

Global Tea Hut

NEWSLETTER #16, MAY 2013

The seasons change round us, measuring our lives... Summer unfolds again... The Grain Rains are ending in early May and as the summer opens the rice silos fill up, as does Nature: with sounds, colors and life. We return to opening and abundance, and at first the curtains of cold rain are only briefly pulled apart to disclose warm, balmy days that make us think summer has arrived, only to be followed by another cool, rainy day that we must give thanks for as it will fill our granaries, and then our bellies. As we mentioned last month, this makes choosing tea each day exciting, as we move towards greener, lighter teas on the days that blossom like summer and return to the last farewell to darker teas on the last exhales of coolness that come with the April Grain Rains.

Tea is harvested up the mountain in spring and down in the winter. This means that lower altitude teas are harvested earlier in the spring, and the higher up you go, the later the harvest. As you receive this newsletter, thousands of pickers will be up on the slopes carefully plucking this year's tea. Raise a cup to them; honor their hard work, for their energy is in every leaf—they select which ones to pluck, and so deftly cut them so as not to bruise the leaf or lose its water too quickly. In Taiwan, tea harvesting will continue all throughout May, as so many tea farms are extremely high, even 2500 meters above the sea.

Tea farmers will be processing tea this whole month. In places like Wuyi Mountain in Fujian, farmers will hardly sleep for weeks—catching a nap of an hour here and there. The tea will have to be monitored day and night. They will sacrifice this time to share tea with the world for the rest of the year. Large quantities of tea will need to be plucked after the rains and they will have to watch carefully, as waiting even a day too long can mean the loss of a crop, and too early will reduce the quality. The first pluck is done in silence, with great reverence. The master accompanies the pickers to the trees and they give offerings to the spirits who protect the land, thanking them for whatever has been given. After the leaves come back, night and day will be devoted to their processing. Tea sheds, aboriginal

huts, factories and farmers are all bustling with tea this month!

May is the Plum Moon in the lunar calendar. It is a time for bounty, for being outdoors and for movement—in Nature and in people. We begin to eat more raw vegetables and fruits, and to stay lighter, shedding the extra fat we put on in the winter by stretching out our bones and moving more beneath the daily warming sun. It is a good time to fast, starting the shift in season with a break in our digestion before we move towards lighter food. It is also a time for harvest in rice and tea, both our staples, which means that we should exercise our gratitude with the stretching we do to bring our body out of the winter stillness. What are you grateful for this month? Do you see that the Grain Rains produce the grain that enables and encourages civilization? Do you respect the tea farmers out in the sun loving every leaf, and the master processors who won't sleep at all this month because their entire annual income is dependent upon the hard work they are doing this month? You honor the farmer by converting the rice into good energy—hard work towards improving our shared world! You honor the tea farmer and processor by thoroughly loving the tea, and by using its lessons to grow spiritually, as medicine for the heart!

In Miao Li county, the Tung flowers cover all the mountains in white and people come from all over Taiwan and beyond to look at them scattered across the hills like snow, covering the ground like sweet rain. There is a festival celebrating this glory of Nature, which the local Hakka people also regard as the beginning of summer and a time of gratitude.

May is also an important month for Buddhists around the world as it heralds the celebration of *Vesakha*, which is the Buddha's birthday. This year it falls on the fifteenth day of the Plum Moon according to the lunar calendar, which is May 24th. Use this month to study some of the Buddha's teachings, and honor him by finding them in your own heart. Maybe this month's tea will inspire you to seek a bit of meditative space, and resting in your Buddha-nature you can find your own birthday as well...

WHO WE ARE

We are a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting, cultivating and expressing an awakening of harmony through tea. We believe that tea wisdom which has no connection to any financial motivation, good or bad, is very necessary in this modern world and therefore strive to build schools, centers and other tea spaces in the true, ancient spirit of tea—leaves, water and wisdom shared without any personal profit. There are several facets of what we do. Below are our main and current projects, branching from our roots outward:

Global Tea Hut

Global Tea Hut is one of our main sources of income, helping to support all of our projects. Members around the world donate money and then tea farmers, merchants or tea lovers donate tea. We connect the two gift-givers. For a minimum donation of twenty dollars a month, members receive a special tea, a newsletter and a gift. All the work involved is voluntary and the tea is donated, keeping expenses to a minimum. We have found that this Global Tea Hut connects tea lovers around the world, and that if you share in the tea with a desire to connect, you will clearly feel the community in the bowl. In joining Global Tea Hut, you can help support all our projects, drink a unique living tea each month, be a part of this community, read about the teas, this tradition and a life of tea and stay connected to our energy and activities here and abroad. For more information visit: www.globalteahut.org

The Leaf

Our free, online magazine about tea hasn't had a new issue in over a year, but it will be restarted very soon with an all-new ninth issue. *The Leaf* focuses more on tea information, differentiating it from these more casual/personal GTH newsletters. It is currently electronic only, though we offer free hard copies to the visually impaired. For more information visit: www.the-leaf.org

Tea Sage Hut

This is our current center, located in Miao Li, Taiwan. Each year, we host over one hundred visitors from all around the world. At the Tea Sage Hut, guests come and drink tea, eat vegetarian food and have a bed should they need it. We have weekly tea classes and daily meditation sessions each morning and evening. We also help coordinate travel around Taiwan and put guests in touch with tea farmers, tea and teaware shops and events. All instruction, room and board, and hugs are free. We operate on a donation basis, and guests are free to leave as much or as little as they like for future guests, knowing that their visit was supported by past guests and hoping to pay the experience forward. For more information visit: www.teasagehut.org

Light Meets Life

In December, we were donated three acres of gorgeous land in the mountains of Da Hu, Taiwan. The land has a waterfall, sakura trees, cliffs, views and abundant verdure. Light Meets Life will be the name of our future, expanded center. It will be a great place to learn about and drink tea as well as to meditate. We plan to have an ecological, organic tea garden for educational purposes and a communal farm to grow our own food. Our new center will be run on similar principals to that of the Tea Sage Hut, only on a larger scale. For more information visit the Global Tea Hut website and click on the 'Our Center' link at the top of the page.

