

Remembering the Venerable Master

憶恩師

譚果式 講於金山寺

A talk given by Madalena Tam at Gold Mountain Monastery



記得先父皈依師父時，他已是七十多、快八十歲的老人。但是當我的父親聽了師父講經後，便認定這位法師可以做他的師父，於是便皈依了上人。其實，當時我父親在商場上稍有名望，而他卻能向一個歲數比他兒子還小的人謙虛受教，拜為師父，實屬難得。父親皈依後，興高采烈地回家告訴母親，他拜了一個師父。母親對我父親說：「你年紀這麼大，還拜師父，那你的師父豈不是比你更老啊？」「不！我的師父頂多是三十出頭。」「那你為什麼拜一個這麼年輕的師父啊？」「妳有所不知，如果妳聽過他講經，便能領會到師父是位博學多才、儀態莊嚴的和尚。我這把年紀還沒遇到過像師父這樣年輕而又博學多才。改天，我帶妳去拜見他，那麼妳就知道我講的沒錯了！」

我年輕時常生大病，身體虛弱。有一天半夜，我又突發高燒且胡言亂語，把全家人弄得都不能入睡，連父親給我佩帶在身上避邪用的古龍玉佩都破裂了。第二天醒來我卻像沒事似的，因此母親就迫不及待地拉我去拜見師父。我們要爬三、四百級石階，路經一

After hearing the Master lecture on the sutras, my father took refuge with him. At that time he was nearly 80 years old. He had high standing in the business world, but extraordinarily enough, he was still willing to humbly bow to a person who was younger than his son and take him as his teacher. My father happily went home and excitedly informed my mom that he had taken a Teacher. "You're already at this age," my mom said, "yet you have taken someone as your Teacher? Is he older than you?" "No, my Teacher is at most in his early thirties!" my father replied. "And why did you take so young a teacher?" my mother asked. "You don't understand. If you were to hear him lecture the sutra, you would understand that my Teacher is a monk of extensive knowledge and lofty deportment. Old as I am, I have never met anyone like my Teacher—a left-home person who is young and yet possesses great scholarly abilities. I will take you to see him one day and you will see what I mean."

In my youth I suffered from poor health and was often seriously ill. Once at midnight, I had a high fever and started talking incoherently, waking up my whole family. This continued to the point that I broke an ancient jade pendant my father had given me for protection from evils, which I wore on my body. When I woke up the next day, I acted as if nothing had happened. My mom couldn't wait to take me to see the Master. We had to climb around 300 to 400 stone steps, passing through clusters of tiny wooden huts and groups of shabbily dressed adults and children. In addition, there was an odd smell hanging in the air. We walked for approximately an hour before we reached a simple hut – the precursor to Xi Le Yuan, Western Bliss Garden.

The Master was sitting on a wooden stool. My mother informed him of the reason for our visit and requested him to bless me. The Master smiled gently at me and said, "There is no problem. Just go back and recite the Buddha's name. Reciting Homage to Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva of Great Compassion and Mercy, then you will be OK." That was the first time I saw him. The Master then gave me three books – *The Wonderful Dharma Lotus Sutra*, *The Sixth Patriarch Sutra*, and *The Biography of Venerable Master Hsu Yun* – and said, "I give you these three books; you need to read them. You can't just set them aside." "Okay," I said. The Master continued, "I will test you on them. How long will it take you to finish reading? Is one month

連串的小木屋，和一群群來來往往穿著衣衫藍縷的大人小孩們。加上一股奇異難聞的味道，走了約一個小時後，好不容易才到達山上一間粗糙簡陋的茅蓬——西樂園的前身。

師父就坐在一張木橈上，母親向師父說明來意並請師父為我加持，但師父只微笑地對我說：「沒事的，回去好好念佛，念南無大慈大悲觀世音菩薩就好了！」這是我第一次見師父。接著師父給我三本書，一本是《妙法蓮華經》、一本是《六祖壇經》、還有一本是《虛雲和尚年譜》。師父接著說：「我給你這三本書，妳是要看的啊！不可以拿回去就扔在一旁。」「可以。」師父又說：「我會考妳的，妳要多久可以看完呢？一個月夠嗎？」「夠！」其實我根本不知道有兩本是那麼深奧的經書，由於我剛強好勝的性格，既然師父問到，也就硬著頭皮答應。

