



# 夕陽無限好

## The Magnificent Beauty of the Sunset

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傍晚時，一邊牽著八十多歲老祖母的手，一邊指著天邊的彩霞說：「阿嬤，你看那顏色好美喔！」老人家點點頭，微笑地回我一句：「是啊！好久沒出來散步嘍！難得見到夕陽，真美哩！」過了兩分鐘，她抬頭問我：「你剛才說什麼來著？」於是我再重覆一次。走了十幾步，她又仰起頭，很不好意思摸摸臉頰說：「你看，我實在老得不中用了，你問我什麼？才一下子就想不起來。」我望望她瘦小、皺巴巴的小臉，輕拍祖母的肩膀，唱起一首歌來：「紅紅的太陽下山啦，啲呀嘿，呀嘿！小小羊兒回家啦，啲呀嘿，呀嘿！阿嬤，我們回去吃飯吧。」踏著餘暉，我們緩緩地往回家的路走去，身後伴著一長一短的影子，腦海浮現兩句詩來：「夕陽無限好，只是近黃昏。」

住在道場已五年多，這次回去，人事已非，隔壁阿伯兩年前車禍身亡；三樓的胖阿姨上個月因久病生厭跳樓自殺。搬家的搬家，鄰居多換成陌生面孔。父親、母親都老了許多。祖母除了不易變白的捲髮依舊，記憶力變得很差，類似老人失憶症。一天之中她問我數十次：「你吃飽了沒？」我總是笑笑回她。（突然間想起上人講「性如灰」<sup>1</sup>的公案，就當眼前這老人是白衣觀音的化身吧！）如果顯的不耐煩，會令她很難過、很自卑。許多人不能體會晚景的淒涼，便會對這樣的長輩又吼又叫。

記得小時候，家裡幾個小蘿蔔頭，都由阿嬤拉拔大的，我最不喜歡冬天洗澡。她怕

Holding my eighty-some-year-old grandma's hand, I pointed to the colorful evening sky and said: "Grandma, look! Gorgeous colors." The elderly woman nodded and smiled: "Yes, I have not taken walk for a long while, so I hardly see the sunset. Really pretty!" Two minutes later, she lifted her head and asked me, "What did you just say?" I repeated it. Taking ten more steps, she lifted her head again and touched her chin in embarrassment: "See? I'm too old to be useful. Now, I cannot remember what you just asked me." I looked at her wrinkled, tiny, slim face, patted her shoulder and sang a song, "The red sun is setting, Yiyahai—yahai—! The little sheep are going home, Yiyahai—yahai—!" "Grandma, let's go home and eat." Walking in the light left after the sunset, we slowly headed for home, followed by our shadows, one short and one long. A poem emerged in my mind:

The sunset is magnificently beautiful, only but near dusk.

After living in the monastery for more than five years, I got back home this time and realized there had been a lot of changes there. The man next door had been killed in a car accident; the plump lady on the third floor had committed suicide by jumping from her apartment after a long illness. As some people moved in and others moved out, neighbors became strangers. Both my dad and my mom looked much older. Other than keeping up her white-resistant curled hair, grandma's memory had degenerated and she had something akin to Alzheimer's. She asked me numerous times in a day: "Did you eat?" I always smiled in return. Suddenly, I remembered the story the Master had told about the man who strove to have "A Nature Like Ashes."<sup>1</sup> Was this elderly lady possibly the manifestation of the white-robed Guanyin? If I responded impatiently, she would feel very sad and suffer from low self-esteem. Many people fail to understand the distress of old age and yell and scream at elderly people.

