

One Meditation #6, June 2025: “Buddha’s Five Waters—Which Are You?” (June 1, 2025, 585 w.)

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Welcome to the sixth issue of One Meditation—one more meditation—and thank you for being here. Please consider sharing/forwarding. Monthly subjects range from modern to ancient, Western to Eastern, and scientific to spiritual. For more info, see below. – Richard

ONE MEDITATION #6, June 2025: BUDDHA’S FIVE WATERS—WHICH ARE YOU?

Buddha (ca. 500 BCE), a Hindu yogi and sage who experienced nirvana and started Buddhism, taught using natural metaphors. One was how our body is like a bowl filled with water. He said five types of water trouble us. Buddhism calls these types the “Five Hindrances”:

- **Ill will:** [A person is like] “a bowl of water being heated over a fire, bubbling and boiling.”
- **Sloth, torpor:** “a bowl of water covered over with water plants and algae”
- **Restlessness, remorse:** “a bowl of water stirred by the wind, rippling, swirling, churned into wavelets”
- **Sensual desire:** “a bowl of water mixed with...turmeric, blue dye, or crimson dye”
- **Doubt:** “a bowl of water...turbid, unsettled, muddy, placed in the dark”

(from Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya*, pp. 1564-65 and 1611-13).

These states, Buddha enjoined us, are emotions in which we are submerged. Modern science actually confirms this. Our bodies are 60-70% water, with the electrochemical energy of tens of thousands of molecules passing through us at most times. In addition, we literally glow with this energy, at least to scientific instruments. For decades, researchers have been able to detect our energy output a few inches away from our skin. More recently, the best such devices can find this “aura” up to six feet away. Often we are not so much “in charge” of ourselves as we *are* a charge—an electrical one. Our emotional feelings determine to some extent how this energy field acts and supports our feelings, such that we develop a self-feeding, electric cycle keeping our negative emotions alive. As Buddha illustrates, sometimes we become like a boiling, slimy, swirling, dyed, and/or muddy bowl of water.

Fortunately, we can change that water. Bruce Lipton points out in *The Biology of Belief: Unleashing the Power of Consciousness, Matter & Miracles* that we are able to reverse the polarities of molecules in our bodies by good thinking, thus changing negative feelings to neutral or positive ones. He summarizes a number of studies that show how we can modify our feelings by willpower—concentration, meditation, exercise, or other practices—to

develop calmer, more positive states within.

Buddha suggested this change of water; he speaks of how a clean version of it in the bowl of our bodies looks—a sixth version of water. When you can look at the top of it, he says, it is so clear and pure that you can see your own face. It is water with few or no visible impurities. Buddha offered examples of what might fill this clear water. They are called, in Buddhism, “Seven Factors of Awakening”—states of energy that we have known at times since we were babies and small children. Buddha said they are:

- Awareness of reality
- Investigation of [its] nature
- Energy, determination, effort
- Joy or rapture
- Relaxation or tranquility...of body and mind
- Concentration
- Equanimity, to accept reality without craving or aversion

(“Bojjhanga Samyutta,” Chapter 46, Book V of the *Samyutta Nikaya*: See “Seven Factors” in *Wikipedia*.)

The Abrahamic religions have similar lists known as the qualities, gifts, or characteristics of the spirit (Judaism); the fruit of the spirit (Christianity); and the forms of *fitra* or original purity at birth (Islam). Eastern religions also offer such lists. In my own meditations, I hope to fill myself with these qualities.

When is your own bowl filled with clean water? How, if it becomes murky, do you clear it? And, when your own true face is best reflected, who or what do you see?

Next Month: MEDITATION: LONE RIDER OR WAGON TRAIN?

Peace, Strength, Joy

Richard Jewell

richard@jewell.net, www.RichardJewell.org

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Previous Issues

Jan. 2025, #1: “What Is Meditation?” Science says it is a conscious calming of body and mind.

Practitioners define it as aware attention for inner growth. **Recommended Book:** Daniel Goleman and Richard Davidson, *Altered Traits: Science Reveals Meditation Changes Mind, Brain, and Body*

Feb. '25, #2: **“What Are Four Main Focuses in Meditation?”** The first two are within (immanent), and outer (transcendent). Either of these can be paired with two others: open waiting, or one-pointed focus. **Recommended:** Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness*

March '25, #3: **“Why Breathe Deeply?”** Science says a breath cycle of 8+ seconds triggers nerve-system calmness. It lowers pulse and blood pressure rates, decreases anxiety, and increases self-awareness. **Recommended:** James Nestor, *Breath—The New Science of a Lost Art*

April '25, #4: **“Why Chant, Sing, or Hum?”** Rightly done, each calms the nervous system and mind, leading to better inner attention and silence. **Recommended:** Golding and Golding, *The Humming Effect: Sound Healing for Health and Happiness*

May '25, #5: **“Hanging Out with Birds, Bees, Water, and Trees.”** Nature bathing offers many of the same beneficial effects as meditation. **Recommended:** Elise Ingram, *Forest Bathing: Mindful Meditation Connecting You to Nature and Eco-Consciousness Through the Practice of Shinrin-Yoku*.