YOUR TEA OF THE MONTH, MAY 2013

Calm Light (靜光), Spring 2013 Green Tea, Nantou, Taiwan

In this day and age, simplicity and emptiness have become the rarest commodities. Finding the space to be free from clutter, noise or disruption is challenging indeed. In Chinese, the word for a sage, a holy man, is “mountain man (*shien ren* 仙人)”, because there was a time where the only thing one had to do in order to seek isolation and peace was to head up into the mountains. The Chinese cliffs and crags were above the clouds, and free of the dust of the city. It was assumed that the only reason someone would retire from civilization was to seek spiritual insight, and so anyone you were likely to encounter in the mountains would be holy. Also, ‘holy’ in Daoist philosophy could not be other than Nature—sagehood by definition is a harmony with Nature. And where better to find such peace and harmony than in the pristine mountains?

These days, things are different. We must seek the mountain within. Ultimately, so did the sages of old. There is an old saying that it ‘is easy to be a sage in the mountain, greater still in the city; but the highest master is at peace in the palace’. External quietude helps us to achieve inner stillness, but in the end it is much more beneficial to rest in a stillness that is not dependent upon external circumstances—a peace that can weather the storm. Otherwise, your peace is fragile, shattered by the first airplane that flies overhead.

In the Daoist way, peace is about stillness and simplicity. Turbid water is still clear in nature; it is only because it has been upset that it has become muddied. To still the water we have but to leave it for some time. Like that, it is our nature to be bright and serene, if we rest in the simple and quiet. And it is often the simplest things that bring the most joy and lasting peace: like sitting in meditation, quietly walking in Nature or drinking tea. These are also the gifts that bring us closer to each other. In the world, we compete and arm ourselves. We get busy achieving and accumulating, but in the spiritual world it is necessary to let go, step back and find the space to appreciate the simple; and the simpler the better.

Tea of the Month

This month’s tea is as simple as it gets. It is a green tea we call “Calm Light 靜光”. This tea is an organic green tea from Nantou in Central Taiwan. It is from a pure area, where all the trees are organic. It was

contributed by our dear friend Master Tsai, who has shared so many teas with us. You can read more about him in the April 2012 newsletter, which is on our web-site.

A lot of farms in Taiwan would have difficulty achieving organic certification in the West since they cannot control what their neighbors do and Taiwan is a small island, meaning that nearby, inorganic farms will influence theirs. Still, we must support the revolution that is happening island-wide. This month’s tea, however, is from a pristine area where there are no nearby farms, making it thoroughly and completely clean.

Green tea is often made exclusively of buds, but this is a simpler tea that includes leaves. It is made with a casual air. Green tea is processed to reduce oxidation as much as possible. If it is made from only buds, it will be picked and immediately fried or steamed to arrest oxidation and de-enzyme. (This process is literally called “kill green” because it kills green enzymes that make tea bitter.) Of course, the moment the tea is picked it starts oxidizing, so completely oxidation-free tea is impossible, but green tea is as close as it gets. However, when green tea is made from bud and leaf sets or just leaves, then it is allowed to wither for a short time. This softens the leaves for processing. When green tea is made only of buds there is also no rolling—the shaping is done during the frying/steaming. Our tea was picked, withered, pan fried and rolled before being oven-dried. In the worldly sense, this tea is simple, cheap and “lower quality”; but in Zen our weeds are treasures and our treasures often weeds. Besides, fashion always seeks the flamboyant, missing the great joy to be had in the unadorned.

Calm Light is the simplest of teas. It is almost like drinking water—clear, simple and open. It doesn’t leave a strong impression. It doesn’t explode in your mouth; it moves through like a soft, cooling breeze that enters unannounced through an open window on a Spring day. It moves like the Dao itself.

We suggest you brew this tea in a bowl, perhaps outdoors. It is a tea that you should definitely enjoy in silence, and in relation to Nature. If your friends join you, you may want to set the intention to have a few bowls in silence. It may also go with some quiet, peaceful music like the CD we have included as this month’s gift. Put a few leaves in the bowl and add water. You may want to use slightly cooler water, like shrimp eye. Hotter water or conversations will overpower this sub-

Tea of the Month

tle tea. The tea will merge with the quiet and fill the tea session with an extraordinary ordinariness—with Zen.

It is nice to end such a tea session with a bowl of water. You may also want to try using a single bowl, no matter how many guests you have. Passing a single bowl around is unifying and creates a different kind of heart space. The final sips of water remind us where the tea began and where it ends—from out of Nature and in returning, through us, to the Dao. There is an old saying that true friendship is like clear water; it leaves no trace.

Calm Light is calm and it is bright! You will find the tea cooling, with a soft Yin energy that uplifts you—Qi rushing upwards from feet to head. There is not much to speak of as far as flavor and aroma, other than to say it is simple and refreshing, clean and purifying. It washes out the mouth and palate and frees us, as

only simplicity can do. May you find in this month's bowl a simple, still mind. And may that empower you to act from that center!

