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Introduction

There seems to be a growing enthusiasm among many people to engage in meditation nowadays and this could be clearly seen in the ever-increasing number of people engaging in meditation and self-realization programs. So we ask: "Why do people bother to allot some of their precious times to seemingly unproductive hours of meditation?" The answer cannot be seen externally as we look at those people while they are deeply engaged in meditation. The answer lies internally in those people who in the process of engaging in meditation get in touch with their inner being during meditation.

The world has a tendency to alienate a person from his inner being. Man's mind is bombarded from all sides by stimuli which distract man's consciousness from truly understanding the meaning and significance of most events and things in this world. Mass media continuously try to satisfy our inner longing by providing us with all the enjoyment and diversions to while away our time and forget the gnawing reality of monotony and angst which afflict every person in our society. These diversionary tactics provided by modern conveniences and amenities slowly distract our mind and alienate us further from our inner-self which is the source of real peace, healing, and understanding.

However, there is a growing movement back to our rootedness in our inner being. This is shown in the large number of people engaging in meditation nowadays. In a 2005 Newsweek's survey,

nearly a third of adults in the United States are found to be engaging in daily simple meditation. These people maintain that meditation brings them a lot of positive things. They claim that meditation gives them inner peace, more focus, lessening of stress, and a deeper appreciation and understanding of life.

The basic truth about meditation is simple—that you could learn it in just five minutes—and you can readily engage in it anytime and anywhere. Yet you should constantly engage in it to improve on it. Likewise, it could also be developed into a habit wherein it becomes natural or second nature to a person to engage in it. The more one practices meditation the higher the level of meditation one can achieve. Moreover, there are various methods of meditation which one can learn to further one's journey deep into one's inner being. In this book, my primary concern is to lay down and explain one of the most useful methods of meditation—the Empty Mind Meditation—which could greatly enhance your meditation experience and lead you to a deeper spiritual experience.

Chapter 1:
What is
Empty Mind Meditation?

There are more than a hundred techniques of meditations which aim to help practitioners in the process of meditation. Yet, among these meditation techniques, one stands out as the most frequently used by those who daily engage in meditation, and this is the "Empty Mind Meditation Technique." What is so special about the Empty Mind Meditation Technique?

Some people use meditation as a way to relieve themselves of the daily stress which buffet them in their life. Some engage in meditation to harness, focus, and discipline their mental faculty. Others set themselves down in meditation out of curiosity. However, others engage in meditation to further their spiritual growth and get in touch with the "Ground of Being," or God, the Universal Life Force, or the Foundation of Being, or the "Tao."

Empty Mind Meditation Explained

Empty Mind Meditation is a meditation technique in which the mind is gradually emptied of all thoughts which interfere in the process of meditation. Buddhists call this method *Vipassana* or *Anapanasati*. It is easy to say that the main purpose of meditation is to attune oneself to the universal energy via total emptiness of the mind from thoughts; yet, achieving this state of mind sometimes entails a lifelong endeavor. Buddhists and Christian monks often engage in an entire life of striving to achieve total detachment, coupled with dedicated and disciplined practices to attain this desired state of mind in which unnecessary thoughts completely disappear from the mind during meditation.

In the ancient times, spiritual greats had used the Empty Mind method to attain enlightenment. Buddha, for example, under the banyan tree, attained enlightenment while using the method of Empty Mind. Jesus engages in Empty Mind Meditation at Mount Tabor and Gethsemane to achieve total emptiness of his mind and will. Great Hindu Mystics were often seen engaged in Empty Mind Meditation in the Himalayan Caves, in Ganges River, and in their favorite nook striving to achieve the total emptiness of mind from unnecessary human thoughts. Great Mystics of the Christian Church likewise engaged in deep spiritual meditation using Empty Mind Meditation Technique to free themselves from selfish thoughts which interfere in their ascend to a higher level of spirituality. This only shows that this technique is as ancient and as new as the Great Religions of the World.