轉眼間，一個月的期限到了。我拿著三本書跑上西樂園向師父交差，師父給我說了一番經裏的道理。尤其是在《六祖壇經》所說的「應無所住而生其心……」和「不思善，不思惡，正與麼時，那個是明上座本來面目……」幾句的意義，當時我似懂非懂。但自此後，我對佛教卻有另一番的認識，有空就會去見師父，聽他講他在東北時的故事，跟他學習古文。那時候，西樂園也建成了，每到週末都有念佛法會和師父開示。而我們幾個年輕人，師父更要我們到台上學習演說。之後，師父又請法師來教我們拜佛行儀，唱念和敲打法器等等。師父為了要引導我們這班在香港土生土長，而略帶洋化的年輕人，常常都會對我們軟硬兼施，難怪師父曾說：「香港人是多麼的難調難度！」

曾經有一個相士給父親批過命，說父親到七十八、七十九歲時壽元便會盡。因為我們尚未成年，父親為此總是耿耿於懷。有一天父親去西樂園看師父，閒談間父親便向師父請求說：「我現在總算豐衣足食，沒什麼遺憾。但是孩子們仍很小，還沒成家立業，如果我能多活十年就於願已足！」雖然父親是師父的弟子，但因為父親年事已高，師父對父親總是恭恭敬敬，從不把父親當作晚輩看待，師父這種敬老尊賢的行為也實值得我們效法！後來，父親真的活到九十一歲才與世長辭。如果有聽過師父的錄音帶開示，或者

long enough?” “Long enough,” I replied, without realizing that two of the three books were deep and profound sutras. Because I have a strongly competitive character, I simply answered affirmatively when the Master asked.

One month went by in the blink of an eye. With the three books in hand, I went up to Western Bliss Garden to see the Master. He proceeded to explain the meaning of the sutras to me, especially the phrase from *The Sixth Patriarch Sutra*, “One should produce the mind that does not dwell anywhere,” and “contemplating neither good nor evil, at that moment, Venerable Master Ming’s true face appears...” Confronted with words of such profound meaning, I felt that I understood and at the same time did not understand. I began to see Buddhism in a different light. When I had time, I would go to see the Master and listen to him tell stories about the days when he lived in Northeast China. I also studied classical Chinese literature under him. After construction was finished on Western Bliss Garden, often there would be Dharma assemblies. On weekends, there were Buddha Recitation assemblies and the Master lectured on the sutras. Young as we students were, the Master wanted us to ascend the stage and practice speaking Dharma. Some time later the Master invited some Dharma Masters to teach us how to bow, chant, and play Dharma instruments. The Master used both soft and tough expedient means to teach us -- we youngsters who were born and grew up in Hong Kong influenced by Western sentiments. No wonder the Master once said, “It is hard to teach Hong Kong people!”

Once a fortune-teller predicted that my father would pass away at the age of 78 or 79, and he worried all the time because we, his children, had not yet grown up. One day he went to Western Bliss Garden to pay his respects to the Master. As they talked, my father beseeched our Master, saying, “Now at last I am well-fed and well-clothed, so there is no need for regret, but my children are still young and have not made anything of themselves yet. If only I could live for another ten years!” My father was the Master’s disciple, but because of his old age, the Master always treated him with the respect due to an elder and never like someone of inferior position. We should learn from the Master’s virtuous conduct of respecting elders and honoring worthies. My father lived to the ripe old age of 91 before departing from this world. If you have listened to our Master’s talks on tape, you might remember him saying that he had used the Forty-Two Hands and Eyes twice to extend people’s lives—well, one of those people was my father.

One night I was awakened from a sleep by the sound of non-stop utterances. I got up from the bed and saw my mom kneeling in front of the Buddhas and whispering inaudibly. However, I couldn’t resist the temptation of the sleeping demon and went back to bed. The next morning I found out that my mom didn’t sleep the whole night due to my older brother’s recurring illness; he was vomiting blood non-stop. The doctor had stated that last night might be his final one if he did not stop vomiting blood. My mom, not caring whether it was night or day,

記得師父說他曾用過四十二手眼法給人續命兩次，其中一次就是家父。

有一天晚上，一陣陣細細的聲音不停地在響，把我從睡夢中吵醒。我睡眼朦朧地爬起床，看見母親跪在佛前囁語細語，不知在念什麼，但是經不起睡魔的引誘，我又回床再睡。第二天早上才知道，原來母親一整晚都沒有睡，那是因為哥哥的舊病復發，吐血不止，連醫生亦束手無策。醫生告訴父母親，如哥哥不停地吐血，那麼昨天晚上就可能是他的最後一天。母親得知後，不顧一切，也不管是晚上，拉著傭人便一口氣跑上西樂園去求師父。回家後，母親就跪在佛前誠心地念大悲咒，並求大悲咒水給哥哥喝。哥哥喝了兩、三次後，吐血量就開始少。母親就繼續地念，哥哥就繼續地喝。終於，哥哥也停止了咯血，而且慢慢地睡著。

