unlawful ways of life. The Buddha says: “If, whether for his own sake, or for the sake of others, a man wishes neither for a son, nor for wealth, nor for lordship, and if he does not wish for his own success by unfair means, then he is good, wise, and virtuous.”

The Buddha was quite conscious of the burdens and challenges of a lay man with household responsibilities; hence, he did not impose on him the same ethical conduct expected of a monk. But he was very emphatic that the layman should strive hard to observe at least the five training precepts, the minimum moral obligation of the ordinary person, and earn his living by right means, by right conduct (dhamma-cariya). Some of the discourses like the Sīgāla-sutta which is rightly called the layman’s code of discipline (gihi-vinaya), Vyaggahapajja-sutta etc. of the Buddha especially for the laity, clearly show his concern for both the material as well spiritual welfare of his lay disciples. We find the mutual duties of parents and children; teacher and pupil; husband and wife; friends and relatives; master and servant etc. explained over there.

Mrs. C. A. F. Rhys Davids, commenting on the Sīgāla-sutta, says:
“The Buddha’s doctrine of love and good-will between man and man is here set forth in a domestic and social ethics with more comprehensive detail than elsewhere … And truly we may say even now of this Vinaya, or code of discipline, so fundamental are the human interests involved, so sane and wide is the wisdom that envisages them, that the utterances are as fresh and practically as binding today and here as they were then at Rājagaha. ‘Happy would have been the village or the clan on the banks of the Ganges, where the people were full of the kindly spirit of fellow-feeling, the noble spirit of justice which breathes through these naive and simple sayings.’ Not less happy would be the village or the family on the banks Thames today, of which this could be said.”

The fundamental needs of both a monk and a layman are four (catupaccaya): food, clothing, shelter and medicine. It seems it was the Buddha’s custom to ask the monks on meeting them: “How is it with you; how are you faring? I trust you are well and that you are not short of food.”

There is a touching story of a herdsman who missed his midday meal since he was on the lookout for an ox that was lost. He was hungry and fatigued on his way back, and yet he went to listen to the Buddha’s preaching. The Buddha knowing that the man had not eaten the whole day requested the people to feed him first. He knew that it was useless to preach to hungry stomachs. On that occasion the Buddha is said to have said:

“Hunger is the worst of diseases, the elements of the body the greatest evil; if one knows this truly, that is Nirvana, the highest happiness.”
Very often poverty is the main cause of crime. The *Kutadanta-sutta*\(^\text{97}\) states how in order to raise the social and economic conditions of a country, the farmers and traders should be provided with the necessary facilities to carry on their farming and business, and that people should be paid just wages. Thus crime can be lessened and peace and harmony can be ensured, when there is economic sufficiency.\(^\text{98}\)

So the Buddha’s instructions on right livelihood are addressed to both the laity as well as the monks, the members of the *Sangha*. He made it very clear that the monk’s life should be pure and free from fraud.\(^\text{99}\) The Buddha himself gave the lead and example when he said in the discourse on *Going Forth*:

\begin{quote}
Leaving home I gave up \\
All evil words and acts, \\
Pure was my livelihood.\(^{100}\)
\end{quote}

And the Dhammapada says:

\begin{quote}
One is the road that leads to wealth, another the road that leads to Nirvana; if the Bhikshu, the disciple of Buddha, has learnt this, he will not yearn for honour. He will strive after separation from the world.\(^{101}\)
\end{quote}

Any form of livelihood at the individual, social or state level that involves cheating, exploitation, injury to others, disturbance of peace and harming of the common good is wrong livelihood. In other words, livelihood in order to be right must follow right understanding.
6. **Right Effort:**

Right effort which includes constancy, endurance, consistency, perseverance, detachment and determined determination is an essential pre-requisite for attaining the goal of life which is nirvana.

Four specific steps are mentioned by Gautama Buddha in regard to effort:

1. Senses are to be guarded against getting entangled with sense-objects in order to keep the mind from unwholesome thoughts.
2. The second prescription is: abandon unwholesome thoughts that have entered the mind.
3. Some technique is to be employed not only to empty the mind of evil but also to fill the mind with good.
4. The fourth prescription is the retention in the mind of all that is healthy and wholesome.\(^{102}\)

*Majjhima Nikāyas* offer equally important suggestions:

1. Promptitude in replacing evil thoughts with good ones.
2. Reflect on the painful consequences that will follow on the heels of the execution of evil thoughts or inimical plots.
3. Finally, changing the environment may be helpful.\(^{103}\)

7. **Right Mindfulness:**

Right mindfulness consists particularly in attention and attentiveness to the persons, situations, mental states we encounter on way through life. It is one of the most important steps and practices on the road to nirvana. This implies attention to
what is done and where and when it is done; awareness that all these things are passing; attentiveness to inner impulses.

Gautama Buddha warned his disciples against heedlessness:

“Be vigilant, be mindful,

Be well-disciplined, O monks,

With thoughts well collected

Keep watch over your mind.”104

And the importance of right mindfulness is evident from the following verses of the Dhammapada:

“Those who bridle their mind, which travels far, moves about alone is without a body, and hides in the chamber (of the heart), will be free from the bonds of Mara (the tempter).”105 “Whatever a hater may do to a hater, or an enemy to an enemy, a wrongly-directed mind will do him greater mischief.”106 “Not a mother, not a father will do so much, nor any other relative; a well-directed mind will do us greater service.”107

8. **Right Concentration:**

The word *concentration*, (in Pāli *Samādhi*) for Buddhism actually refers to recollection though in some Indian languages it may also refer to a sepulchre or tomb. Persons in this state having gained sufficient control and command not only of their emotions and feelings but also of their mental states are able to maintain themselves in inner calm, peace, tranquillity, whatever external conditions may be, whatever the turmoil in the surroundings.
Meditation

For the attainment of Samādhi, meditation is the means. Meditation occupies the highest place in Buddhism; for it is in and through meditation that enlightenment and supreme security from bondage, spoken so highly of in the teachings of the Buddha, are attained.

Meditation or *dharana* or better *dhyana* attends to the calming of the mind or concentration whereas *vipassana* is concerned with insight meditation.

“What is concentration? What are its marks, requisites and development?

“What whatever is unification of mind, this is concentration; the four arousings\textsuperscript{108} of mindfulness are the marks of concentration; the four right efforts\textsuperscript{109} are the requisites for concentration; whatever is the exercise, the development, the increase of these very things, this is herein the development of concentration.”\textsuperscript{110}

According to Piyadassi Thera, this statement clearly indicates that the three factors of the samādhi group viz. right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration function together in support of each other. They comprise real concentration.\textsuperscript{111}

For attaining concentration, attention to breathing in and breathing out is a beneficial exercise. This in-and-out-breathing is called ānāpānasati. Ānāpānasati means mindfulness of breathing. According to tradition, it was originally taught by the Buddha in several sutras. Ānāpānasati means to feel the sensations caused by the movements of the breath in the body as is practiced in the context of mindfulness. As we saw in the first chapter, Gautama sat under a Bodhi tree at Gaya and practised concentration/meditation till he attained enlightenment. The
one cherished most by him in his personal meditation and also recommended most insistently for his disciples is ānāpānasati.\textsuperscript{112} Having thus gained perfect calm, he was able to develop Insight, or true wisdom that enables a person to see things as they really are. Through the practice of Insight Meditation one can have real insight into reality. This Insight Meditation is called Vipassanā.

Vipassanā in the Buddhist tradition means insight into the true nature of reality, namely as the three marks of existence: impermanence, suffering or unsatisfactoriness, and the realization of non-self. By observing the breath one becomes aware of the perpetual changes involved in breathing, and the arising and passing away of mindfulness. One can also be aware of and gain insight into impermanence through the observation of bodily sensations and their nature of arising and passing away.

Thus meditation is a practice of mental concentration that brings the two elements of \textit{calm} and \textit{realism} to a perturbed, blind mind.\textsuperscript{113} The importance of meditation is underlined by the Dhammapada:

“Even the gods envy those who are awakened and no forgetful, who are given to meditation, who are wise, and who delight in the repose of retirement (from the world).”\textsuperscript{114}

“The disciples of Gotama are always well awake, and their mind day and night always delights in meditation.”\textsuperscript{115}

Meditation or \textit{dharana} has two principal objectives -

a) To realise that all things are passing:
A realistic person should not shun from the fact that sooner or later he will be
dead and gone. This fact has to be faced and psychologically prepared for. What
will happen to the five aggregates when my body is in the coffin or in the
cemetery? Regular reflection on such topics may help the practices recommended
by the *sila*.

b) Benevolence:

This is the second objective of meditation: to become gradually more firmly
rooted in habits of mind that are conducive to attitudes and actions that foster
benevolence and compassion. The Buddha for this purpose is said to have
encouraged friendship meditation (*maitribhāvanā*). It is practised as follows:

At any suitable moment, meditators send out thoughts of good will towards
different individuals, beginning with those whom they love – parents, siblings,
spouse, children. Then they include those with whom their relationship is of a
general nature, such as fellow-students, co-workers, pupils and servants. Lastly,
they incorporate even those whom they dislike and who are inimical to them. In
each instance they identify them by name, individually, in their minds and express
this or a similar phrase of well-wishing: May (name) be happy, may he (she) be in
good health, may he (she) prosper.\textsuperscript{116}

The insistence with which the Buddha tried to inculcate such a spirit of
loving kindness is evident from his advice:

“Monks, if a person were to harbor ill-will even when wild bandits with double-
handed saw were to dismember him, he is not a follower of my teaching. Thus,
monks, should you train yourselves. ‘Unsullied shall our minds remain, neither shall an ill-word escape our lips, kindly and compassionate, we will ever abide will loving hearts and not harbor hate. We will radiate loving kindness even to them (bandits) and then we will radiate the whole world with thoughts of infinite friendliness, without hate, without ill-will.’ This is how you must train yourselves, Monks.’\textsuperscript{117}

And in the Dhammapada he says: “For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time: hatred ceases by love, this is an old rule.”\textsuperscript{118}

We find the best summarization of the Buddhist system of meditation in the advice given by the Buddha to his son Rāhula:

“Develop the meditation on loving kindness (mettā), Rāhula, for by this ill-will is banished.