The Basis of Empty Mind Meditation

The reason why “Empty Mind Meditation” is commonly used lies in the fact that the ultimate purpose of meditation is to attune oneself to the universal will by emptying oneself of the “ego” or the self. The mind is a powerful tool which sometimes hinders us from achieving the inner peace which we all seek. The mind works frantically every second creating and producing myriads of thoughts which hinder us from really achieving the relaxed state which is ideal for meditation. Our thoughts embody our very own self and we are what we repeatedly think about most. We are in fact the products of our own thoughts. For this reason, the goal of meditation is to empty our minds of all these thoughts to gain the ultimate experience of the “**Ground of Being**” or the “**Tao**”

(God). After all, it is a common spiritual idea that “unless one dies to oneself, one cannot really enter eternal life.”

The Development of the Self

The dynamics of the development of the “**Self**” or the “**Ego**” lays down the foundation of the importance of the Empty Mind Meditation. In the Psycho-social development of a self, a person develops one’s **Ego** as one grows in life. The newborn baby has no concept of the Ego or Self. As the baby grows, it begins to develop a concept of oneself which one carries along in one’s development as a person. This **Self**, which embodies all our self-concepts and thoughts, becomes impermeable as one matures, and we protect this “self” by a very porous ego-boundary. We thought that this ego-boundary and the self that it protects is the real self—our very own being—which we treasure and so much value. We feel deeply hurt when someone says something untoward about ourselves. Yet, underlying this ego and ego boundary is our inner being which has been covered along the way with heaps of our self-thoughts and concepts. In the Buddhist concept of the self, there is only one true self and this true self is God or the Tao, and all others selves are illusions. This might be true considering the fact that the ego boundary, in the last analysis, is illusory. Now, to counteract the over-dependency of humans on his ego or self, one has to engage in a certain form of exercise on self-emptying. The **Tao**, the Buddhists say, can only enter into an empty mind and heart. Likewise, the **Universal Life Force** or the **Tao** can never be reached unless one is full of oneself and self-thoughts. For this reason, we need the Empty Mind Meditation Method to achieve a

certain state of emptiness of the mind which will allow us to see the essential in life and discard the trappings or the non-essentials in life, and in the process, get in touch with the **Ground of Being** or the **Tao**.

The “Self” and the ego boundary as a barrier to Enlightenment

The “Self” often poses as a big hindrance in our ascent to a higher level of spirituality. The “Self” with all its desires, thoughts, and cravings hinder us from attaining the ultimate goal of meditation which is the attunement to the universal will via the total emptiness of oneself. The more porous our self or Ego is, the greater the hindrance it creates in our ascent to a higher level of meditation. For this reason, there is a need to temper down the self by the use of Empty Mind Meditation.

The Empty Mind Meditation Technique softens the Ego

As I have mentioned earlier, the ultimate goal of meditation is the attunement to the universal will by way of emptying oneself. To other people, emptiness is tantamount to dying. Yet, it is said that “in dying we are born to eternal life.” The truth is that “no one wants to be released from his/her own self.” This is basically true considering the fact that it is unnatural for a person to want to empty oneself. Yet, all the sacred scriptures of the great religions tell us that the only way to enlightenment is through the

emptiness of the self. The Empty Mind Meditation is best suited to a lifelong striving to attain enlightenment through self-emptying. This Technique enables us to develop that habit of self-denial which is radically necessary if we want to achieve a higher level of spirituality. For this reason, the continuous practice of Empty Mind Meditation Technique enables us to soften the Ego and helps us to inch closer to the most-sought after enlightenment.

Chapter 2:

The Benefits of Empty Mind Meditation

The Proximate Goals of the Empty Mind Meditation

For some people, the practice of Empty Mind Meditation helps them find some relaxation from the highly demanding and hectic lifestyle in which most modern people find themselves. The mere practice of emptying the mind enables a person to free the mind from the anxious thoughts which clutter the mind throughout the day. Once one engages in the step-by-step process of Empty Mind Meditation, which entails the muscle conditioning and moderation of breathing at the start, and the tempering of thoughts later on, one finds oneself slowly in the alpha-relaxed state of the mind which enables a person to free oneself of the stress which has built up all throughout the day. By achieving a relaxed state, one can de-stress the body and consequently achieve healing of some ailing body parts. This may be a secondary effect of the practice of Empty Mind Meditation which, in some way, is very beneficial to the practitioners. This is the main reason too why a lot of people engage in the practice of Empty Mind Meditation.

