

16 Bodhisattvas  
Koan Saturday



April 24, 2009

**KOANS for BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY**

*In medieval Japan, the nuns of the great temple of Tokeiji would take up the poems composed by earlier teachers and nuns as koans. Here are some poems for Buddha's Birthday, written by Yodo, the 5<sup>th</sup> abbess of Tokeiji, and her attendants, along with the questions about them that were asked in later generations.*

**Decorate your own heart,  
for the buddha of the flower hall  
is nowhere else.**

How do you recognize your own heart?  
How would you decorate the flower hall?  
If you revere a buddha who is in your own heart,  
what do you need with a flower hall?



**Throw the past into the street.  
What is born in its place, on the flower altar,  
let it raise its newborn cry.**

When the past has been thrown away, what is born  
in its place?  
Let's hear the newborn cry.  
Where is the flower altar?



**Born, and forgetting the parents who bore you—  
the parents who are Guanyin and Shakyamuni.**

Where is the birth?  
Where are Guanyin and Shakyamuni?



16 Bodhisattvas  
Koan Saturday



April 24, 2009

**KOANS for BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY**

*In medieval Japan, the nuns of the great temple of Tokeiji would take up the poems composed by earlier teachers and nuns as koans. Here are some poems for Buddha's Birthday, written by Yodo, the 5<sup>th</sup> abbess of Tokeiji, and her attendants, along with the questions about them that were asked in later generations.*

**Decorate your own heart,  
for the buddha of the flower hall  
is nowhere else.**

How do you recognize your own heart?  
How would you decorate the flower hall?  
If you revere a buddha who is in your own heart,  
what do you need with a flower hall?



**Throw the past into the street.  
What is born in its place, on the flower altar,  
let it raise its newborn cry.**

When the past has been thrown away, what is born  
in its place?  
Let's hear the newborn cry.  
Where is the flower altar?



**Born, and forgetting the parents who bore you—  
the parents who are Guanyin and Shakyamuni.**

Where is the birth?  
Where are Guanyin and Shakyamuni?