As we mentioned in previous months, we recommend letting the tea get over its jet lag. Let it sit a week or two and become acclimatized.





HERALD OF SPRING

Article by Kaiya

Every tea has its own unique personality and power, making it impossible to compare teas from one genre to that of another, or even those within the same genre. Puerh teas, for example, are often simple and direct, yet powerful and full of wisdom, like the unrefined pithiness of an old village woman. Wuyi Rock teas, on the other hand, carry us up to the most refined, delicate peaks, requiring of us a great deal of sensitivity, and all the elegant sophistication of the philosophical conversation you might have with a woman in the city. How to compare them? And yet, Green Tea is in a sense my favorite genre of tea, and I am so pleased that we are sharing some with you this month, and especially this one, which has long been a favorite of ours.

One of the best things about Green Tea is that it heralds the arrival of spring. It's time to come crawling out of our caves, blink our eyes, take off our shoes and socks and run on the grass under the sun and feel the warm dirt between our toes again. Hooray! There is very little processing required to make Green Tea, so it is also one of the first teas to become available in the spring season, but there's more to it than that. Come to think of it, it's Spring which heralds the coming of Green Tea, since the tea wishes to be drunk at this time of year. Green Tea is cooling, light, refreshing, and at its best when it is as fresh as possible; as near to the time when it was still there on the bush or tree basking in the sun as you can get it. (Actually, I really love aged Green Tea too. However, this has to be considered as a totally different genre of tea, since it's not really 'green' anymore.)

I tend to feel nostalgic when I drink Green Tea—it's my oldest tea friend, being the first tea that ever spoke to me, and I often have the feeling that I may have drunk a great deal more of it than I can even remember. It takes me back somewhere; it uplifts me and encircles me with its gentleness and simplicity. Green Tea, to me, is an embodiment of light, and drinking it is a communion with light. I feel it filling the cells of my body, I hear it singing through my soul and my spirit joins in its playful, gentle dance. Green Tea is playful, and it reminds me of a time when sunbeams inspired me to play with them, or the way light dances at the bottom of a clear pool of water. Green Tea still has a sun-inspired playfulness and wants to share it with us. As a choice of teas to get you out there brewing in Nature for the first time this year, which I wrote about

last month, I couldn't recommend a better choice. This tea loves to be drunk outside on a sunny day, or in your tea space at whatever time of day is brightest.

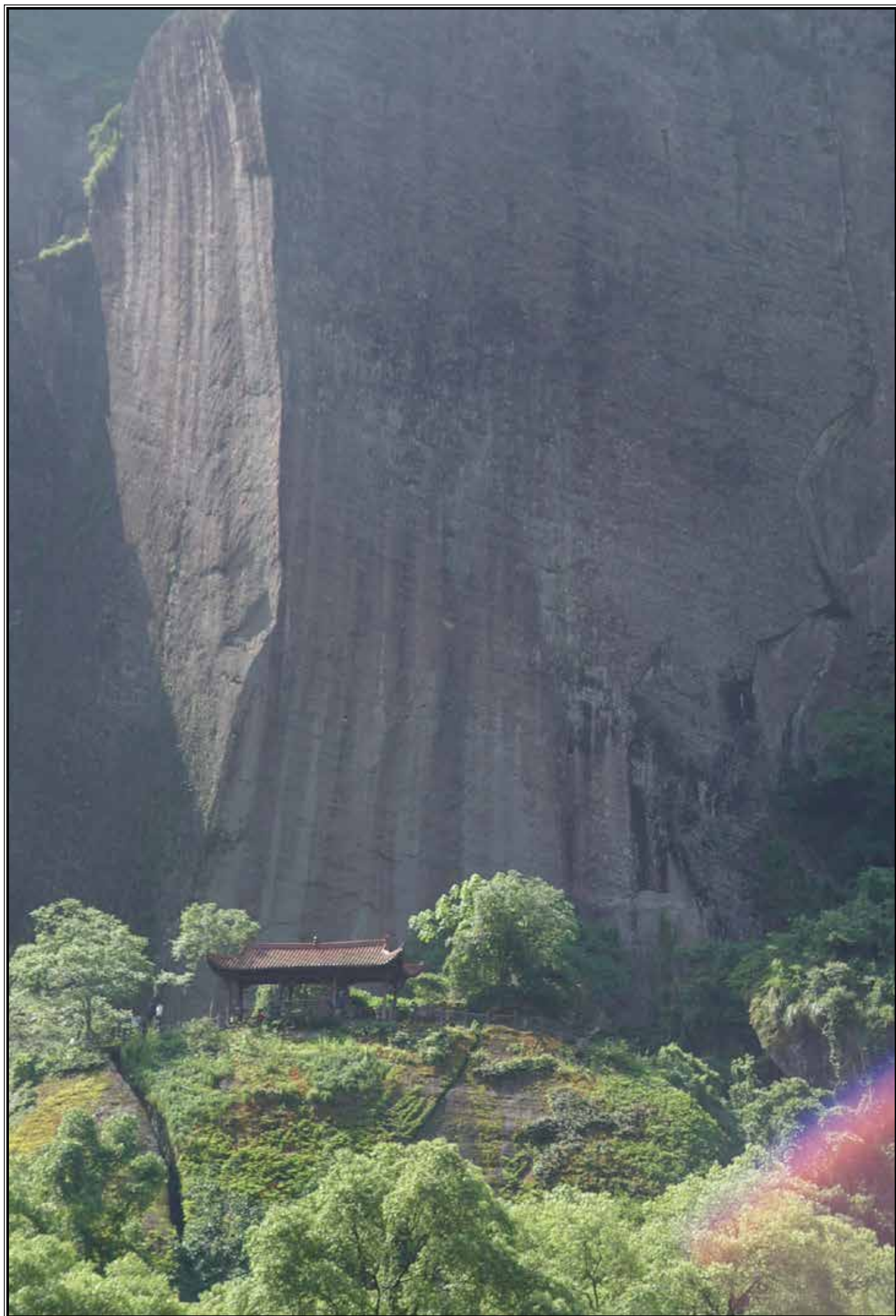
Green Tea loves music that is reminiscent of light as well. I personally enjoy plucked string instruments with little or no accompaniment: Simple Gu Xing music or a harp perhaps. I particularly enjoy an album I have of Celtic strings, and another that is a very delicate duet of flute and hammer dulcimer. Just think of any music you have that reminds you of the play of light on water and you will have a good match for this month's tea. (I'll be sure to post a few of my specific favorites up in the tea of the month section of our forums this month, and I hope you will share some of yours with us as well!)

