

Monterey Bay Zen Center News

Winter 2018

PAPANCA, ZAZEN AND NONPROLIFERATION

“Why, sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.”

Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland

The Pali word *papanca* loosely translated means the proliferation of thoughts and mental actions that shade and twist our capacity to see things as they are. In the Theravada tradition *papanca* (pronounced pa-pan-cha) is sometimes referred to as “dwelling” or the endless habit of constructing, fabricating and ruminating. The state of mind of *papanca*, as described by the Buddha, is the source of much of the anxiety, restlessness, agitation and dis-ease that we experience. Depending upon the conditions and influences, *papanca* can be mild and neutral or feel like a storm of influxes, influences, afflictions and dispositions all coming down in a painful torrent.

The word *papanca* is infamously hard to translate, with the name changing meaning through the centuries among Indian Buddhists, the only constant being that it was primarily regarded as something negative. It is through the root meaning of “spreading” or “expansion” that the word has entered the vocabulary of modern meditation. While the exact basis of the word *papanca* is not wholly known, its meaning hovers somewhere between three fundamental characteristics: 1) the blooming or proliferation of mental constructs; 2) the quality of a misapprehension, illusion, and repetition; 3) a hindrance or obstruction to any sort of mental calm or clarity.

The quality of proliferation can vary according to conditions, with some *papanca* bordering on the very pleasant, such as daydreams and imaginings of future pleasant events. Other *papanca* can be entirely neutral and don’t seem to have an extreme emotional characteristic. There may simply be an unbiased observation regarding the day’s events. Then, at other times, the *papanca* we are absorbed in can have a blindingly toxic quality. The perpetual looping of noxious views seems to spin around the creation of a self-perpetuating tape that feeds thoughts of despair, judgement and hopelessness. When a sequence such as this kicks-in, the entire world can be assessed as a hostile and aggressive milieu. The effect can be made all the more vexing by the impossibility of sharing or articulating the pain itself, and that lack of articulation becomes a component of the never-ending cycle.

The edifice of *papanca* is loosely based on the following structure: with contact there is feeling; that which we feel, we perceive; that

which we perceive, we think about; that which we think about, we proliferate and that which we elaborate and dwell upon shapes our minds. This “dwelling” turns into beliefs and the beliefs turn into conclusions. Left to itself, the mind has no shame. It will think anything about anyone at anytime.

The four traditional categories of *papanca* are: 1) *tanha* (desire) *papanca*, which is proliferation of thought based on pleasure; 2) *moha* (aversion) *papanca*, or proliferation based on unpleasant experiences; 3) *ditthi* (view) *papanca*, proliferation of thoughts based upon views and *mana*; and 4) *mana* *papanca*, which includes all the ways we create stories and narratives about ourselves.

Tanha *papanca*, or craving-based proliferation, may appear similar to the following mental reverie: “It is a bit warm in here. But not bad, really. Makes me relax. And really not that hot.....say, hot as Modesto in July or next to pizza oven...one of those large brick ovens with a little door that looks like a miniature version of native American houses outside of Taos Pueblo, New Mexico...but the smell of it: tomato and crusted bread and cheese bubbling at 500 degrees...followed by fresh chopped basil. Chopped fast, I bet, with large, silvery chef knives...Like the pizza on that street in Noe Valley with olive oil and red pepper flakes on the table and Luca Botta singing southern Italian ballads on a tape. Plus everyone was nice. Plus grainy black and white pictures on the walls of ordinary Italian people that look like extras from a De Sica film...but, really, what if I was actually able to go to northern Italy starting in Florence—no, maybe Milan—they have pizza there with....”

On the other hand, *moha* *papanca*, or proliferation based upon unpleasant experiences, might look something like: “It is a bit warm in here. Is this still Zen if it’s this warm? Warm like this? I thought it was supposed to be colder, more austere in the zendo. Rigorous... Who is in charge of the actual heat in here? Really... It makes things feel soft and doughy... Like the time we drove through Fresno and it was 98 degrees and we turned on the heater thinking it was the air conditioner and rolled up the windows and just labored along for about 15 miles in the boiling mass of metal and vinyl before we realized the mistake...but not before our t-shirts stuck to us like warm clotted sponges....”

Similarly, *ditthi* *papanca* is proliferation based on views, the stream of thinking that revolves around opinions, beliefs, and concepts. Often following from generalizations about people, places and things, *ditthi* *papanca* carries the vague sense of how things should be.