The constant practice of Empty Mind Meditation is beneficial to the holistic development of oneself. When I say holistic, I mean it has benefits which bring about development in the different aspects and spheres of the life of a person. The five areas of life improved by the regular practice of Empty mind meditation are: the Physiological Aspect, the Social Aspect which involves the way we relate with other people, the Intellectual Aspect, Emotional and, the Spiritual aspect. The continuous practice of Empty Mind Meditation enhances and improves these five interactive

dimensions of a person's life. In this chapter, the benefits to the four aspects of human person's life—physiological, intellectual, emotional, social—will be given emphasis. Later on in the succeeding chapter specifically in chapter four, the spiritual dimension will be elaborated upon in a more cohesive manner to highlight the spiritual benefits which could be had from the practice of Empty Mind Meditation.

The Physiological Benefit of Empty Mind Meditation

It is believed in the oriental religions that the world is made up of the universal energy and sicknesses are just blockages in the natural paths (meridians) of energy inside the body. In fact, in the oriental alternative healings such as Acupuncture, Shiatsu, Reiki and many more, the unblocking of energy paths brings about immediate healing to the body. The practice of Empty Mind Meditation helps in the unblocking of these blocked energy paths. The start of this meditation is the moderation of breathing. Then enhancement of Chakra energy could be done by replenishing the different chakras with universal energy. Most of our bodily sicknesses are rooted in some persistent thoughts in the mind. Emptying the mind of these thoughts frees the mind from the cause of anxiety and, at the same time, frees the person of the symptom-causing anxious thought. In this way, the Empty Mind Meditation helps a person recover from the symptoms of the sickness by freeing the mind from the symptom-producing anxious thought. Likewise, the unblocking of energy could be done during the meditation process when one opens up the

chakras and the energy pathways, unblocking in the process the source of energy blockages.

The Intellectual Benefit of the Empty Mind Meditation

The undisciplined mind is usually a source of physical as well as mental malady. The negative thoughts which have lodged into our subconscious mind work as a gnawing hindrance to our self-realization. The Empty Mind Method can enable a practitioner to get in touch with these gnawing negative thoughts and eliminate them from the subconscious mind by altering them with positive thoughts. In the meditation process, you will be aware of these negative thoughts cropping up into the conscious mind as one wants to still one's consciousness. This keen awareness of these negative thoughts would enable us to understand why we think in this way and act in this way. Being aware of them puts us in better position to alter these thoughts with positive thoughts. Awareness is the first step to freeing ourselves from these negative thoughts.

The Emotional Benefits that could be derived from Empty Mind Meditation

Our emotions are also situated in the subconscious part of our mind. For this reason, we don't have direct access to our damaged emotions once they have lodged into our subconscious mind. Yet the gnawing effects of these emotions persist in our daily lives. The pessimism and negativism we exhibit are often traceable to

damaged emotions of which we are barely aware. In the practice of Empty Mind Meditation, we endeavor to empty the mind of all thoughts. Yet, as we engage in the process of emptying our minds of these thoughts, past thoughts rooted in damaged emotions usually crop up making us aware of them. This is a good time to be conscious of these persistent damaged emotions in the form of negative thoughts which readily crop up to the conscious level. Once we are made aware of them, we can rule them out of our subconscious mind by reprogramming our subconscious mind and replacing them with positive and optimistic thoughts. Thoughts and emotions are always related to each other. Emotions engender thoughts and thoughts engender emotion. Thus it is necessary to be aware of these cropping thoughts to heal ourselves of damaged emotions.

The Benefits of the practice of Empty Mind Meditation on the Social Aspect of Person's life

The social aspect of a person's life deals with how a person relates with other people and his environment. This aspect also deals with how we relate with our significant others. Our manner of relating with other people is a mirror of how we are at peace with our inner self. Most of the problems in our relationships start from our own selfish inclinations. Yet we are not aware of these inclinations. In the practice of the Empty Mind Meditation, we temper our selfish inclination and develop a strong inclination to see the needs of other people. Constant practice of Empty Mind Meditation enables us to discipline our mind and body. In the process, we acquire a new set of habits through discipline and

persistence in the practice of meditation. These newly acquired habits will facilitate our dealings with other people and help us understand ourselves more thoroughly.