I still remember that grandma took care of all the kids at home when

我們受涼，特地把每人份的四、五件衣服，一層一層套在一起，放在傳統火炭爐上烤，有幾次還差點把衣服燒焦呢！她常常扛回一大捆、一大捆的毛衣回來剪線頭賺外快，每次和她去領工資時，阿嬤都不忘買根棒棒糖哄我。幾次發燒上急診，都是她老人家背著我四處向鄰居求救。曾幾何時，那雙有力的臂膀，已酸痛得無法抬重，背也駝了，數十年的風霜往事，都刻在皺紋裡。每位長輩都曾像這般無私地為子孫奉獻一生，等他們老了，怎忍心棄養不顧，反更惡言相向？在這因緣聚合的世間，誰不會老呢？（除非短命）誰又能免於一死呢？「萬里長城今猶在，誰見當年秦始皇？」當我們嫌老人行動遲緩、臥病在床而不耐奉養時，可否想到自己也會有這麼一天（甚至比他們更糟哩！）

曾聽說這麼一則故事：有位年輕人不願照顧年邁的父親，於是把老人放入一個大竹簍，準備載去山上，任其自生自滅。年幼的孫子在一旁看到了，就對年輕人說：「爸爸，你把爺爺送走後，竹簍子不要丟，等你老的時候，我再把你放進去。」相形之下，晉朝李密的〈陳情表〉則千古流芳。這個為了奉養祖母而向皇帝遞辭呈的古人，真值得我們深思反省。老人存在這世上，不能像「折合新台幣」去精打細算所付出的社會成本，也無法用「機器折舊」加以商品化。花開花謝，四季交替；月有圓缺，人有生老病死，這「殘酷」的因果律是亙古不變，「若佛出世，若未出世，此法常住，法住法界。」由於「諸法從緣生，諸法從緣滅」，在生的一剎那，就自然向死亡邁進，隨著十二因緣的「順生門」而流轉，除非修行如三叉文魚逆流而上，依「還滅門」趨向解脫，不然在無常的法則下，青年人終會老，何不用「以己度他情」的同理心，去看待長輩，設身處地去感受一番？

這個有情世間，像一個龐大扇形的因緣網絡，每位生命個體，都有無數的因緣成就，無論政治、文化、歷史、建設、生態，種種資生

I was little. I did not like to take baths in the winter. She was worried that we would catch cold, so she would put one set of clothes inside another, four or five layers altogether, and then warm them up on top of coal heater for each of us. A few times the layered clothes almost got burned. Quiet often, she brought home big heaps of sweaters and trimmed the threads as a part time job. As soon as she got paid, she would buy lollipops for me. Many times when I had fever and needed emergency care, she carried me on her back to ask for help from the neighbors.

I did not remember exactly when her strong arms became too sore and painful to lift something heavy, and her back became bent. All the events of the past are engraved in her wrinkles. All of our forbearers have selflessly devoted themselves to their offspring; how can we abandon them when they are old, or treat them spitefully? Unless a person is short-lived, who can avoid getting old? Besides, who can avoid death? The Great Wall is still standing there today, but who can see Emperor Chin of old? When we complain about elderly people for being so slow in moving and being bedridden because we lack the patience to take care of them, have we ever considered that we might be worse than them, someday?

I have heard a story: Being tired of taking care of his aged father, a young man put his father into a big bamboo basket and got ready to dump him in the mountains. The little grandson watched and told the young man: "Daddy, after you dump grandpa, don't discard the bamboo basket. I will put you inside it when you are old." In contrast, the Petition submitted by Mi Li in the Jin Dynasty is worthy of eternal admiration. This man submitted his resignation to the emperor so he could take care of his elderly grandmother; we should seriously reflect on ourselves.

We cannot calculate the cost to society of supporting the elderly, the way we calculate foreign currency exchange. Nor can we treat the elderly like machines whose value depreciates with age. Flowers blossom and then wither; the moon waxes and wanes; humans go through birth, old age, sickness and death; the merciless law of cause and effect has never changed since time immemorial.

"Whether Buddha manifests in this world, or does not manifest; the Dharma exists forever; the Dharma exists in the Dharma Realm." Since "all dharmas are born from conditions and all dharmas cease due to conditions," from the moment of birth, life moves towards death. Following the Twelve Links of Conditioned Causation, life proceeds in order from birth to death unless one cultivates, thereby swimming against the current like the three-striped fish. Due to impermanence, the youth will get old for sure. Thus, why not empathize with the elderly and try to understand how they feel.