Conceivably, the cornerstone of mental proliferation is *mana* *papanca*,



the locus of self-love, self-pride, self-confusion and self-view. Manas is the meaning-maker and foundation for all decision and actions. In terms of *papanca*, it is the way we proliferate and tell stories about “me”: “I am appalling, brilliant, a disappointment, accomplished, outstanding, undeserving...” In a very particular sense, meditation is turning-on “channel me” at full volume. At times, *mana papanca* is historical and sometimes transitory. An identity is formed around an event or situation, and manic proliferation begins and slowly progresses into a full blooming.

“People delight in proliferation, the Tathagata in nonproliferation.”

— Dhammapada 254

In the Uddana Sutra (1:10), an early Pali text, the Buddha proposed: “Please train yourself thus. In the seen, there will just be the seen. In the heard, there will just be the heard. In the sensed, there will just be the sensed. In the cognized, just the cognized. Then you will not identify with the seen, and so on. And if you do not identify with them, you will not locate in them. If you are not located in them, there will be no here, no there, or in-between, and this will be the end of suffering.”

This is a description of meditation. Beneath the layers of thought and perception is simply a moment of contact of sense organ and sense object and consciousness that cognizes prior to reflection and elaboration. Here is a moment of contact and meeting which carries no content or coloration of its own. It is to see a flower prior to the reflection, “beautiful flower.” The moment of contact is absent of the whirl and spin of endless permutations, coloring and volitional formations. It is a moment without signs. A moment unadorned with *papanca*.

The Japanese word *hishiryo* is sometimes used to describe *zazen*. According to Rev. Tairyu Tsunoda, in an essay from Sotozen.net, *hishiryo* literally means “non-thinking.” “*Shiryo* means ‘thinking’ and *hi* is a prefix or negation and opposition. So *hishiryo* amounts to ‘unthink’ or ‘not a matter of thinking,’” writes Rev. Tsunoda. “The word *hishiryo* appears in Dogen Fukanzazengi, Shobogenzo Sazengi, Shobogenzo Zazengi, Shobogenzo Zazenshi and in Keizan Zenji’s Zazen Yojinki.”

“In the Tenpuku version of Fukanzazengi [Dogen Zenji’s signed manuscript], we do not see the sentence, ‘think of not-thinking.’ Instead, there are these sentences: ‘When a thought arises, be aware of it. When you are aware of it, it will disappear. Continuously put aside everything outside and make yourself into one piece.’”

Dogen Zenji’s “one piece” is sometimes referred to as “your own face before your parents were born” or the “original person.” When we are fully engaged in just “letting the heard be the heard,” there is just sound and no “me” or “mine.” It is contact without proliferation. *Hishiryo*, however, is not a state of blankness, or no thought. Rather, it is the activity of not grasping or identifying with thought. Or, as Suzuki Roshi said, “of not taking the thought out to lunch.” If a thought arises, we do not “dwell” in concept, rather, simply release the thought and return to the tangible reality of the posture and allow the proliferation of afflictive views and dispositions to melt in the furnace of attention.

— Robert Reese

CADENCE OF GRASSES: HALF DAY SITTING AND “THE TRUTH OF THIS LIFE” IN SANTA CRUZ

The Monterey and Santa Cruz Zen Centers will co-sponsor a half-day sitting in commemoration of our founding teacher, Karin Sobun Katheine Thanas, on Saturday, March 17, 2018. Presented on the her 90th birthday, six years after her death, the day will include *zazen*, a memorial service and potluck lunch with our dharma brothers and sisters from Santa Cruz Zen Center.

Additionally, Natalie Goldberg and Bill Anelli, the editors of *The Truth of this Life: Zen Teachings on Loving the World as It Is*, a collection of articles by Katherine Thanas, will speak in the afternoon and the book should be available for purchase. Katherine Thanas’ encounters with Soto Zen practice and the affairs of everyday life are expressed in the series of trenchant, intensely personal talks and essays.

Sitting will begin at 8:30 am and continue until 12:00 noon at the zendo in Santa Cruz at 113 School Street, Santa Cruz (near the Santa Cruz mission). We will begin lunch at 1:00 pm followed by Natalie’s presentation.

