

## One Meditation #15, March 2026 (Mar. 5, 2026, 613 w.)

### One Meditation #15, March 2026: “What are the Eastern ‘Gifts’ of Meditating?”

Welcome to this monthly meditation email and thanks for being here! I hope it may be healing for you. Please consider sharing it with others. Subjects range from modern to ancient, Western to Eastern, and scientific to spiritual. I began meditating in 1962 and have a couple of graduate degrees in religions. Number of subscribers: about 500. To unsubscribe, email me. – Richard

Note: I dedicate this to the people of Iran. The U.S. started a war recently with their country. Their continuing Persian civilization of many thousands of years influenced early Western spiritual practices. And their ancient immigrants to India and Pakistan helped birth Hinduism, from which Jainism and Buddhism then developed.

#### “WHAT ARE THE EASTERN ‘GIFTS’ OF MEDITATING?”

The January message was Part 1 of the “‘Gifts’ of Meditating” —in the West. February offered a break for resistance meditation with Martin Luther King as 4000 federal immigration agents flooded Minnesota. Here is Part 2 of “Gifts” —in the East.

Regarding formal Eastern meditation, I first tried it as a teenager. I sat cross-legged in my darkened room, stared at a candle flame, and breathed deeply. My nose began running, my rear hurt, and I grew tired and frustrated. *Enough!* I thought, jumping up during my third attempt. But a few months later, I learned you can practice meditation when walking in nature or even just focusing on what is within.

#### Gifts as Virtues

On the one hand, the West often praises spiritual virtues that appear in others or oneself as a trait. So do some Eastern traditions. The Hindu *Bhagavad Gita*, for example, lists “purity of mind, steadfastness, austerity” ([Saintly Virtues](#)).

Three Chinese religions also offer embodied spiritual qualities: The *I Ching* describes sixty-four natural conditions, some of which extoll virtues like having “increase [in life], fellowship, modesty” (“[64 Hexagrams](#)”). Confucianism values “benevolence, fairness, propriety, and wisdom” ([Four Sprouts](#)). Taoism names three: compassion, simplicity, and modesty (“[Three Treasures](#)”).

#### Dynamic Actions

But other Eastern religions ask you to *do* something. They emphasize process-oriented verbs instead of virtues to find. You don’t just possess love or inner strength; rather, you cultivate it like farmers working their fields. For example, several major offshoots of Hinduism call for active meditation practices.

First, Buddhism—born from Hinduism—asks a person to engage in “Seven Factors of Awakening” (*Wikipedia*). The first three invite you to become more aware of reality, to investigate its nature, and do these with energy. The next three enjoin you to love, calm yourself, and focus. In the final one, you learn to see reality objectively with neither desire nor aversion.

A second offshoot, Hindu Yoga, is especially verb-conscious in its gifts of meditation. Hinduism’s first complete yoga handbook, *The Yoga Sutras*, recommends you learn to shine with radiance, inside and out. You can do so, it says, by detaching from others’ “not-blessed”

words and deeds. You accomplish this by embracing peace and joy, controlling your senses, and seeing life more clearly ([2:40-41](#)).

The third offshoot, Zen Buddhism, is all about focus. Thich Nhat Hanh, nicknamed by some as the Father of Modern Mindfulness, emphasizes this. He suggests classic Zen methods like “Staying in the Present Moment,” “Looking Deeply,” “Breathing In,” “Mindfulness of the Body,” and “Nourishing Our Joy” (“[introduction to practice](#)”).

### Chasing the Elephant and Monkey

You also can view the Eastern gifts as part of a path you walk toward increasing awareness. The path has been painted in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries since medieval times. [Terebess Center Online](#) has ten different paintings and drawings of the whole process with instructions. My favorite is the very last one shown in the web page. If you go to the bottom of each drawing, you’ll see a monk—the meditator—chasing an elephant and a monkey:



<https://terebess.hu/english/oxherd27.html>

The meditator, elephant, and monkey are on a trail winding up the mountain of awakening. The meditator carries a rope and a cane to gain control of the elephant, which represents the mind. S/he also wants to catch the monkey, symbolizing scattered monkey-mind thoughts, eventually to put the monkey aside. The rest of the painting illustrates how it transpires.

What is it that leads a person forward most powerfully: objective virtues, or actively practicing? Perhaps it is “both/and.” As I sit now, remembering my painful rear in my first teenage meditation attempts, my own answer is, “Whatever keeps you meditating.”

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**Next Month: “A Tale of Two Cities: Meditating with the Vagus Nerve”**

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*Peace, Strength, Joy*

Richard Jewell

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*“Meditation has two major definitions: (1) science says it is a conscious calming of the body and mind, and (2) experienced practitioners often define it as aware attention for the purpose of inner growth. Using these two meanings, the word covers most major spiritual practices. Mindfulness, too, say the Mayo Clinic and other scientists, is a type of meditating. All of these outer forms and more are linked by having, in common, very similar purposes and scientific results.” – “One Meditation #1,” Jan. 2025*

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