This is a world of sensations, just like an enormous fan-shaped network of affinities. Each individual life has its cause and conditions. Whether it is in politics, culture, history, construction, or biology, all of us have benefited from our ancestors' silent contributions. We, the current



具，皆承受先人、長輩默默奉獻一生的恩澤，而我們年輕的一代，也將成爲後代子孫眾多因緣之一，明白這點，該如何感激這一些可敬的老人啊！

上人創辦敬老節的宗旨，是希望藉此喚醒我們孝順長者之心，本著「老吾老以及人之老」去邀請附近的老人們，來歡度屬於他們的節日。記得有一年，我和幾位法師去拜訪一家老人院，並遞上寺裡敬老節的請卡時，有一些長輩很激動拉著我們的手說：「我每年都盼這一天快來！你看，你們前兩年送的禮物，我都珍藏著。」有的則感慨說：「不知明年能否再參加敬老節？」老人要求不多，請給予他們溫飽與敬意吧！除了噓寒問暖，也令長者感覺「活得有尊嚴」，因爲「至於犬馬皆能有養。不敬，何以別乎？」

望著窗邊的夕陽，忍不住停下筆來欣賞滿天的彩霞、落日?真的很美，感謝它一天辛勞散發光和熱，令世間得以光明，萬物得以滋長，即始西下，還不忘一抹紅霞，慰問芸芸眾生。如果我們以經濟的眼光來看，夕陽是該咒詛的。因爲黑暗即將來臨，萬家燈火耗電甚多。但是換一個角度，心存感激，它值得我們讚歎，千古吟詠。隨手改了案頭古人所寫的詩：夕陽無限好，只「因」近黃昏—年老的長輩們，我們永遠尊敬您！

註<sup>1</sup>：「性如灰」的公案：有位修行人，自認修到不動怒的功夫，在門上寫著「性如灰」。有位老婆婆問他無數次那三個字是什麼？最後修行人發了脾氣，老婆婆笑著說：「你的灰中還有火啊！」原來是觀世音菩薩來試驗他。

young generation, will someday become one of the numerous affinities for our offspring. Understanding this, how deeply we can appreciate those honorable elderly people! The Venerable Master purposely set up “Honoring Elders Day” in order to remind us to be filial towards our elders. In the spirit of treating all elderly people as our own elders, we invite the seniors in town to celebrate this particular day which belongs to them. One year when few Dharma Masters and I went to visit a senior home and presented the invitation for Honoring Elders Day, an elderly resident excitedly held our hands and said, “I look forward to this day every year. Look, I still keep the gifts you gave me in the past two years.” Some exclaimed, “I don’t know if I can come to join Honoring Elders Day next year.” Most elderly people do not demand much, so please give them warmth and respect! Other than checking on their living conditions, we also need protect their dignity. If we do not treat them with respect, then what is the difference between caring for them and feeding dogs and horses?

Watching the sunset through the window, I could not help but set down my pen to appreciate the magnificent, colorful sky—truly beautiful. I am thankful to the sun for its hard work during the day, emitting light and heat to brighten up the world and nourish all lives. Even before it sets in the west, it consoles all that lives by painting the sky with colorful clouds. From an economical perspective, the sunset should be cursed—for it is followed by darkness and lights in thousands of homes will consume a lot of energy. However, looking at it from different angle, we should be grateful for it deserves our praise and is the subject of immemorial hymns. I modified the poem written by the ancients: “The sunset is magnificently beautiful, but only because it is near dusk.” — We will always respect you, our elders.

Note1: The story of “A Nature Like Ashes.” A cultivator who believed that he had reached the level of being free from anger wrote, “A Nature Like Ashes” on his door. An elderly lady asked him numerous times, “What does that mean?” He finally got irritated. The elderly lady laughed, “There is still fire in your ashes!” It turned out that the lady was Guanyin Bodhisattva coming to test him.

