



PICTURE 4 – CATCHING THE OX

Allow yourself to be drawn into the picture.

PREFACE:

Today you've chanced upon it, so long hidden in the wilds. But you can't keep up with its high spirits, and it won't give up its love of sweet grass. Even more willful, as wild as ever, if you want to tame it, you must lay on the whip.

VERSE:

With your last ounce of strength, you take it,
But stubborn and strong, it won't be broken.
Now it suddenly climbs to high ground,
Then it descends to vanish deep into mist.

[Daido Looi/Tanahashi Verse]

Through extraordinary effort you seize the ox.
Still, its will is forceful, and its body spirited.
Sometimes it runs high into the mountains,
 other times it disappears into the mist.

[M.H. Trevor/Kennedy Verse]

Grasp the rein harder, do not let go of the ox!
Many, and the most subtle, faults are still not yet overcome.
Even when the herdsman cautiously draws him by the nose with the
 rein,
The ox occasionally turns around and wants to go back to the
 wilderness.

WAKA:

Thinking only: "Ox! Ox! Don't let go!"
Just this is the real fetter.

Picture 4 – GUIDING QUESTIONS

What does the tether or rope represent in this picture? In the Preface, what does the whip represent? How does tether and whip function in your practice?

Explore the reality of constant change: in what ways are giving up finality or fixed positions a gift?

What is your experience as you surrender to and accept the reality of constant flux?

Explore the reality of impermanence: in what ways are the newness of each moment and infinite possibility a gift?

What is your experience as you surrender to and accept the reality of the uniqueness of each moment, of who you are, of others?

Explore the reality of interconnectedness of all life: in what way is this a gift?

What is your experience as you surrender to and accept the reality of the interconnectedness of all life?

How would you practice catching the Ox in terms of the Three Tenets of Not-Knowing, Bearing Witness, and Loving Action?

ASSIGNMENT(S)

1. Allow yourself to be drawn into the picture – feel yourself struggling with the ox; feel yourself as the Ox reality.
2. During the coming month, make an effort to surrender to and deeply accept the Ox of:
 1. the constant flux of all things – giving up views of finality or fixed positions.
 2. impermanence – experiencing possibility in everything, newness, uniqueness.
 3. the interconnectedness of all life – activating collective wisdom.

Experiment with an approach that works best for you. For example, apply one or more of these gifts of Ox–reality to a particular situation in your life. Or reflect on your day through the lenses of these realities. Or identify how your ego–nature is habitually programmed to deny these realities and the kind of suffering that arises as a result.

3. Share your reflections with the e–Group.