

*Koans*

for the

*Make the Mountains Dance*

*Retreat*

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*Koans, Freedom, & Love*



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## FIRST EVENING

If we were not so single minded about keeping our lives moving,  
and for once could do nothing,  
Perhaps a huge silence might interrupt this sadness  
of never understanding ourselves  
and of threatening ourselves with death.

Pablo Neruda



Someone asked, "One of the ancestors said that everyone has it,  
but I'm covered with the dusts of the world and don't know  
whether I do or not."

Caoshan said, "Show me your hand." Then he pointed to the  
questioner's fingers: "One, two, three, four, five. Enough!"

## FIRST DAY

The Way is the Territory

Quickly, without thinking good and evil, before your parents were  
born – what is your original face?

Getting Free

Shoushan said to his assembly, "If you get it the first time you  
hear it, you will be the teacher of the buddhas and ancestors. If

you get it the second time you hear it, you will be the teacher of  
gods and humans. If you get it the third time, you can't even save  
yourself."

A monk asked, "When did you get it?"

Shoushan said, "The moon sets at midnight; I walk alone  
through the town."



There was a woman who kept the pilgrim's inn at Hara under  
Mt Fuji. Her name is unknown, and it is not known when she was  
born or died.

She went to hear a talk by Hakuin, who said, "They say there's a  
Pure Land where everything is only mind, a Buddha of Infinite Light in  
your own body. Once that Buddha appears, mountains, rivers, and earth,  
plants, trees, and forests, all suddenly glow with a great light. If you want  
to see this, look into your own heart. Since the Pure Land is only mind,  
what kind of special features would it have? Since this Buddha is your  
own body, how would you recognize it?"

When she heard this, the woman said to herself, "This isn't so  
hard." Returning home, she meditated day and night, asking these  
questions while she was awake and during sleep. One day, as she  
was washing a pot, she had a sudden breakthrough. She tossed  
the pot aside and rushed to see Hakuin. She said, "I've run across  
the Buddha of In-finite Light in my own body, and everything is  
shining with a great light. It's wonderful!" She danced for joy.

"Is that so?" Hakuin asked. "But what about a cesspool – does  
it also shine with a great light?"

The woman ran up and slapped him. She said, "Don't you  
know the answer to that, you old gasbag?" Hakuin roared with  
laughter.



Say something without moving your lips or tongue



Are dolphins really as smart as people say they are?



Explain buddha nature to your dog



Make the mountains dance

At Home in the World

Yunmen said, "Sickness and medicine correspond to each other.  
The whole world is medicine. What is the self?"



How does Guanyin use all those hands and eyes?  
It's like someone in the middle of the night, reaching behind her  
head for a pillow.

## *SECOND DAY*

Even More at Home in the World

Linji said, "There is nothing I dislike."



Save a ghost



Someone asked, "In the day there is sunlight, at night there is  
firelight. What is divine light?"  
Zhaozhou replied, "Sunlight, firelight."

## Bibliography

Zenkei Shibayama, *The Gateless Barrier* (Shambhala, 2000)

Yamada Koun, *Gateless Gate* (Wisdom Publications, 2004)

Both are translations of the Chinese collection Wumenguan (Japanese Mumonkan); they include contemporary commentaries on each koan, which make them a good place to begin exploring the tradition

Thomas and J.C. Cleary, *The Blue Cliff Record* (Shambhala, 1992)

The Chinese Biyan Lu (Hekigan Roku), associated with the Linji (Rinzai) school. Dense, poetic, and sometimes perplexing, it's considered by many to be the richest and most challenging koan collection

Thomas Cleary, *Book of Serenity* (Shambhala, 1998)

The Chinese Congrong Lu (Japanese Shoyo Roku), associated with the Caodong (Soto) school, compiled in the 12th century and including introductions, commentaries, and verses for each koan from that time

Trevor Leggett, *Samurai Zen: The Warrior Koans* (Routledge, 2003)

A collection of Japanese koans from the Kamakura era (13th century), including traditional poems and checking questions; one of the best sources for koans involving women

Victor Sogen Hori, *Zen Sand: The Book of Capping Phrases for Koan Practice* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2003)

The most extensive collection of capping phrases, brief original writings or quotes linked to a koan; includes a detailed description of contemporary koan practice in Japan

John Tarrant, *Bring Me the Rhinoceros: And Other Koans to Bring You Joy* (Harmony Books, 2004)

A new book by my colleague in developing this way of working with koans, exploring a dozen koans in depth, from a thoroughly western and poetic perspective

[www.joansutherland.net](http://www.joansutherland.net)

More koans not found in these anthologies, as well as talks on working with koans and this way of practice