The description of the book from the publisher reads, “The truth and joy of this life is that we cannot change things as they are.” The import of those words can be found beautifully expressed in the work of the woman who spoke them, Katherine Thanas (1927–2012)—in her art, in her writing, and especially in her Zen teaching. Fearlessly direct and endlessly curious, Katherine’s understanding of Zen was inseparable from her affinity for the arts. She was an MFA student studying painting with Richard Diebenkorn, the preeminent Californian abstract painter, when she met Shunryu Suzuki, author of *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*, in the sixties.”

Students from Monterey will be carpooling to arrive at the Santa Cruz zendo. For more information, please contact Susan McDonald at (831) 601-7590 or Robert Reese at (831) 920-8303. By donation. No one will be denied based on the lack of ability to pay.

ANNUAL WINTER SESSHIN

The annual Monterey Bay Zen Center sesshin will be held Friday, February 16th through February 18th at Villa Angelica. A sesshin is residential period of intensive meditation and is an opportunity to deepen our practice, through periods of *zazen*, walking meditation, silent meals, dharma talks, practice discussions, work periods and rest.

Revs. Robert Reese and Sho¹gen Danielson, will be leading the sesshin, which marks the beginning of our winter practice period.



Participants must have had at least one previous experience of sitting for one day. Early registration will be important. Residential space is limited. Priority will be given to residential applications for the entire schedule of sesshin. There are also opportunities for day-long non-residential practice. Scholarships are available. No one will be denied the opportunity to participate because of his or her financial situation. The sesshin will close at 3:00 pm, Sunday, February 18, 2016. Villa Angelica is located in Carmel, 1/2 mile south of Rio Rd.

Residential participation: Suggested donation \$90.00 per day. Day long participation: Suggested donation \$75.00 per day. For more info and registration, please contact: Susan McDonald: soozmcdonald@gmail.com (831) 601-7590.

WINTER PRACTICE PERIOD: SERENE DWELLING

One of the foundational teachings of the Buddha is that of renewing our focus and intensifying our commitment for a short, more intense interval of time. This enlivens our practice and clarifies our intention. *Ango*, or practice period, means "Peaceful Dwelling" and is a time when we are encouraged to take advantage of the singular opportunity to work with our life, supported by the community and practice leaders.

The *Ango* will be led by Revs. Shogen Danielson and Robert Reese. During the practice period a head student (Shuso) is often selected to help lead the *Ango* and to deepen their own practice. For the 2018 Winter Practice Period, Guy Riina has been selected to be Shuso. Practice period begins with a shuso entering ceremony on February 13, 2018 and ends with the shuso closing ceremony on April 3, 2018.

While there are a number of events offered during this time, the *Ango* occurs within each one of us — exactly where we are. With this understanding, the Practice Period is created to sustain our efforts in the circumstances of our everyday life and work. To support this endeavor, we have created a series of options from which you can form an ongoing practice that cultivates and encourages you to go deeper into your life. For information, registration and practice period forms, contact Robert Reese at (831) 920-8303.

COOL MOUNTAINS, VALLEY SOUNDS: ZAZEN AT CARMEL VALLEY ZENDO

A day-long retreat of zazen meditation, *zazenkai* will be held Sunday, January 7th at the Carmel Valley Zendo. Throughout the history of Zen, the practice of zazen has been considered the primary agent of awakening. As Dogen Zenji declared, before bowing, offering incense or chanting Buddha's name, the practice of zazen reveals and expresses awakening. With this in mind, *zazenkai* is a period of time dedicated to zazen with minimal traditional formalities. Full day or Half day: (9 am to 4 pm or 12:30 pm to 4 pm). There will be scheduled periods of sitting and walking, with the option of continuing to sit through the walking meditation if desired. Reservations required. Please contact Rev. Sara Hunsaker at (831) 659-1552 to register or for more information.

MAKING PEACE AND CHANGING THE NARRATIVE: NVC WORKSHOP REDUX

The Monterey Bay Zen Center will offer a second installment of the Nonviolent Communication workshop with Jean Morrison and Patricia Wolff on Saturday, January 27th at the Carl Cherry Center. Jean Morrison, MA (Psychology, counseling and holistic health) has been providing trainings, consultation, and mediation for the past 23 years. Patricia Wolff has been practicing in the field of natural health care for women and children for over 30 years and given Lay Entrustment in 2010 at the Monterey Bay Zen Center by Katherine Thanas. The workshop will be held at the Cherry Center from 12 to 4 pm. Information/registration: Patricia Wolfe at (831) 659-4042 Suggest donation: sliding scale from \$50 to \$75 per person. No one will be turned away for lack of ability to pay.



