

## Nine Stages of Sthiti or Mental Abiding<sup>1</sup>

Stages <sup>2</sup> (Mental States or samadhis)	Description of Level of Concentration (Four Engagements or Efforts & Their Six Supporting Forces or Powers)
<p><b>LEVEL 1:</b> Placing or Setting the Mind—<b>The Memory Abode</b> (<i>cittasthapana</i>) or fixes the mind, binding the mind to the object of meditation (<i>sthapayati</i>). At the beginning you can only be tied to your mindfulness or right remembrance. That is to say, in the first state (first abode) you just set your mind in the inner holding, this is the method to secure yourself on one cause of abode. This is the method you should take to secure yourself on the cause of abode, and this is the first state of existence. In the first state the <b>power of chaotic disturbances are very strong</b>, so as to disturb the right remembrance and produce serious destruction to the right remembrance on the state of the related cause. They are very strong while the holding on the right remembrance is very weak.</p>	<p><b>FORCIBLE ENGAGEMENT:</b> You are barely able to hold onto the meditation object or image before losing it. You can begin to set the mind on the object or image of meditation but cannot hold it there. You will have to seek and find the object again and again and take hold of it. Conceptuality or discursiveness is being identified so that it may appear that there is more conceptuality than usual. Other types of conceptualizations appear more frequently than the object or image of meditation. <b>At this stage you recognize and experience the many disturbing thoughts as they arise.</b> <b>Attained by force or power of HEARING instructions.</b></p>
<p><b>LEVEL 2:</b> Continuous Placement or Setting the Mind—<b>The Waiting Abode</b> (<i>samsthapana</i>) or establishes the mind turning it continuously in the object of meditation (<i>samsthapayati</i>). It means to begin by tying the mind to the realm of the related cause, and to continue with using the right remembrance to secure it to the related cause. Sometimes you will find a case of <b>outward scattering</b>, and <b>after a while</b> you discover that your mind has drifted away--the discovery comes only after a while. Such disturbances come randomly anytime and from anywhere. Your holding on your mind is lost, so the Concentration is disturbed.</p>	<p><b>FORCIBLE ENGAGEMENT:</b> You are able to remain focused on an object or image for at least five minutes. <b>Conceptuality is beginning to lessen and some of the mental disturbances are pacified, and others appear to slow down a little and become exhausted.</b> <b>Attained by force or power of THINKING or reflection on instructions.</b></p>
<p><b>LEVEL 3:</b> Replacement or Resetting the Mind-<b>The Secure Abode</b> (<i>avasthapana</i>) or places it upon the object means that having recognized distraction, you remove it (<i>avasthapayati</i>). Even when the mind tends to scatter and have disturbances frequently from</p>	<p><b>MOIST or INTERRUPTED ENGAGEMENT:</b> You are familiar with the object of concentration to the point where you can re-establish your hold on the object immediately after losing it and you no</p>

<sup>1</sup> Pamu, *The Dharma of Concentration, Contemplation, and Visualization Essential for Enlightenment*, pp. 28-37, 48-55, and 56-61. “The cause of Sthiti or mental abiding means to rest the mind securely in the realm of one cause. There are nine states or stages of resting one's mind on one cause . . .” PaMu’s term for this state is in **Bold Red** letters.

<sup>2</sup> The first definition in each level is from PaMu, pp. 30-44, the second from Kamalashila in *The Progress of Meditation: The Three Bhavanakramas*, pp.116-117, who says that these words were “previously expressed by the Preceptor Maitreya.”

<p>outside, so as to mislead it and to cause the loss of the right remembrance, once you detect the loss, you should at once return to the right knowledge and right views in order to hold the enlightenment. In the third state one is <b>aware of external disturbances immediately</b>. The time of awareness is different from the second state. Instantaneous detection is the state.</p>	<p>longer need to seek it. You are still bothered by distractions, only you can quickly return to the meditation object. <b>Attained by the force or power of MINDFULNESS or the force of right knowledge and right view.</b></p>
<p><b>LEVEL 4:</b> Close Placement or Setting the Mind—<b>The Near Abode</b> (<i>upasthapana</i>) or places it near means that having eliminated the distraction, you again place the mind higher and higher in that very object of meditation (<i>upasthapayati</i>). There are both the right remembrance and the disturbances. The <b>right remembrance is not lost</b> but exists along with the disturbances, so the related cause it rests on is also not lost. <b>Rough dizziness will occur</b> in the fourth state. This state of existence is superior to the other three, but still not the ideal state.</p>	<p><b>MOIST or INTERRUPTED ENGAGEMENT:</b> The point is reached through the force of intense mindfulness where you can hold onto the meditation object or image to the end of the session without ever breaking the continuity of your concentration. The object of observation or image will not be lost at this level. At this state the mind may begin to be withdrawn through the power of mindfulness. The power of mindfulness is now complete. You can begin to apply the power of discriminating alertness. During both levels 3 and 4 you are easily moved by states of attachment and have difficulty remaining focused. You will not have very long meditation sessions at this level because gross sinking or inattentiveness and excitement will still occur. Excitement and mental sinking or inattentiveness are also prevalent at earlier levels; only laziness and forgetfulness are the more pervasive problems and must be dealt with first. When laziness and forgetfulness are no longer problems, you are at Level 4. <b>Attained by the force or power of MINDFULNESS or the force of right knowledge and right view.</b></p>
<p><b>LEVEL 5:</b> Controlled or Disciplined Mind—<b>The Regulating Abode</b> or State (<i>damana</i>) or tames it means you generate passion for the object of meditation (<i>damayati</i>). The most important regulating factor is the <b>contemplation on the virtue, greatness, subtlety, and joy of Samadhi</b>, calling up the right remembrance with some spirit, driving away any <b>mild mode of dizziness</b>. Since it is not easy to detect the mild dizziness, one is likely to think that his mind is not scattered nor chaotic, and that he has already attained concentration. It is very easy to be misunderstood.</p>	<p><b>MOIST or INTERRUPTED ENGAGEMENT:</b> At this level, it is necessary to revivify or heighten the mind to overcome subtle sinking or inattentiveness. You generate the power of introspection and through your own power know the good qualities of meditation. <b>Attained through the force or power of INTROSPECTION, being more conscious of the right views.</b></p>