第二天，醫生來看哥哥，都覺得是奇跡，而哥哥也度過了危險期。就這樣子，哥哥活了下來。母親愛子心切，除了以誠心祈求觀音菩薩的加被外，還發願減食。也許大家在美國不會覺得減食是什麼一回事，要知道香港人對吃方面是看得很重的，少吃了就覺得是很嚴重的事。這是母愛的偉大，也是師父的慈悲啊！

有些人或許覺得師父已經不在，沒能見到師父的德相。其實不是的！如果有真心、有誠心一定還是可以見到上人。就好像有一些人在不同地方、不同環境、不同時間仍然會見到上人為他們現身說法，引導他們信佛聞法！下面我講一個真實的故事與大家分享：

十幾年前在萬佛城，師父荼毘的那天。有一個姓傅的年輕男學生，因為親友們要去萬佛城參加師父的茶毘大典，就拉他當司機，幫忙開車到萬佛城。他從來沒有去過萬佛城，這是他第一次去。抵達後，他覺得這個地方似曾相識，當他的親友們去大殿念佛時，而他便到處遊覽。不經意地，他走到男眾宿舍，探頭一望，看見裏面有一張小木凳子靠在牆邊。他心想這兒正是一個安靜的地方，可以讓他坐在小木凳子上打個盹，而不在乎有人看見。

當他正閉上眼睛沒多久，似夢非夢的看見有一個高個子的出家人，走來對他微笑著說：「快去拜佛啊！」

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took a servant to accompany her to Western Bliss Garden to beseech the Master for help. Afterwards, she came home, knelt in front of the Buddhas to sincerely recite the Great Compassion Mantra, and gave blessed water to my brother to drink. My mom recited and prayed, and my brother drank the water. After the third time, his vomiting lessened. My mom continued to recite and my brother continued to drink. Finally his vomiting stopped and he fell asleep.

The doctor came the next day and was amazed at such a miraculous recovery because my brother had passed the critical life-threatening stage. This is the story of how my brother's life was extended and he was able to live. A mother's love for her child is deep indeed. She sincerely prayed to Guanyin Bodhisattva for help to cure my brother and she made a vow to eat less food. Perhaps some people here in America feel that it is not a serious matter to eat less. However, for the people of Hong Kong, the issue of food and drink is taken quite seriously, and vowing to eat less is of some significance. This gesture demonstrates the greatness of a mother's love and the compassion of our Master.

Some people may feel that since the Master is no longer with us, we are unable to perceive his virtuous countenance. This is not the case. There are people here who may feel regretful at not being able to personally see the Master's flesh body. There is no need for such regret because if you have a true and sincere mind, it is for certain that you will be able to encounter the Master. There are still people who are able to see the Master in various circumstances, times, and locations, manifesting his body to speak Dharma to them and leading them to believe in the Buddhadharma. At this point, I would like to share a true story with everyone.

Over a dozen years ago, on the day of the Master's cremation at CTTB, there was a young male student by the last name of Fu. His relatives and friends wanted to participate in the Master's cremation ceremony and recruited him to be their driver. Even though, this was his first time at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, he felt a sense of familiarity upon arrival. While his relatives and friends went to the Buddha Hall to recite the Buddha's name, he walked around and found himself in the men's dormitory. He saw a small wooden bench next to the wall and thought it would make a quiet place for him to curl up and take a nap, without being seen by others. He lay down on the bench. Not long after closing his eyes, he seemed to dream of a tall monk walking over, smiling at him, and saying, "Hurry, go and bow to the Buddha!" He opened his eyes and didn't see anybody. He thought he must have been dreaming.

He closed his eyes again and the same monk appeared in front of him and told him to bow to the Buddha. He opened his eyes but saw no one. This time he was afraid. He flew to the Buddha Hall, and seeing everyone paying their respects to the Master, he followed along. Upon looking at the Master's face, he became scared and shaken, with sweat pouring from his body. The Master was that same tall monk that he had encountered in the dream. ☞ Continued on page 38