SHŌGEN DANIELSON JOINS TEACHING COUNCIL

Rev. Shōgen Danielson will be joining the Monterey Bay Zen Center's Teaching Council. Rev. Danielson will join Robert Reese, Sara Hunsaker, and Patricia Wolfe to lead the MBZC community. He received an enthusiastic endorsement from MBZC's board of directors. Shōgen has a rich history of monastic practice at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center and has shared his teaching with classes on Vasubandu as well as dharma talks on Tuesday evenings.

Shōgen Danielson first realized he was Buddhist the summer of '96 after travelling in India and Nepal. After sitting alone for five years, he began practicing at San Francisco Zen Center in 2001. He was ordained as a priest in 2008 by Teah Strozer, and was Head Monk at Tassajara in 2013 with Kiku Christina Lehnher. He worked with the United States Peace Corps in Africa for 4.5 years during two stints as a volunteer teaching Physical Science, Math, and Life Skills. His formal educational training includes a B.S. in Engineering Physics with a minor in Astronomy and a M.S. in Physics & Astronomy. Shogen loves music and spending time in nature: walking, hiking, backpacking and camping. And most of all he loves sharing all of this with his 10 year old son and 5 year old daughter.

NEW RAILING SUSTAINS AND SUPPORTS CHICKEN COOP ZENDO

Zen students with Phyllis Thorngate are grateful for new railing at the Chicken Coop Zendo in Jamesburg. Funded by the MBZC and Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, the

railing was built by Jon Higgins and Bill Hughes, who noticed the dangerous situation, then designed and constructed the structure last summer. To preserve the rustic building, Jon and Bill collected and utilized downed redwood branches for the spindles of the railings.





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FACEBOOK

MONTEREY BAY ZEN CENTER

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WEEKLY SCHEDULE

We meet Tuesday evenings, Monday and
Thursday mornings at the Cherry Center,
4th and Guadalupe in Carmel.

Tuesday evening schedule:

Zazen 6:30
Kinhin (walking) 7:10
Service 7:20
Lecture/discussion 7:30-8:30

Monday, Thursday mornings:

Zazen 7am
(followed by service and soji)

Zazen instruction first Tuesday of
each month at 5:30pm

Ordinary Recovery, Sats, 9-10am
Cherry Center, Carmel

Fearless Fathers, Tuesdays, 5:30
p.m. (415) 531-2090

Brown Bag Zen, Fridays 12:15-1:15
St. James Church, Monterey

**Mountains and Rivers Medita-
tion**, Oct 25, Nov 22, Dec 13, 27
7-8:30pm

Patricia 659-3042

Chicken Coop Zendo, Thursdays
5:30-7:00pm - 659-2365

Just Sitting Day

Non-Violent Comm

Dogen's Birth (Jan. 22nd)

Full Moon Ceremony

Bodhidharma's Birth (Feb 5)

Shuso Entry Ceremony

Villa Angelica Sesshin

Practice Period Classes

Katagiri Roshi Memorial

Buddha's Parinirvana Day

Mahapajapati Memorial

Katherine Thanas Celebration

Full Moon Ceremony

Shuso Closing Ceremony

Buddha's Birth Celebration

Katherine Thanas Sesshin

Sun, Jan 7, 9 – 4pm

Sat, Jan 27, 12:00 – 4pm

Tues, Jan 23, 6:30 - 8:30

Tues, Jan 30, 6:30 – 8:30

Tues, Feb 6, 6:30 - 8:30

Tues, Feb 13, 6:30 – 8:30

Fri-Sn; Feb 16 – 18

Times/dates/location TBA

Tues, Mar 6, 6:30 - 8:30

Tues, Mar 6, 6:30 - 8:30

Tues, Mar 13, 6:30 - 8:30

Sat, Mar 17

Tues, Mar 27, 6:30 - 8:30

Tues, Apr 3, 6:30 - 8:30

Tues, Apr 10, 6:30 - 8:30

Jun 22- 24 w/ SCZC

Carmel Valley Zendo

Carl Cherry Center

Carl Cherry Center

Carl Cherry Center

Carl Cherry Center

Carl Cherry Center

Villa Angelica

Carl Cherry Center

Carl Cherry Center

Carl Cherry Center

Santa Cruz Zendo

Carl Cherry Center

Carl Cherry Center

Carl Cherry Center

Jikoji