Develop the meditation on compassion (karunā), Rāhula, for by this cruelty is banished.

Develop the meditation on gentleness (muditā), Rāhula, for by this hard-heartedness is banished.

Develop the meditation on equanimity (upekkhā), Rāhula, for by this anxiety is banished.

Develop the meditation on corruptibility of the body (ashubha), Rāhula, for by this lust is banished.

Develop the meditation on the concept of impermanence (anicca), Rāhula, for by this the pride of self (asmi-māna) is banished.
Develop the meditation on mindfulness by in and out breathing (ānāpāna sati), Rāhula, for this if frequently practiced, bears much fruit and is of great advantage.”

John of the Cross

Introduction:

From what we know already, the views of the Buddha seem to accord quite well with sages of the West like Plato and Aristotle. A superficial knowledge of the ethics of Plato and Aristotle would suggest that both Plato and Aristotle would congratulate Buddha on the accuracy of some of his insights into human nature. Probably they would recognize him as superior to themselves so far as the analysis of cravings is concerned and the ruinous effects they have on individuals and societies. As for the attribution of senseless cravings to ignorance by the Buddha, does it not remind us of the Socratic thesis that no one does evil knowingly? Though Athens and Bodh Gaya are thousands of miles apart, the air that the sages breathe in seems to be having similar, if not the same constitution.

A comparative study of the ethics of Plato and Aristotle on the one hand and of the Buddha on the other, would be an appropriate preparation for comparing St. John of the Cross with the Buddha. Moreover, it would appear that an examination of Biblical prescriptions for human happiness would reveal many similarities with the teachings of the Nikāyas including the Dhammapada.

Taking all the above into account and bearing it in mind we proceed to what we think after sufficient research about the views of John of the Cross in
connection with the Astangamarga, without forgetting that from the point of view of natural reason that the scholastic tradition with its Platonic and Aristotelian underpinnings was a strong influence on the philosophy of John of the Cross. The scholastic tradition however, was a herculean attempt to corroborate natural reason with supernatural revelation on the one hand and integrate natural reason into supernatural faith on the other. Like St. Thomas Aquinas, St. John of the Cross would hold that the truths of natural reason and supernatural revelation cannot contradict each other.

**The Four Noble Truths**

At this juncture we must briefly survey what John of the Cross has to say about suffering, the causes of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the Astangamarga.

1. **Suffering**

   Generally speaking along with Aquinas and the scholastic tradition which is supported by the Bible, John maintains that the Supreme Being God is Infinite Goodness and has created everything good. In fact, all created beings are ontologically good and the universe promotes universal goodness and material nature too has goodness written into its forms and structures and functions, operations and aims and goals. In material nature there is a hierarchy or order of beings: the living are differentiated from the non-living. The living too are distributed into essentially different classes. There is the vegetable kingdom and the animal kingdom. Mankind is the crown of material creation. These different
orders of being are closely interconnected and interrelated. It is natural to see that lower living forms are intended for higher living forms. The grass, for example, is intended for the cow. If the smaller fish were not food for the larger fish, many species of fish would be extinct. Is it suffering for the grass to be eaten by the cow? Is it suffering for the cow to be eaten by the tiger? If there were no cows or deer or other such animals, tiger would also disappear. Reflection on such issues as these must lead the human mind to a right understanding of nature and also to a right understanding of dukkha. Is the grass or the cow or the tiger in its old age the subject of dukkha? John of the Cross would reply that as far as we can see, the grass is not the subject of dukkha in the same way as the cow nor is the cow or the tiger subject to dukkha in the same way as human beings. Without doubt, cows and tigers experience pain yet the problem of pain and suffering and evil as far as we can perceive and understand never arises in their mind. As far as we can understand, problems and questions and the search for solutions are characteristic only of the human mind.

So, can it be said, the sufferings of the cow or the tiger in its old age are the effect of craving? Going a step further, can it be said that all human sufferings are the effect of ignorance or cravings? According to John of the Cross, a right understanding of creation in general, of the material world of living material beings, the situation and role of mankind in the material world must be acquired in order to make a correct estimate of what is called the First Noble Truth, Dukkha.
Human beings have been created by God as the crown of material creation. As a believer in the Bible, Friar John accepts that all human beings are one family – all children of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve being deceived by the devil broke a serious commandment of God who had warned them of dire consequences if they failed to obey Him. This sin of Adam and Eve therefore, is the cause of suffering, unhappiness, misery, old age, sickness and death. In other words, this original sin is the first link in the causal chain of *dukkha* generation after generation. Ignorance and craving lead to sin and *dukkha*. Sin leads to *dukkha* and *dukkha* leads many deeper into sin. In this sense to a large extent broadly speaking, Friar John would agree with Gautama Buddha that sinful craving is the cause of human misery and *dukkha*. We saw in chapter two how appetites/desires or cravings in other words, weary, torment, darken, defile and weaken the soul.¹²⁰

John of the Cross might have translated Buddha’s *dukkha* sometimes as sorrow, sometimes as suffering. True, sorrow and suffering practically always go hand in hand. However, it appears they are far from identical nor are they always to be avoided. One thing that definitely merits the greatest sorrow for John of the Cross is sin. Whereas as already mentioned earlier, suffering for the love of God was a great joy for Friar John. Sorrow for Friar John was one of the four chief passions of the soul the other three being joy, hope and fear. It appears to be that the very constitution of the human person who blends into one sense and spirit makes it possible that what causes sorrow to the senses can bring joy or at least hope to the spirit.
2. Cause

John of the Cross would say that all suffering has at least a reason or a condition, if not a cause. He points out that cravings are the cause of suffering as just mentioned.

John of the Cross uses the word *appetite*. He does not define appetite, but he calls it the mouth of the will. An appetite we understand as any physical craving or desire; it’s a strong wish or urge to partake of something. Its root meaning is ‘striving after’.

If one asks further how did humanity which was created good by God fall into evil cravings, human beings were not only created good but also intelligent and reasonable. Being intelligent and reasonable they were endowed with the freedom of the will. Although freedom of the will is rooted in human intelligence and reason, it has the power to act against intelligence and reason. This was the sin committed by Adam and Eve who, being deceived by the devil, misused their freedom and fell from grace.

St. John of the Cross accepts that the present condition of mankind as a fallen race is due to sin. Fallen from where? Fallen from the supernatural state of grace where the rule of the mind over the body was perfect because the mind was perfectly subject to God through faith and grace.

This loss of faith and grace through sin is considered by John of the Cross as the greatest possible evil though it is not experienced by many as suffering. The sinful condition of the children of Adam and Eve leading to innumerable moral
and physical evils including sickness, old age and death accounts for the great misery and unhappiness of mankind. This sinful condition also explains dependent origination leading generation after generation and tempting generation after generation to craving after craving devastating the minds and bodies of millions. Such being the situation, disease, old age and death although part and parcel of nature and natural material life, can also be considered in Johannine perspective as punishment for sin. Now punishment according to Plato and presumably according to John is not an evil but a good since just punishment an act of justice and therefore, good. Punishment therefore, and the suffering that goes with it is good as an act of justice, but may be considered evil by the criminal. In this perspective suffering may not always be an evil but also under some conditions something good.

If suffering may sometimes be good and not evil further enquiry is needed to discern when it is good, when it is evil, when it is avoidable, when it is unavoidable, when it is undesirable and when it may be possibly desirable. John of the Cross would believe there is a real distinction between evil and suffering. The sufferings brought about by cravings are certainly evil but not all sufferings are brought upon the sufferer by his or her own cravings. Thousands of people suffer because of the cravings of others. Evil and suffering are often seen to be relative. One person’s tension is another person’s relief. One company’s progress is another company’s misfortune. John of the Cross in Biblical perspective would therefore consider sin as absolute evil whereas sickness, old age and death are relative
especially after the suffering and death of Jesus Christ who rose from the dead. John of the Cross believed that the cause of the suffering and death of Christ was the sinfulness of the people around him. Moreover, the sinfulness of those people shared in the nature of the sinfulness of the human race. Because of the redeeming death of Christ, a believer in Christ need not consider disease, old age and death as absolute evil. Believers hope to share in the resurrection of Christ.

