

CLEAR MIND



Wise Reflection in Meditation

Retreat with Janice Cittasubha Sheppard, July 17~19, 2015

We are delighted that Madison Vipassana's own Janice Cittasubha Sheppard will be leading a retreat for our community this summer at Holy Wisdom Monastery in Madison.

Jan has been teaching meditation since 2002. She is a student of the Theravada Thai Forest lineage and received training as a Lay Buddhist Minister from Ajahn Pasanno and Ajahn Amaro at Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery in California. She was also trained as a Community Dharma Leader through Spirit Rock Meditation Center in California. She co-led Madison Vipassana retreats with Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia in 2011 and 2013. She also co-led a "Thaypassana" retreat for the Center



for Mindfulness and Justice in January of this year.

Since 2003, Jan has led a weekly Tuesday night meditation for Madison Insight Meditation Group and has taught meditation in Madison at many venues. She currently teaches classes for Madison Insight Meditation Group, is a meditation teacher for Meriter Hospital's Smoking Cessation Program, teaches meditation in Wisconsin prisons, and is leading a yearlong program for those wishing to deepen their meditation practice and understanding of the Buddha's teachings. She is also a long-time member of the Madison Vipassana Board and serves as webmaster for madisonmeditation.org.

The theme of this retreat will be *Wise Reflection in Meditation*. Some people resist meditation because they believe they could never "stop thinking." However, those who continue to meditate learn that insight meditation does not mean we have to empty the mind of all mental activity. But does that mean we do "think" in meditation?

Our practice of insight meditation develops calm (*samatha*) through sustained attention and insight (*vipassana*) through reflection. Some popularized meditation instructions focus solely on paying attention through mindfulness (*sati*), overlooking the important and necessary complement of reflection. The Buddha directed that we practice *yoniso manasikara* (variously translated as *wise reflection*, *appropriate attention*, and *systematic attention*) to develop the Path of Awakening. This retreat will help us understand what constitutes wise reflection, why it matters, how it differs from our habitual patterns of "thinking," and how it is used in meditation.

The retreat will be suitable for both beginning and experienced students of meditation. Sitting meditation periods of 45 minutes will alternate with periods of walking meditation throughout each day. Retreatants will observe noble silence except during interviews and question-and-answer periods. Jan will offer a Dhamma talk each day.

The retreat will be nonresidential, with a residential option for a limited number of practitioners. Holy Wisdom Monastery offers a beautiful and peaceful setting for this wonderful practice opportunity.

Registration fees cover room (for residential retreatants), simple vegetarian meals (lunch and dinner for all and breakfast for residents), and other retreat expenses. The cost for nonresidents is \$165; the cost for residents is \$280 for a single room and

Yoniso-manasikara acts as a link between *sati* [mindfulness] and *pañña* [wisdom]. It is that which guides the stream of thought in such a way that wisdom is able to get down to work and achieve results. . . . One could say that when *sati* brings an object to mind and lays it down in full view of the mind, *yoniso-manasikara*, as it were, picks it up and manipulates it in such a way that *pañña* may scrutinize it and then deal with it effectively.

—Ven. P. A. Payutto, *Sammasati: An Exposition of Right Mindfulness* (translated by Dhamma-Vijaya)

\$240 for a double. In keeping with Theravada Buddhist tradition, there is no charge for the teachings. However, a donation (*dana*) to the teacher is encouraged.

To register for the retreat, complete the registration form at the back of this newsletter. Early registration is encouraged to ensure a spot. Financial assistance is available through our retreat scholarship program.

For a taste of Jan's teachings, see page 3. ❖



Prairie at Holy Wisdom Monastery

Additional Opportunity to Practice with Janice Cittasubha Sheppard

On Sunday, July 19, 2015, Janice Cittasubha Sheppard will lead our regular weekly meditation and offer a Dhamma talk. If you can attend the retreat, this will allow you to extend it. If you aren't able to attend the retreat, this will give you a chance to benefit from Jan's teachings. The sitting is 6:00–8:00 p.m. at the First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive. Please join us!

