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THE TEN COW-HERDING PICTURES

THE attainment of Buddhahood is what is aimed at by all pious Buddhists, though not necessarily during this one earthly life, and Zen as one of the Mahayana schools, also teaches that all our efforts must be directed towards this supreme end. While most of the other schools distinguish so many steps of spiritual development and insist on one's going through all the grades successively in order to reach the consummation of the Buddhist discipline, Zen ignores all these and boldly declares that when one sees into the inmost nature of one's own being, one instantly becomes a Buddha, and that there is no necessity of climbing up each rung of perfection through eternal cycles of transmigration. This has been one of the most characteristic tenets of Zen ever since the coming-east of Bodhi-Dharma in the sixth century. "See into thy own nature and be a Buddha," has thus grown the watchword of the Sect. And this "seeing" was not the outcome of much learning or speculation, nor was it due to the grace of the supreme Buddha conferred upon his ascetic followers only; but mainly it grew out of the special training of the mind prescribed by the Zen masters. This being so, Zen could not very well recognise any form of gradation in the attainment of Buddhahood. The "seeing into one's nature" was an instant act. There could not be any process in it which would permit scales or steps of development.

But in point of fact where the time-element rules supreme, this was not necessarily the case. As long as our relative minds are made to comprehend one thing after another by degrees and in succession and not all at once and simultaneously, it is impossible not to speak of a progress. Even Zen as something possible of demonstration in one way or another must be subjected to the limitations of time. That is to say,

there are after all grades of development in its study; and some must be said to have more deeply, more penetratingly realised the truth of Zen. In itself the truth may transcend all form of limitation, but when it is to be realised in the human mind, its psychological laws are to be observed. The "seeing into thy nature" must admit degrees of clearness. Transcendentally, we are all Buddhas just as we are, ignorant and sinful if you like; but when we come down to this practical life, pure idealism has to give away to a more particular and palpable form of activity. This side of Zen is known as its "constructive" aspect, in contradistinction to its "all-sweeping" aspect. And here Zen fully recognises degrees of spiritual development among its followers, as the truth reveals itself gradually in their minds until the "seeing into one's nature" is perfected.

Technically speaking, Zen belongs to the group of Buddhist doctrines known as "discrete" or "discontinuous" or "abrupt" (頓, *tun* in Chinese) in opposition to "continuous" or "gradual" (漸, *chien*); and naturally the opening of the mind, according to Zen, comes upon one as a matter of discrete happening and not as the result of a gradual, continuous development whose every step can be traced and analysed. The coming of *satori* is not like the rising of the sun gradually bringing things to light, but it is like the freezing of water which takes place abruptly. There is no middle or twilight condition before the mind is opened to the truth, in which there prevails a sort of neutral zone, or a state of intellectual indifference. As we have already observed in several instances of *satori*, the transition from ignorance to enlightenment is so abrupt, the common cur, as it were, suddenly turns into a golden-haired lion. Zen is an ultra-discrete wing of Buddhism. But this holds true only when the truth of Zen itself is considered, apart from its relation to the human mind in which it is disclosed. Inasmuch as the truth is true

only when it is considered in the light it gives to the mind and cannot be thought of at all independent of the latter, we may speak of its gradual and progressive realisation in us. The psychological laws exist here as elsewhere. Therefore, when Buddha-Dharma was ready to leave China, he said that Dōfuku (道副) got the skin, the nun Sōji (總持) got the flesh, and Dōiku (道育) the bone, while Yeka (慧可) had the marrow (or essence) of Zen.* Nangaku (南嶽懷讓) who succeeded the Sixth Patriarch had six accomplished disciples, but their attainments differed in depth. He compared them with various parts of the body, and said, "You all have testified my body, but each has grasped a part of it. The one who has my eye-brows is the master of manners; the second who has my eyes, knows how to look around; the third who has my ears, understands how to listen to reasoning; the fourth who has my nose is well versed in

* After nine years' stay in China Dharma, wishing to go back to India, ordered his disciples to come to him, and said, "The time is coming [for me to depart]. Let me hear what you each have attained [in the Tao]." Dōfuku then answered, "According to my view, it is neither to cling to letters nor to keep away from them, and there is the Tao in operation." Said the patriarch, "You have my skin."