To be noted also is the fact that quite often the remedies for suffering may also be causes of suffering. Cancer, for instance is cured according to many doctors by chemotherapy – which is quite a painful remedy. The terms “pain”, “suffering” are sometimes to be taken univocally, sometimes analogically and may be sometimes equivocally. From this perspective dukkha is the remedy for dukkha in the sense that just as one dukkha or rather one kind of dukkha is the cause of another dukkha or another kind of dukkha, so also one kind of dukkha can be the remedy for another kind of dukkha.

John of the Cross recommends the accomplishment of three tasks if one desires to reach the mount of perfection, i.e. union. “Those desiring to climb to the summit of the mount in order to become an altar for the offering of a sacrifice of pure love and praise and reverence to God must first accomplish these three tasks perfectly. First, they must cast out strange gods, all alien affections and attachments. Second, by denying these appetites and repenting of them - through the dark night of the senses - they must purify themselves of the residue. Third, in order to reach the top of this high mount, their garments must be changed. By
means of the first two works, God will substitute new garments for the old. The soul will be clothed in a new understanding of God in God (through removal of the old understanding) and in a new love of God in God, once the will is stripped of all the old cravings and satisfactions. And God will vest the soul with new knowledge when the other old ideas and images are cast aside [Col. 3:9]. He causes all that is of the old self, the abilities of one's natural being, to cease, and he attires all the faculties with new supernatural abilities. As a result, one's activities, once human, now become divine. This is achieved in the state of union when the soul, in which God alone dwells, has no other function than that of an altar on which God is adored in praise and love."

We saw earlier that the journey towards union with God is a night. So Friar John says: “This night, which as we say is contemplation, causes two kinds of darkness or purgation in spiritual persons according to the two parts of the soul, the sensory and the spiritual. Hence one night of purgation is sensory, by which the senses are purged and accommodated to the spirit; and the other night or purgation is spiritual, by which the spirit is purged and denuded as well as accommodated and prepared for union with God through love. The sensory night is common and happens to many … The spiritual night is the lot of very few, those who have been tried and are proficient… The first purgation or night is bitter and terrible to the senses. But nothing can be compared to the second, for it is horrible and frightful to the spirit.”
Thus we see that the journey towards union of the soul with God involves two dark nights: dark night of the senses and dark night of the spirit.¹²⁴

In Chapter 4 of Book One of The Ascent of Mount Carmel Friar John explains the necessity of truly passing through the dark night of sense (the mortification of the appetites) in order to journey to union with God. “The necessity to pass through this dark night (the mortification of the appetites and denial of pleasure in all things) to attain divine union with God arises from the fact that all of a person's attachments to creatures are pure darkness in God's sight. Clothed in these affections, people are incapable of the enlightenment and dominating fullness of God's pure and simple light; first they must reject them. There can be no concordance between light and darkness; as St. John says: Tenebrae eam no comprehenderunt (The darkness could not receive the light) [Jn. 1:5].”¹²⁵ He proceeds to give reason for the same and says: “The reason, as we learn in philosophy, is that two contraries cannot coexist in the same subject. Darkness, an attachment to creatures, and light, which is God, are contraries and bear no likeness toward each other, as St. Paul teaches in his letter to the Corinthians: Quae conventio lucis ad tenebras? (What conformity is there between light and darkness?) [2 Cor. 6:14] Consequently, the light of divine union cannot be established in the soul until these affections are eradicated.”¹²⁶

Referring to the narrow gate that leads to life which Jesus speaks of in the Gospel according to Matthew¹²⁷ Friar John says: “This narrow gate is the dark night of sense, in which the soul is despoiled and denuded - in order to enter it -
and grounded in faith, which is foreign to all sense, that it may be capable of walking along the constricted road, which is the night of spirit. The soul enters this second night so that it may journey to God in pure faith, for pure faith is the means whereby it is united with God. Few there are who walk along this road, because it is so narrow, dark, and terrible that, in obscurities and trials, the night of sense cannot be compared to it ... Yet the benefits of this night are incomparably greater than those of the night of sense.”

Book Two of the *Dark Night* is a treatise on the dark night of the spirit. John of the Cross explains in chapter one when this night commences: “If His Majesty intends to lead the soul on, he does not put it in this dark night of spirit immediately after its going out from the aridities and trials of the first purgation and night of sense. Instead, after having emerged from the state of beginners, the soul usually spends many years exercising itself in the state of proficients. In this new state, as one liberated from a cramped prison cell, it goes about the things of God with much more freedom and satisfaction of spirit and with more abundant interior delight than it did in the beginning before entering the night of sense. Its imagination and faculties are no longer bound to discursive meditation and spiritual solicitude, as was their custom. The soul readily finds in its spirit, without the work of meditation, a very serene, loving contemplation and spiritual delight. Nonetheless, the purgation of the soul is not complete. The purgation of the principal part, that of the spirit, is lacking, and without it the sensory purgation, however strong it may have been, is incomplete because of a communication
existing between the two parts of the soul that form only one suppositum. As a result, certain needs, aridities, darknesses, and conflicts are felt. These are sometimes far more intense than those of the past and are like omens or messengers of the coming night of the spirit.”

Another question is whether the experience of dukkha is always the experience of nothing but dukkha. If one kind of dukkha is the cause of sorrow and another kind of dukkha is the remedy, does that not imply that while the former kind brings sorrow, the latter kind – remedy – brings hope?

Further if dukkha can be associated with sorrow and also with hope could it not in some instances be associated with joy or with love – a love that is free from craving? For Friar John an essential characteristic of craving is that it is more or less sinful, more or less inordinate or disordered, more or less against reason and more or less against the commandments of God.

In Chapter 11 of Book One of The Ascent of Mount Carmel, John of the Cross gives proofs of how freedom from all appetites, even the smallest, is necessary to attain divine union. He anticipates the question of the reader whether the total mortification of all the appetites, large and small, is a requirement to attain the high state of perfection, or if it is sufficient to mortify just some of them and leave the others, at least those that seem trifling. For it seems it would be an arduous task for individuals to attain such purity and nakedness that they would have no attachment to anything. And he responds saying that it is true that the appetites are not all equally detrimental, nor are all equally a hindrance to the soul.
He says that he is speaking of the voluntary appetites because the natural ones are little or no hindrance at all to the attainment of union, provided they do not receive one's consent or pass beyond the first movements, those stirrings in which the rational will does not take part either before or after. To eradicate the natural appetites, that is, to mortify them entirely, is impossible in this life. Even though they are not entirely mortified, they are not such a hindrance as to prevent one from attaining divine union. A soul can easily experience them in its sensitive nature and yet be free of them in the rational part of its being. It will happen sometimes that while a person is experiencing an intense union of will in the prayer of quiet these appetites will be actually dwelling in the sensory part. Yet the superior part of the soul, which is in prayer, will be paying no attention to them. But he cautions saying that all the other voluntary appetites, whether they be the most serious that involve mortal sin, or less grave in that they concern venial sin, or whether they be the least serious of all in that they only involve imperfections, must be mortified. A person must be liberated of them all, however slight they be, in order to arrive at the complete union. The reason is that in the state of divine union a person's will is so completely transformed into God's will that it excludes everything contrary to God's will, and in all and through all is motivated by the will of God.

He gives some examples of habitual imperfections: the common habit of being very talkative; a small attachment one never really desires to conquer, for example, to a person, to clothing, to a book or a cell, or to the way food is
prepared, and to other trifling conversations and little satisfactions in tasting, knowing, and hearing things, and so on. Any of these habitual imperfections to which there is attachment is as harmful to progress in virtue as the daily commission of many other imperfections and sporadic venial sins that do not result from a bad habit. These latter will not hinder a person as much as will the attachment to something. As long as this attachment remains, it is impossible to make progress in perfection, even though the imperfection may be very small.¹³³

Using a beautiful imagery of a bird that is tied he says: “It makes little difference whether a bird is tied by a thin thread or by a cord. Even if it is tied by thread, the bird will be held bound just as surely as if it were tied by cord; that is, it will be impeded from flying as long as it does not break the thread. Admittedly the thread is easier to break, but no matter how easily this may be done, the bird will not fly away without first doing so. This is the lot of those who are attached to something: No matter how much virtue they have they will not reach the freedom of the divine union.”¹³⁴

3. Cessation of Suffering

For John of the Cross it would follow from what has been said above that believing in Christ is the beginning of the cessation of suffering in the sense that believing in Christ leads ultimately to eternal happiness, eternal life, including the final resurrection of the body. The believer achieves a new understanding of the meaning of reality including the meaning of this-worldly reality and its passing nature and the meaning of suffering. For John of the Cross from some accounts
suffering and pain were great joys. His personal love and loyalty to Christ through whom he experienced God’s love for him moved him to desire suffering as an expression of his gratitude for God’s love. It is said that on one occasion when John was praying before a painting of Christ carrying His cross, he heard the Lord speak to him: “Fray John, ask of me what you will, for I will grant it in return for this service you have rendered me.” John’s answer was: “Lord, I desire trials to suffer for you and to be despised and considered unimportant.”

