



Following the Footsteps of the Venerable Master

踏著上人的足跡

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Extract from the talk given by Cheng Hsu on February 15, 2011
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什麼是傳統？我們作為年輕的一代，生長在一個快速的社會裏，什麼都是要快的。我們從咖啡店買快速的咖啡，吃外賣的漢堡，用快速的寵物罐頭餵養寵物，用厚厚的髮膠來對抗匆忙的痕跡。這就是我們的生活。傳統，正在被我們有意無意地忽略着。有的時候會問自己：如果沒有學佛法，你會是什麼樣子？那當然是個很愚蠢的問題，我從來都沒有回答過。不過，下面的故事卻

What are the traditions? We are a new generation and are growing up in a society where everything is fast. We buy a quick café latte from a coffee shop, eat a drive-thru burger, leave the pet with its own 'single serve' convenience food, and use a liberal application of hair gel to counteract the effects of a high-speed existence. This is the life we have. Traditions have been being intentionally or accidentally ignored by us. Sometimes I teasingly ask myself: If I had not studied the Buddhadharma, what would I be like? Of course that is a very stupid question; I never answer it. There is a meaningful story that happened just after I had

很有意思，發生在我學佛不久，現在和大家一起分享，如果，將來萬一我把它忘了，請提醒我。

這個故事發生在加拿大的卡加利。那是我第一次去華嚴聖寺參加楞嚴咒法會。那裏的信眾邀請我們去爬文殊山。其實文殊山是洛磯山脈的很小的一段。有一次，上人乘坐的飛機從那段山上飛過，上人說，在那座山裏住着一條龍。那座山能給人們帶來智慧。很興奮能去爬那座山，因為大家說：去爬過那座山的人都得到了智慧。

就這樣，我們一行三十幾個人，外加一個導遊就去爬山了。那時是初春，山上的積雪還沒有化。導遊告訴我們，一般普通人要花兩個或兩個半小時才能爬到山頂。但是，由於現在山上的積雪還沒有溶化，所以，差不多要花三、四個小時才能爬到山頂。不管怎麼說，我只想緊緊跟着導遊，快快地爬到山頂，所以加入和導遊在一起的先鋒隊。剛開始，先鋒隊還有好幾個人，但是漸漸地，人越來越少，最後只有我一個人跟著導遊。剛開始，還能聽到大家說話和嬉笑的聲音，漸漸地，越來越安靜，當我回頭，想看看大家在哪裏的時候，他們已經完全沒有了蹤影。這時只覺得，在這座大山裏，只有我和導遊兩個人，再沒有其他的人了。導遊爬得越來越快，我都跟不上。好吧，既然導遊把他的腳印深深地印在了雪地上，我倒也並不在意一個人爬山。

一個人走在初春安靜的深山裏，四邊都是白雪圍繞，真是很妙的境界，好像無意中踏入了仙境。雖然知道，嚮導就在前面，很多人也還在後面，但是情不自禁地還是有一種前無古人、後無來者的豪情。我沉浸在自我欣賞的時候，文殊山發怒了！突然間，天空變暗了，開始下起了大雪，很大的雪。剛開始，並沒有在意，但發覺到嚮導的腳印越來越淺的時候，真的被嚇到了。如果大雪把腳印給覆蓋住的話，那就會完全迷失在這深山裏了。想到也許會死在這裡，一下子頭髮都豎起來了。集中所有的注意力，小心地看清每一個腳印，不敢有絲毫的鬆懈，知道如果犯了任何的錯誤，如果走錯路的話，那結果將是一個大災難，沒有人可以救得了我。

也只有仔細看嚮導的腳印的時候，才發覺其實山裏有很多野獸，因為在雪地上有很多野獸的腳印。有的我認識：像山雞、小鳥的腳印，山貓或者是狗和像鹿的腳印，但是，更多的是我不知道的腳印。也許是老虎的？或者是狼的？或者是別的……？真的不敢再想了，我被自己的妄想嚇到

been studying the Buddhadharma and I would like to share it with everyone. If in the future in my carelessness I forget it, please remind me.

It happened in Calgary, Canada. It was my first visit to Avatamsaka Monastery where I attended the Shurangama Mantra Session. The host invited us to climb Mount Manjusri which is a small part of the Rocky Mountains. One time the Venerable Master was in a plane that flew over the mountain; he said there was a dragon dwelling in the mountain and the mountain would bring wisdom to the people. I was quite excited about climbing it because it is said that everyone who climbs the mountain will obtain wisdom.

Some thirty of us set out with one guide to go to Mount Manjusri. It was early spring and the snow had not yet melted. The guide informed us that without snow, it would take two or two and a half hours to get to the top but due to the current amount of snow, it would take three or four hours to climb to the top. I was in the front group with the guide; I wanted to follow close and get to the top as soon as possible. At the beginning, there were several people in the front group with the guide, but gradually there were fewer and fewer until finally I was the only one keeping up with the guide. At the beginning, I could hear talking and laughing then it became quieter and quieter until finally I heard only the squeezing sound of the snow under my feet. I looked back to see where the others were, but there was no sign of them. It seemed as if the guide and I were the only ones on that huge mountain. However, the guide was walking faster and faster, and I couldn't keep up the pace. The guide left his footprints deep in the snow so it didn't seem like I was climbing the mountain alone. I really didn't mind.

