

FOREWORD

IS IT POSSIBLE for people today to attain the deep absorption states of jhāna? Can modern meditators directly know and see ultimate realities, and personally realize the liberating fruit of vipassanā? Decades of teaching both monastics and laypeople from all over the world have demonstrated to me that the answer is *yes*.

Effective methods for practicing jhāna and vipassanā have been preserved and mastered by generations of dedicated monastic and lay practitioners, but until recently have been little known in the West. Many years ago my teacher asked me to plant the seeds of this approach in the West. Under my guidance, Shaila Catherine, one of my American lay students, has since 2006 thoroughly practiced the detailed methods of both jhāna and vipassanā. I encouraged her to write a book based on her own experience of this training, and I am very pleased with what she has done.

Wisdom Wide and Deep is a beautifully written handbook that describes an effective approach to the path of jhāna and vipassanā. This book introduces meditation practices adapted from the fifth-century meditation manual *The Visuddhimagga*, supported by the philosophical structures of Abhidhamma analysis, and securely rooted in the Buddha's teachings. This method is distinguished by its emphasis on the initial development of the meditative absorptions called jhāna, and the precise discernment of the ultimate realities of mind and matter. Once the mind is concentrated and psychophysical processes are seen clearly, insight practice becomes efficient, transformative, and exceedingly effective for realizing liberating knowledge. *Wisdom Wide and Deep* skillfully guides

dedicated meditators to experience the stability of deep concentration, to recognize the subtle nature of material and mental processes, and to realize the exquisite peacefulness that arises from genuine insight knowledge.

This is a handbook that respects both the ancient tradition and the needs of contemporary lay practitioners, without compromising either. Shaila Catherine presents the Buddha's teaching by blending scriptural references, personal examples, and timeless stories with detailed meditation instructions. She writes with an authority that comes from genuine meditation experience, and a clarity that is informed by her own personal experiences of this training. The combination of Shaila's pragmatic style and theoretical knowledge produces a striking invitation for the reader to apply these instructions and master the complete practice for awakening.

I highly recommend *Wisdom Wide and Deep* to any serious meditator who wants to practice what the Buddha discovered and taught.

Pa-Auk Sayadaw

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