How explain this reply of John of the Cross? Some light on the answer may be thrown by his statement in *The Spiritual Canticle*. “The soul does nothing very outstanding by wanting to die at the vision of the beauty of God in order to enjoy him forever. Were she to have but a glimpse of the height and beauty of God, she would not only desire death in order to see him now forever, as she here desires, but she would very gladly undergo a thousand singularly bitter deaths to see him only for a moment; and having seen him, she would ask to suffer just as many more that she might see him for another moment.”

Suffering therefore can be redemptive as well as rewarding. In such an approach is the cessation of suffering to be considered an absolute good and a final goal? John of the Cross would reply, in this life the cessation of suffering is a relative good but its cessation in the next life is certainly a final goal.

In chapter 17 of Book Three of *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* he says that the first of the four passions of the soul and emotions of the will is joy, the other three being hope, sorrow and fear. Joy is nothing else than “a delight of the will
in an object esteemed and considered fitting”.

For the will never rejoices unless in something that is valuable and pleasing to it. Joy has six kinds of objects or goods: temporal, natural, sensory, moral, supernatural, and spiritual. We shall briefly deal here with the first three.

The first is temporal goods. By temporal goods John of the Cross means: riches, status, positions, and other things claiming prestige; and children, relatives, marriages, and so on. All these are possible objects of joy for the will. It is true that temporal goods of themselves are not necessarily the cause of sin, but because of the weakness of its tendencies, the human heart usually becomes attached to them and fails God, which is sin.

Referring to the exclamation of Jesus in the Gospel according to Luke “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” (i.e. those who have joy in them) “For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” , he says it demonstrates clearly a person's obligation not to rejoice in riches, since one is thereby exposed to much danger.

John says that spiritual persons must take care that in their heart and joy they do not become attached to temporal goods. They must fear lest, through a gradual increase, their small attachments become great. Great things can come from little things, and what is small in the beginning can be immense in the end, just as a spark is enough to set a mountain on fire, and even the whole world (Jas. 3:5). By liberating themselves from joy in temporal goods, they not only free themselves from the pestiferous kinds of harm mentioned in the preceding
chapters\textsuperscript{145}, but in addition acquire the virtue of liberality. Liberality is one of God's principal attributes and can in no way coexist with covetousness. They obtain more joy and recreation in creatures through the dispossession of them. They cannot rejoice in them if they behold them with possessiveness, for this is a care that, like a trap, holds the spirit to earth and does not allow wideness of heart (2 Cor. 6:11).\textsuperscript{146}

He adds further saying that here is another exceptional and principal benefit of detachment from joy in creatures, i.e. freedom of the heart for God. With this freedom the soul is disposed for all the favours God will grant it. Without it, he does not bestow them. The favours are such that for each joy the soul renounces out of love of God and evangelical perfection, it will receive a hundredfold in this life, as promised in the Gospel\textsuperscript{147}. Even if such gains were not to be had, the spiritual person would have to quell these joys because of the displeasure given to God through them. In the Gospel we see that merely because the rich man rejoiced in having stored up goods for many years God was so angered that he told him he must give an account of his soul that very night.\textsuperscript{148} We should believe, therefore, says Friar John, that as often as we rejoice vainly, God is watching and planning some chastisement and bitter drink according to our merits; for at times the sadness redounding from the joy is a hundred times greater than the joy.\textsuperscript{149}

Friar John counsels that we should not rejoice over riches; neither when we possess them nor when our neighbour possesses them, unless God is served and honoured through them. He says the same holds true for other temporal goods,
titles and positions, and so on. It is vain for people to rejoice in these goods if they do not serve God by them and walk more securely on the road of eternal life. And because they cannot know with certitude that they are serving God more, it would be vain of them to rejoice over these goods, for such joy cannot be reasonable. As Jesus says, even though one gains the whole world, one can lose one's soul (Mt. 16:26). The only reason for rejoicing then is the greater service of God.\(^{150}\)

To the parents John of the Cross says that there is no reason to rejoice in their children because they are many, or rich, or endowed with natural talents and gifts, or because they are wealthy. They should rejoice in their children if the latter are serving God and give glory to Him. Beauty, riches, and lineage were of no help to Absalom, David's son, since he did not serve God (2 Sam. 14:25). The joy he found, therefore, in these goods was vain.\(^{151}\)

To the childless couple Friar John has this consolation to offer: It is vain to desire children, as some do in upsetting and troubling the whole world with their longing for them. For, they do not know whether their children will be of good character and whether they will serve God, or whether the expected happiness will instead bring sorrow, trial, grief and dishonour. And because of the children they might, as many do, offend God more. Christ says of these people that they circle the earth and the sea in order to enrich their children, and they make them children of perdition twice as much as they themselves (Mt. 23:15)\(^{152}\). Friar John is not against having children, but is it worth having children who bring disgrace and
dishonour to the parents, to the society, and ultimately to God Himself who created them?

It would also be vanity for a husband and wife to rejoice in their marriage when they are uncertain whether God is being better served by their marriage, says John of the Cross. They should rather be perplexed, he says, for as St. Paul declares, matrimony is the cause of not centring the heart entirely on God, since the hearts of the couple are set on one another (1 Cor. 7:32-34). He advises consequently: *If you are free from a wife do not seek one, but if you already have one, be as free of heart as if you had none* (1 Cor. 7:27, 29). He teaches us this together with what he teaches about temporal goods: *This, therefore, that I say to you, brothers, is certain, the time is short; what remains is that those who have wives be as those who have them not; and those who weep as those who do not weep; and those who rejoice as those who do not rejoice; and those who buy as those who do not possess; and those who use this world as those who use it not* (1 Cor. 7:29-31)\(^\text{153}\).

Friar John adds, the reason St. Paul says all this is to explain that nothing but what belongs to the service of God should be the object of our joy. Any other joy would be vain and worthless, for joy that is out of harmony with God is of no value to the soul.

In Chapter 19 of Book Three of *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, John of the Cross describes in detail the harm caused from joy in temporal goods. The seriousness of the harm can be gauged from what he says: “We would run out of
ink, paper, and time were we to describe the harm that beleaguers the soul because it turns its affection to temporal goods. Something very small can lead into great evils and destroy remarkable blessings, just as an unextinguished spark can kindle immense fires capable of burning up the world.”154 He says this harm has its origin and root in one main privative harm embodied in this joy, i.e. withdrawal from God. Just as approaching God through the affection of the will gives rise to every good, so withdrawal from him through affection for creatures breeds every harm and evil in the soul. This privative harm, from which the other negative and positive kinds arise, has four degrees, one worse than the other.155

The first degree of harm to spring from this joy is backsliding: a blunting of the mind in relation to God, by which God's goods become dark to it, just as a cloud darkens the air and prevents the sun from illumining it.156

The second degree of this privative harm issues from the first. It is a spreading out of the will in temporal things - and in a manner that involves even greater freedom. This consists in making little of joy and pleasure in creatures, in not being afflicted about it nor considering it to be so serious a matter. This second degree causes one to withdraw from spiritual exercises and the things of God, to lack satisfaction in these exercises because of the pleasure found in other things, and to give oneself over to many imperfections, frivolities, joys, and vain pleasures.157 The trait of those in this second degree is extreme lukewarmness as
well as carelessness in spiritual matters, observing them through mere formality, force, or habit, rather than through love.\textsuperscript{158}

The third degree of this privative harm is the complete abandoning of God. These individuals don't care about observing God's law, but attend to worldly goods and allow themselves to fall into mortal sins through covetousness. This degree includes all who are so engrossed in the things, riches, and affairs of this world that they care nothing about fulfilling the obligations of God's law. Thus in the affairs of God they are nothing, and in those of the world they are everything. To these individuals God refers through Prophet Jeremiah: "They have abandoned me, the fount of living water, and dug for themselves leaking cisterns that cannot hold water" (Jer. 2:13).\textsuperscript{159}

The fourth degree of this privative harm is the one into which the avaricious ones fall. Because of temporal goods, the avaricious do not concern themselves with setting their heart on God's law, and consequently their will, memory, and intellect wander far from God and they forget Him, as though he were not their God at all. The reason is that they have made gods for themselves out of money and temporal goods. St. Paul indicates this in declaring that avarice is a form of idolatry (Col. 3:5). Those who are in this fourth degree, says Friar John, forget God and deliberately turn their heart - which ought to be centred on him - to money, as though they had no other God.

He laments: "Today many belong in various ways to the category of this fourth degree. Out there in the world, their reason darkened as to spiritual matters
through covetousness, they serve money and not God, they are moved by money rather than by God, and they give first consideration to the temporal price and not to the divine value and reward. In countless ways they make money their principal god and goal and give it precedence over God, their ultimate end.  

In the category of this last degree are also included all those miserable souls who value earthly goods as their god and are so enamoured of them that they do not hesitate to sacrifice their lives when they observe that this god of theirs undergoes some temporal loss. They despair and commit suicide for wretched reasons, and demonstrate with their own hands the miserable reward that comes from such a god. Since there is nothing to hope for from him, he gives despair and death. And those whom he does not pursue right up to death, the ultimate injury, die from living in the affliction of anxieties and many other miseries.

