

ARTICLE

THE MOON AND COMMITMENT

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*The Faithful.*

*A moonlit night: we few assorted cranks  
Fogies and halfwits call the Name with thanks.<sup>1</sup>*

-Issa (1763-1827)

In this poem the moon is the ever present Eternal, the few assorted cranks are not “the chosen” but rather those who choose to respond and call the Name with thanks. This is to train with true gratitude which is, as Dōgen tells us, rarer than encountering a tiger wandering in the city.

It is rare to be born a human being, it is rare to encounter the Dharma and it is rarer still to find a True Teacher. Since we have these benefits, let us take full advantage of them. Our finding of the Eternal depends upon no one but ourselves. Neither the Prior, nor the seniors, nor the Master will do our training for us. We ourselves must tread the path, the Buddhas do but point the way.

If we wish a priory, meditation group or monastery to succeed, then we have to put our training where our mouth is and stop thinking that the Way of the Buddha and Ancestors is for everyone but ourselves. True training is difficult to undergo and not something we can take up and put down when the mood strikes us, like some fashionable but boring novel.

To take Refuge is to enter into and repose in faith, to surround ourselves with and give all we have to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. It is not a game nor an amusement. It is in deadly earnest.

Those who train themselves will always be rare and those who go all the way rarer still. Let us pray that we may be one of them!

I write this for the purpose of encouraging myself, in whom I often see so very little good, as much as for others.

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<sup>1</sup> See *A Chime of Windbells, A Year of Japanese Haiku in English Verse*, trans. with an essay by Harold Stewart (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1981). Reprinted with permission of the publishers.

Lament impurity.

    Within the silent waters of the heart  
Dwells the moon, the lonely waves—  
    Brightness everywhere.<sup>2</sup>

-Dōgen (1200-1253)

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<sup>2</sup> See *The Story of Rev. Dōgen*, translated from the Japanese by Rev. P.T.N.H. Jiyu-Kennett.