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Q5

**Muddy water is best cleared by leaving it alone.**

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2025 · Essay · 125 marks · Philosophical and ethical quotes

Philosophical and ethical quotes

**Core demand of the question**

- **Taoist / quietist image:** sediment settles if you stop stirring
- **Stake:** some problems worsen with frantic intervention; some need urgent stirring
- Patience vs paralysis

**Revision summary**

Guidance only.

Pond anecdote. Stillness vs neglect.

- **Body:** mind, rumour, markets, diplomacy.

Watts/Tao, Aurelius, **Buddha** - one earned line.

- **Counter:** drowning child. Close on tool, not temperament.

**Note**

This is a map, not the full 1,000-1,200 word essay.

**Anecdote**

A pond behind a school is kicked up by children every hour. By evening it is still brown. The gardener puts a bamboo screen and waits. By morning you can see the bottom. "Muddy water is best cleared by leaving it alone" is that wait - not neglect of the child who fell in.

**Heading map****Unpack**

- Mud = panic, rumour, ego, a market frenzy, a diplomatic insult.
- Leaving alone = stop adding energy; let sediment drop; then act on the clear view.
- **Cousin ideas:** **wu wei**, **Gandhi's** pauses, a judge's reserved order.

**Quote to earn:** Often linked to **Alan Watts / Taoist teaching: muddy water clears by stillness. Marcus Aurelius** - do not be yanked by first impression. **Buddha** - the stirred pond of mind.

**Self**

- **Social media argument:** more replies, more mud.
- **Grief:** some friends stir; time plus ordinary care clears more than speeches.

**Society and media**

- **Communal rumour:** a fact-check delay can be wisdom; a three-day silence from a leader can also be cowardice. Distinguish.
- **Fact peg:** Election Model Code - a pause on certain speeches so the pond can be voted, not only stirred.

## Economy and policy

- **Currency panic:** over-communication can worsen a run; calm plus reserves can settle.
- **Fact peg:** 1991 reforms were stirring of a different kind - mud of licence raj needed movement, not stillness.
- **Environmental restoration:** sometimes stop dredging a river's every bend; sometimes desilt or the town floods. Case by case.

## State

- **Police in a tense town:** showing force can muddy; a night curfew can be a still pond.
- **Diplomacy:** not every tweet needs a démarche.

## Counter

Leaving a muddy well when a child is drowning is cruelty. Epidemic, fire, a missing person - stir immediately. The quote is about ego-mud and rumour-mud, not about duty.

## Last paragraph

- **Close:** learn the difference between sediment and a drowning. Stillness is a tool, not a personality. Expand with one case of wise wait and one of needed haste.

## Facts & figures

### Wu wei

Taoist non-forcing: act without agitating the problem you claim to solve.

### Model Code of Conduct

A legal pause on campaign mud before polling - stillness with a date.

### 1991

Some mud (licence-permit) needed stirring; do not make the quote anti-reform.

### RBI / runs

Liquidity and calm speech can settle a panic that more drama would worsen.

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