The second is natural goods. Natural goods are: beauty, grace, elegance, bodily constitution, and all other corporeal endowments; also, in the soul, good intelligence, discretion, and other talents belonging to the rational part of humans.

Friar John says people will be deceived if they rejoice in these gifts only because they or their relatives have them, without giving thanks to God who grants them in order to be better known and loved. Bodily grace is deceptive, deludes people along the way, and attracts them to inappropriate things through vain joy and complacency with self or with the possession of this grace. Beauty is vain because it causes people who esteem and rejoice in it to fall in countless ways. People
should rejoice only if they serve God or others through it. They ought rather to be diffident and fearful lest their natural gifts and graces occasion their offending God by turning their eyes to these gifts in vain presumption or excessive attachment.

He advises that those possessing these endowments should be careful and live cautiously lest through vain ostentation they be the occasion that someone's heart withdraw even one iota or a dot from God. These natural graces and gifts are such a provocation and occasion of sin both to the possessor and the beholder that there is scarcely a heart that escapes from this snare or birdlime. He says that many spiritual persons with these endowments have, out of fear, prayed God even to disfigure them lest these gifts be an occasion to themselves or others for some vain joy or attachment.⁶³ Spiritual persons, he says, must purge and darken their will of this vain joy, and bear in mind the following: Beauty and all other natural endowments are but earth, arising from the earth and returning to it; grace and elegance are but the smoke and air of this earth, and should be considered and valued as such for the sake of avoiding a lapse into vanity.⁶⁴

Friar John says that there are many benefits derived through withdrawal of the heart from rejoicing in natural goods. Besides preparing the soul for the love of God and for other virtues, it directly paves the way for humility towards oneself and general charity towards one's neighbour. By not becoming attached to anyone a person remains unencumbered and free to love all rationally and spiritually, which is the way God wants them to be loved.⁶⁵
A second excellent benefit coming from the denial of this kind of joy is the fulfillment of the counsel our Lord gives in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, that those who would follow him should deny themselves.\textsuperscript{166} In no other way could a soul do this if it were to rejoice in its natural goods, because those who pay some attention to themselves do not deny themselves or follow Christ.\textsuperscript{167}

A third benefit of the denial of this kind of joy is that such denial begets deep tranquility of soul, empties one of distractions, and brings recollection to the senses, especially to the eyes. By not wanting this joy, souls do not want to look at or occupy the other senses with these things so they may avoid being attracted or ensnared by them and wasting time or thought. By guarding the senses, the gates of the soul, one safeguards and increases one's peace and purity of soul.\textsuperscript{168}

The fourth benefit is: Obscene objects and ideas do not cause in them the impression and impurity they do in those who still find this joy to their liking. Consequently, from the denial and mortification of this joy, spiritual purity of soul and body (of spirit and sense) arises; a person gradually acquires angelic harmony with God, and the soul and body become a worthy temple of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{169}

The fifth benefit coming to the soul is freedom from countless vanities and other kinds of spiritual and temporal harm, and especially from being held in disesteem, which is the lot of those who boast about natural endowments and rejoice in them whether they belong to themselves or others. Accordingly, those who pay no attention to such things, but are interested in what is pleasing to God, are considered and esteemed to be discreet and wise - and indeed they are.\textsuperscript{170}
And the last one is freedom of spirit by which the soul easily conquers temptations, passes through trials, and grows prosperously in virtue. This is an excellent good and very necessary in serving God.\textsuperscript{171}

The third object of joy is sensory goods. By sensory goods he means all the goods apprehensible to the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, and to the interior faculty of discursive imagination. They are goods pertinent to the exterior and interior senses.\textsuperscript{172}

Spiritual joy directed to God at the sight of all divine or profane things follows from the eye already purged of enjoyment in seeing things. Resulting from the purgation of enjoyment in hearing things is a most spiritual joy, a hundred times greater, directed to God in all that is heard, divine or profane; and so on with the other senses already purged. In the state of innocence all that our first parents saw, spoke of, and ate in the garden of paradise served them for more abundant delight in contemplation, since the sensory part of their souls was truly subjected and ordered to reason. The person whose sense is purged of sensible objects and ordered to reason procures from the first movements the delight of savory contemplation and awareness of God.\textsuperscript{173}

The one who does not live according to the senses directs all the operations of the senses and faculties to divine contemplation. In good philosophy, says Friar John, the operation of each thing corresponds to its being or life. If the soul through mortification of the animal life lives a spiritual life, it must obviously, without contradiction, go to God in all things, since all its spiritual actions and
movements will flow from the spiritual life. Consequently this person, now of pure heart, finds in all things a joyful, pleasant, chaste, pure, spiritual, glad, and loving knowledge of God.\textsuperscript{174}

Divine contemplation for John of the Cross being a joy without cravings may be considered a kind of this worldly nirvana.

In detachment from things people acquire a clearer knowledge of them and a better understanding of both natural and supernatural truths concerning them. Their joy in these temporal goods is far different from the joy of one who is attached to them, and they receive great benefits and advantages from such joy. They delight in these goods according to the truth of them, but those who are attached delight according to what is false in them; they delight in the best, the attached delight in the worst; they delight in the substance of them, those sensibly attached delight in the accidents. The senses cannot grasp or attain to more than the accidents, whereas the spirit, purged of the clouds and appearances of the accidents, penetrates the truth and value of things, which is the object of the spirit. Joy, then, clouds the judgment like a mist. For there can be no voluntary joy over creatures without voluntary possessiveness, just as there can be no joy, insofar as it is a passion, unaccompanied by habitual possessiveness of heart.\textsuperscript{175}

4. The Astangamarga – Parallels in John

Friar John of the Cross of course, as far as we are aware, knew little of the great civilizations of the East and had probably never heard of Buddhism. However, from his writings we can garner his attitudes and estimates of the main
ideas of the Astangamarga and this is what we call here his “comments”. As a whole, John would have a very high appreciation of the Astangamarga, the recommendations of which he would make his own. He would regard the Astangamarga as a path embedded in human nature itself and a powerful force for humanizing human nature. He would also regard the Astangamarga as a sort of universal code not only of ethics but also of spirituality. It doesn’t appear that there is a single precept of the Eightfold Path that John would not approve.

i) **Right Understanding**

Regarding right understanding as we have seen above there are for John basically two sources: natural reason, and here he would agree A to Z with Gautama Buddha; and Supernatural Revelation. John believes that God has made a supernatural revelation intended for all humanity. The written part of the divine Revelation is found in the Bible – the Old and the New Testaments. The Bible tells John that the Creator of the universe is a Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The Son of God, in other words, the Word of God took on Himself human nature and appeared on the earth two thousand years ago. Jesus, as already seen above, died on the cross but rose again and after his ascension into heaven sent His Holy Spirit on believers. Hence believers receive an understanding of reality, of spirituality, of time and eternity, of the meaning of life and death, of the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body etc. that is not only natural but also supernatural. This supernatural understanding is given to believers in Christ in order to make them partakers in Divine Nature so that they may enjoy
forever the vision of God. For John therefore over and above the virtues recommended in the Astangamarga, there are – Faith that accepts Supernatural Revelation, Hope that trusts God’s grace to elevate the believers above what merely human means can achieve and Charity that unites them to the Supreme Being. This Union with God became the driving force of John’s life from the time he was a youth, about which we spoke in chapter three. For the pursuit of this goal he had to employ a dynamics for which a more enlightened understanding was necessary.

Friar John says: “Human beings know neither how to rejoice properly nor how to grieve properly, for they do not understand the distance between good and evil”.

Sometimes according to Friar John, people appear to be ignorant about the difference between good and evil, right and wrong. From this fact the weakness of human reason and understanding become manifest. What appears good at one time may appear evil to the same or different persons at another time. Natural reason therefore, exists only in particular, concrete men and women with their particular and concrete idiosyncrasies, tendencies, trends and perhaps also with different types of blocks to the functioning of reason. That is one reason why what is called “natural reason” may fail and falter in discerning good from evil, truth from falsehood. That is why God our Creator has given supernatural revelation.

The problem would be: how is human reason to discern, when there are several claimants to supernatural revelation, where exactly are we to find it?
ii) **Right Thought**

Like Gautama Buddha John is aware of the importance of right thought or right speech and right action. His main goal being union with God, that too must be the constant focus of his thoughts. For the rest John would agree with Gautama’s description and classification of thoughts to be shunned and thoughts to be nurtured. Right understanding is the guardian of thoughts and also their guide.