MIMG Sitting Groups

Madison Insight Meditation Group offers three weekly meditation opportunities, one in central Madison, one on the west side, and one on the east side. Bring your own meditation cushion or bench if you have one. Chairs and some extra cushions are available. Details are below.

Central: Sundays 6:00–8:00 p.m.

First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive, Madison

1st, 3rd, 5th Sundays: 45-minute sitting followed by talk and discussion

2nd and 4th Sundays: 45-minute sitting, 20-minute walking meditation, 45-minute sitting (breakout group on 2nd Sundays offers introduction to insight meditation)

This sitting group is peer-led.

East: Mondays 7:30–9:00 p.m.

Main Street Yoga, 1882 E. Main Street, Madison

30-minute sitting followed by 10-minute movement meditation and Dhamma discussion or talk

This sitting group is led by Devon Hase, Craig Hase, and Jack Arpin. Devon completed the Community Dharma Leader training at Spirit Rock Meditation Center. Craig has been studying in the American vipassana tradition for a number of years. Jack ordained and lived in a Thai Forest monastery.

West: Tuesdays 6:30–8:15 p.m.

9638 Shadow Ridge Trail, Middleton (directions on [website](#))

45-minute sitting followed by Dhamma discussion

This sitting group is led by Janice Cittasubha Sheppard, who was trained at Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery as a Buddhist Lay Minister, and at Spirit Rock Meditation Center as a Community Dharma Leader.



Clinging to Suffering

By Janice Cittasubha Sheppard

All of us on this path are well aware of the teaching that craving is the cause of suffering. However, I think we often assume that the problem primarily has to do with the ways in which we crave for and cling to happiness or pleasurable things or experiences.

The habit pattern I want to consider here is the tendency to cling to the suffering that's arisen as a result of craving. This form of clinging is a habitual response that I've noticed in myself and others and that is reinforced in the society at large. I've heard one teacher suggest that we cling to our own suffering more tightly than anything else, and I believe it.

It is an odd, clearly counter-productive, and somewhat surprising tendency to cling to our suffering. It seems remarkable that we would do so, yet we do. We may even cling to suffering with a sense of righteousness and purpose. Sometimes, we even do it with the mistaken notion that it is actually something that is skillful or wholesome or compassionate.

"In Solidarity" with Suffering?

Once during a meditation class, after trying metta practice for the first time, a student said, "I'd like to send safety and well-being to everyone in the world. But I know there are many people in the world who aren't safe, so it feels wrong to be saying, *may you be well, may you be safe*, when it's not so."

On the practical, conventional level, this student was correct: There are indeed people who will not be safe or at ease. But on reflection, in the face of that truth, why would we not send them a wish for safety and well-being? Just because it *may* not happen, is there a reason not to wish them well? Does it make sense to only wish for what we feel certain will occur? Are we ever certain what will occur anyway? Isn't it for our own benefit as well as others' that we wish them well without being

certain that it will happen? Do we only wish happy birthday to people who we are certain will actually have a happy birthday?

Through courageously opening our heart to envelop the pain of suffering, we are able to release and transform it into generosity, kindness, and wisdom.

On a transcendental or spiritual level, we wish others well because we know that, in fact, their well-being *is* possible. What we are wishing for them, on that level, is not physical safety; it is heart and mind safety, ease, and wisdom. That peace of mind is not based on external conditions alone. Famous survivors, leaders, warriors, prisoners, and many others have been able to maintain safety of the heart/mind under the most horrific of conditions. When we use metta phrases to wish people safety and peace and happiness, we are wishing them *true* happiness, the happiness that is unrelated to the conditioned realm. That is something we can wish all people, everywhere.

The sort of skepticism or cynicism expressed by the student is one way we hold on to suffering. We feel some responsibility for waving a flag of "truth" about the suffering in the world and thinking the only appropriate, respectful, honest response to suffering is to suffer too. But if we really care about the world, holding on to an attitude that resists sending goodwill only serves to add more suffering to it. We can decide that rather than standing "in solidarity" with suffering, we can choose to act with compassion by developing a heart that meets suffering with courage, kindness, and goodwill. In that way, we can actually reduce suffering and add goodness to the world.