<p><b>LEVEL 6: Pacified Mind—The Tranquil Abode</b> (<i>samana</i>) or calms it means that he suppresses the lack of interest by seeing the fault in distraction (<i>samayati</i>). There is no more loss of the cause or false delusion, but there may still be harbored greedy wishes and blind love, the pleasure, anger, sorrow and joys of the common world causing the minute, mild mode of ambition or excitement. Let the enlightenment of sambodhi be kept in the state of the <b>pleasant Samadhi</b> and lock out the negativities of the common world. You have to cut off any mild ambition in this state and concentrates on the abode of samadhi. You must be very strict in obeying the commandments, very strong in the mind of the mahayana bodhi, and very strenuous in the practice of cultivation.</p>	<p><b>MOIST or INTERRUPTED ENGAGEMENT:</b> Meditation is improved through knowledge of the faults of various obstacles. Due to the heightened awareness, there is danger of subtle excitement. <b>Power of discriminating alertness complete. Attained through the force or power of INTROSPECTION, being more conscious of the right views.</b></p>
<p><b>LEVEL 7: Complete Pacification—The Most Tranquil Abode</b> (<i>vyupasamana</i>) or tranquilizes it means that when sloth and torpor and so forth arise, you tranquilize them (<i>vyupasamayati</i>). You now have in your possession the power of right knowledge to detect mild modes of dizziness and ambition (excitement) and to control them when they are still immature, driving them away and extinguishing them by the power of right knowledge.</p>	<p><b>MOIST or INTERRUPTED ENGAGEMENT:</b> Powers of mindfulness and discriminating alertness are now complete and your balance cannot be upset by subtle sinking or inattentiveness or by subtle excitement. <b>Attained by the force or power of EFFORT.</b></p>
<p><b>LEVEL 8: Single Pointedness—The Concentration on One Destination</b> (<i>Ekotikarana</i>) or unifies it means that you make effort in the object of meditation when the mind is in an unmotivated state (<i>ekotikaroti</i>). The <b>refinement of learning</b> (<i>jing-jin</i>) can secure you to the Samadhi.</p>	<p><b>ENGAGEMENT AT EASE or UNINTERRUPTED ENGAGEMENT:</b> Engagement at Ease: <b>Very little effort is required to remain focused upon the meditation object for the entire session without experiencing even the slightest interruption to concentration. Attained by the force or power of EFFORT.</b></p>
<p><b>LEVEL 9: Balanced Placement or Setting in Equipoise—The State of Equal Holding</b> (<i>Samadhana</i>) or concentrates it means that when the mind has attained to equalnimity it flows along evenly (<i>samadadhati</i>). This is different from the eighth and all other previous states. It has entered into an even higher hierarchical level. All outside causes and outside realms, such as greedy wishes and blind loves, pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy, dizziness, ambition (excitement) and chaotic minds and so on, are useless, utterly useless to you. All these erroneous thoughts can no longer act on you, no longer influence your</p>	<p><b>ENGAGEMENT OF PURE WISDOM or SPONTANEOUS or ONE-POINTED ENGAGEMENT:</b> The Engagement of Pure Wisdom: Ability to place the mind on the object of concentration with equanimity. <b>Without effort you are able to maintain faultless concentration.</b> Dorje Pamu talks about the <b>force of FAMILIARITY</b> or the force of right knowledge and remembrance at this point. At this level you should be natural and calm and attain the strength of</p>

<p>thinking and no longer control your right remembrance or mindfulness.</p> <p>When you enter into the ninth state, you are well approaching the vipasyana<sup>3</sup> of absolute reality and you are now different from what you were before. All outside causes and realms are no longer able to influence you and have no power of destruction on you. You can naturally have continuous holding power and would not need to have further strengthening to uphold the enlightenment.</p>	<p>right concentration to maintain the state of true samadhi.</p>
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<sup>3</sup> Vipasyana is to consider and discern illusion so as to discern the seeming from the real. It is to contemplate and gain insight so as to mentally enter into the Truth. It is also defined as awakening or awareness.