A quotation from the Heart Sutra, the most widely used teaching on how to live day-to-day Zen life:

- Form is emptiness, emptiness is form.
- Form is not different from emptiness, emptiness is not different from form.
- The same is rue of name, conception, perception, and knowledge.

The Tao (the Way, the roadless road) discipline is similar. It is sometimes referred as the means to no particular end. Some translate it as “you are in this world (fullness) but not of it” (emptiness). It is a beautiful paradox, where fullness and emptiness exist together as one. Just like the two sides of a coin. You cannot have one side without the other.

Bruce Lee, an intuitive Tao practitioner, describes it very nicely. He says that the phenomenon of wu-hsin, or non-mindedness” is not a blank mind that shuts out all the thoughts and emotions: nor it is simply calmness and quietness of mind. It is the non-grasping of thoughts. It is a mind immune to emotional influences. Therein lays the secret of fullness of life: the Emptiness. The word form in the sutra refers to the matter. That includes our thoughts and emotions.

The meaning of the word emptiness obviously is different than the ordinary use of this word. But we have no better word for it. Languages are incapable of describing such truths. You can certainly experience the non-grasping.

It can be concluded that emptiness does not mean nothingness. A room can be full of furniture and thousands of ants crawling in it, yet we call it empty. It is empty in one sense and full in other sense. The reason we still call it empty is because there is no disturbance of any kind. Such a state of mind, when there is no disturbance, is emptiness. In this state there is no misery. If we can be in this state all the time, then we are completely free from suffering. The Nirvana is then right here.

CULTIVATING EMPTINESS
The description so far is just a finger pointing towards emptiness. If it could be described in words then it is not emptiness. Lao Tzu once said: Truth cannot be described. Id you can describe it, then it is not truth. Even the feeling cannot be described. You can only experience it. If you eat an apple, can you accurately describe how it feels?

One way to experience Emptiness is to practice the following statement:

The good and evil are two sides of a coin.
The coin itself is free of both.

This means that if an incident you experienced last week appears in your thought, you don’t say: “I like it” or “I dislike it”. The minute you make either of these choices, your mind will cling to them, resulting in disturbance. You just let the thought come; do not feed more fuel to it. Of course, it does not mean that there is no good or bad in this world. The point here is that an encounter with a good experience should not give rise to craving in mind for it. Similarly, an encounter with a bad experience should not give rise to hatred.

ENJOY - DON’T REACT
Many people think that you have to detach yourself from things and be non-emotional. If you have to detach, then there is a struggle in mind. Buddha’s teaching is that you neither attach nor detach. You just accept the things as they are in the nature. If you see a rose flower and a sunflower, don’t automatically conclude that the rose is better of the two. Such a conclusion is based on your past traditions, emotions, and beliefs, which have been programmed into your mind like a computer software. Then you tend to behave like a robot, not like a living being.

A person whose mind is unconditioned, can see both flowers just as beautiful. The rose is beautiful in its own way - so is the sunflower. The unconditioned mind, if it has to choose, will choose the flowers differently at different times, depending on the intuition without analysis. You just feel the poetry of the flower, then move on to whatever comes next without clinging to what you just experienced.

NO ANALYSIS PLEASE!
Let us take the mundane task of wearing clothes. If it is too cold, I just wear more clothes. If it is too warm I change to less or cooler clothing. I don’t analyze what will look good on me, what people will think of me, or will they invite me ever again. You just accept the weather as it is. No need to complain. The weather is a gift of Mother Nature. It is not going to change just because you complain. Why bother liking or disliking it? That is the experience of emptiness

UNDERSTAND WHAT IS NATURAL
A woman brought her baby son to pay respect to a monk. She told her son to bow to the monk. Instead, the little boy started crying and peeing in his pants. The mother got upset and started to punish the child until the monk said: “The child is not doing anything wrong. It is natural for a child to cry, and it is normal for a child to pee. He is doing what needs to be done.” He further told the woman that it is she who is creating misery for herself by embarrassing and punishing the child for something that is the child’s pure nature.

This parable once helped me laugh off instead of getting

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Hinduism Reflects Unity in Diversity

voluminous Mahabharat, Ramayan and many more scriptures as well as innumerable related commentaries. The Ramayan is a very popular Hindu scripture. The Geeta regarded as the Hindu’s Bible is a part of the Mahabharat. Although hundreds of scriptures currently exist, all of them present the same basic truths in different fashions or formats.