This student's comment about metta is similar to concerns that are often raised about meditation practice in general. People frequently express sincere worry about the wholesomeness of sitting here, in meditation, in comfort, ease, and safety, when there are horrific things happening in the world; terrible injustices and social, political, and environmental evils are occurring right now.

Does the Buddha's teaching on knowing suffering and the end of suffering mean we are to ignore the truth of suffering when we encounter it? And if it doesn't mean that, which of course it doesn't, then how do we respond? This is an important question and one that is heartfelt and serious.

What the Buddha was teaching is that without awareness, craving results in a predictable cascade into suffering. It begins with our craving for things to be how we'd like them to be, how we think they *should* be, or just other than how they are. We inadvertently attach/cling to that desire, and once that clinging is established, releasing it feels as if we are turning our back on the suffering that generated the craving in the first place. As a result, we practice sympathetic suffering—we feel some obligation to suffer in response to the suffering we see.

Compassion does mean "suffering with," but that is *not* the same as taking on the suffering of others. Rather, having compassion for the suffering of another means opening our heart to it, not hardening our heart against it. Through courageously opening our heart to envelop the pain of suffering, we are able to release and transform it into generosity, kindness, and wisdom.

Releasing the Causes for Suffering

It takes courage to acknowledge suffering and be willing to face it without suffering in response. It is a skill we can learn, and as a result our hearts become larger, lighter, and

better able to actually be of assistance to those we care for and about.

Many years ago, the illness and death of a dear friend helped me practice this skill. One January he was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer. By the following August, he had received six chemotherapy treatments, and the doctors were pleased to inform him that the tumors had shrunk dramatically and they saw no need for more treatment. Things looked hopeful. Then, quite soon after, he started having pain again and feeling a new lump. He went back to the clinic, and a new CT scan revealed that the tumors that had been the size of a pea at the beginning of the month were suddenly the size of cantaloupes, and spread to the liver. The prognosis was that with fast-growing liver tumors he had very little time remaining.

I received this shocking and distressing news in an early morning email. Being at work that day was very hard; I was distracted and shut down. After work, I stopped at the grocery store, and I remember having an enormous wave of grief engulf me. I wanted to allow myself to feel the grief, but in the middle of the grocery store, I was afraid to do so.

The process of allowing oneself to feel the suffering is essential to see our way through to wisdom and release. However, being able to fully do so is dependent on time and place and will be done differently if one is in meditation, in a place of quiet and safety, than if one is in a busy, public place such as a grocery store. At the July retreat, we will talk about how we can use wise reflection—*yoniso manasikara*—in meditation to link mindfulness and wisdom for release. The example offered here is similar, but a modification of the sort of investigation that could be possible while in meditation.

When I learned the news about my friend, I'd been practicing and teaching for many years, and I wanted to follow my own advice. I knew that I had the opportunity in that moment to see if it really was possible to experience

suffering and release it. I could recognize that part of me wanted to help his suffering by suffering too. Could I trust that being able to let go of the suffering would not diminish my feelings for him or indicate that I didn't care about him? Could I feel the suffering of this impending loss and not be stuck in it?

I was feeling overwhelmed there in the grocery store, but I determined that if these teachings worked anywhere, they should work everywhere. So I stopped and asked myself, were the fear, grief, and intense craving that my friend not be dying causing me to cling to this suffering? How was my response actually intensifying and perpetuating suffering? How was I clinging to the suffering through my fear about letting it go? Was I willing to let it arise and be felt? Did I fear it would be unkind or cruel to allow the suffering to end?

Recognizing the possibility that the suffering was present because I was supporting the conditions for it to grow really woke me up. It let me see my own role in the condition of suffering itself and the possibility that I was sustaining the causes for suffering when I didn't need to. I could ask myself, are my suffering and grief of help to me? to my family? to my dying friend? It was easy to see that they weren't. So then I could ask myself, in this moment can I find a mind-state that isn't based on fear, sorrow, or grief, and yet is also fully cognizant of the truth of my friend's situation?