Chapter 3:
***The Stages of Empty Mind
Meditation***

An empty mind does not mean the mind is like an empty shell. On the contrary, it is more like a brand-new computer devoid of any program or data loaded into it. An empty mind is a mind that is free from selfish thoughts. It is the primary goal of meditation to attune oneself to the universal mind by freeing the mind from any selfish thoughts. This is a simple process that most people find difficult to achieve. This is because as human beings, we tend to cling to what we have learned, striven for, and have achieved. This is exactly the opposite of letting go of all thoughts. In meditation, we will learn how to let go of these clingy thoughts. There are numerous procedures or ways to achieve and complete a meditation. Some people commonly use traditional methods; while others may adapt newer meditation techniques. Yet, people have a common goal—that of freeing the mind from selfish thoughts—which hinder them from attuning themselves to the universal mind. The most experienced meditation practitioner uses the simplest step-by-step procedure which is shown here:

1. **Sitting still and comfortable:** The first thing that a practitioner should do is to find a suitable place to meditate. Sitting is basically the most widely used position in meditation. Even Buddha himself, in most figurines and pictures, is commonly depicted seated in a cross-legged manner. You can sit on a chair, at floor, or in your bed. You can sit anywhere but what is important that you are seated comfortably with your back straightened so that your back muscles will not readily strain. Likewise, you can use a pillow for back support and for comfort. There are several traditional sitting positions that are widely used by meditation practitioners such as the Burmese position, the

Quarter Lotus, the Half Lotus, and the Full Lotus positions. These positions are popular because they can be used for long-duration meditation. When conducting lengthy meditation, it is extremely important to be in a quiet place to avoid any kind of distraction.

- 2. Relaxing the body:** The next step in the meditation process is the closing of one's eyes and the relaxing of the body by tensing, stretching, or curling one part of body repeatedly until you feel relaxed. Stretching and pumping your arms, bringing fists to shoulders a few times and then giving some slack. Tensing the muscles in your feet, calves, knees and thighs to relieve muscular stress. Likewise, curling your fingers and toes up to loosen the joints brings some soothing feelings. Moreover, while you are seated, push your hips forward, and then push your stomach out while tensing up all your stomach muscles for a couple of times and relaxing between to relieve the tension. Tuck your stomach in until the muscles of your lower back and buttocks are tensed enough, and then arch both your shoulders and push your chest in, tensing all your upper back muscles repeatedly. Then, slacken your muscles in between exercises. And then, reversing the exercise by pulling your shoulders back and pushing your chest out, tensing all your muscles and then slackening the tension. This exercise relieves the upper body of stress and tension. Repeat this process until you are feeling relaxed. Then, you can start arching your neck forward and placing your chin on your chest, tensing neck and jaw muscles, then momentarily relaxing to reverse the action by pushing your head all the way back while raising your chin up high, and tensing your throat and jaw muscles. Move your head back while looking up; then, open your mouth wide and screw your face up face, tensing your facial and other muscles in your head, and tensing and

relaxing. Likewise smile widely as possible, while screwing up your face and tensing all facial muscles. Frown deeply while screwing up your face; then tense all your facial muscles. This exercise relieves our muscles and joints of the stress and tensions that accumulate every day.

3. **Breathing:** The third step in the meditation process is to be aware of your breathing. Breathe deeply but silently. Use your abdomen while breathing. Feel your abdomen expands and contracts while you inhale and exhale. Inhale through your nostrils and exhale through the mouth. Moderate your breathing and give it a regular pacing until you reach a point of almost non-breathing. This will further relax the body and mind and set your being in a meditative mood.

4. **Clearing your mind:** As you find yourself with the correct, relaxed breathing, observe the thoughts passing through your mind. Don't interfere with these thoughts; just observe them and you will notice some gaps between two thoughts. Gently focus on the gap where there is no thought. Try to expand this thoughtless gap. Let it last longer until there is no thought anymore. This is the traditional method used by Gautama Buddha in achieving enlightenment. Another empty mind meditation procedure is by emptying the mind of any thought by thinking nothing and doing nothing. Normally thoughts suddenly come out of nowhere; just ignore them. Revert back to thinking of nothing. Just close your eyes and observe the blackness or whiteness regardless of any thoughts which may crop.