Like a lot of Green teas, being so simply processed and lacking pretension, this tea enjoys being made in the oldest way, leaves and water in a bowl. However, I strongly encourage you to make a bit of it in your teapot as well, as I have enjoyed many transcendental sessions with this tea in that way as well. The leaves are a bit smaller this year than they were in the past. No matter how or where you enjoy this tea, I am so happy to be sharing it with you and participating in your sharing of it with yourself and others, and hope to hear from some of you about it as Spring unfolds and arises without and within us this year. May your every sip be filled with Love and Light!

Do not gulp the tea, but sip it slowly allowing its fragrance to fill your mouth. There is no need to have any special attitude while drinking except one of thankfulness. The nature of the tea itself is that of no-mind. It does not discriminate and make differences. It is just as it is.

—Pojong Sunim





FEELING PROUD

Article by Dan Smith

Growing up in a small Midwestern town, I experienced many manifestations of ‘pride’. And I think what someone feels pride for and how they express it says so much about a person and their ethos. There’s the type of pride that one experiences from a traditional conservative father; protecting his ‘face’ and feeling faith in the Protestant work ethic, with a generally narrow mind. The pride of a loving mother, who may cry with joy for her son who won a soccer game or acted in the school play. I recently was looking through some old photographs and came across one that captured a deer carcass hanging from a tree in the front yard of our family home. Amazed at the reminder of my roots, I recalled the robust pride in deer hunting that many men in America feel. There were sports teams; with a zeal often bordering on madness that their members and fans may feel. Black pride; White pride; I’d also heard about ‘Brown and Proud’ for immigrants from south of the border. I couldn’t identify with any of that. Another obvious one was national pride for America and what it supposedly stood for. Tears may wash the faces of grown men when they’ve just heard the national anthem. I moved on to the army and felt confused and rebellious about an unquestioning pride in cruelty and destruction. I observed passively and didn’t identify much with any of these forms of pride. I hadn’t heard of Nihilism yet but maybe I felt it anyway. I then moved on to a university city. There, I witnessed pride in political affiliations, philosophies, sexual orientation, environmentalism, art cliques and social progressiveness. These all seemed to be more noble causes—things were looking up in the world at 21.

I felt inspired, so I moved to California. I said goodbye to my friends and family in pursuit of a ‘belonging’ that was a little more spacious than the ‘American Dream’ that I’d experienced thus far. Yes, much more than distance distinguishes California from Middle America. There, you find pride for California, rather than the nation. Wow, there’s pride felt in shopping for organic vegetables at the farmer’s market, eating exotic foods, acquiring knowledge or experience of foreign cultures, spirituality, Redwood trees, a successful restaurant I worked at, Asian pride now too and even the pride in ‘puffing tuff’ with friends—it was all wonderful. It was a lot of new influence and it all seemed a lot healthier.

At the restaurant I worked at, there was a dishwasher nicknamed ‘Akbar’ or ‘The Great’ and he was, in his own way. He had steely eyes and seldom smiled, but when he did, it was natural and came from his heart without reservation. He didn’t complain and he did his job with patience. He was a practitioner of *Wing Chun*, a type of boxing kung fu and had a teacher of whom he often shared stories or quotes. It was clear that his life had direction because of this kung fu and he thought very highly of his master. This direction was sure, and in sharp contrast to that of most people. It was soon clear to all that he met that he was the ‘*Wing Chun* guy’. He was content to practice his skill, his art, take on students and share it, and wash dishes as a routine to make a little necessary money. Washing dishes wasn’t just a humdrum job to pay the bills though, and it wasn’t separate from his life of kung fu. He diligently maintained his posture with skillful movements, minimizing wasteful steps. He shared knowledge on a variety of topics, but especially *Wing Chun*. He loved it and had faith in his teacher as a messenger of a great skill: a Dao and an art of life. He didn’t criticize other kung fu traditions. He respected and noted their merits but clearly maintained that *Wing Chun* was more efficient, direct and skillful. Most people didn’t care one way or another and he recognized this with no offense. He wasn’t alive to convince people of his path, just to practice it. This is maybe the most distinguishing feature of this type of true, innocent pride: the people who feel it don’t have any desire to prove it to themselves, nor anyone else. It just comfortably is. It is defined by its presence and makes itself present right away, but without preaching, opposition, disruption or distortion—like a fine tea.