Here are some of the thoughts of John of the cross:

“One human thought alone is worth more than the entire world, hence God alone is worthy of it.”\(^{177}\)

“For the insensible, what you do not feel; for the sensible, the senses; and for the spirit of God, thought.”\(^{178}\)

“How is it you dare to relax so fearlessly, since you must appear before God to render an account of the least word and thought?”\(^{179}\)

“Frequent combing gives the hair more luster and makes it easier to comb; a soul that frequently examines its thoughts, words, and deeds, which are its hair, doing all things for the love of God, will have lustrous hair.”\(^{180}\)

The Carmelite Rule prescribes unceasing prayer and pondering on the law of the Lord day and night.\(^{181}\) For the achieving of this, the guarding of one’s thoughts is very necessary. The Rule quotes from the Bible the injunction “holy meditation will save you.”\(^{182}\) For Friar John whose sole aspiration was union with God, “The entire world is not worthy of a human being’s thought, for this belongs to God alone; any thought, therefore, not centred on God is stolen from him.”\(^{183}\)
“Bridle your tongue and your thoughts very much, direct your affection habitually toward God, and your spirit will be divinely enkindled”, he says. Any spiritual master is aware that thoughts are the roots of actions and words. The bad as well as the good done by people usually begins with their thoughts.

iii) Right Speech

Here are some sayings that will convey sufficiently the teaching of St. John of the Cross about right speech:

“Let your speech be such that no one may be offended, and let it concern things that would not cause you regret were all to know of them”.

We are so rooted in false values that we rate people in accordance with our own natural and sensory standards and criteria than with objective and spiritual standards. The intrinsic worth of human persons we measure with extrinsic accessories and peripheral measures. For instance, often showing the powerful and the rich preference over the poor and the weak, though the poor and the weak may have no worth because of their virtue. Our internal contempt for some persons may unconsciously be expressed through our speech and our manner of dealing with people. “Such contempt may not only be internal but manifest itself externally through speech: This is not like that, or so and so is not like so and so”.

Friar John is very well aware of the harm and hurt that the tongue can do. In the third stanza of the Spiritual Canticle the soul says: “I will not … fear wild beasts”. “Wild beasts” refers to the world, because in the imagination of the soul
that begins to tread the path leading to God the world is pictured as wild animals threatening and scaring her. The world frightens her principally in three ways, says Friar John:

First, it makes her think that she must live without its favour, and lose her friends, reputation, importance, and even wealth.

Second, through another beast, no less ferocious, it makes her wonder how she will ever endure the permanent lack of the consolations and delights of the world and all its comforts.

And third, which is still worse, it makes her think that tongues will rise up against her and mock her, there will be many remarks and jeers, and she will be considered almost worthless.\(^{187}\)

In *Counsels to a Religious* he says: “And note carefully that if God will ask a strict account from all the faithful of every idle word, how much more will he ask it of religious who have consecrated all their life and works to him”.\(^{188}\)

Friar John is aware all through that for his words he is accountable to God Himself much more than to any created authority. He takes almost literally the Gospel saying “... *on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter*”.\(^{189}\)

He says: “*Do not complain about anyone, or ask for anything; and if it is necessary for you to ask, let it be with few words*”\(^{190}\) and again, “*By no means speak words that are not pure*”.\(^{191}\)

The opposite of speech is silence. Regarding silence he says:
“Wisdom enters through ... silence ... It is great wisdom to know how to be silent and to look at neither the remarks, nor the deeds, nor the lives of others.”

“Ignoring the imperfections of others, preserving silence and a continual communion with God will eradicate great imperfections from the soul and make it the possessor of great virtues.”

One of the three signs of inner recollection, he says, is “a liking for solitude and silence” and one of the twelve stars for reaching the highest perfection is silence.

Replying to the letter of the Discalced Carmelite nuns of Beas in Granada, he writes: “My failure to write was not due to any unwillingness, for indeed I desire your great good, but to my belief that enough has already been said and written for doing what is important; and that what is wanting, if anything is wanting, is not writing or speaking - rather these usually super abound - but silence and work. Furthermore, speaking distracts one, while silence and work recollects and strengthens the spirit.”

In Chapter 3 of Book Three of The Ascent of Mount Carmel he says, “It is better to learn to silence and quiet the faculties so that God may speak” and earlier in Chapter 2, “All ...sensory means and exercises of the faculties must consequently be left behind and in silence so that God himself may effect divine union in the soul.” And again, “Conquering the tongue is better than fasting on bread and water.”
These counsels of John of the Cross regarding control of the tongue imply that for him frequently silence is to be considered more valuable than speech.

iv) Right Action

For John as for Gautama Buddha, right action is conduct and behaviour that is befitting to a human being since for Friar John believers in Christ are human beings pursuing union with God as their end and goal, the actions, conduct, exterior and interior behaviour must logically conform and correspond to their final end. John takes for granted the Biblical presupposition that love for God is inseparable from love of neighbour and service of neighbour which in its turn presupposes true love of self.

Right action for Friar John may be considered negatively and positively. Negatively considered, right action is action in conformity with the commandments forbidding disrespect for parents, forbidding murder, forbidding bearing false witness, lies, stealing, coveting.

Referring to envy which is definitely not a right or good action, he says: “In regard to envy, many … feel sad about the spiritual good of others and experience sensible grief in noting that their neighbor is ahead of them on the road to perfection, and they do not want to hear others praised. Learning of the virtues of others makes them sad. They cannot bear to hear others being praised without contradicting and undoing these compliments as much as possible. Their annoyance grows because they themselves do not receive these plaudits and because they long for preference in everything. All of this is contrary to charity,
which, as St. Paul says, rejoices in the truth [1 Cor. 13:6]. If any envy accompanies charity, it is a holy envy by which they become sad at not having the virtues of others, rejoice that others have them, and are happy that all others are ahead of them in the service of God, since they themselves are so wanting in his service.”

Positively considered, right action consists briefly, in true love for God, self and neighbour. Like the Buddha, Friar John, as we have said in the first chapter, had great compassion for the sick, those in need of help etc., which expresses his love for the neighbour.

While describing the harm incurred by the desire for willful joy in sensory goods he says how our cravings are the cause of other’s misery: “Joy in the delights of food directly engenders gluttony and drunkenness, anger, discord, and lack of charity toward one's neighbor and the poor, as toward Lazarus on the part of the rich man who ate sumptuously each day [Lk. 16:19-21].”

Another right action is: “Always be more disposed toward giving to others than giving to yourself, and thus you will not be envious of or selfish toward your neighbor.”

Actions proceeding from jealousy, therefore, are evil.

And in the celebrated passage Friar John says:

“Endeavor to be inclined always:

not to the easiest, but to the most difficult;
not to the most delightful, but to the most distasteful;
not to the most gratifying, but to the less pleasant;
not to what means rest for you, but to hard work;
not to the consoling, but to the unconsoling;
not to the most, but to the least;
not to the highest and most precious, but to the lowest and most despised;
not to wanting something, but to wanting nothing.”

Choosing what is less pleasing to oneself gives opportunity for others to take what is pleasing to them. That is the right and good action John advocates out of love for one’s neighbor.

Attachment to natural goods takes away the love of neighbour and also leads to injustice. Speaking about the benefits the soul acquires from not rejoicing in natural goods, John of the Cross says: “Besides preparing the soul for the love of God and for other virtues, it directly paves the way for humility toward self and general charity toward one’s neighbor. By not becoming attached to anyone, despite these apparent and deceptive natural goods, a person remains unencumbered and free to love all rationally and spiritually, which is the way God wants them to be loved. As a result one realizes that no one merits love except for virtue. And when one loves with this motive, the love is according to God and exceedingly free. If the love contains some attachment there is greater attachment to God, for as the love of neighbor increases so does the love of God, and as the love of God increases so does the love of neighbor, for what proceeds from God has one and the same reason and cause”. And therefore there can be no inequality between rich and poor, educated and uneducated and the like.
Speaking about the six principal kinds of spiritual and bodily harm directly and effectively ensuing from joy in natural goods, Friar John says, that the first one is vainglory, presumption, pride, and disesteem of neighbour, for a person cannot fasten the eyes of esteem on one object without withdrawing them from others. The result is, at least, a material disesteem of other things, since naturally, when the heart values one thing it turns from others because of its concentration on this esteemed object. And through this material contempt it is exceptionally easy in a general or particular way to slip into intentional and voluntary contempt for some of these other things. Such contempt may not only be internal but manifest itself externally through speech, like saying e.g.: This is not like that, or so and so is not like so and so etc.²⁰⁵

v) **Right Livelihood**

John apparently would not object to any form of livelihood acceptable to the Buddha. By right livelihood Friar John would mean any honest profession or means of self-maintenance that does not conflict with conscience. The *Rule* followed by John of the Cross as a Carmelite quotes from the second letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians²⁰⁶ “*the charge we gave you when we were with you was this: that whoever is not willing to work should not be allowed to eat either*”²⁰⁷. That refers to any honest occupation. St. Paul himself worked with his hands, he was a tent maker by profession. And Friar John was ever ready for manual work like agriculture and even the work pertaining to monastery construction. Since, however, in his writings he aims at directing readers to union with God, we cannot
expect many direct references to the question of right livelihood since right livelihood is for the most part presupposed and taken for granted.

So, right livelihood is right profession according to one’s state of life, sustaining oneself by that which is not against reason and faith.
vi) **Right Effort**

As regards right effort John, like the Buddha and most spiritual masters, would be a firm disciplinarian as is evinced by the following advice given to his disciples.

“Be attentive to your reason in order to do what it tells you concerning the way to God. It will be more valuable before your God than all the works you perform without this attentiveness and all the spiritual delights you seek.”

“Deny your desires and you will find what your heart longs for. For how do you know if any desire of yours is according to God?”

