

憶上人荼毘大典

Reflection on the Venerable Master's Cremation Ceremony

比丘近永法師講於2023年6月28日萬佛聖城佛殿

A Dharma Talk by Bhikshu Jin Yong at the Buddha Hall of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas on June 28, 2023



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City of Ten Thousand Buddhas on July 29, 1995.

今天輪到近永和眾人結法緣。因為昨天是上人圓寂週年的正日，所以今天我就想和大家分享一下上人荼毘的事情。

大家都曉得，上人是在1995年陰曆五月十日圓寂的，當時近永還在台灣。聽到這個消息，大家當然都很驚訝，因為我們從沒有想到上人會這麼快就離開。因為上人以前講過說，如果活到100歲的話，他要焚身供佛，是不是？我記得好像有這麼一回事，所以我一直認為上人不會這麼快就入滅了。當聽到上人圓寂的消息時，我實在是非常的訝異，幾乎不敢相信。

我是1989年在洛杉磯金輪寺皈依上人

Today is Jin Yong's turn to share some Dharma with everyone. Since yesterday was the anniversary of the Venerable Master's entering Nirvana, I would like to share with you some reflections of his cremation.

When the Venerable Master passed away on the tenth day of the fifth lunar month in 1995, I was still in Taiwan. When I heard the news, I was very surprised because I never expected the Master to leave so soon. As I know, the Master once mentioned that if he lived to one-hundred years, he would burn himself to offer to the Buddhas, so I always believed the Master would not enter Nirvana so quickly. When I received the news of his passing, I was truly shocked and couldn't believe it.

I took refuge with the Master in 1989 at Gold Wheel

的，那時我才開始學佛，所以到1995年只有6年的時間。1995年初，我已經打算要到聖城來，於是在春天時就提出辭呈；等到暑假把東西收拾好，八、九月就可到聖城來常住。但是在六月一聽到上人圓寂了，我就提前到了美國。

上人的遺囑是說：「我走後，你們可以念佛或誦《華嚴經》，你們要多少天就多少天。」所以在台北法界印經會就開始誦《華嚴經》。當時的做法是一天誦四卷，打算在三個禮拜誦完八十一卷。

那時候我還沒有誦過《華嚴經》，心裏很想誦《華嚴經》；但我白天工作，覺得沒有那個機會很可惜。因為台北法界在早上誦兩卷，下午誦兩卷，晚上念佛號。後來我就懇請法師把下午的一卷經，留到晚上誦；如此，白天工作的人，一天還可以誦一卷的《華嚴經》。法師很慈悲地答應了。這樣一來，近永至少有機會誦到四分之一的《華嚴經》。

七月初我到了聖城，那時候聖城正在籌劃上人荼毗事宜。由於上人的遺囑是說：火化之後，他的骨灰要撒在聖城的上空，大家就腦力激盪，想怎麼樣去完成上人這個遺願。

一開始的時候，有人想到飛機。因為聖城附近有很多農場，常用飛機撒農藥。這個想法，大家不是很喜歡，因為飛機一方面很吵，又飛得很快，一下子就飛過聖城了。後來又想到，是不是可以用氣球？當時，我想到的是固特異輪胎公司的氣船（叫作「Blimp」）；但是我不會講「Blimp」，我就說「balloon」。實法師聽到了，他就說：「好啊！Hot Air Balloon（熱氣球）。」因為在納帕谷那邊有很多遊客，他們喜歡搭乘這種熱氣球觀光。

於是大家就決定用熱氣球來撒上人的骨灰。因為我剛到聖城，沒有事幹，其他人都很忙，所以他們就要我去和熱氣球公司聯絡；找個適當的公司，請他們來幫我們完成這件要事。

打了幾次電話，我找到一個公司，覺得還不錯，就邀請他們過來。原本的計劃是像一般人乘坐熱氣球觀光一樣，從聖城的一個角落飛到另外一個角落去。但是熱氣球要這樣飛行的話，要有合適的風向和風速，所以這個計劃不

Monastery in Los Angeles, that marked the start of my learning Buddhism. So, by 1995, it had only been six years. At the beginning of 1995, I had already planned to move to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas (CTTB). In the spring, I submitted my resignation from my job; I planned to packed up during the summer and move to the CTTB by September. Because of the Master's passing, I came to the U.S. earlier than planned.