Looking back on my life, this was the first time I had ever met someone who had such pride in their life, their way. And it had all the mysticism of the East in it. I had seen this in movies and video games, read about it in books, but this was the first time I had witnessed it face to face. Experience really is the truest teacher. I spoke with him and took a few private lessons at his humble home. He taught me the basics and there was some enrichment, but I didn’t pursue that path, as I was still too ungrounded, drifting with the clouds. Maybe it just didn’t call to me.

Many years later, Tea called me to Taiwan. I am fortunate to have found my teacher and connection to a tradition. I’m gaining experience, wisdom and feeling joy. There is an intimate communion with tea



that reaches into every facet, every corner of life. It has been some three years now and I've just recently realized that I've matured enough to know the true, innocent pride of Akbar, The Great. I was recently introduced as a 'practitioner of tea' to a circle of students on a complementary path. As we drank tea, I noticed differences in their customs, but without discrimination. They saw a confidence in me and some started to ask questions concerning tea. Pride filled my heart that night, and I could just 'be' with an unpretentious ability to respond to questions, prepare tea and thank the whole experience.

In respect and special thanks to the one and only Akbar, these days, I like to say a new mantra for a life of tea:

"Be Great, Be Love."



GONG FU TEA TIPS

May 2013

In tea preparation there is always a lot of discussion of form versus function. On the one hand, it shows great respect to prepare the tea in a way that allows its greatest virtue to shine forth. It took a tremendous concert of natural energies and billions of years to evolve this plant medicine, bestowed on us by Nature. And tea is one of the most taxing crops, costing farmers countless hours of toil. Then, for most of us, there is the work of transporting the tea to where we live—mostly done by hardworking tea merchants who love the Leaf and want to share it. Finally, we also work hard to gather the money needed to buy our tea. In honor of all this, we brew the tea in a way that it wants to be brewed: the way that allows its essence to be glorified. And for that reason, most tea lovers usually incline towards function over time, choosing teaware and brewing methodologies that enhance tea over those that are performance based or merely look nice.

Despite the need for function, we also cannot neglect form either. There is an enhancement, indefinable but definitely real, when we enjoy tea in pleasant surroundings and when the movements of the brewer are graceful and beautiful. It *does* make the tea better, though we may not be able to describe just how it does this. Some flowers near the tea, a recent guest announced, completely changed his experience of the tea.

The stage on which the tea is performed is called the “Cha Xi” in Chinese. It is usually composed of a tea cloth, a tea pillow or tea boat, some utensils and maybe a waste-water vessel (*jen shui*). Then, we can decorate the space however we want: with flowers, a Buddha, stones, bamboo or wood. These help calm us and bring a sense of harmony to the session. They enhance the story the tea is telling us the way that the stage—its props and decorations—can enhance the work of great actors. Still, fancy special effects won’t make a silly movie great. The plot and the acting are always more important; and we’d rather watch a great actor on an empty stage than a poor actor tell an uninteresting story on a fancy stage with a lot of props. Similarly, a simple tea in a bowl with no stage is better than a gorgeous stage in which the tea is forgotten. Sometimes this happens, just as Hollywood sometimes makes fancy movies with no substance. People also get wrapped up in the performance and beauty that surround tea and forget why they are there—to make great tea!

Perhaps form is a kind of function when it is used properly? Try adding some summer touches to your tea this month: a nice tea cloth with some decorative colors that match some aspect of your tea, a scroll, some flowers, a rock or wood—anything that calms the mind and soothes the soul, enhancing the work that the tea is doing. You will find that a bit of form can make your tea much more enjoyable, as long as you don’t lose sight of the tea. We often leave the vessel and cups/bowls alone and use other aspects of the *Cha Xi* to express ourselves.

Arranging our space for tea is like a mandala, which is a piece of artwork meant to express this moment’s relationship to all of time and space—to show the cosmic significance of our gathering and the galaxies beyond all our personal drama. The Dao won’t be ruffled by our entire existence, and even after our sun has long gone out and we are but a memory in space, the stars will still wheel on and the Dao will embrace it all. Allow the smallness and ordinariness of your tea session to resonate with the greatness of Being and you will have found the function in the form!



RHYTHM, LOST IN A TEA MEDITATION

Story by Shane Marrs

A rhythm courses through the veins of this world. A Great Heart beats and the earth itself tremors on all stratum, from gross to delicate. Hidden messages are whispered in spirals, eddies, fractals, and ratios. Schools of birds and flocks of fish twist, arc and sway in mirrored synchronicity. Volcanoes erupt and cicadas awaken in chords of celebration. Nature winds and unwinds, sighs and sails, passes through time in forms of webs and waves and infinite change. Beings of water, land and air tap into that rhythmic vein, hurdling and cascading down evolutionary channels.

The young *chatong* (tea helper), sitting in meditation, can't shake these lucid thoughts of rhythm. The meditation has only just begun. Legs crossed, back straight, chin tucked and eyes gently closed. Shadowy figures shuffle in the immediate foreground as others join the hour-long sit. The space is quiet, yet fiery thoughts blaze across a mind full of activity... Breathe in.

Temperatures fluctuate; waters ebb and flow; Moon waxes and wanes. Tremendous power is generating this Universal symphony. Great forests and microscopic algae work tirelessly and the earth breathes deeply. Birds migrate, bears hibernate, and the seasons take shape in response to cosmic alignments. Everything twists and melds in a chewy

flow with lots of texture and infinite space within which to contract and expand. Nature's rhythm is one of perpetual change and abundance.