Why people are not created equal or alike?

Everybody is born with certain aptitude, abilities and attributes which differ from person to person. Such differentiating qualities are due to Sanskaras (related to Karmas) acquired during the previous life time. This is why, for example, a good teacher cannot be a good soldier, a good business man or a good farmer, or vice versa. Lord Krishna (Geeta, 18-41) recognizes four classes (Varnas) of humans - priests, warriors, businessman and laborers for the smooth functioning of society, their roles being mutually complementary and conducive. But, with the passage of time, such social classification in India degenerated into a caste system which is indeed tantamount to a social evil. It must be understood that casteism is not Hinduism. Of course, among the non-Hindus, there are classes of haves and have-nots, which are riddled with similar social problems rooted in injustice and discriminatory criteria. Nevertheless, the Hindu scriptures underscore the truth that all individuals are potentially divine. True Hindus see God in everything and everything in God (Geeta, 6-30). Thus, the Hindus experience oneness of existence.

In conclusion, the Hindu religion recognizes innumerable deities and multiple approaches to God, and has numerous scriptures as well as a multiplicity of sects. Nonetheless, Hinduism highlights the truth of multifariously manifested singular God with the creation of varied classes of humans and other beings, reflecting unity in diversity.

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ADVANCING THE CULTIVATION

The first stage of cultivation of Emptiness is to unify the body and mind into a single stream of concentration. This is done through the practice of meditation. If your mind is at rest and the body in a relaxed state, you will forget about the body. There is feeling of silence in which you forget that even you are there. Yet you are fully aware of what is going on (Fullness). That is when body and the mind are one. Suddenly, the body pain is not there, as if it were empty!

But this kind of state needs to be achieved even when you are not meditating. That is why Buddha said that all forms are empty. When non-graspiness is there, even the names, concepts, perceptions, and knowledge are empty. When you are empty, none of these matter. Nothing is on your mind!

The second stage is to unify the body, mind, and the environment. Let us consider that you are entertaining a guest. You are done talking but he still feels the need to keep talking because silence is boredom for him. If you pay full attention to his talk but you are not emotionally reacting, then your body and mind are at ease and, therefore, united. But let us add another element. There are many other guests who are giggleing and making disturbing remarks. If you can still listen to your guest and not be disturbed by other guests then your body, mind, and environment, all three are united.

The last stage of cultivation of Emptiness is going beyond the mind. It is called the state of no-mind, or Samadhi. In this stage, there is no awareness of the individual self, as with Buddha, and Raman Maharishi. A Tao saying is: The highly evolved or cultivated person many selves. There is another Tao description of the Emptiness: No identity is true identity! You are nobody when it comes to ego. You belong to everybody when it comes to love and compassion, like the sun that gives sunshine regardless of good or a bad person.

ULTIMATE EMPTINESS

A Tao sage, Chung Tzu, gives the description of a perfectly happy person. He says:

Do not seek fame.

Do not be absorbed by activities.

Do not think that you know.

Be aware of all that is and dwell in the infinite.

Be empty that is all. It grasps nothing. It expects nothing

Therefore, the cultivated person can act without effort.

Buddha’s teachings give the ultimate view. It is about connectivity and who we are. One theory is like peeling an onion. If you keep peeling the layers of who you are not, ultimately you discover that there is nothing. But that also is an illusion. It appears there is nothing but there is infinite consciousness there. This is the same consciousness that permeates through all of us. Some may call it a mystic power or God, others may call it Emptiness. For example: take an empty cup. The space inside the cup seems to be limited to the volume of the cup. The space outside the cup is same but infinite. Are they the same space? The answer, of course, is yes. Once the cup breaks, both the spaces become one. There is no boundary between the two. The space never changes. It neither increases nor decreases. There is no birth or death. The consciousness that permeates through us is similar to space. There may be clouds, rain, and storms but the space never gets disturbed. So does the consciousness. This is the nature of Emptiness. Happiness depends on who do you identify with. If you identify yourself with the cup, you create individuality, an ego. If you identify with the infinite, in which we are all connected through the consciousness, everyone becomes a part of you. You become like space, where clouds do not disturb you.