It was amazing to walk alone on this deep quiet mountain in the early spring with white snow all around me. I felt like I had entered into a celestial realm. I knew the guide was far ahead of me and lots of people were following me, but I felt as if I were just a passenger, with no one preceding or succeeding me. Just as I was indulging in this kind of narcissism, Mount Manjusri got angry. Suddenly, the sky darkened and it began snowing heavily. I pressed onward, not paying much attention to the snow or the footsteps of the guide that were getting shallower and shallower. It really terrified me when I noticed that if the snow covered up the footprints, I would be totally lost and would die there. My hairs stood on end. I focused all my attention. I carefully checked for the footprints of the guide and followed them with precision because I knew if I made any mistake it would be a disaster. No one could save me.

Then, something else amazing happened. It was in paying close attention to the guide's footprints that I noticed other footprints in the snow – the footprints of many different types of creatures and animals. Some I recognized, such as those of pheasants, small

了。我只能一再提醒自己，集中精神，集中精神，仔細看清每一個腳印，絲毫不差地踏在上面，拿出全部的力氣和大雪與時間比賽。此時只能聽到自己的呼吸聲、心跳聲，和衣服摩擦的聲音，再也聽不到其他聲音了。周圍像死一樣寂靜。

突然一個念頭在腦海裏閃現：對了，就是這樣，每一步都踏在腳印上，只有這樣才能逃離死亡。腳印就是路，腳印就是嚮導，雖然他人不在你的身邊，但是有他的腳印，嚮導從來就沒有離開過。上人也是一樣。雖然他不能活生生地在你的身邊，但是他的法語還在世間，他的教法還在實行，他的宗旨還在激勵着弟子，所以，他也從來就沒有離開過。遵循着他的教導，就可以超越生死。這個念頭把自己感動得淚流滿面。是啊，我跟隨着嚮導的足跡找到了通往山頂的路，我也應該跟隨著上人所建立的傳統找到修行的正路，超越生死，那不就是我應該做的嗎？在那座深山裏，我下了一個決心。也許是巧合吧，做了那個決定之後，雪停了。抬起頭的時候，看見嚮導就在前面。他對我說：「你花了一小時四十五分鐘爬到了山頂。恭喜你，創了一個新的記錄。」我微笑地看着他，我知道，此時所得到的遠遠超過一個新的記錄。那真是一個很棒的經歷。

今年，真的很有幸，能參加二十一天的禪七，這次用傳統時間表的禪七。回想起來，那時也是上人的苦行修行，激發了我對佛教的興趣和恭敬，那時也讀了一些關於七十年代所舉行的百日禪書；但是，個人從來沒有想到過，在過去三十多年後的今天，自己也可以有這樣的福報，親身經歷那樣的禪七。正如上人講的：「禪堂就是金剛堂，就是般若堂，也是選佛場。」參加了這次的禪七，個人真的能感受到當年的道風，在三十多年後的今天，依然是如此地強勁。一天十四支香，一天二十一個小時的禪坐，連續二十一天，沒有間斷，那真是一個巨大的考驗啊！

禪七的最後一天，一位道友開玩笑地問我：「開眼了沒？」我回答說：「開眼了。」她瞪大了眼睛看着我，很有趣的表情。我說：「我的腳上開了一個好大的洞眼……。」修行不容易啊，但是我們依然在盡力地做着。末法的風雪越來越大了，上人的腳印在這風雪中也變得越來越淺了。真的希望大家能踏著上人的足跡，早登涅槃。

birds, cats, dogs, and deer. There were many more that I didn't recognize – maybe a tiger or wolf or something like that? I could not think any more; I was startled by my own idle thinking. Focus, focus! I told myself. Looking at the footprints, stepping exactly on them, without any thinking, bringing up all my energy to compete with the heavy snowing and with time, I only could hear the sounds of my breathing, the beating of my heart, the sound of the rubbing of my clothes, nothing else. Everything was deadly quiet.

All of a sudden, a thought flashed in my mind: Focus on each footprint and step exactly into each one and I will escape death. The footprint is the way, the footprint is the guide. Although the guide is not with me in person, because of his footprints, he hasn't left me. The Venerable Master is also like this; he is not with me in person, but his words are still in the world, his teachings are still being practiced, his principles continue to admonish all his disciples, and he is still with me; he never left. Following his guidance, I can transcend birth and death. This thought moved me to tears. Yes, I should follow the footprints to find the right path to the top, and I should follow the tradition that the Venerable Master established to tread on the right path to transcend birth and death. Deep in the mountains, I made my first resolution. The snow stopped when I made that resolution; perhaps it was coincidental. Then I looked up and saw the guide waiting ahead. He looked at me and said, "You took one hour and forty-five minutes to climb the mountain. Congratulations! You set a new record!" I smiled at him but I knew that I accomplished something far more than a new record – a marvelous experience.

This year it is an honor to have had the opportunity to attend the 21-day Chan Session with the traditional schedule. It was the Venerable Master's ascetic practice that won my respect and interest in the Buddhadharma. I read books talking about the 98-day Chan Session held in the 1970s. But I never thought I would have the blessings to attend this kind of session after more than thirty years. It is just as the Venerable Master said, "The Chan Hall is the Vajra Hall, the Prajna Hall, and it is also the place for training future Buddhas. Participating the session, I felt the sharp and forceful power of the tradition of cultivation. Even now, thirty years later, it is still strong. It is a big challenge - fourteen sitting periods, twenty-one hours a day, for twenty-one days.

On the last day of the session, one of my fellow practitioners teased me, "Have you opened your eyes?" I replied, "Yes." I saw her eyes open wide; it was quite funny. I explained, "I developed a big hole in my leg." Cultivation is very difficult, but we are still trying our best to do it. The snowing of the Dharma Ending age becomes heavier and heavier, blurring our vision. The footprints of the Venerable Master are being covered by the snow and getting lighter and lighter. I hope that all of us can step into Venerable Master's footprints and quickly climb Nirvana Mountain.