Chapter 4:
**Cultivating Spirituality through the
Practice of Empty Mind Meditation**

In the previous chapters of this book, the five aspects or dimensions of a person's life have been discussed saved for the Spiritual aspect of life which has been reserved for this chapter. It is a fact that meditation in whatever form is designed to improve our level of spirituality and enhance our spiritual experiences and life. Meditation technique which is not aimed at spiritual enhancement is a half-baked technique and defeats its purpose. However, meditation techniques, with the aim in mind of enhancing our spiritual awareness, serve its purpose well. In this chapter, I am going to deal with the spiritual benefits which could be derived from the regular practice of Empty Mind Meditation.

In the physiological realm, the strength of the body is assured through the practice of good habits of regular exercises. The body becomes strong and virile through constant regular exercises coupled with healthy diets. Likewise, in the spiritual aspect of our life, we could harness and enhance our rootedness to our spiritual foundation through the practice of a good meditation technique which would engender good spiritual habits which, in turn, would readily help us cope with the demands of daily spiritual striving. The right meditation technique can readily facilitate our meditation process enabling us to easily get in touch with our inner spiritual being. The spiritual titans of the past have not achieved their status as spiritual greats without the help of Empty Mind Meditation Technique. Lao Tzu, Buddha, Elijah, Plato, Augustine, Theresa of Avila and John of the Cross, Paramahansa Yogananda, have not achieved true emptiness without the constant practice of withdrawing themselves into the confines of their cells and favorite spiritual nooks, and trying to practice constant emptying of oneself. They practice the continuous

dropping of oneself aware of the fact that the illusory psychic self has different inclinations and desires which are counterproductive to spiritual growth. The great hindrance to spiritual growth is attachments. These great guys tried to free themselves from any earthly attachments so that they could soar high to greater spiritual heights. The only way and the surest way to achieve this is through the emptying of oneself. How quickly do we recognize that all our attachments automatically disappear the moment we part with our illusory self or ego.

The eternal paradox involved in the process of Emptying

There is a paradox involved in the process of emptying of the mind. This paradox goes like this: “that without effort, we can do nothing and with effort, we spoil everything.” Many people say that we can achieve the total enlightenment by freeing ourselves of all our thoughts. This is basically true, but since the paradox lays in the fact that effort could be counterproductive to self-emptying. It is not our very self which will empty our minds of and our being of our self. The solution to this paradox lies in what had happened to Buddha under the banyan tree. Buddha had been struggling to reach enlightenment and his struggle was counterproductive because he used his very own self to free empty himself. But enlightenment readily dawned on him when he stayed still under the banyan tree and let the universal spirit engulfed him. It’s as if the scales from his eyes suddenly dropped off and now he clearly saw the illusions of the world and recognized what was really of value. This is experience is similar to letting eyes open to see the spiritual things. The only way to

enlightenment is to open our spiritual eyes and see. Let the scales from our eyes fall. This act of letting the scales fall is so easy; yet, it is paradoxically difficult for those who really cling to the illusory self because, as I have said earlier: “no one wants to be freed from oneself.

The Empty Mind Meditation Technique helps us attune ourselves to the universal energy

The Empty Mind Meditation Technique greatly helps us understand the importance of emptying of oneself of thoughts which distract us from letting the universal life force engulf us. Just like what happened to Buddha when he effortlessly let the universal life force engulfs his self so that afterwards, it was no longer Buddha who was seen in his very own self, but the life of the universal spirit. The spiritual giants were not really giants in the sense of the world but giants in the sense that they were able to diminish themselves to the point that God was able to inhabit their very beings. This is the ultimate goal of Empty Mind Meditation. It helps us to slowly die to our illusory self and espouse a new life in the spirit wherein the Tao or the God is already the one being seen in our very own existence. Very few people achieve this state of mind in this life time because very few people want to empty themselves. The self has been given so much emphasis by the world even to the point of deifying the very concept of the “ego.” For this reason, the world glorifies wealth and power because these two strengthen the “illusory self.” Just imagine how we our fashion industry glorifies the looks and how modern advertisements amplify the images of the self to the

diminishing of the real inner self. But in the end, all these self-aggrandizement produce the ennui and loneliness experienced by modern man. Likewise, this aggrandizement of the illusory self alienates mankind from the inner self which the ancient wise men considered to be the real self. Because of the gnawing angst experienced by modern man, the movement back to the inner being is gaining momentum as shown by a large number of people seeking spiritual strength through the practice of Empty Mind Meditation.