A slight shuffle at the hips and stretch of the shoulder blades brings attention back to the present moment. She sits upright; knowing as much as she'd like twenty minutes to have passed by now, it's more like twelve. Being a student of Cha Dao, immersed in a life of tea; it's no wonder such thoughts of rhythm bombard her meditation space. A life of tea is a life of rhythm. There is always a flow to consider: the Flow of Change. In particular, when regulating the water for tea.

Breathe out.

The charcoal layout can influence the time a cast-iron kettle takes to boil by tens of minutes. Not to mention the type of charcoal used, how thoroughly it was lit, and in what brazier it burns. While two kettles are necessary, it's cumbersome to have both ready at the same time. Predicting how fast the first kettle will be consumed and considering the state of the charcoal roughly determines how much time the second kettle requires to reach a boil. On a good day, one kettle drips dry whilst the other boils to a fish eye. The rate that water is used varies bowl by bowl and guests may



arrive and dissipate like birds on a power line. Of course, each tea itself lends to variance in preparation based on the amount and method of brewing. Where is the flow? When to put on the next kettle? What is the rhythm of change?

She grits her teeth like a threatened alley dog through the physical pain and mental calamity that build in unison, but remains cross-legged, determined to return to the soft center of her own rhythmic breath. Her eyes remain shut. Through her nostrils, the dry air is moistened, taken in deeply, and exchanged in exhalation. For a brief moment, her mind shines with silence like the full moon from behind a thin veil of clouds. Breathe in.

Tea rhythm happens in the course of a day, over the period of a week, throughout each month and within the year. Rhythm nested within rhythm where changing circumstances can cause a shift from one level to the next at any moment. Is this chaos or rhythm married to change? Surely, if any pattern is to be recognized, it must be done with great attention to detail, and only in the present moment. Flow is found in awareness and skilled reaction to that pattern. Rhythm is realized in a regular and intuitive response to that flow.

Calm, she remains poised, letting these thoughts pass just as they spontaneously arise. Not attached to having them, not attached to letting them go, and always resolved to return to the breath.

Breathe out.

What beautiful rhythm lies at the tea table. Mental music slowly subsiding, the sound of silence ever increasing, offering bowls full of tea, returning them empty to the heart—medicine for the people—fetching of water and exchanging of kettles, pouring from spouts and delicate sounds, steam rising and wavering, warming of lips and easing of tension, the final steeping, cleaning, this tea gathering dies to be born again. Through tea make friends.

Her mind wanders no more. For whatever time remains, she sits in inner stillness. Eternity. She has realized the base rhythm:

Breath in.

Breath out.

It's not how many times your mind wanders, but how many times you bring it back.

—An old friend





Light Meets Life

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The summer has brought an incredible vibrancy to our land, and the birds, monkeys, bugs, eagles and other wildlife are all moving with the urgency of heat and humidity. The surrounding mountains are green and lush, filling the heart with a sense of natural abundance. We are indeed provided for. The Earth is still very much alive and in love with Heaven.

Our community is very much about living in harmony with the Great Spirit and all life on this planet. That is health, and anything that helps us achieve that communion is medicine. Tea is a return to the mountains. It comes from there, and whether you dwell in the city or the mountains, it is important to return to that connection—both spiritually and physically by taking actual trips out into Nature. Light and life will meet in our intentional community, providing a chance to work together as a tribe, learning from tea and the land. The mountains of Taiwan are a glorious place to find yourself, and in Miao Li spiritual work catalyzes on its own (call it Daoist Geomancy, *feng shui*, if you wish.)

Many people ask us what the differences between our current center (Tea Sage Hut) and the new center (Light Meets Life) will be. The main difference is just in the size and the amount of people we can host. These days the Tea Sage Hut is always full, hosting roughly one to two hundred people a year. The new center will be able to house twice that comfortably, and it is definitely our aim to expand a bit (though not too much). Also, we currently need to have two buildings: a main one for guests, classes, meditation, etc. and another for long-term residents to live in since space is limited. The new center, however, will allow us to all live in one location. Finally, there is the most obvious improvement, which is that Light Meets Life is located in the mountains, far away from any noise that isn't plant or animal. This will allow us to deepen our tea practice, to farm our own food and to have an educational tea garden that will have many varieties from around the world, affording guests the chance to process some tea to take home.

We still plan to keep our main building in Miao Li city if there is enough money, as some guests arrive at night and need to be housed. This also allows us to take trips and return at night as well. Furthermore, there is going to be no Wi-Fi or other connectivity at Light

Meets Life, so guests that need some connectivity will then have the opportunity to go stay in the town for a day and google to their heart's content.