Next came out the nun Soji, saying, "As I understand, it is like unto Ananda's seeing the Buddha-field of Aksobhya. To see it just once, and not to repeat, -[This is my faith]." "You have my flesh," was Dharma's verdict.

Dōiku said, "The four elements (*dhātu*) are empty in their essence, and the five aggregates (*skandha*) have no reality; and as I see it, there are no particular objects to be attained." "You have my bone."

Lastly, Yeka made bows to the patriarch and stood still in his place. Said the master, "You have my marrow."

The above is as stated in the history of Zen such as *Dentoroku* (傳燈錄), *Gotō-yegen* (五燈會元), etc. Some say that the incident has no historical authority. That may be so, but the fact that it has been incorporated in the history and generally accepted as true by most Zen masters, proves that at least theoretically there is such a gradation in the attainment of the truth of Zen.

the act of breathing ; the fifth who has my tongue, is a great arguer ; and finally the one who has my mind knows the past and the present. This gradation was impossible if "seeing into one's nature" alone was considered ; for the seeing is one indivisible act, allowing no stages of transition. It is however no contradiction of the principle of *satori* as we have repeatedly asserted to say that in fact there is a progressive realisation in the seeing, leading one deeper and deeper into the truth of Zen, finally culminating in one's complete identification with it.

In this respect, the Zen masters are just like the Christian or Mohammedan mystics, they mark the stages of spiritual development, and the "kō-ans" are arranged according to the requirements of each stage. Some Sufis describe the "seven valleys" * to traverse in order to reach the court of Simurgh where the mystic "birds" find themselves gloriously effaced and yet fully reflected in the Awful Presence of themselves. The "seven valleys" are : 1. the Valley of Search ; 2. the Valley of Love, which has no limits ; 3. the Valley of Knowledge ; 4. the Valley of Independence ; 5. the Valley of Unity, pure and simple ; 6. the Valley of Amazement, and 7. the Valley of Poverty and Annihilation, beyond which there is no advance. According to St. Teresa, there are four degrees of mystic life : Meditation, Quiet, a numberless intermediate degree, and the Orison of Unity ; while Hugh of St. Victor has also his own four degrees : Meditation, Soliloquy, Consideration, and Rapture. There are other Christian mystics having their own three or four steps of "ardent love" or of "contemplation." (Underhill—*Mysticism*, p. 369.)

Lieh-tzu (列子), the Chinese philosopher of Taoism, describes in the following passage certain marked stages of development in the practice of Tao :

* According to Fariduddin Attar, A.D. 1119-1229, of Khorassan, Persia. Cf. Claud Field's *Mystics and Saints of Islam*, p. 123 et seq.

“The teacher of Lieh-tzu was Lao-shang-shih, and his friend Pai-kaò-tzu. When Lieh-tzu was well advanced in the teachings of these two philosophers, he came home riding on the wind. Yin-sheng heard of this, and came to Lieh-tzu to be instructed. Yin-sheng neglected his own household for several months. He never lost opportunities to ask the master to instruct him in the art [of riding on the wind]; he asked ten times, and was refused each time. Yin-sheng grew impatient and wanted to depart. Lieh-tzu did not urge him to stay. For several months Yin-sheng kept himself away from the master, but did not feel any easier in his mind. He came over to Lieh-tzu again. Asked the master, ‘Why this constant coming back and forth?’ Yin-sheng replied, ‘The other day, I, Chang Tai, wished to be instructed by you, but you refused to teach me, which I did not naturally like. I feel, however, no grudge against you now; hence my presence here again.’ ‘I thought the other time,’ said the master, ‘you understood it all. But seeing now what a commonplace mortal you are, I will tell you what I have learned under the master. Sit down and listen! It was three years after I went to my master Lao-shang and my friend Pai-kaò that my mind began to cease thinking of right and wrong, and my tongue talking of gain and loss, whereby he favoured me with just a glance. At the end of five years, my mind again began to think of right and wrong, and my tongue to talk about gain and loss. Then for the first time the master relaxed his expression and gave me a smile. At the end of seven years I just let my mind think of whatever it pleased and there was no more question of right and wrong; I just let my tongue talk of whatever it pleased, and there was no more question of gain and loss. Then for the first time the master beckoned me to sit beside him. At the end of nine years, just letting my mind think of whatever it pleased and letting my tongue talk of whatever it pleased, I was not con-

scious whether I or anybody else was in the right or wrong, whether I or anybody else gained or lost; nor was I aware of the old master's being my teacher or the young Pai-kao's being my friend. Both inwardly and outwardly I was advanced. It was then that the eye was like the ear, and the ear like the nose, and the nose like the mouth; for they were all one and the same. The mind was in rapture, the form was dissolved, and the bones and flesh all thawed away; and I did not know how the frame supported itself and what the feet were treading upon. I gave myself away to the wind, eastward or westward, like leaves of a tree or like a dry chaff. Was the wind riding on me? or was I riding on the wind? I did not know either way.