Chapter 5:
**Rule Out Procrastination Through
The Regular Practice Of Empty Mind
Meditation**

The first step in ruling out a particular bad habit is by being aware of the existence of that habit. Yet, simply being conscious of the existence of the bad habit does not immediately weed out the bad tendency from our daily life. The weeding out of old bad habits is further compounded if the vice has become deeply ingrained in the subconscious mind. It would take extra effort our part to consciously alter the bad habit with the opposite good habit. In the religious parlance, bad habits are called vices while good habits are called virtues. A person is considered good if he has more number of virtues than vices, after all, the great philosopher—Aristotle—once said: "We are what we repeatedly do." This basically means that our very own personality is the product of all the habits we have imbibed in our lifetime.

One of the common habitual tendencies of common man is the habit of procrastination. Procrastination is the attitude of habitually and intentionally putting off important tasks which one should focus on in favor of a more pleasant activity. Psychologist Professor Clarry Lay, a well-known writer on the subject of procrastination hinted that procrastination entails a gap between the time period in which a person should do the job and the actual doing of a job. Say for instance, a person has to do a project right now. However, due to other factors or habits such as laziness, the person would put off the work which he must do right now to a later time producing a domino adverse effect on the fulfillment of scheduled jobs. On the other hand, a person who has developed attitudes of promptness and industriousness would feel uneasy until the job at hand has not been fulfilled and completed. Kurt Lewin, a famous Psychologist once said that an open-task tension exists when an important job has not yet been completed.

However, most people have learned to ignore this open-task tension and have developed the habit of procrastination. For this reason, learning to curtail the ill effect of procrastination by going down to the root cause of the attitude and replacing it with the opposite positive attitude can help us improve our character and consequently aid us in the succeeding in life.

How do we counteract the lingering effect of procrastination?

A habit, once it has taken its root in our being, will become second nature to us. When I say second nature, I mean it comes out naturally as if it is a part of our nature. For this reason, habits make our life easier; for when we have already acquired the habits, we would no longer need the initial great amount of effort that we had used when we first tried to fulfill a particular task. Habit facilitates the performance of an act. Therefore, it is necessary that we be wary of the development of any habit. It takes a month to develop a habit and it usually takes a year to solidify a habit as a second nature. The deeper the rootedness of a habit, the more difficult it would be to weed it out. Thus, in the case of procrastination, it would take a lot of effort on our part to alter this bad habit. Awareness and acceptance of the existence of this habit in our life would be the initial step to weed out this persistent tendency. Likewise, developing a keen focus on the job at hand and being aware of the open-task tension while responding to this tension positively can gradually diminish the lingering effect of procrastination.

Take a look at the Empty Mind Meditation process. This meditation technique not only enables us to focus our mind intently on a single task, but it allows us also to be aware of the habits and tendencies which are imbedded in our subconscious mind. Procrastination can be rooted in our tendency to avoid pain. In our growing process, we have been gradually programmed to avoid pain and like pleasure. This natural tendency is rooted in our infancy when we feel satisfied when we are given milk after feeling the pangs of hunger. Yet, mature people do not shun away from pain and difficulty. They are able to delay gratification for future satisfaction. In the same way, the practice of Empty Mind Meditation, with its concomitant exercises and disciplines, will stamp down the bad habit of procrastination and develop the opposite habit. Empty Mind Meditation engenders mental discipline and procrastination is averse to discipline. Thus, internal discipline developed through the constant practice of Empty mind meditation counteracts the bad effect of procrastination and enables a person to internally motivate the body to do the job which would be otherwise delayed.