The Master's will stated: "After I pass away, you can recite the Buddha's name or the *Avatamsaka Sutra* for as many days as you wish." So, at the Dharma Realm Buddhist Books Distribution Society in Taipei, we began reciting the *Avatamsaka Sutra*. The plan was to recite four rolls each day and complete the eighty-one rolls in three weeks.

At that time, I had never recited the *Avatamsaka Sutra* before, and I really wanted to. However, since I had to work during the day, I regretted missing the opportunity. In Taipei, they recited two rolls in the morning, two in the afternoon, and the Buddha's name in the evening. I then requested the Dharma Master there to move one roll from the afternoon session to the evening. That way, those who work during the day could at least recite one roll of the Sutra each day. The Dharma Master kindly agreed. So, I had the opportunity to recite one quarter of the *Avatamsaka Sutra*.

In early July, I arrived at CTTB, where preparations were underway for the Master's cremation. The Master's will instructed that after his cremation, his ashes should be scattered over CTTB, so everyone brainstormed ways to fulfill his wish.

At first, someone thought of using an airplane. Since there are many farms around CTTB, planes are often used to spray pesticides. However, this idea wasn't very popular because planes are noisy and fly quickly, so they would pass over CTTB too fast. Then I thought of the Goodyear Blimp, but I didn't know its name, so I said, "balloon." Upon hearing that, Dharma Master Sure immediately said, "Great! A hot air balloon." Many tourists in Napa Valley enjoy hot air balloon rides.

So, it was decided to scatter the Master's ashes from a hot air balloon. Since I had just arrived at CTTB and



上人的骨灰灑於聖城上空

The Master's ashes were scattered over the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas.

一定行得通。若行不通，就要固定在一個地方，用繩子拉著氣球，這樣就不會飛跑了。

撒骨灰的當天，因為風太大，那家氣球公司覺得不安全，所以就在五觀齋堂前面那一片大草地上，將熱氣球用一條很長的粗繩子綁著，一端固定在地上。氣球充氣後，緩緩升空，然後往下撒骨灰。熱氣球只能有四個人搭乘。當初是希望四眾各一名代表，但是因為像籃子一樣的搭乘空間很小，女眾覺得不太方便，所以就變成四位都是男眾。我記得是實法師、來法師、陳果威居士的弟弟，另外一位是上人東北的親戚。這就是用熱氣球撒骨灰的由來。

當時茶毗場是在現在楞嚴鐘的地方，也是男校的排球場。茶毗必須有茶毗爐，我們臨時去買了一個回來。在城內茶毗必須經過政府的批准。城外現有的火化場地很小，有眾多的弟子要回來參加茶毗大典，所以我們很欣慰政府批准我們在城裏舉行茶毗。上人茶毗大典，還特別邀請明暘法師遠從上海來主法。

上人在洛杉磯地區圓寂的。他的法體要從長堤聖寺迎請到萬佛聖城來，五、六百哩的路，這段旅程並不是一件容易的事情。

hadn't assumed any duty yet, while everyone else was busy, they asked me to contact hot air balloon companies to find a suitable one for this task. After several phone calls, I found a company that seemed suitable and invited them over. The original plan was to have the balloon take off from one corner of CTTB and fly to another, just like a regular hot air balloon ride. However, the flight of a hot air balloon depends on wind direction and speed, so the plan wasn't guaranteed to work. If it didn't work, the balloon would be tethered in one spot so that it wouldn't drift away.

On the day of scattering the ashes, the wind was too strong to safely fly the balloon over CTTB. So, the tethered balloon ascended slowly at the large grassy area in front of the Big Dining Hall, and the ashes were scattered downward. The balloon could only hold four people. Originally, the plan was to have four representatives: a monk, a nun, a layman, and a laywoman. But because the basket was small, the nuns didn't like the idea, so all four passengers were male. I remember that Dharma Master Sure, Dharma Master Lai, the brother of layman Thomas Chen, and a relative of the Master from Manchuria, China were the ones who went up. That's how the idea of using a hot air balloon to scatter the ashes came about.