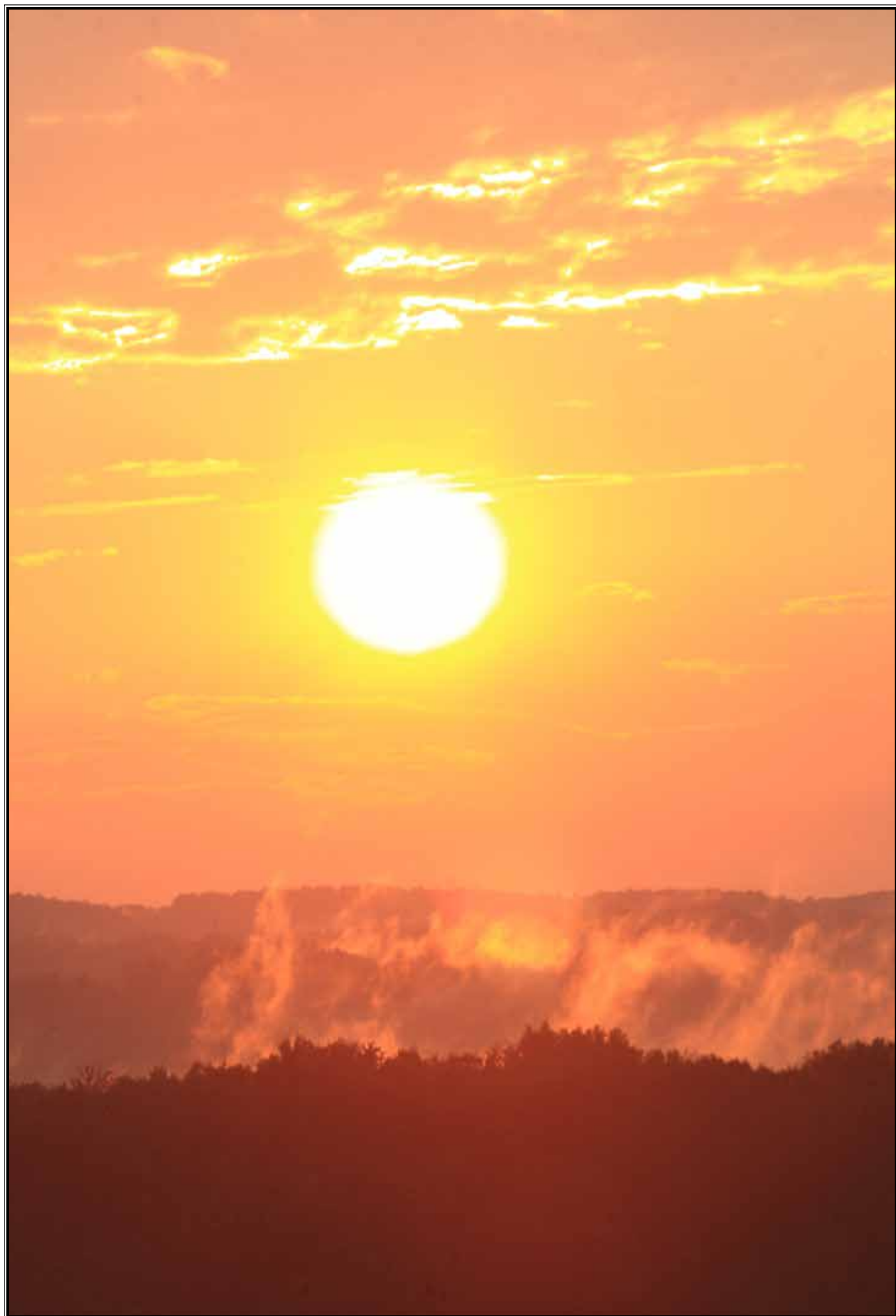
We have made a commitment to start using the new center as much as possible, as soon as possible; and regardless of when the money for building comes. This means that we have first of all started landscaping the property already. We plan to use the time we have, while we raise this large amount of money, planting trees, clearing up some of the space, running in power and water lines, etc. It also means that we will start camping at the new center this summer. We hope to go there a weekend a month and start sleeping on the property, cooking by fire and drinking tea in the early mornings—using the water on the property, of course. We don't need to have a building to enjoy the community of trees and animals there, and to be uplifted by the surrounding mountains and views. This also starts the center, long before any ground has been broken.

And that is our special announcement for this issue: the new center, Light Meets Life, will officially open this month! Should any of you find yourself Eastward bound, you have but to ask and we can try to arrange a tent stay at the new center, should you find Tea Sage Hut too urban for you (doubtful) or if you just want to be in Nature and/or alone. The unseen doors are open! Come camp with us at Light Meets Life this summer!

Should any of you wish to contribute or have any ideas for ways to help us realize this vibrant dream, please contact us. You can donate at the Center page of our GTH website or send a check to:

Global Tea Hut West
2441 Beverley Ave. #6
Santa Monica, CA 90405
United States

Or [contact](#) us for other ways to support.





TEA AND SPIRITUALITY

Article by Wu De

People sometimes wonder why it is that a tea center focuses so much on spiritual matters. Some people view tea as a beverage, a hobby or perhaps a cultural art and therefore better left to the profane. They wonder why the tempest in such a small cup. Why the fuss? Why not just drink tea? Some are tea lovers, and yet still have difficulty swallowing a sense of the sacred with the infusions they brew. It is likely, however, that such people have difficulty finding the sacred in anything. The answer as to where the spirit, life and Dao of tea issue from is threefold: the practical, the nature of the Leaf and the virtue of the highest arts. Each of these three aspects of this tradition and life is complete on its own, addressing why tea is sacred to us and why the brewing and imbibing of it is a ceremonial rite:

The Practical

On the most basic level we drink tea in a spiritual way because we are spiritual people. It seems obvious, but still needs to be stated that people who are interested in spiritual matters, and in cultivating themselves towards greater spiritual heights, will both view tea as an aspect of a spiritual life and a means of cultivation. All spirituality, in whatever method or tradition, is about cultivating wisdom and kindness. And when one has chosen a life of wisdom and compassion, everything is a spiritual tool, and every daily act a chance to learn and grow, transform and transcend.