“Withdraw from creatures if you desire to preserve, clear and simple in your soul, the image of God. Empty your spirit and withdraw far from them and you will walk in divine lights, for God is not like creatures.”

“Do not tire yourself, for you will not enter into the savor and sweetness of spirit if you do not apply yourself to the mortification of all this that you desire.”

“See that you do not interfere in the affairs of others, nor even allow them to pass through your memory; for perhaps you will be unable to accomplish your own task.”

“See that you are not suddenly saddened by the adversities of this world, for you do not know the good they bring, being ordained in the judgments of God for the everlasting joy of the elect.”

“Do not rejoice in temporal prosperity, since you do not know if it gives you assurance of eternal life.”

“In tribulation, immediately draw near to God with trust, and you will receive strength, enlightenment, and instruction.”

“In joys and pleasures, immediately draw near to God in fear and truth, and you will be neither deceived nor involved in vanity.”
“Take God for your bridegroom and friend, and walk with him continually; and you will not sin and will learn to love, and the things you must do will work out prosperously for you.”

“You will without labour subject the nations and bring things to serve you if you forget them and yourself as well.”

“Abide in peace, banish cares, take no account of all that happens, and you will serve God according to his good pleasure, and rest in him.”

“Bridle your tongue and your thoughts very much, direct your affection habitually toward God, and your spirit will be divinely enkindled.”

“Enter within yourself and work in the presence of your Bridegroom, who is ever present loving you.”

“Be hostile to admitting into your soul things that of themselves have no spiritual substance, lest they make you lose your liking for devotion and recollection.”

“Bear fortitude in your heart against all things that move you to that which is not God, and be a friend of the Passion of Christ.”

“Be interiorly detached from all things and do not seek pleasure in any temporal thing, and your soul will concentrate on goods you do not know.”

“Allow yourself to be taught, allow yourself to receive orders, allow yourself to be subjected and despised, and you will be perfect.”

“Ignoring the imperfections of others, preserving silence and a continual communion with God will eradicate great imperfections from the soul and make it the possessor of great virtues.”

“More is gained in one hour from God’s good things than in a whole lifetime from your own.”

“To lose always and let everyone else win is a trait of valiant souls, generous spirits, and unselfish hearts; it is their manner to give rather than receive even to the extent of giving themselves. They consider it a heavy burden to possess themselves, and it pleases them more to be possessed by others and withdrawn
from themselves, since we belong more to that infinite Good than we do to ourselves.”

“Speak little and do not meddle in matters about which you are not asked.”

“Strive always to keep God present and to preserve within yourself the purity he teaches you.”

“Do not excuse yourself or refuse to be corrected by all; listen to every reproof with a serene countenance; think that God utters it.”

“Consider it the mercy of God that someone occasionally speaks a good word to you, for you deserve none.”

“Never listen to talk about the weaknesses of others, and if someone complains of another, you can tell ... humbly to say nothing of it to you’’

“Do not complain about anyone, or ask for anything; and if it is necessary for you to ask, let it be with few words.”

“Do not refuse work even though it seems that you cannot do it. Let all find compassion in you.”

“Do not contradict; by no means speak words that are not pure.”

“Abandon evil, do good, and seek peace.”

“Do not be suspicious of your brother, for you will lose purity of heart.”

Finally, Friar John says that the individuals who walk in the dark night of contemplation are conscious of a true determination and power to do nothing they recognize as an offense against God and to omit nothing that seems to be for his service. This is indeed the right effort that he advocates.

vii) Right Mindfulness

The very advice given by Gautama Buddha to his disciples would be given by John of the Cross to his. Each, however, would have to bear in mind their respective goals. To John of the Cross would nirvana mean the same thing as
union with God? If so, the mindfulness of which they speak may be approximately the same. There are reasons however, to consider nirvana as something other than union with God in accordance with what was said in chapter three.

Gautama said to his disciples: ‘‘With thoughts well collected keep watch over your mind.’’

Friar John would repeat the same advice for his disciples counselling them at the same time to bear in mind their goal which is union with God. This goal is all important for Friar John. Whereas freedom from cravings and inordinate desires may bring a great deal of peace, serenity and tranquillity to people, the aim and goal of Friar John is not merely peace, serenity and tranquillity but union with God.

viii) Right Concentration

Friar John of the Cross would of course not sit in judgment over the opinions of Gautama Buddha. It is only the researcher who being struck by the similarity of some of the categories used by the Buddha on the one hand and John of the Cross on the other, attempts to discern the agreements and disagreements between these two masters.

Meditation is a practice dear to monks and ascetics all over the world at all times. Since both Gautama Buddha and John are masters in monastic spirituality it is not surprising to find them insisting on meditation. Their respective goals for cultivating the practice will naturally modulate the style, the procedures and the themes and objects of meditation.
Right concentration in other words, is meditation. Meditation is a discursive activity proper to beginners and built on images formed in the imagination and phantasy. Serving as a remote means to union with God by habituating the spirit to spiritual things through the use of the senses, it empties the imagination of profane images. Its purpose is to acquire some knowledge and love of God. It is helpful for learning how to follow and imitate Christ. John of the Cross says: “Seek in reading and you will find in meditation; knock in prayer and it will be opened to you in contemplation.”

Speaking of the importance of meditation John says: “…methods of meditation are necessary to beginners that the soul may be enamored and fed through the senses … They are suitable as the remote means to union with God, which souls must ordinarily use to attain their goal and the abode of spiritual repose. Yet these means must not be so used that one always employs them and never advances, for then one would never achieve the goal, which is unlike the remote means and unproportioned to it - just as none of the steps on a flight of stairs has any resemblance to the goal at the top toward which they are the means. If in climbing them we do not leave each one behind until there are no more, or if we want to stay on one of them, we would never reach the level and peaceful room at the top.”

Conclusion

The comment I would like to make interpreting the similarities between Gautama Buddha and Friar John is that, had Friar John met or known Gautama
Buddha he would have wholeheartedly approved his teachings as regards the Eightfold Path. There are elements in Buddhist ethics and humanism that are so universal in their appeal as to transcend the distances between Spain and India as well as the chronological differences of the two millennia that separated John from the Buddha. However, while the Buddha as far as we know, speaks little about God, Friar John’s top priority as we have seen in chapter three is mystical union with God. An essential means for this supernatural goal are the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity as explained in chapter three. I would consider the Astangamarga of Gautama a good natural, human, ascetical basis or starting point that supernatural faith, hope and charity can use and elevate for attaining mystical union with God.

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7 MN 28 as cited in Piyadassi Thera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 38.
8 MN. 22 as cited in Piyadassi Thera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 38.
9 Piyadassi Thera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 38.
10 Piyadassi Thera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 39.
11 SN v. 433 as cited in Piyadassi Thera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 40.
12 SN v. 437 as cited in Piyadassi Thera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 40.
15 See AN i. 80 as cited in Piyadassi Thera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 42.
16 SN iii. 69 as cited in Piyadassi Thera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 42.
17 Piyadassi Thera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 42.
18 Cfr. Piyadassi Thera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, pp. 43-44.
19 We have already discussed the five aggregates in the second chapter.
Phronesis is a Greek word for a type of wisdom or intelligence, which is a common topic of discussion in philosophy. In Aristotelian ethics, for example in the Nicomachean Ethics, it is distinguished from other words for wisdom and intellectual virtues – such as episteme and techne – as the virtue of practical thought. For this reason, when it is not simply translated by words meaning wisdom or intelligence, it is often translated as “practical wisdom”, and sometimes as “prudence”, from Latin prudentia. Cfr. Phronesis in http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phronesis, accessed on 26.11.2014.

Descartes was very much concerned with the enquiry into the method of philosophizing. He proposed to lay down thirty six rules. The object of his (Cartesian) methodology was to apply mathematical method to philosophy to obtain certitude in knowledge. As a result of his enquiry he laid down four broad rules for his self-guidance:

1. Never to accept anything as true unless I know it as such.
2. Divide up each of the difficulties under examination, into as many parts as possible; we begin with something vague and indefinite and later on step by step attain clearness and distinctness.
3. Commence with the simplest objects and ascend step by step to the more complex.
4. In every case make the enumeration so complete that I might be assured that nothing was omitted.

The complex thing can be understood when we know its several constituent factors separately, clearly and distinctly and when we know the order or system in which they are found. In the same way, one who seeks truth must not be satisfied with surface knowledge, with the mere external appearance of things, but must delve deep and see what is beyond the reach of the naked eye. That is the kind of search encouraged in Buddhism, for it leads to right understanding. The man of analysis states a thing after resolving it into its various qualities, which he puts in proper order, making everything plain. He does not state things unitarily, looking at them as a whole, but divides them up according to their outstanding features so that the conventional and the highest truth can be understood unmixed.

The Buddha was discriminative and analytical to the highest degree (vibhajjavadi). As a scientist resolves a limb into tissues and the tissues into cells, he analysed all component and conditioned things
into their fundamental elements, right down to their ultimates, and condemned shallow thinking, unsystematic attention, which tends to make man muddle-headed and hinders the investigation of the true nature of things. It is through right understanding that one sees cause and effect, the arising and ceasing of all conditioned things. The truth of the Dhamma can only be grasped in that way, and not through blind belief, wrong view, speculation or even by abstract philosophy. Cfr. Piyadassi Thera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 90.

