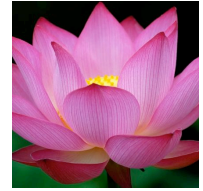


# CLEAR MIND



Non-Residential Retreat August 16-18:

Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia with Janice Cittasubha Sheppard

Madison Vipassana, Inc., is pleased to welcome Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia to lead a non-residential weekend retreat August 16-18 at Holy Wisdom Monastery in Madison, Wisconsin. Janice Cittasubha Sheppard will be co-teaching. The retreat topic is "Insight into the Three Characteristics of Existence: Dukkha, Anicca, and Anatta."



**Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia**

Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia has been a Dhamma teacher since 1990, and has been a regular guest teacher for Madison Vipassana. She is a student of the Western forest sangha, the disciples of Ajahn Sumedho and Ajahn Chah, and is a Lay Buddhist Minister in association with Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery in California. She has served as resident teacher of Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts, regularly teaches at the Forest Refuge in Barre, and is a member of the core faculty at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies.

Janice Cittasubha Sheppard has been teaching meditation since 2002. Like Taraniya, 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. Since 2003

she has led the weekly Tuesday night meditation for the Madison Insight Meditation Group and has taught meditation in Madison at many venues. She currently teaches classes throughout the year for Madison Insight Meditation Group. She is also a meditation teacher for Meriter Hospital's *Mindfulness Training for Smokers* program for smoking cessation.



**Janice Cittasubha Sheppard**

The Buddha's discourses point out that all physical or mental phenomena have three "signs" or characteristics: they are ultimately unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), impermanent (*anicca*), and devoid of an abiding self (*anatta*). These phenomena are interdependent and in a state of flux, arising and ceasing in unbroken succession. During the retreat, we will consider practical ways that insight into the three characteristics helps us cut through the delusions and difficulties of life. Participants will practice mindfulness techniques while sitting,

walking, eating, and moving about throughout the day. This retreat is suitable for new and seasoned practitioners.

For details about the retreat, see the enclosed registration form or [www.vipassana.net](http://www.vipassana.net). Some housing is available for the retreat; see page 4 for more information. For more on Taraniya's teachings, see page 3. And for more about *dukkha*, *anicca* and *anatta*, see pages 2 and 3.

## Additional Opportunities to Learn from Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia

Gloria will provide additional teaching opportunities following the retreat. She will host group and individual interviews to talk about practice on Monday, August 19, at 9638 Shadow Ridge Trail. Eight 30-minute individual interviews and two one-hour group interviews (for up to five people) will be offered. Individual interview time slots will be in the morning, mid-day and evening. One group interview will take place in the morning, and one will take place in the evening. Sign-up for interviews will take place during the retreat on Sunday morning, August 19, and at the regular Sunday night sitting on August 19.

# Insight into the Three Characteristics

by Janice Cittasubha Sheppard

The August 16-18 retreat will focus on what are called the three “signs” or three characteristics of existence. A deep understanding of these “signs” opens the door to the end of suffering. When we begin to comprehend and fully acknowledge these characteristics of existence, many of the other teachings also fall into place.

The three characteristics explain the natural world. They can help us untangle the existential “why” questions that cause so much pain and suffering.

The Buddha said that this teaching on the three characteristics wasn't special to him or “about” him in any way. Instead, he was just pointing out the nature of all conditioned existence, regardless of whether there was a teacher to explain it or not. In the following verse, he refers to himself as The Tathagatha (as he usually did) and explains how these natural truths are the case whether he teaches them or not:

***Dhamma-niyama Sutta:***  
***The Discourse on the Orderliness of the Dhamma***, Anguttara Nikaya 3.136, translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

“Monks, whether or not there is the arising of Tathagatas, this property stands—this steadfastness of the Dhamma, this orderliness of the Dhamma: All processes are inconstant.

“The Tathagata directly awakens to that, breaks through to that.

Directly awakening & breaking through to that, he declares it, teaches it, describes it, sets it forth. He reveals it, explains it, & makes it plain: All processes are inconstant.

“Whether or not there is the arising of Tathagatas, this property stands — this steadfastness of the Dhamma, this orderliness of the Dhamma: All processes are stressful.

“The Tathagata directly awakens to that, breaks through to that. Directly awakening & breaking through to that, he declares it, teaches it, describes it, sets it forth. He reveals it, explains it, & makes it plain: All processes are stressful.

“Whether or not there is the arising of Tathagatas, this property stands — this steadfastness of the Dhamma, this orderliness of the Dhamma: All phenomena are not-self.

“The Tathagata directly awakens to that, breaks through to that. Directly awakening & breaking through to that, he declares it, teaches it, describes it, sets it forth. He reveals it, explains it, & makes it plain: All phenomena are not-self.”

