

SANGHA AT ANY MOMENT

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Recognizing sangha in the little things—The whole sangha in our hands, sangha anywhere at any moment—I was on my way to a young adult meditation group in Amsterdam with some bowls and tea to share, there was only one friend there to share some bowls with. And although we were sharing tea just the two of us, I felt that we formed a community, a sangha. Supported by the present moment, Nature and each other, we had the space to let go and relax. On our way back to the train station we shared about community and sangha, and he reminded me that we ourselves can practice at any moment—the art of providing space for and taking care of sangha anywhere we go, helping to make the sangha bloom like a flower.

“If we are a drop of water and we try to get to the ocean as only an individual drop, we surely evaporate along the way. To arrive at the ocean, you must go as a river. The sangha is your river. In our daily practice, we learn to be a part of this river. We learn how to look with sangha eyes, how to walk with sangha feet, how to feel with a sangha heart.”—Thich Nhat Hanh

On another day, I was sitting in my tea room early in the morning, sipping tea steeped from leaves grew in Sun Moon Lake, Taiwan. They were picked by a farmer who takes care of these trees with love, who knows his trees like we know our friends. Trees that I feel are so connected to our community, as many of us have been offered tea steeped from their leaves. Breathing in, I feel the presence of the spirit of these leaves in every cell of my body. I see that all is there, resting in this bowl between my two hands. I can see the presence of the trees, the farmer and all my brothers and sisters, all of you, in my bowl. I recognize that the whole sangha is present, right here and now, between my two hands. Breathing out, I know that I’m carried by the river of the sangha. I know that I can let go.

From the leaves of these trees my mother served us tea one day. Together with Nature, she gave birth to that moment and space with love, just like she gave birth to me one day. She had the chance to hold me tender at the hospital for a long time because the nurses were too busy taking care of all the other newborns.

Just the other day I opened my laptop to chat with one of our dear Global Tea Hut sisters on the other side of the world from where I live—a beautiful being with whom I was so blessed to share a room during my stay at the Tea Sage Hut. Being steeped in an abundance of kindness and love at the center, the presence of true brother and sisterhood, in which there was mutual understanding, unconditional love and support, I felt a love that

was fluid. I couldn’t do anything else than to let it flow through me. This time, too, my heart was brimming over with kindness and love.

“Hello!”

“Hey from the other side of the world.”

“How are you?”

“How was your day?”

“Just share with me anything you’d like to share!

I’ll happily sit here and listen,

While you clean up your room.”

As I pour more freshly boiled water on the leaves in the bowl, I realize how important it is to take refuge in sangha, independent of time and place, independent of whatever form it may take. Whether sangha comes in the form of a good friend, a teacher, family, a cat, a dog or a community of trees. Anything or anyone that can remind us to go back to ourselves and bring us back to the present moment. We can create sangha anywhere we go, taking refuge in the sangha at any moment. Then we appreciate all those little things that make up the whole.

I smile, and once again feel endless gratitude. Hoping that I too will be able to be there and show up and be able to face and embrace the fears that might come up in the process of doing so. To be able to contribute to the collective energy of the whole, the energy that provides safety for every individual drop of water in the river.

Breathing in.... I feel the presence of the whole sangha, right here, right now.

Breathing out.... I smile to the whole sangha, right here, right now.



*Tonight we dance the dance of freedom,
While the earth sings us a song.*

*When the kettle is empty,
And the coals no longer burn,
I lay down next to you.*

*So that your roots can be my pillow,
And your leaves can be my roof.*

