



Living the Spiritual Life

Program

This is a small booklet for you to use during the 10 weeks that we will be studying the 10 Ox herding pictures.

The course runs from Sunday 18th September and finishes on Sunday 20th November.

The booklet contains the pictures and the commentary that goes with it from the Japanese Institute of Zen Studies.

There are spaces throughout for you to make notes.

Journal

1. Searching for the Ox

The beast has never gone astray, and what is the use of searching for him? The reason why the oxherd is not on intimate terms with him is because the oxherd himself has violated his own inmost nature. The beast is lost, for the oxherd has himself been led out of the way through his deluding senses.

His home is receding farther away from him, and by-ways and crossways are ever confused. Desire for gain and fear of loss burn like fire; ideas of right and wrong shoot up like a phalanx.

Alone in the wilderness, lost in the jungle, the boy is searching, searching!

*The swelling waters, the far-away mountains,
and the unending path;*

*Exhausted and in despair, he knows not where to go,
He only hears the evening cicadas
singing in the maple-woods.*



The Search

2. Seeing the traces

By the aid of the sutras and by inquiring into the doctrines, he has come to understand something, he has found the traces.

He now knows that vessels, however varied, are all of gold, and that the objective world is a reflection of the Self. Yet, he is unable to distinguish what is good from what is not, his mind is still confused as to truth and falsehood.

As he has not yet entered the gate, he is provisionally said to have noticed the traces.

*By the stream and under the trees,
scattered are the traces of the lost:*

*The sweet-scented grasses are growing thick
-did he find the way?*

*However remote over the hills and far away the beast may wander,
His nose reaches the heavens and none can conceal it.*



3. Seeing the Ox

The boy finds the way by the sound he hears; he sees thereby into the origin of things, and all his senses are in harmonious order.

In all his activities, it is manifestly present. It is like the salt in water and the glue in color.

(It is there though not distinguishable as an individual entity.)

When the eye is properly directed, he will find that it is no other than himself.

*On a yonder branch perches a nightingale cheerfully singing;
The sun is warm, and a soothing breeze blows,
on the bank the willows are green;
The ox is there all by himself, nowhere is he to hide himself:
The splendid head decorated with stately horns
- what painter can reproduce him?*



4. Catching the Ox

Lost long in the wilderness, the boy has at last found the ox and his hands are on him.

But, owing to the overwhelming pressure of the outside world, the ox is hard to keep under control.

He constantly longs for the old sweet-scented field.

The wild nature is still unruly, and altogether refuses to be broken.

If the oxherd wishes to see the ox completely in harmony with himself, he is surely to use the whip freely.

*With the energy of his whole being,
the boy has at last taken hold of the ox:
But how wild his will, how ungovernable his power!
At times he struts up a plateau,
When lo! he is lost again in a misty unpenetrable mountain-pass.*



The Practice

5. Herding the Ox

When a thought moves, another follows, and then another an endless train of thoughts is thus awakened.

Through enlightenment all this turns into truth;

but falsehood asserts itself when confusion prevails.

Things oppress us not because of an objective world, but because of a self-deceiving mind.

Do not let the nose-string loose, hold it tight, and allow no vacillation.

*The boy is not to separate himself with his whip and tether.
Lest the animal should wander away into a world of defilements:
When he is properly tended to,
he will grow pure and docile;
Without a chain, nothing binding,
he will by himself follow the oxherd.*



6. Coming home on the Ox's back

The struggle is over; gain and loss, the man is no more concerned with.

He hums a rustic tune of the woodman, he sings simple songs of the village-boy.

Saddling himself on the ox's back, his eyes are fixed at things not of the earth.

earthy.

Even if he is called, he will not turn his head:

however enticed he will no more be kept back.

Riding on the animal, he leisurely wends his way home;

*Enveloped in the evening mist,
how tunefully the flute vanishes away!*

*Singing a ditty, beating time,
his heart is filled with a joy indescribable!*

That he is now one of those who know, need it be told?



歸騎
家牛

7. The Ox forgotten, leaving the man alone

The dharmas are one and the ox is symbolic.
When you know that what you need is not the snare or
set-net but the hare or fish;
it is like gold separated from the dross,
it is like the moon rising out of the clouds.
The one ray of light serene and penetrating shines even
before days of creation.

*Riding on the animal, he is at last back in his home,
Where lo! the ox is no more; the man alone sits serenely.
Though the red sun is high up in the sky,
he is still quietly dreaming,
Under a straw-thatched roof are his whip and rope idly lying.*



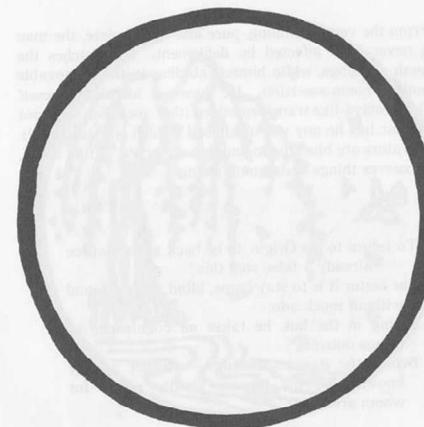
忘牛
存人

Return to the Source

8. The Ox and man both gone out of sight

All confusion is set aside, and serenity alone prevails:
even the idea of holiness does not obtain.
He does not linger about where the Buddha is, and as to
where there is no Buddha he speedily passes by.
When there exists no form of dualism, even a thousand-
eyed one fails to detect a loop-hole.
A holiness before which birds offer flowers is but a
farce.

*All is empty
the whip, the rope, the man, and the ox:
Who can ever survey the vastness of heaven?
Over the furnace burning ablaze,
not a flake of snow can fall:
When this state of things obtains,
manifest is the spirit of the ancient master.*



俱忘
人牛

9. Returning to the origin, back to the source

From the very beginning, pure and immaculate, the man has never been affected by defilement.

He watches the growth of things, while himself abiding in the immovable serenity of non-assertion.

He does not identify himself with the maya-like transformations (that are going on about him), nor has he any use of himself (which is artificiality).

The waters are blue, the mountains are green; sitting alone, he observes things undergoing changes.

*To return to the Origin,
to be back at the Source already a false step this!
Far better it is to stay home,
blind and deaf, and without much ado:
Sitting in the hut, he takes no cognizance of things outside,
Behold the streams flowing - whither nobody knows;
and the flowers vividly red- for whom are they?*



還返^九
源本

10. Entering the city with bliss-bestowing hands

His thatched cottage gate is closed, and even the wisest
know him not.

No glimpses of his inner life are to be caught; for he goes
on his own way without following the steps of the
ancient sages.

Carrying a gourd he goes out into the market, leaning
against a staff he comes home.

He is found in company with wine-bibbers and
butchers, he and they are all converted into Buddhas.

*Bare-chested and bare-footed,
he comes out into the market-place;
Daubed with mud and ashes, how broadly he smiles!
There is no need for the miraculous power of the gods,
For he touches, and lo! the dead trees are in full bloom.*



昭和辛卯夏
富吉郎
画
十
入
手
廓

Back to the City