“Your stay with the master has not covered much space of time, and you are already feeling grudge against him. The air will not hold even a fragment of your body, nor will the earth support one member of yours. How then could you ever think of treading on empty space and riding the wind? Yin-sheng was much ashamed and kept quiet for some time, not uttering even a word.”

During the Sung dynasty a Zen teacher called Sekkyo (石鞏) illustrated stages of spiritual progress by a gradual purification or whitening of the cow until she herself disappears. But the pictures, six in number, are lost now. Those that are still in existence, illustrating the end of Zen discipline in a more thorough and consistent manner come from the ingenious brush of Kakuan (廓庵), a monk belonging to the Rinzai school. His are in fact a revision and perfection of those of his predecessor. The pictures are ten in number, and each has a short introduction in prose followed by a commentary verse. Both are translated below.* There are some other masters who composed stanzas on the same subjects using the same rhymes of the first commentator.

* The poem is printed underneath each picture.

The cow has been worshipped by the Indians from very early periods of their history. The allusions are found in various connections in the Buddhist scriptures. In a Hīnayāna sutra entitled "On the Herding of Cattle," eleven ways of properly attending them are described. In a similar manner a monk ought to observe eleven things properly in order to become a good Buddhist; and if he fails to do so, just like the cow-herd who neglects his duties, he will be condemned. The eleven ways of properly attending cattle are: 1. To know the colours; 2. To know the signs; 3. Brushing; 4. Dressing the wounds; 5. Making smoke; 6. Walking the right path; 7. Tenderly feeling for them; 8. Forging the streams; 9. Pasturing; 10. Milking; 11. Selecting. Some of the items cited here are not quite intelligible. (See also a Sutra in the Anguttara Agama bearing the same title, which is evidently another translation of the same text. Also compare "The Herdsman, I," in *The First Fifty Discourses of Gotama the Buddha*, Vol. II, by Bhikkhu Śīlācāra. Leipzig, 1913. This is a partial translation of the Majjhima Nikāya of the Pali Tripitaka. The eleven items as enumerated in the Chinese version are just a little differently given. Essentially, of course, they are the same in both texts. A Buddhist dictionary called *Daizo Hossu*, 大藏法數, gives reference on the subject to the great Mahayana work of Nāgārjuna, the *Mahāprājñā-pāramitā-Sūtra*, but so far I have not been able to identify the passage.)

The Zen masters have followed the example and make frequent references to the cow in their sermons and dialogues. The "Ten Cow-herding Pictures" showing the upward steps of spiritual training is doubtless one of such instances. In the following the explanatory introductions in prose to the pictures are printed together in order while the verse portion appears underneath each picture.

THE TEN STAGES IN SPIRITUAL COW-HERDING

1. *Looking for the Cow.* She has never gone astray, and what is the use of searching for her? We are not on intimate terms with her because we have contrived against our inmost nature. She is lost, for we have ourselves been led out of the way through the deluding senses. The home is growing farther away, and byways and crossways are ever confusing. Desire for gain and fear of loss burn like fire; ideas of right and wrong shoot up like a phalaux.

2. *Seeing the Traces of the Cow.* 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 things, however multitudinous, are of one substance, 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.

3. *Seeing the Cow.* He finds the way through the sound, he sees 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 colour. [It is there though not separably distinguishable.] When the eye is properly directed, he will find that it is no other thing than himself.

4. *Catching the Cow.* After getting lost long in the wilderness, he has at last found the cow and laid hand on her. But owing to the overwhelming pressure of the objective world, the cow is found hard to keep under control. She constantly longs for sweet grasses. The wild nature is still unruly, and altogether refuses to be broken in. If he wishes to have her completely in subjection, he ought to use the whip freely.

