

第一部  
活力  
舒醒  
故事

# ELEVATION STORIES PART I

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*This year, for our Tea Around the World, we asked the community to share their Elevation stories. We were worried that there wouldn't be enough content other than that the tea is simple and beautiful. We are amazed, however, at the response. This is one of the best and deepest issues of Global Tea Hut. In this first installment of Elevation Around the World, Mike and Jasper explore the depths of using Elevation as a part of your self-cultivation, while Herkko and Mattias share the beginnings of their tea journeys, which, like so many of ours, started with Elevation.*

## ELEVATION FROM OUR MISERIES, BY JASPER HERMANS

**D**rinking some leaves of Elevation in a simple bowl, for me, is like returning home. The mingling of my and the tea's energies often gives me a feeling of familiarity, comfort and ease—the same ease I experienced after I traveled all the way from Amsterdam to Miaoli, Taiwan. A bowl of Elevation takes me there: the door of the Tea Sage Hut slides open to reveal the smiles of the dedicated and illuminated human beings who reside there, and I, of course, give them all a big hug! Elevation also often offers me visions of my stay at Sun Moon Lake last summer, cruising around the gorgeous lake, noticing all the wonderful aromas of the lush, moist and green subtropical forest, or sauntering through a field of old arbor tea trees.

Having spent lots of time at the Tea Sage Hut, loving our Brothers and Sisters there till death and after, as well as having spent time in the gorgeous, friendly and incredibly safe country of Taiwan, probably helps to bring about this feeling of ease.

And after visiting the surroundings of Sun Moon Lake, it is no surprise to me that these leaves can take me back. It is amazing that once you visit a tea's home, even once, you can forever drink it and be right back there, smelling and feeling it all so distinctly. The terroir is in the bowl and once you've been, you can always return for the price of a few leaves.

The word "Elevation" might give you the idea that this tea can bring you to super-, ultra-spiritual heights, but my experience with this tea has been quite the opposite: Not in the sense that Elevation brings me down, but more in the sense that She has often helped me to elevate myself from the desire to reach spiritual heights altogether, to leave the world of dust. She doesn't just offer a temporary escape to bliss or some higher state, only to crash down as agitated as we were before; rather, She offers us the possibility of true elevation from our miseries by helping us to practice acceptance of what is.

Elevation is a simple tea, but within that simplicity there is a whole world to discover, if we just set down our expectations and desires for something special to happen. Once we've stopped longing for something special and supernatural to arise, the special and supernatural will come and show themselves in the magic of this very moment, alive and well on this oh-so-magical Earth. We then start to recognize the supernatural in the natural, the sacred in the ordinary. When we are ready to just be with what is, a simple bowl of Sun Moon Lake red tea turns into something extraordinary indeed!

In that sense, Elevation has been such a wonderful companion to my practice of bowl tea. She is very pleasant, comforting and tasty to drink, but She is not so overpowering, complex and seductive to the senses. There isn't a danger that She will distract me from looking inwards—She doesn't trigger tea geekiness in me, or invoke in me the kind of feeling that says:



“Where can I get more of this tea?” I know that She’ll come back to me at least once a year in one of our beloved brown envelopes.

She has helped me to keep my two feet firmly on the Earth, both in my life as a whole, as well as in my life of tea, by helping me to not get distracted by all the wanting, craving and searching for tea, teaware or tea experiences. She has helped me to look inside more often and realize that what I think is the issue I’m facing, isn’t really the issue: the way I relate to it is. The way I relate to a bowl of Elevation changes all my tea—changes everything!

Wu De sometimes explains that the practices of bowl tea and gongfu tea are like two wings of a bird, flying on the winds of enlightenment. Bowl tea helps us to strengthen our wing of equanimity, and gongfu tea helps us to strengthen our wing of sensitivity or awareness. These two qualities are essential for someone who aspires to walk on the path of liberation. With-

out balance and cooperation between them, we would fly in circles.

Without the wing of sensitivity, we would not grow in our ability to notice the subtler and subtler realities in our cups and bodies/minds. We wouldn’t learn to appreciate finer and finer teas and would stay “stuck” at whatever level we are. If we were at the level of enjoying Lipton tea bags, we would continue to use Lipton tea bags and wouldn’t ever get to the point where we realize that these tea bags create an inferior cup of tea. And without the wing of equanimity we could easily get lost in all the pleasures that tea has to offer. We would be seeking higher and higher quality teas without coming back to appreciating the more “simple” ones. We would then start to notice subtler realities—the pleasant sensations that some fine teas have to offer, for example—but we would forget that these subtle realities are but one side of tea and the connection with Nature, ourselves and others is the other side of

our practice. We enjoy the pleasant space that tea helps to bring about within our beings, and perhaps then experience a more lasting peace and tranquility. As soon as we get up and go on with our day, we will face challenges and difficulties that come up in exactly the same way as we have been used to. But now we respond to the more gross, apparent, painful or annoying realities with a sense of acceptance. The truth is that life cannot only be pleasant, peaceful or easy. We are bound to face difficulties, pain and hardship. Life consists of suffering, too. Try to find an 80+-year-old (or ask our tea brother Steve Kokker, who is already quite old, too) who hasn’t gone through pain or hardship, whose life was easy. Do you think you could find such a one?

When we practice strengthening both our wings, we will be able to notice subtler and subtler realities too, but we won’t get stuck in the idea that these realities are the only ones worth living for.



We will be able to enjoy finer and finer teas, but we will continue to be able to enjoy the simple ones as well. And if you really practice awareness of the whole spectrum of tea, perhaps at some point you will start to notice that the way you react to things happening both outside and in will not only be limited to what is happening within the tea space. You will start to notice that the way you react to things happening outside of the tea space, in your “ordinary life,” will be different, too. Only when these two qualities are combined will our tea practice lead us to experience more freedom. We will have the chance to experience peace in the quiet as well as the noisy, the easy as well as the difficult, the pleasant as well as the unpleasant.

I am very grateful that the practice of bowl tea has come into my life. Otherwise, I would probably still be endlessly craving that next cup of “fine” tea. Because, after all, how much would our practice of tea really help us if it only taught us to distinguish and recognize subtler and subtler realities within our cup (or our lives) and didn’t teach us how to deal with them or the fact that all pleasure, no matter how great, is impermanent and will eventually pass away? How much would our tea practice help us if it only brought us to spiritual heights, sensual pleasure or gave us a temporary relief from misery? Eventually, that relief would also pass away and we’d return to “normal” again. Elevation can help us to practice tea in a way that conveys the sacred and the ordinary.

May these leaves help you to elevate yourself from all your miseries, to free yourself from all desires, even the desire for a fine cup of tea! How much more enjoyable such a cup is if we no longer desire it!

**茶** *This is the organic section at the Tea Research Center in Sun Moon Lake. It is meant to scientifically prove that organic practices are better for the land.*

