

Global Tea Hut



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The weather gets cooler round each bend of the mountain path. But you find yourself breathing deeper, savoring the way the clean air fills your body and soul. There are still some patches of snow here and there, retreating from spring's verdure, and the evergreen trees sway in the wind, oblivious to the seasons. Their fragrance reminds you of how old the earth is... As you round the next corner, you find an old gnarled tree looming over a small clearing; its giant branches set the rays of morning sun to music, dancing shafts across the grass. Beneath the rocks the old tree is married to, you find a simple hut that looks as if it's been in the clearing as long as the tree. The smoke from the chimney is inviting... You push aside the burlap flap and allow your eyes to adjust. A kettle sits boiling on the coals, and its steam curls like incense in and out of the single shaft of sunlight that enters through the window. The old man's eyes glitter smilingly as he reaches for his pot and cracked bowls...

And so we find ourselves here in this ancient hut yet again. It's grown once more, and there is a greater verve in the eyes of those seated around us. It's certain that we've all had a few bowls already, and the spirit of tea is coursing our veins, brightening our eyes—even in the dim light. We don't need to say as much as before, either, as we've come closer to understanding one another in this space. The small ego-perspective gives way to the universal—the foreground and background somehow changing places. We find ourselves mirrored all around, and there is a great love in our eyes, love for our true selves.

For a moment, let us set down the focal point of our ego-centered world—let the figure grow hazy as its ground comes into focus—and then we can look out as whirling specks in a great and vast universe, like so many bits of leaves floating in the bowl.

Watching this hut grow with every gathering has been such an amazing joy. In the last two introductions, we've discussed firstly that we mustn't view this as a financial transaction. We aren't selling anything; it is a gift exchange. And it should bring us closer together as a result. In the second issue, we began by discussing how connected we all are through this global hut. No matter where you drink your tea, or when, someone else is joining you in spirit. Just over those mountains out your

back window is another house, and in another tearoom there's a brother or sister of yours sharing the same tea. Now, we'd like to begin a discussion on the nature of that spirit.

When tea fell into *Shen Nong's* old metal *ding*, it reached out to become human. And it has embraced our fate as completely as its own roots embrace the earth. This simple Leaf, in becoming human, has also shared our collective fate: wars have been fought over it, empires built and crumbled, marriages and funerals, friendship and enmity, all float like so many dregs in its liquor. Even today, tea spans the human gamut, from the depths of greed and environmental destruction to the highest of spiritual states...

And tea need not be drunk in any certain way. It is an artless art. Tea is a great social lubricant, making new friends and celebrating the old; it is a great beverage, delicious and uplifting in its own calm way; and it is an incredible spiritual tool as well. So in this endless variety of tea ways, where is the spirit of Global Tea Hut? Of course, we don't want to define the way you drink this tea, or any tea for that matter. But if you can, we ask that you try to share this tea in a spirit of community; of global roots and the sewing of Cha Dao seeds across this earth, our only home.

We believe that schools and centers where there is no financial motivation are necessary, especially since so much information in the tea world is governed by vendors—not all of which are bad, of course. Without merchants of the Leaf, we'd have none to share with you, after all. And there are indeed some great ones seated here amongst us. Still, there is also a need for wisdom beyond any and all self-profit—tea shared in the ancient spirit of leaves and water. Join us in this community of earth-minded tea lovers, sharing a bit of time and space in this great galaxy of being—sharing a bit of each other as well.

Take these simple leaves, one pouch of many scattered across our earth, and plant them deep in the soils of your inner self. Water them, much more than just once a month, and they will sprout trees of insight. Sooner than you know it, you'll be plucking leaves from your own garden and sharing them with the next traveler that rounds the bend into your own clearing...