5. *Herding the Cow.* When a thought moves, another

follows, and then another—there is thus awakened an endless train of thoughts. 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 get the nose-string loose, hold it tight, and allow yourself no indulgence.

6. *Coming Home on the Cow's Back.* The struggle is over; gain and loss, he 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 cow's back, his eyes are fixed at things not of the earth, earthly. Even if he is called to, he will not turn his head; however enticed he will no more be kept back.

7. *The Cow Forgotten, Leaving the Man Alone.* Things are one and the cow 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.

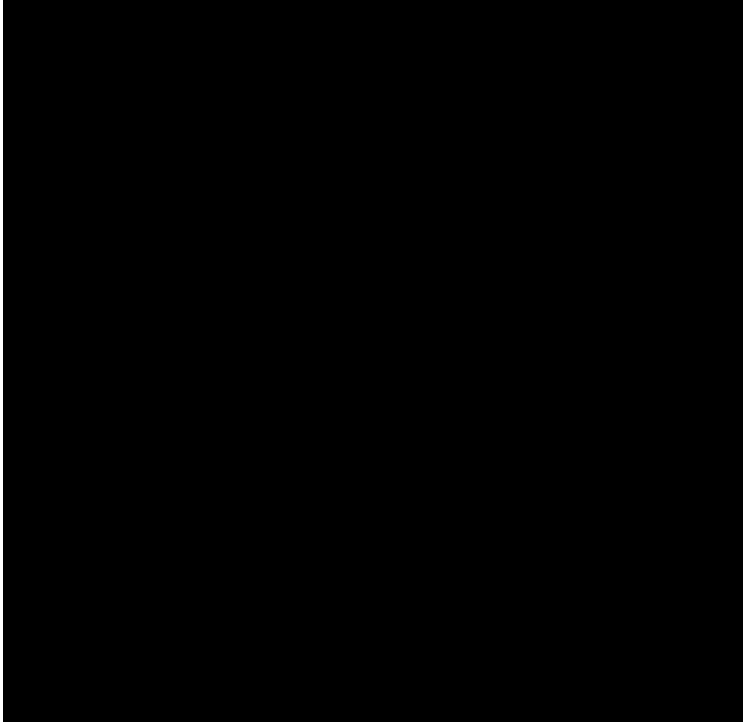
8. *The Cow and the Man Both Gone out of Sight.* All confusion is set aside, and serenity alone prevails; even the idea of holiness does not obtain. He does not linger about where the Buddha is, and as to where there is no Buddha he speedily passes on. When there exists no form of dualism, even a thousand-eyed one fails to detect a loophole. A holiness before which birds offer flowers is but a farce.*

9. *Returning to the Origin, back to the Source.* From the very beginning, pure and immaculate, he has never been

* It will be interesting to note what a mystic philosopher would say about this: "A man shall become truly poor and as free from his creature will as he was when he was born. And I say to you, by the eternal truth, that as long as ye desire to fulfil the will of God, and have any desire after eternity and God, so long are ye not truly poor, He alone hath true spiritual poverty who wills nothing, knows nothing, desires nothing."—(From Eckhart as quoted by Inge in *Light, Life, and Love*.)

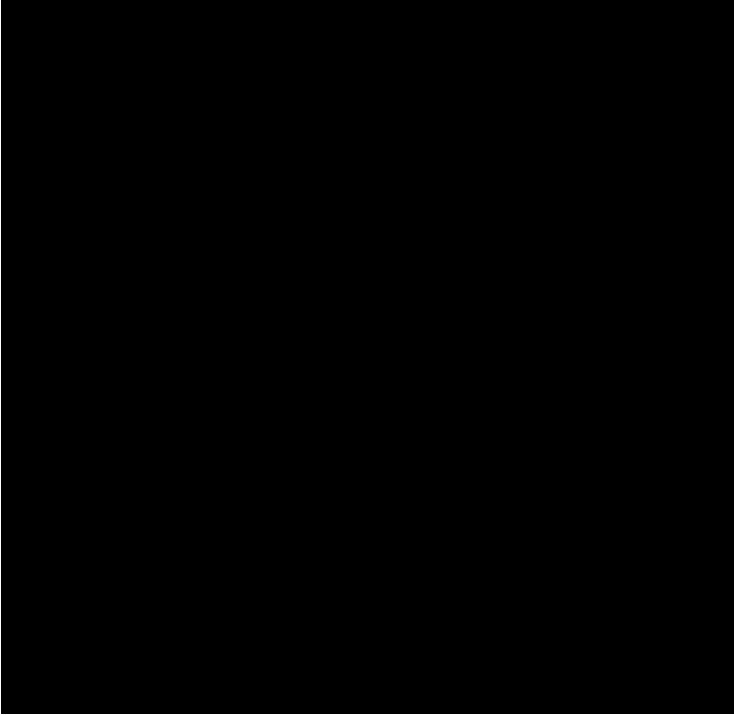
affected by defilement. He calmly watches the growth and decay of things with form, while himself abiding in the immovable serenity of non-assertion. When he does not identify himself with magic-like transformations, what has he to do with artificialities of self-discipline? The water flows blue, the mountain towers green. Sitting alone, he observes things undergoing changes.