Cfr. DN. 22, MN 141 as cited in Piyadassi Thera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 90.


Piyadassi Thera, p. 120.

Cfr. Piyadassi Thera p. 120.

44 Cfr. Dhp 300
45 Dhp 1; cfr. also Dhp 2
46 Dhp 33
47 Dhp 36
48 Dhp 39
49 Dhp 327
51 Cfr. Sn 884 as cited in PiyadassiThera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 137.
53 MN 27, 38 and passim as cited in PiyadassiThera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 139.
54 Dhp 133
55 Bodhisatta said: ‘Mother dear, the jay’s cry was dreadful and we covered our ears rather than listen to it. No one delights in a coarse language. Though dark and without beauty, the cuckoo won the love and attention of all with its pleasing call. One’s speech, therefore, should be friendly and restrained, calm and full of meaning…’ Thus exhorted by her son, the mother became refined in speech and elegant in manners (Jataka269). Cfr. PiyadassiThera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, Rider & Company, United Kingdom, 1964, Sri Lankan Edition, 1987, p. 140.
56 MN 26 as cited in PiyadassiThera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 140.
57 Dhp 100
59 Subhasita-sutta as cited in PiyadassiThera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 141.
60 Dt. 5: 17-21
61 AN i. 261 as cited in PiyadassiThera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 142.
62 AN i. 102 as cited in PiyadassiThera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 143.
64 Cfr. PiyadassiThera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 143.
65 Read the dialogue between the Buddha and Kesi, a horse-trainer who once visited the former in A. ii. 111, sutta 111 as found in PiyadassiThera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 144.
66 Dhp 131. Buddhist compassion extends also to the protection of animals.
67 Dhp 130
68 Sn 705 as cited in PiyadassiThera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 146.
69 AN iii. 40 and MN 135 (Culakammavibhanga-sutta) as cited in PiyadassiThera, The Buddha’s Ancient Path, p. 146.
72 Dhp 251
73 There are altogether ten precepts:
   1. I undertake the training precept to abstain from killing anything that breaths.
   2. I undertake the training precept to abstain from taking what is not given.
3. I undertake the training precept to abstain from sexual misconduct.
4. I undertake the training precept to abstain from speaking falsehood.
5. I undertake the training precept to abstain from liquor that causes intoxication and heedlessness.
6. I undertake the training precept to abstain from untimely eating.
7. I undertake the training precept to abstain from dancing, singing, music and unseemly shows.
8. I undertake the training precept to abstain from the use of garlands, perfumes, beauty creams and embellishment.
9. I undertake the training precept to abstain from the use of high and luxurious couches.
10. I undertake the training precept to abstain from accepting gold silver. (Cfr. PiyadassiThera, *The Buddha’s Ancient Path*, pp. 130-131, 133.)


Dhp 246-247.

Dhp 137-140

Dhp 312

Dhp 314


AN ii. 74 as cited in PiyadassiThera, *The Buddha’s Ancient Path*, p. 156.


Dhp 84


DN 31 as cited in PiyadassiThera, *The Buddha’s Ancient Path*, p. 158.

A. ii as cited in PiyadassiThera, *The Buddha’s Ancient Path*, p. 158.


MN 31, AN i. 70 and passim as cited in PiyadassiThera, *The Buddha’s Ancient Path*, p. 159.

Dhp 203

DN 5 as cited in PiyadassiThera, *The Buddha’s Ancient Path*, p. 159.

Cfr. also AN. ii.69, sutta 62, as cited in PiyadassiThera, *The Buddha’s Ancient Path*, p. 160.


Dhp 75


DN 16 as cited in PiyadassiThera, *The Buddha’s Ancient Path*, p. 182.

Dhp 37

Dhp 42

Dhp 43

The four arousings are: (a) The contemplation of the body, (b) The contemplation of feelings, (c) The contemplation of mind and (d) The contemplation of mind-objects.

The function of right effort is fourfold – to prevent, discard, develop and maintain ( samvara, pahana, bhavana, anurakkhana: (a) to prevent the arising of evil and unwholesome thoughts that have not yet arisen in a man’s mind, (b) to discard such evil thoughts already arisen, (c) to produce and develop wholesome thoughts not yet arisen and (d) to promote and maintain the good thoughts already present.


Spiritual aridity or dryness is a condition of soul in which a person derives no consolation or satisfaction from prayer. According to spiritual writers, aridity may be due to different causes such as infidelity to God’s grace like lukewarmness in the service of God, habitual venial sin etc., or physical discomfort or mental uneasiness or it may be sent by God in order to purify the soul. In the last case this dryness is an indication of a more accentuated divine influence. In this case, which is implied here, aridity manifests a divine call to enter upon a new, more simplified form of prayer—a contemplative loving attentiveness to God.

Prayer of Quiet is one of the degrees of contemplation as is regarded by the writers of mystical theology.

Cfr. 1A 11, 2-3

Cfr. 1A 11, 4; also see Spiritual Canticle 26, 18; 20, 8 for some examples of corresponding doctrine.


Cfr. 1A 1

Cfr. 1A 4, 1

Cfr. 1A 4, 2

Mt 7:14

1 N 11, 4; the entire Book One of the Dark Night is a treatise on the night of the senses.

Prayer of Quiet is one of the degrees of contemplation as is regarded by the writers of mystical theology.

Cfr. 1A 11, 2-3

Cfr. 1A 11, 4; also see Spiritual Canticle 26, 18; 20, 8 for some examples of corresponding doctrine.

Cfr. 1A 11, 4

Cfr. 3A 16, 2

Cfr. 3A 17, 1

Cfr. 3A 17, 2

Cfr. 3A 18, 1

Cfr. 3A 18, 1

Cfr. 3A 18, 1

Cfr. 3A 18, 1

Lk 18:24-25

Cfr. 3A 18, 1

Cfr. 3A 20, 1

Cfr. 3A 18-19

Cfr. 3A 20, 2

Cfr. Mt. 19:29; Mk. 10:30

Cfr. Lk. 12:20

Cfr. 3A 20, 4

Cfr. 3A 18, 3

Cfr. 3A 18, 4

Cfr. 3A 18, 4
Friar John himself was guided by the Primitive Rule of the Order of Carmel given by St. Albert which lays great emphasis on silence. Quoting St. Paul it says that he tells us to work in silence (cfr. 2 Thess 3:12) and Prophet Isaiah says: ‘Silence is the way to foster holiness’ (cfr. Is 32:17) and also ‘Your strength will lie in silence and hope’ (Is 20:15). The Rule exhorts the Carmelites not to indulge in a great deal of talk for ‘Sin will not be wanting where there is much talk’ (Prov 10:19) and ‘He who is careless in speech will come to
harm’ (Prov 13:30) and the use of many words brings harm to the speaker’s soul (Cfr. Sir 20:8) and the warning of Jesus in the Gospel: ‘Every rash word uttered will have to be accounted for on judgment day’ (Mt 12:36). It advocates to ‘make a balance’, ‘to weigh your words’, to ‘keep a tight rein on your mouths, lest you stumble and fall in speech, and your fall be irreparable and prove mortal (Cfr. Sir 28: 29-30’), ‘watch your step lest your tongue give offence (cfr. Ps 38:2), and employ every care in keeping silent, which is the way to foster holiness (cfr. Is 32:17)’. Cfr. The Primitive Rule in *Discalced Carmelites Constitutions and Norms*, Dublin, 1988, pp. 24-25.

199 Cfr. *Sayings* 170
200 1N 7, 1
201 3A 25, 5
202 St. John of the Cross, *Degrees of Perfection* 17.
203 1A 13, 6
204 3A 23, 1; cfr. also *Sayings* 62
205 Cfr. 3A 22, 2
206 Cfr. 2 Thess 3: 10

208 *Sayings* 14
209 *Sayings* 15
210 *Sayings* 25
211 *Sayings* 41
212 *Sayings* 61
213 *Sayings* 64
214 *Sayings* 65
215 *Sayings* 66
216 *Sayings* 67
217 *Sayings* 68
218 *Sayings* 69
219 *Sayings* 70
220 *Sayings* 80
221 *Sayings* 90
222 *Sayings* 91
223 *Sayings* 95
224 *Sayings* 96
225 *Sayings* 112
226 *Sayings* 118
227 *Sayings* 134
228 *Sayings* 137
229 *Sayings* 141
230 *Sayings* 142
231 *Sayings* 143
232 *Sayings* 145
233 *Sayings* 147
234 *Sayings* 148
235 *Sayings* 149
236 *Sayings* 150
237 *Sayings* 161
238 *Sayings* 173
239 Cfr. 2N 16, 14
240 DN 16 as as cited in PiyadassiThera, *The Buddha’s Ancient Path*, p. 182.
241 Cfr. 2A 12, 2
242 Cfr. 1N 8, 3; 2A 12, 2-5; 13, 1
243 Cfr. 2A 14, 2
244 Cfr. 1A 13, 3
245 *Sayings* 158
246 2A 12, 5