

# **The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana, The General Basis of All Samadhis**

## **Introduction**

Through the superior knowledge arising from reflection, one eliminates misconceptions and finds certainty regarding the deep view and the general and specific character of phenomena; this understanding should then be applied to one's own being through meditation. Thus, the eighth chapter deals with the progressive classification of the training in superior samadhi.

### **1. The Necessity of Practicing Samadhi**

**One needs to practice by meditating on the meaning of what one has listened to and reflected upon, just as a farmer needs to make use of a good crop.**

One needs to practice, focusing inwardly on what one has understood through the superior knowledge arising from listening and reflecting. No matter how deeply one listens and reflects, if one does not also meditate, one will not be freed from bondage

### **2. Identifying the Samadhi to be Practiced**

**One should gain certainty in both shamatha and vipashyana, which comprise the ocean of samadhis of both the greater and lesser vehicles.**

Since it is said that shamatha and vipashyana comprise all the samadhis of both the greater and lesser vehicles, and since it is impossible for anyone striving for samadhi to fathom the great number of divisions, this ocean of samadhis is classified into just shamatha and vipashyana. Therefore, one should first gain certainty in these two. This is necessary because, as stated in the same Sutra, all the qualities ensuing from the practice of the greater and lesser vehicles, whether mundane or supramundane, are the fruit of shamatha and vipashyana.

### **3. The Essential Nature of Shamatha and Vipashyana**

**The essential nature of these is one-pointedness and individual analysis which fully discriminates phenomena.**

Shamatha is to rest the mind one-pointedly, using a correct object of observation, and vipashyana is to completely analyze suchness by means of superior knowledge that fully discriminates and individually analyses phenomena.

### **4. Etymology**

**Having calmed distraction, one completely abides, and the superior nature is seen with the eyes of wisdom.**

The etymological definition of shamatha and vipashyana is as follows: “shama” means “calms” and “tha” is “abiding;” so “shamatha” means “calm abiding.” It is thus called since distraction towards objects such as form etc. has been calmed, and the mind abides one-pointedly in whichever concentration one is practising. In the word “vi(shesa)-pashyana,” “vishesa” means “special” or “superior,” and “pashyan” means “seeing” or “observing”; so “vi(shesa)pashyana” means “superior seeing.” It is thus called since one sees “the superior,” i.e. the nature of phenomena, with the eyes of wisdom.

## **5. The Necessity of Both**

**Just as in the example of the bright oil lamp not blown by the wind, one realizes the true nature by bringing both together.**

If one has undistracted concentration but lacks the superior knowledge that realizes the true nature, it will not be possible to realize the nature of mind. Also, if one has the view which comprehends selflessness but lacks the samadhi in which the mind rests one-pointedly, it will not be possible to see the true nature clearly. Therefore, since it is considered that by bringing both shamatha and vipashyana together one will be able to realize suchness, it is advised in all the Sutras and Tantras to combine these two.

## **6. The Progressive Order**

**The progression is from the support to that which is supported.**

The progression from shamatha to vipashyana is such that one depends on the other, like the oil and the flame of an oil lamp. Thus, having first accomplished shamatha, one proceeds to practice vipashyana. The reason for this is that vipashyana is seeing the nature of the mind as it is by observing it through discriminating knowledge; and in order to see it, one must start with shamatha, since it is absolutely necessary to have control over the mind to be observed, by making it workable.