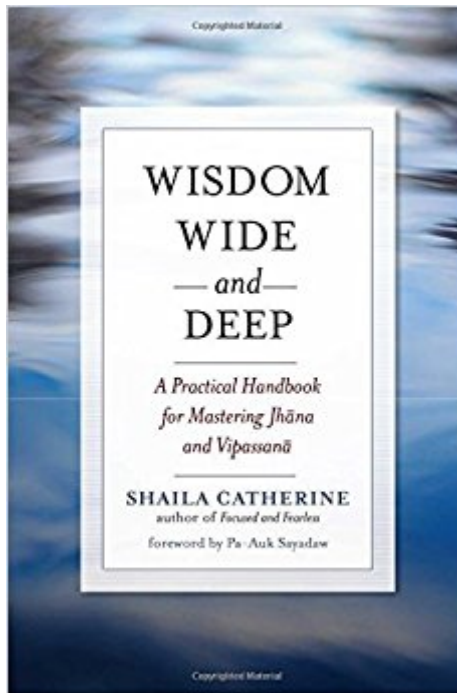


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# Wisdom Wide And Deep: A Practical Handbook For Mastering Jhana And Vipassana



## Synopsis

Wisdom Wide and Deep is a comprehensive guide to an in-depth training that emphasizes the application of concentrated attention (jhana) to profound and liberating insight (vipassana). With calm, tranquility, and composure established through a practical experience of jhana meditators are able to halt the seemingly endless battle against hindrances, eliminate distraction, and facilitate a penetrative insight into the subtle nature of matter and mind. It was for this reason the Buddha frequently exhorted his students, Wisdom Wide and Deep follows and amplifies the teachings in Shaila Catherine's acclaimed first book, *Focused and Fearless: A Meditator's Guide to States of Deep Joy, Calm, and Clarity*. Readers will learn to develop this profound stability, sustain an in-depth examination of the nuances of mind and matter, and ultimately unravel deeply conditioned patterns that perpetuate suffering. This fully detailed manual for the mind sure to become a trusted companion to many inner explorers.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The teachings of the Buddha over 2500 years ago have been interpreted in a variety of ways, leading to a variety of skillful means for achieving wisdom and liberation. At Pa Auk Monastery in Burma, a very structured and detailed approach based on the Visuddhimagga has been preserved and developed. For those with the discipline to practice it, it is said to be extremely effective. However, until now it has been little known in the West. In *Wisdom Wide and Deep*, Shaila Catherine, a student of Pa Auk Sayadaw, performs the heroic task of elucidating the often arcane

instructions for this approach in beautiful, readable, yet precise English prose. Her masterful work is a generous gift to many future generations of Western practitioners. It is based on, and consistent with, the manual *Knowing and Seeing* by Pa Auk Sayadaw, but is one hundred times more accessible and comprehensible. I am a close friend of Shaila's, and I helped her edit this book. At a recent retreat with Pa Auk Sayadaw, a printout of the in-press manuscript was my constant companion. I referred to it often, not only to clarify points of instruction, but to be nourished by Shaila's kind and practical encouragement, real life examples, and connections to Western thought. The exercises, designed to illustrate concepts for the more casual reader, were also highly useful to me on retreat, deepening my understanding of concepts while providing a break from formal meditation. For the practitioner of Pa Auk Sayadaw's approach, *Wisdom Wide and Deep* is an essential--and I mean truly essential--resource for making the most of one's practice time. And for any practitioner of Buddhist meditation, *Wisdom Wide and Deep* provides a very readable, enjoyable, and instructive introduction to one truly remarkable "skillful means".

*Wisdom Wide and Deep* is an extraordinarily detailed and beautifully written book. As a long time Dhamma student who also completed Venerable Pa Auk's course I have first hand knowledge of the Sayadaw's approach to the path of jhana and vipassana. Shaila, with great clarity and skill, has described this methodical training in a way that makes the enormous detail accessible to lay practitioners. Reading this practice manual felt as though Shaila was personally guiding me through the many exercises and meditations. Her words provide an on-going emotional and technical support for this demanding and sometimes tumultuous work. Even if one does not want to undertake this practice, the book is a useful and much needed reference manual. *Wisdom Wide and Deep* makes the sometimes dry details of the *Visuddhimagga* and the *Abhidhamma* understandable. What is the mental process involved in seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking? What is dependent origination? Why is life so often unsatisfactory? Read this book and you will begin to understand that insight and personal, direct experience is still possible for people today. Shaila also included contemporary reflections and personal stories which made these ancient practices even more relevant to modern life. After eagerly reading the book from cover to cover I now read several pages each day after sitting meditation. It is a great review of the course and a wonderful inspiration. No serious dhamma student or even one beginning their exploration should be without this book.

This book represents something historic. The West has benefited profoundly in our time from the

introduction of Buddhist practices, including the teachings from "Old School" Theravada Buddhism. To date, the latter have been made available largely in the form of Vipassana (insight) teachings, through figures like Goenka, Jack Kornfield, and Joseph Goldstein. As wonderful as these have been (and continue to be), Vipassana is in one sense only "half" of the original Buddhist tradition. With *Wisdom Wide and Deep* Shaila Catherine has provided in a single volume an integration with the other half - the Theravada's instructions for effecting experiential states of deep calm and marked concentrative absorption. Such instructions have traditionally always accompanied, supported, and deepened the practices for enlightened insight in Buddhism. The techniques outlined in Catherine's book are presented with considerable precision and depth of understanding, including analyses of the very highest and most subtle experiential realizations. A number of the practices described here will be matter-of-factly beyond the current purview of many meditators. But even then, a reader's acquaintance with the mere existence of such techniques can be of mind-opening benefit itself. In its conjoint, systematic and detailed presentation of both traditional Buddhist concentrative and insight practices, *Wisdom Wide and Deep* marks a significant contribution towards making Western modernity aware of just what the human mind is capable of.

'*Wisdom Wide and Deep: A Practical Handbook for Mastering Jhana and Insight*' by Shaila Catherine is a remarkable work, a must-have for serious vipassana meditators. Unlike anything previously available, it delivers exactly what the title suggests: an immediately accessible guide for mastering traditional meditative practices leading to liberating wisdom. Discussions of Buddhist psychology and Abhidhamma theory are supported by practical meditation instructions, reflections, and well-organized charts. Although this work is broad in scope and comprehensive in detail, readers should not be hesitant to approach with confidence, for it is also remarkably accessible. One need not be ready for the complete practice; practitioners can glean invaluable benefit from any single practice, reflection, or discussion. Shaila Catherine writes with a voice so fresh and rare, speaking from direct experience of knowing and seeing, guiding readers along the path of meditation practice. Instructions are clear and concise. Discussions are light-hearted and relevant. At last, contemporary meditators have access to the ancient practices of liberating wisdom. I highly recommend '*Wisdom Wide and Deep*' to anyone dedicated to deepening their meditation practice.

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