10. *Entering the City with Bliss-bestowing Hands.* His humble cottage door is closed, and 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 stick he comes home. He is found in company with wine-bibbers and butchers, he and they are all converted into Buddhas.



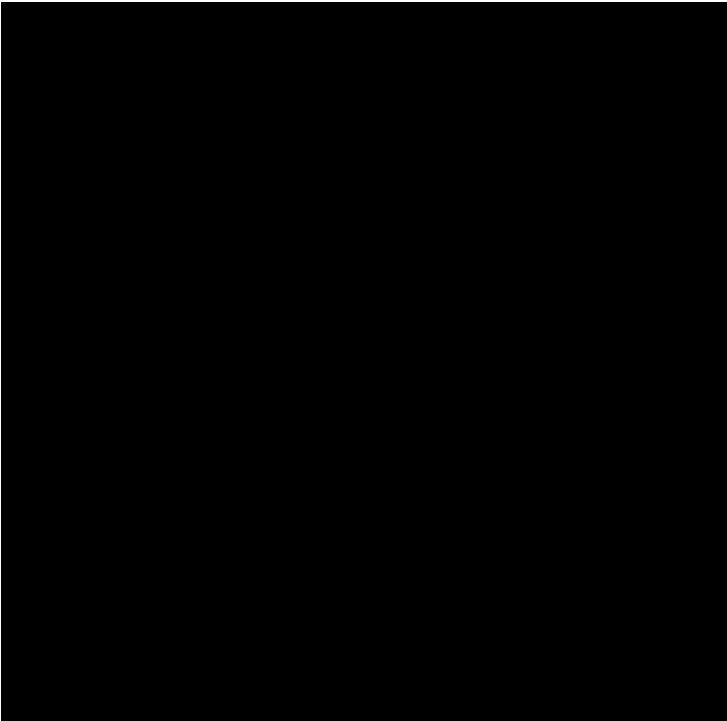
I

Alone in the wilderness, lost in the jung'le, he is searching, searching !
The swelling waters, far-away mountains, and unending path ;
Exhausted and in despair, he knows not where to go,
He only hears the evening cicadas singing in the maple-woods.



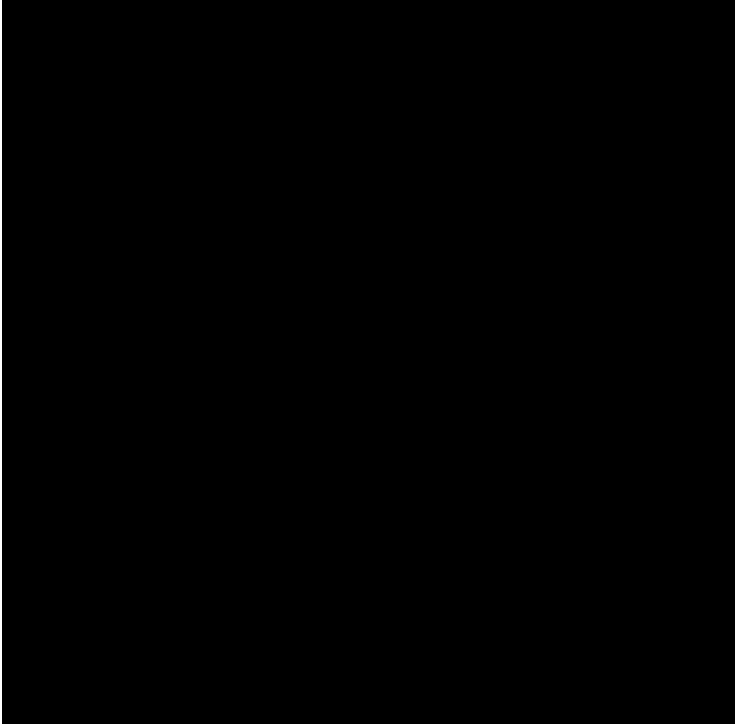
II

By the water, under the trees, scattered are the traces of the lost:
Fragrant woods are growing thick—did he find the way?
However remote, over the hills, and far away, the cow may wander,
Her nose reaches the heavens and none can conceal it.