And in fact I could. My suffering was the result of craving for things not to be as they were; for my friend not to be sick at all, or at least for the improvement in his condition not to have reversed itself. But it really didn't matter how I wanted things to be; the important question was whether I could have the courage to release my own desires, fears, and projections in order to bring clarity and mindfulness to the experience right there, in the produce aisle. I didn't need to hold on to the fantasy of how I wanted things to be. I was adding the causes for suffering to the moment through

craving for things to be different than they were. Instead, if I wanted to keep my friend in my awareness as I was shopping, I could take joy in his amazing and generous life, in all he'd given me and many others, and in my opportunities to be with him still in the coming days. There was no suffering in that. Rather, there was joy and gratitude and appreciation and kindness.

Finding Freedom from Suffering

The transformation of the simple "want" into a stuck place of attachment can happen in a split second, and it is more difficult to release the suffering once the clinging has set in. If possible, when mindfulness is present, it is easier to release craving before clinging arises; however, since frequently that isn't possible, if clinging has already arisen, we can try to pause, and back up to identify and release the initial craving. Then we can bring clarity and an investigative process to realize how craving is obscuring our ability to see Dhamma, to see what is. This is our opportunity for breaking the cycle of suffering leading to more suffering. If we can identify craving and clearly see how it denies the truth of the way things actually are, we won't need to go down that sad, well-trodden, path of suffering yet again. When we know the truth of how things are, without craving for them to be otherwise, we are in a position to choose what we will add to a situation. That is where freedom resides—in that moment *yoniso manasikara* can allow us to direct the actions of body, speech, and mind, and choose whether we will create further causes for suffering or create the causes for generosity, kindness, and wisdom to arise, right here, right now. ❖

If one going down into a river,
swollen and swiftly flowing,
is carried away by the current—
how can one help others across?
Sutta Nipāta 2.321

Upcoming Half-Day Sits

Madison Insight Meditation Group will hold a half-day sit on Saturday, June 6, at Lori and Dave Creswell's house, 5753 Forsythia Place, in Madison.

Our half-day sits begin at 9:00 a.m. (try to arrive a little early), and the formal practice ends at about noon. Three 45-minute sitting periods alternate with two 20-minute walking periods. If you can't attend for the entire morning, feel free to come for a portion of it. Plan to arrive just a little before the hour so you can join the last few minutes of walking and stay for the next sitting period.

The morning's practice is followed by a potluck lunch in the same location. Bring something to share if you can, but come anyway if you can't. Questions can be directed to Dave or Lori at (608) 238-1234. There is no fee or registration required. Everyone is invited. ❖

Upcoming Retreats

Janice Cittasubha Sheppard, July 17–19, 2015
Holy Wisdom Monastery, Middleton, WI
(residential/nonresidential)

Santikaro, October 8–11, 2015
Pine Lake Retreat Center, Westfield, WI (residential)

Ajahn Sucitto, June 5–9, 2016
Christine Center, Willard, WI (residential)

Sharon Salzberg, August 12–14, 2016
Lussier Family Heritage Center, Madison, WI
(nonresidential)

James Baraz, October 27–30, 2016
Pine Lake Retreat Center, Westfield, WI (residential)

Upcoming Class

Training the Mind: Introduction to Meditation

Taught by Janice Cittasubha Sheppard and Dave Creswell
Four Friday evenings: May 15, May 22, June 5, June 12
6:30–8:30 p.m.
9638 Shadow Ridge Trail, Middleton, WI

This four-week class will introduce the basic principles of breath based meditation as outlined by Gotama Buddha 2,558 years ago. The skill of meditation offers us a way to train the mind and cultivate ease, clarity, kindness, and awareness in our daily lives. Participants will learn techniques for formal sitting and walking meditation as well as informal practices to establish and cultivate joy, open-heartedness, kindness, and wisdom in any moment and as we go about our daily life.

Details at madisonmeditation.org/classes.html.

