

Bodhidharma in Winter

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Even in a cave while meditating, one has a dim awareness that the harsh winds and snows of winter have made their arrival at last. As the days passed, the piles of snow around the cave kept increasing until it covered nearly the whole entrance.

But after so many years of seating and “gazing” at the wall, Bodhidharma was nearly impervious to the content and demands of his sense stores. He was mostly free of mental and emotional distractions. The mind was mostly empty. Yet his concentration was both subtle and intense. Sometimes, false manifestations filled with attractive or aversive images appeared. But without grasping to their illusory essence, they soon disappeared

He started to see his own true character and be free from the terrible grasp of Karma. His awareness of what was Buddha-nature grew. What life was before was an unsatisfying dream of wants, wishes, and scarcity. This was no longer the case for him. No more clinging. No more regrets, shames, or fits of anger. Just a simple sense of clarity.

Even so, he still felt there was much to learn and kept sitting. The snow took out its wrath on the cave entrance with its unrelenting fierceness. But Bodhidharma remained undeterred breath after breath, moment after moment.

At times, when I seek to calm myself, I visualize a hooded bearded man with an empty look sitting steadfast facing a cave wall. Then I feel my every part of my body relax and a soothing release. May you experience the same.