III

Yonder perching on a branch a nightingale sings cheerfully ;
The sun is warm, the soothing breeze blows through the willows green on the
bank ;
The cow is there all by herself, nowhere is there room to hide herself ;
The splendid head decorated with stately horns, what painter can reproduce her ?



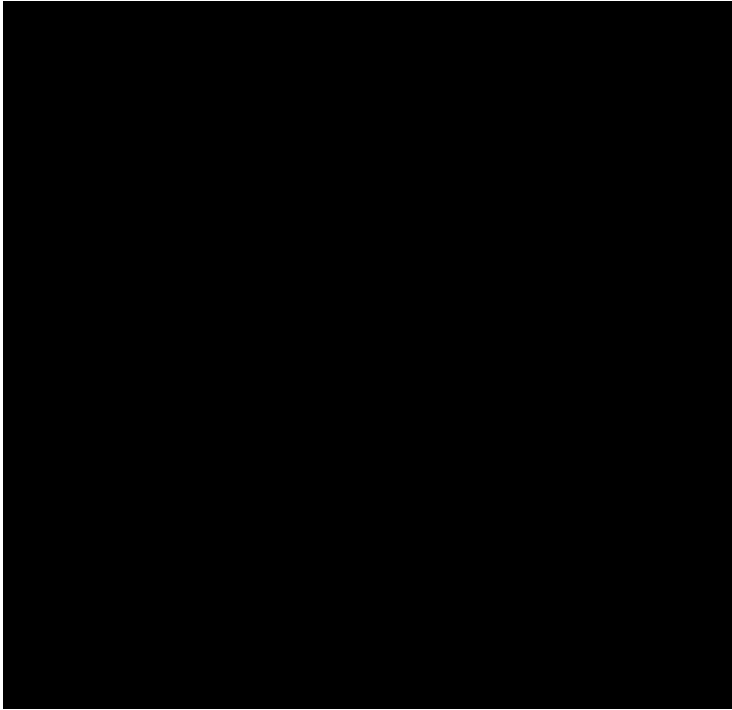
IV

With the energy of his whole soul, he has at last taken hold of the cow:

But how wild her will, ungovernable her power!

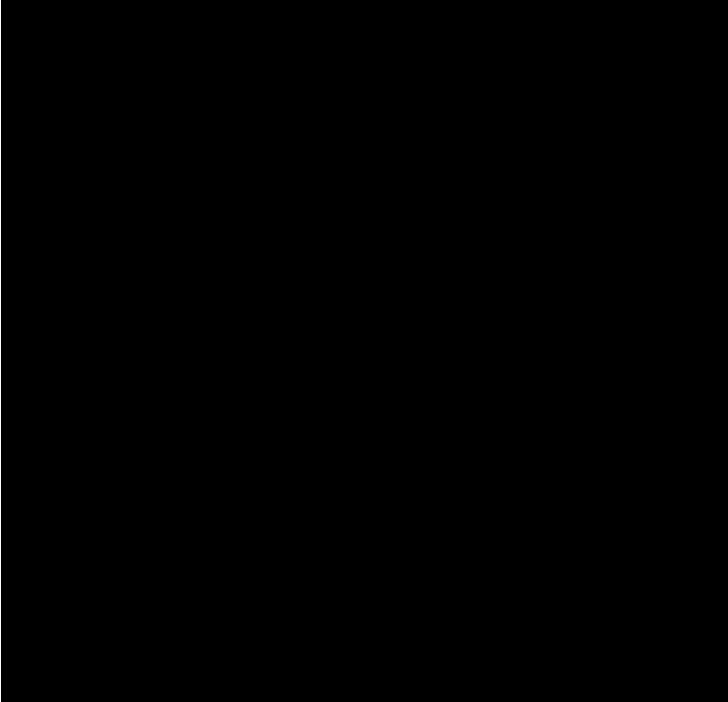
At times she struts up a plateau,

When lo! she is lost in a misty unpenetrable mountain-pass.



