

**Ten bulls**

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## 1. The Search for the Bull

In the pasture of this world, I endlessly push aside the tall grasses in search of the bull.

Following unnamed rivers, lost upon the interpenetrating paths of distant mountains, My strength failing and my vitality exhausted, I cannot find the bull.

I only hear the locusts chirring through the forest at night.

Comment: The bull never has been lost. What need is there to search? Only because of separation from my true nature, I fail to find him. In the confusion of the senses I lose even his tracks. Far from home, I see many crossroads, but which way is the right one I know not. Greed and fear, good and bad, entangle me.





## 2. Discovering the Footprints

Along the riverbank under the trees, I discover  
footprints!

Even under the fragrant grass I see his prints.

Deep in remote mountains they are found.

These traces no more can be hidden than one's nose,  
looking heavenward.

Comment: Understanding the teaching, I see the  
footprints of the bull. Then I learn that, just as many  
utensils are made from one metal, so too are myriad  
entities made of the fabric of self. Unless I  
discriminate, how will I perceive the true from the  
untrue? Not yet having entered the gate,  
nevertheless I have discerned the path.



### 3. Perceiving the Bull

I hear the song of the nightingale.  
The sun is warm, the wind is mild, willows are  
green along the shore,  
Here no bull can hide!  
What artist can draw that massive head, those  
majestic horns?

Comment: When one hears the voice, one can sense  
its source. As soon as the six senses merge, the gate  
is entered. Wherever one enters one sees the head of  
the bull! This unity is like salt in water, like color in  
dyestuff. The slightest thing is  
not apart from self.





#### 4. Catching the Bull

I seize him with a terrific struggle.  
His great will and power are inexhaustible.  
He charges to the high plateau far above the  
cloud-mists,  
Or in an impenetrable ravine he stands.

Comment: He dwelt in the forest a long time, but  
I caught him today! Infatuation for scenery  
interferes with his direction. Longing for sweeter  
grass, he wanders away. His mind still is stubborn  
and unbridled. If I wish him to submit, I must  
raise my whip.



## 5. Taming the Bull

The whip and rope are necessary,  
Else he might stray off down some dusty road.  
Being well trained, he becomes naturally gentle.  
Then, unfettered, he obeys his master.

Comment: When one thought arises, another thought follows. When the first thought springs from enlightenment, all subsequent thoughts are true. Through delusion, one makes everything untrue. Delusion is not caused by objectivity; it is the result of subjectivity. Hold the nose-ring tight and do not allow even a doubt.





## 6. Riding the Bull Home

Mounting the bull, slowly I return homeward.  
The voice of my flute intones through the evening.

Measuring with hand-beats the pulsating  
harmony, I direct the endless rhythm.  
Whoever hears this melody will join me.

Comment: This struggle is over; gain and loss  
are assimilated. I sing the song of the village  
woodsman, and play the tunes of the children.  
Astride the bull, I observe the clouds above.  
Onward I go, no matter who may wish to call  
me back.



六  
騎牛  
歸家

## 7. The Bull Transcended

Astride the bull, I reach home.  
I am serene. The bull too can rest.  
The dawn has come. In blissful repose,  
Within my thatched dwelling I have abandoned  
the whip and rope.

Comment: All is one law, not two. We only  
make the bull a temporary subject. It is as the  
relation of rabbit and trap, of fish and net. It is  
as gold and dross, or the moon emerging from a  
cloud. One path of clear light travels on  
throughout endless time.





## 8. Both Bull and Self Transcended

Whip, rope, person, and bull -- all merge in No-Thing.

This heaven is so vast no message can stain it.  
How may a snowflake exist in a raging fire?  
Here are the footprints of the patriarchs.

Comment: Mediocrity is gone. Mind is clear of limitation. I seek no state of enlightenment. Neither do I remain where no enlightenment exists. Since I linger in neither condition, eyes cannot see me. If hundreds of birds strew my path with flowers, such praise would be meaningless.



## 9. Reaching the Source

Too many steps have been taken returning to the root and the source.

Better to have been blind and deaf from the beginning!

Dwelling in one's true abode, unconcerned with that without --

The river flows tranquilly on and the flowers are red.

Comment: From the beginning, truth is clear. Poised in silence, I observe the forms of integration and disintegration. One who is not attached to "form" need not be "reformed." The water is emerald, the mountain is indigo, and I see that which is creating and that which is destroying.





## 10. In the World

Barefooted and naked of breast, I mingle with  
the people of the world.  
My clothes are ragged and dust-laden, and I am  
ever blissful.  
I use no magic to extend my life;  
Now, before me, the dead trees become alive.

Comment: Inside my gate, a thousand sages do  
not know me. The beauty of my garden is  
invisible. Why should one search for the  
footprints of the patriarchs? I go to the market  
place with my wine bottle and return home with  
my staff. I visit the wine shop and the market,  
and everyone I look upon becomes enlightened.

