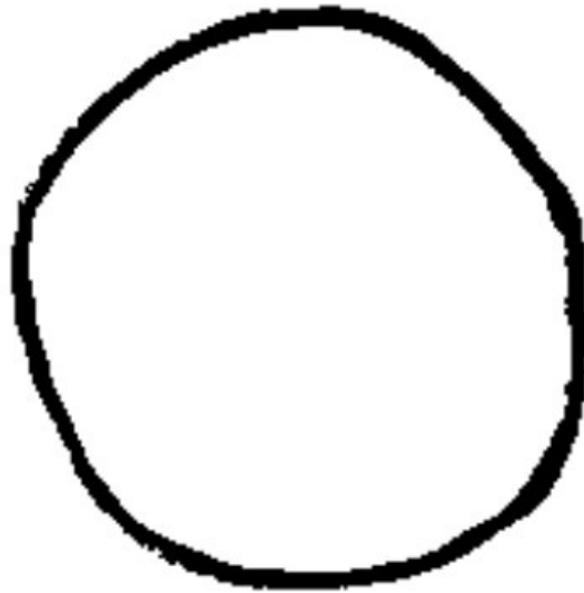




# The Miscellaneous Koans of Zen Buddhism

Questions and Answers



The Miscellaneous Koans of every Zen School  
Part I (Koans one to thirty seven)

Introduced, edited and illustrated by Reinhard Koch  
Pictures taken from 1940<sup>th</sup> American comic pencilers

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# Introduction

## *Basic ideas to remember while dealing with Koans*

**The way to answer Koans questions** is to forget about their practical or philosophical complications and instead of talking try to **act out** an answer, equally strange as the question. (Sometimes you have to say something while acting.) Some examples:

If you're asked,

- to grab a stone from the deep ocean, just put your hand down (in water), get it up again and open the hand to “show the stone”.
- to ride a buffalo while walking, forget about the walking and move your body as if riding a buffalo.
- where to go after death, just go for breakfast.
- What is the law of change: show that in the morning it's cold, but at midday it's much warmer.



**Koans** sound difficult, because they **are based on three strange assumptions**

1. The world is simple and nothing else but everyday activities.
2. Theory or concept are of no use.
3. You, the actor is identical with everything.

With these basic ideas of Zen in mind it should be easy to find solutions for Koans.

But it isn't.

The reason is quite simple:

**Zen believes contradict our everyday experiences.**

**They are illogical and wrong because**

1. The world is NOT simple.
2. We NEED at least basic theories and concepts in our everyday life.
3. We're NOT identifying ourselves with everything.

**But Zen insists, your every experiences are not reality, but only a dream.**

I'll stop here. If you would like to go further down the track to understand the meaning of Koans and the believes of Zen, please refer to my website at <http://www.heartofmeditation.com/zen-riddles.html>

### ***Paradox, Koans and the religious background of Zen***

Zen Riddles, called Koans are so difficult, because they are paradoxical, many people believe. But that's wrong. A proper paradox is illogical and contradictory. A paradox cannot be solved.

Koans riddles can. They are only absurd for they ask you to do or to know something, which is impossible to do or to know.

- "Bring me the stone which lies 10.000m deep in the ocean."
- "While walking ride a buffalo".
- "Where do you after go death?"
- "Why is everything under the law of change?"



Religion is equally illogical as Koans are. It's this similarity that makes Zen people believe, answering Koans is a way to achieve Enlightenment, the supreme religious state of soul and mind.

Therefore the answers are kept secret and each student, under the guidance of a master has to find the right answer herself.

Dealing with Koans deeply changes a students mind and one day there will be sudden shift to Enlightenment. The master realises the shift at once and will acknowledge Enlightenment.

This religious narrative can in no way be proved, but that's why Zen people like to believe in it.

You can find more about the connection between Koans and Enlightenment at <http://www.heartofmeditation.com/zen-enlightenment.html>