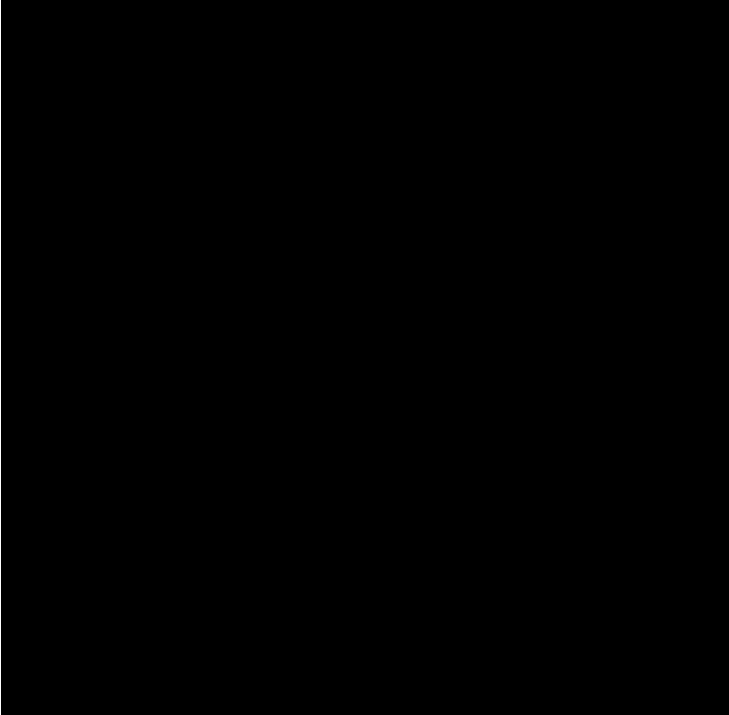
v

Never let yourself be separated from the whip and the string,
Lest she should wander away into a world of defilement :
When she is properly tended, she will grow pure and docile,
Without chain, nothing binding, she will by herself follow you.



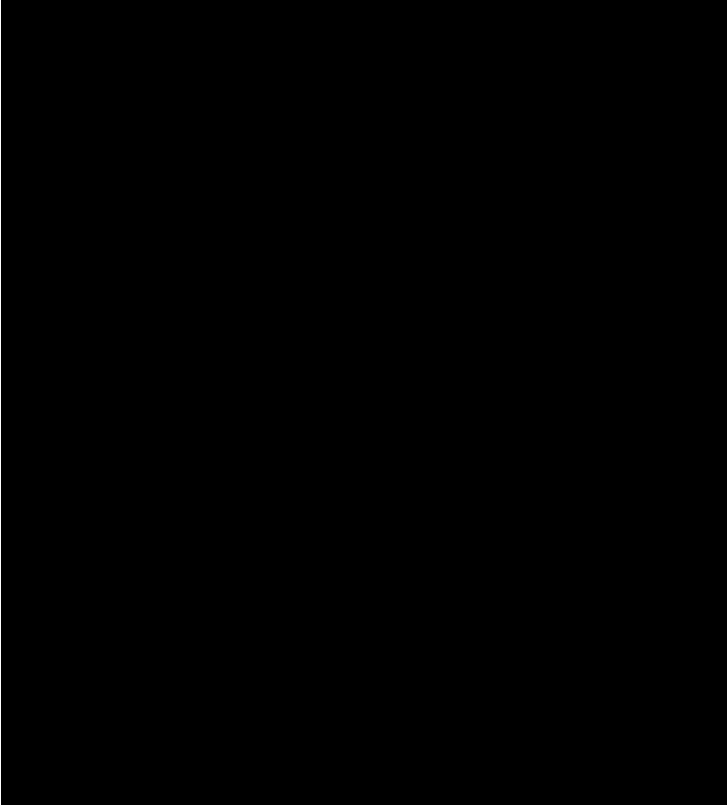
VI

Riding the cow 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?



VII

Riding on the cow he is at last back in his home,
Where lo! there is no more the cow, and how serenely he sits all alone!
Though the red sun is high up in the sky, he seems to be still quietly asleep,
Under a straw-thatched roof are his whip and rope idly lying beside him.