The complete understanding of how everything in the natural world is conditioned, interdependent, in flux, and therefore inconstant (*anicca*), stressful (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anatta*) leads naturally to disenchantment and the end of suffering.

This understanding of the nature of existence is not based on belief, taking the Buddha's word on

faith, or intellectual memorization of lists or suttas. It is based on an intuitive knowing, “insight,” that arises from the consistent examination of our own mental and physical experience during our meditation practice.

On this retreat Gloria and Jan will provide ways to comprehend what the Buddha said about *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*, and tools to cut through our habitual delusions about reality so we can “let go” to peace.

In the following passage, from <http://www.beyondthenet.net/dhamma/trilogy.htm>, Bhikkhu Bodhi discusses the nature of our delusions about reality and how to understand them:

***The Trilogy of Anicca, Dukkha and Anatta***, by Bhikkhu Bodhi

“The Buddha says that we have to examine our experience in order to discover its most pervasive features, the universal characteristics of phenomena, namely, impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and egolessness or not-self.

“The Buddha says:  
All formations are impermanent. All formations are unsatisfactory. All phenomena, everything whatsoever, are not self.

“Formations are things which arise from causes and conditions. They include all compounded or formed phenomena. Although all formations around us have these three characteristics, we are unable to see them because our

minds are ordinarily cloaked by ignorance. Ignorance is a mental factor which has been covering the minds of all sentient beings through beginningless time. It covers the minds of every one but the fully enlightened ones, the Buddhas and the arahants.

“Ignorance functions in two ways, negative and positive. On the negative side it simply obstructs us from seeing things as they are; it throws up clouds of mental darkness. On the positive side, it creates in the mind illusions called perversions. Due to these perversions, we see things in quite the opposite way from the way they really are.

“These perversions are:

- (a) Perversion of seeing what is unattractive as attractive.
- (b) Perversion of seeing what is Dukkha or unsatisfactory as pleasurable.
- (c) Perversion of seeing what is impermanent as permanent.
- (d) Perversion of seeing what is really not self as self.

“These illusions give rise to craving, conceit, wrong view and all other defilements, and in that way we become entangled in dukkha.

“These universal characteristics have to be understood in two stages: first intellectually, by reflection; and thereafter by direct insight or realisation through insight meditation. When we explain these intellectually, we should not make this a substitute for practice, but only take it as a guideline for understanding what has to be seen by the actual practice of insight meditation.”

## Waking Up to the Present Moment by Gloria Taraniya Ambrosia

Many years ago I began to take note of my state of mind in the first moments of wakefulness each day. As I lay in bed, I noticed the flood of sensory experience—the array of sensations, feelings and thoughts that immediately vied for my attention. I watched as the mind habitually sought refuge in proliferation—deluding itself into believing that there were problems in my life and that these needed to be addressed . . . right now!

Some of this early-morning chatter contained nasty critiques regarding yesterday’s actions and inactions . . . followed by promises to do better. Some of it involved plans and agendas—directives as to what I needed to do and who I needed to become. Or else the mind simply drifted, re-establishing itself in yesterday’s entertainments or dreams.

Watching . . . it didn’t take long to grow sick of the proliferation, sick of being drawn in. I made the determination to refrain from getting out of bed until I was confident that I had relinquished my grip on the whole mess and become fully established in the present moment. Often just the reminder brought me back. But many mornings the mind seemed determined to whine and complain about this ache or pain, that issue or concern . . . and I could barely resist.

Some mornings there was such a cloud in the mind that I was only vaguely aware. But I really worked at it (still do!) and over the years the first moments of each day have grown infinitely more settled.

I realize that this growing presence of mind may just be one of the blessings of old age. (I don’t have the energy to pick up on my own internal chatter!) But I’m confident that most of it proceeds from practice. The Buddha was right . . . over time the mind actually becomes interested in staying put, being present. As practitioners we want to notice how good it feels to be more and more present to life.

# Retreat Housing Options

A small number of overnight accommodations for out-of-town retreatants are available for August 16 and 17 at Holy Wisdom Monastery. Contact the monastery directly at (608) 836-1631 to inquire about availability and cost and to make a reservation. Additional information about the monastery is available at <http://benedictinewomen.org/>.

A block of rooms has also been secured at Baymont Inn and Suites, 8102 Excelsior Dr., Madison, WI 53717. Baymont Inn and Suites is about an 8- to 10-minute drive to Holy Wisdom. Contact the hotel directly for reservations. Information about the hotel is available at <http://www.baymontinns.com/>.

Campsites also can be reserved at Mendota Park, 5133 Cty Hwy M, Middleton, WI 53562. For information on camping options, see <http://www.countyofdane.com/lwrp/parks/mendota.aspx>.

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