The cremation site was where the Shurangama bell

大家為這次盛大的茶毗大典，搭建了一個大帳篷；帳篷位於現在的祖師殿前邊的大草坪上，而不是現在大帳篷的地方。

茶毗大典那天，人山人海，許多人從老遠趕來，包括從海外各地來的弟子；大家聚集在帳篷裏，舉行了隆重的茶毗儀式。

在帳篷裏，男眾和女眾站立的位置，和我們現在佛殿裏邊一樣。令我印象很深刻的是，我留意到一位年輕的女眾坐在男眾席的前邊。這個女眾看起來很特別，像個西方人，皮膚很白，她搭的衣服是白色的，就像袈裟一樣。我心裏嘀咕著：為什麼沒有人把她請走？因為她一直坐在比丘眾的前邊，似乎不恰當。我不曉得其他人有沒有看見這位女眾；這位女眾其實很特別，也許她是天人來的也不一定。

然後上人的法體從佛殿移往茶毗現場去，那段路當然也是非常隆重；大家跟在上人的法體後面，同往茶毗場。在大眾念佛聲中，明暘法師舉火，口誦偈語，大喝一聲：「燒！」然後就開始燃燒上人的色身。上人燒出來很多舍利子，大家都曉得。

以上是我能夠想起的上人茶毗的經過。上人圓寂已經二十八年了，二十八年不是短時間。我曉得在座有人上人圓寂的時候還沒有出生呢！一個人從出生到二十八歲，可以拿到博士學位。我們要反省，自己在過去這二十八年，修行有沒有什麼進步？當然我自己也要好好反省，自己大概不會再有二十八年了！今天就和大家分享到這裏。阿彌陀佛！✽

now stands, which was also the boys school's volleyball court. For the cremation, we needed a cremation furnace, which we had to purchase quickly. Conducting a cremation within the City required government approval. The existing cremation site outside CTTB was very small, and since many disciples wanted to come to attend the ceremony, we were glad to be able to hold the cremation within CTTB. We invited Dharma Master Ming Yang to come over from China to officiate the cremation ceremony.

The Venerable Master passed away in the Los Angeles area. His body had to be transported from Long Beach Monastery to CTTB, a journey of six hundred miles, which was no easy task.

A large tent was set up for the grand cremation ceremony, located on the large lawn in front of what is now the Patriarch Hall, not where the large tent currently stands.

On the day of the cremation ceremony, the tent was packed with people, many had come from afar, including overseas. Everyone gathered in the tent to participate in the solemn cremation rites.

Inside the tent, the male and female participants stood in the same positions as we do now in the Buddha Hall. What struck me deeply was noticing a young woman sitting at the front of the monks' section. She was quite special, appearing to be a Westerner with very fair skin, dressed in white clothing that resembled monastic robes. I wondered why no one asked her to move since she was sitting right in front of the bhikshus, which didn't seem appropriate. I don't know if anyone else noticed her; she was indeed very special, and perhaps she might have been a celestial being.

Then the Master's body was moved from the Buddha Hall to the cremation site. Of course, this was also a very solemn procession, with everyone following along to the cremation grounds. Amidst the chanting of the Buddha's name, Dharma Master Ming Yang lit the fire, reciting a verse, and then loudly commanded, "Burn!" The Master's body was then set ablaze. As everyone knows, the Master's body produced many relics.

This is what I can remember about the Master's cremation. It has been twenty-eight years since the Master's passing, which is not a short time. I know that some of you here were not even born when the Master passed away! A person born twenty-eight years ago could have earned a Ph. D. degree by now. We should reflect on whether we've made any progress in our cultivation over these past twenty-eight years. Of course, I also need to reflect deeply on this myself. I probably won't have another twenty-eight years. That's all I want to share today. Amitabha! ✽