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The Newsletter of Madison Vipassana, Inc.
Madison, WI

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Wise Reflection in Meditation

An Insight Meditation Retreat with

Janice Cittasubha Sheppard

July 17–19, 2015

Friday 9:30 a.m.–8:15 p.m. (check-in 8:15–9:15 a.m.)

Saturday 8:45 a.m.–8:15 p.m.

Sunday 8:45 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

Holy Wisdom Monastery, Middleton, WI

Sponsored by Madison Vipassana, Inc. (madisonmeditation.org)

The practice of insight meditation develops calm (*samatha*) through sustained attention and insight (*vipassana*) through reflection. Some popularized meditation instructions focus solely on paying attention through mindfulness (*sati*), overlooking the important and necessary complement of reflection. The Buddha directed that we practice *yoniso manasikara* (*wise reflection* or *appropriate attention*) to develop the Path of Awakening. This retreat will help us understand what constitutes wise reflection, why it matters, how it differs from our habitual patterns of “thinking,” and how it is used in meditation. This retreat is suitable for both beginning and experienced meditators. Sitting meditation periods will alternate with periods of walking meditation throughout each day. The retreat will be held in noble silence except for instructions, group interviews, Q&A periods, and Dhamma talks.

Janice Cittasubha Sheppard is a student of the Theravada Thai Forest lineage and trained as a Lay Buddhist Minister through Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery and as a Community Dharma Leader through Spirit Rock Meditation Center. She has co-led Madison Vipassana retreats as well as a “Thaypassana” retreat for the Center for Mindfulness and Justice. Since 2003, Jan has led a weekly Tuesday night meditation for Madison Insight Meditation Group (MIMG) and has taught meditation in Madison at many venues. She currently teaches meditation for MIMG, in Meriter Hospital’s Smoking Cessation Program, and in Wisconsin prisons, and she is leading a yearlong program for those wishing to deepen their meditation practice and understanding of the Buddha’s teachings.

Cost: The retreat will be nonresidential, with a residential option for a limited number of practitioners. The cost for nonresidents is \$165; the cost for residents is \$280 for a single room and \$240 for a double. Registration fees cover room (for residents), simple vegetarian meals (lunch and dinner for all and breakfast for residents), and other retreat expenses. In keeping with Theravada Buddhist tradition, there is no charge for the teachings; however, a donation (*dana*) to the teacher is encouraged.

Financial assistance: Financial assistance is available through our retreat scholarship program. Individuals may receive scholarships multiple times. Please ask if you need assistance. Contact Lori at loricres@charter.net or (608) 238-1234 to discuss how we can help.

Special needs: To inquire about special situations, contact Ann at annvarda@gmail.com or (608) 843-7531. Please note that we are unable to accommodate special dietary needs.

Ride sharing: To request or to offer a ride to the retreat, contact Beth at bracette@gmail.com or (608) 239-9790.

Registration: Early registrations are encouraged. Registration is on a space-available basis and must include the registration form below and a check to reserve your spot. Confirmation will be by email and will include information on the facility, driving directions, and recommendations on what to bring. If the retreat is full, you will be placed on a waiting list. Those on the waiting list who do not get a spot will receive a full refund. For questions about registration, contact Ann at annvarda@gmail.com or (608) 843-7531.

Cancellation and refund policy: All cancellations are subject to a nonrefundable \$50 fee. Cancellations received on or before June 19 will be refunded the retreat fee less \$50. Refunds, less \$50, will be given to those canceling after June 19 only if there is another person wanting to register for the retreat.

To register: Send a check for the full amount payable to Madison Vipassana, Inc., with the registration form below to:

Madison Vipassana, Inc., c/o Ann Varda
1724 Hoyt St.
Madison, WI 53726

REGISTRATION FORM—PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Insight Meditation Retreat with Janice Cittasubha Sheppard, July 17–19, 2015

Make checks payable to: Madison Vipassana, Inc.

Nonresidential (\$165) _____ Residential double (\$240) _____ Residential single (\$280) _____

Circle your gender: M F

Is this your first vipassana retreat? Yes _____ No _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime phone: _____ Evening phone: _____

Email _____ I enclose an additional \$ _____ to be used for scholarships.