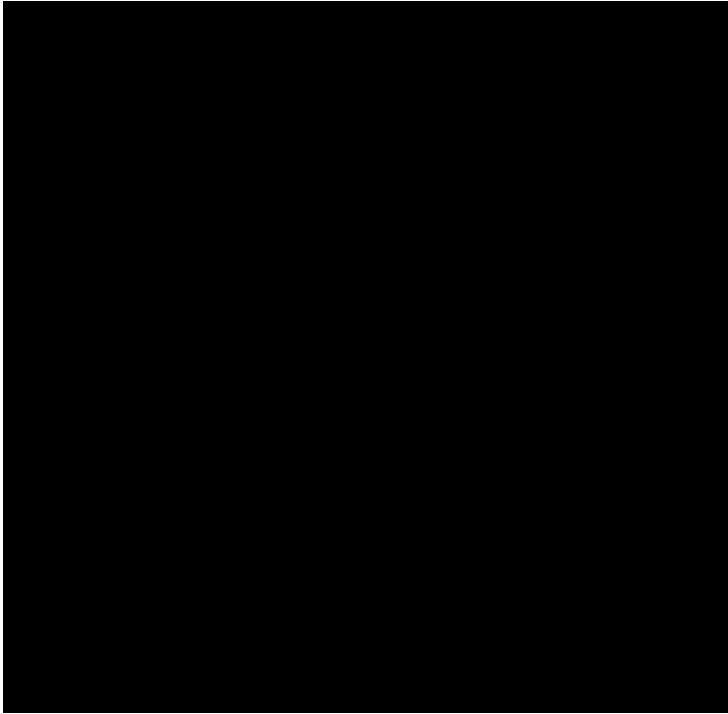


All is empty, the whip, the rope, the man, and the cow:

Who has ever surveyed the vastness of heaven?

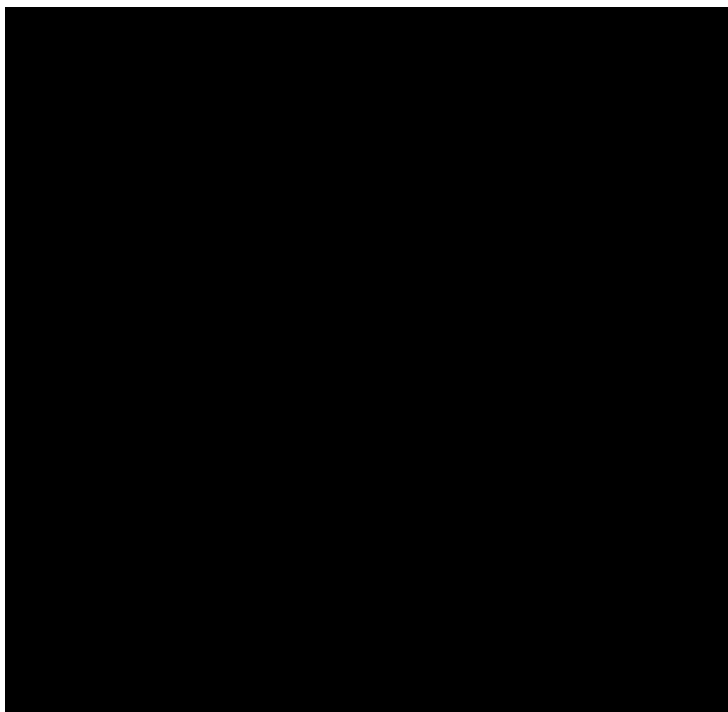
Over the furnace burning ablaze, not a flake of snow falls:

When this state of things obtains, manifest is the spirit of the ancient master.



IX

To return to the origin, to be back to the source—already a false step this !
Far better to remain, straightaway and without much ado, blind and deaf,
Sitting within the hut he takes no cognisance of things outside,
Behold the water flowing on—whither nobody knows ; and those flowers, red
and fresh—for whom are they ?



X

Bare-chested and bare-footed, he comes out into the marketplace;
He is covered with mud, covered with ashes, and how broadly he smiles!
No need of resorting to the miraculous power of the gods.
He touches, and lo! the dead trees come into full bloom.

DAISETZ TEITARO SUZUKI