Most people who are on a spiritual journey find little reward in materialism or sensual pleasure. This isn't a rejection of the world, but rather an insight into its true nature as transitory and therefore beyond grasping. Some confuse this for an aversion towards or rejection of beauty and pleasure. Quite the contrary, the enlightened revel in beauty and pleasure, they just avoid concluding such experiences in craving for more or a desire to possess. This desire to possess is delusory because there is no such thing as property or ownership in anything other than a social, legal sense. We all come and go from this world naked, and without any of this, including this self. There is little lasting pleasure in the world, and sensuality is but the shadow of true joy, which is the soul resting in its true nature and heart. Also, sensual pleasure is so often a means of escape; rather than addressing and curing our malady, it

but allays the symptoms, providing temporary comfort. It is like weeding without taking out the roots.

As a result, most spiritual people are already approaching tea from a sense of depth and understanding. They are seeking medicine, rather than sensual pleasure. The joys of preparing tea are welcomed, but rarely primary in their relationship to tea, which is more about self-cultivation, connection with Nature and sharing a heart space with others in communion.

Simply put: let the worldly tea drinker drink tea as a beverage or hobby. There is nothing wrong with that; and vice versa, those of us on a path find in tea a friend, ally and teacher throughout our journey. Spiritual people drink tea spiritually, and of course they do!

The Nature of the Leaf

Most of the plants in this world evolve to fill a particular niche in a local environment, and that process has little to do with human beings. Other plants have a long and very influential relationship with us, changing as we interact with them. And we believe that some plants evolve as teachers—messages from the plant kingdom that are here to show us the light. And tea is one of the greatest of these “entheogens”.

There is no plant with a greater relationship to the history and consciousness of humankind. It has been the currency of empires, helping to establish and protect China through trade with the Northerners and then the British empire's global trade as well. For thousands of years people have imbibed tea as medicine and spiritual communion, with Nature and each other. There are villages in Japan where father and son spent every waking moment devoted to the creation of one kind of teaware for some twenty generations, like bamboo whisks for example. And that is just one kind of teaware amongst many. Tea farmers, healers, teaware makers, tea sages, merchants and dealers have devoted so much heart to this plant that it has become intertwined with our karma indelibly.

They say that the great emperor, the “Divine Farmer” (*Shen Nong*), was meditating one day when a tea leaf fell into his boiling water. Drinking the elixir, he exclaimed, “This is the emperor of all medicinal herbs!” *Shen Nong* is said to have given the people civilization, farming, and taught them herbal medicine as well as simple hygiene. He is supposed to have ruled for a



thousands years, though what he most likely represents is all the wisdom of the tribal shamans and chieftains of pre-civilized China, who were the source of plant/animal domestication and other social advancement. The tea leaf falling into the legendary emperor's pot is demonstrating its desire to be human, to connect to the consciousness of people. It is the king of all herbs because other plant medicines are only useful to treat one or a few illnesses, and are often poisonous if one doesn't have those symptoms, whereas tea can be imbibed every day and provides alignment and harmony with Nature. This means that tea's medicinal qualities are in the way it aligns body, mind and spirit with Nature. And when we are aligned with our environment, we also automatically align with each other—peacefully and in an open heart space.

Plants are aware, and recognize their connection to the other kingdoms far more intimately and with greater interconnectedness than we do: opening and receiving the mineral kingdom, the light and power of the sun, moon and stars and then giving on the other end, allowing animals and humans to consume

their energy, often propagating themselves through that process. The energy of the universe flows and moves through them in ways that we can *only understand through consuming and communing with them*. They are the source of our solar energy, for example, which animates all that we do: me in the writing and you in the reading. It only makes sense that certain plants would evolve in conjunction with animals, and it happens all the time. Animals then evolve in response to plants as well. In light of that, you could say that we have the receptors to receive tea—a connection with this plant body, mind and soul. That may have come from years of drinking it, which might explain why some people have more receptors than others. But any of you who know Wu De, know that he is a hopeless romantic, so I like to believe that we had those receptors before we ever drank any tea and were just waiting to meet, like estranged lovers waiting for that first, fated star-crossing.

Tea and humankind have become intertwined completely, which means we share the same fate, in good and ill. This plant has embraced us as only Nature

Tea and Spirituality

can. And so much in the tea world has been corrupted and turned to industry and pollution, like all aspects of what humankind has done to the Earth, our Mother. As a result, even today, tea spans the entire human spectrum: from the lowest of greed and environmental destruction to the highest of spiritual states, and everything in between.

Tea is medicine, but not in the Western sense of the word, more in a Native American sense: anything that puts us in alignment with the Great Spirit and all life on this planet. Health of body, mind and spirit both create such harmony and result from it. This means that tea *is* spirituality. The profane, economic trade of tea has only been around for one to two thousand years, and only predominantly for five hundred. Prior to that, all tea was drunk medicinally, which is to say spiritually. There are three-thousand-five-hundred-year-old cave paintings in Yunnan. Some of them portray tea picking and processing, but the vast majority are of tribes bringing offerings of fruits, flowers and incense to pray before the sacred tea trees. For thousands and thousands of years tea was viewed as a sacred medicinal plant. As a result, its relationship with all the spiritual traditions of the Far East was assured, since the shamans would pass on such medicine to those that followed: both Buddhist and Daoist traditions have deep and meaningful relationships with the Leaf, to the point that when the Japanese came to China to learn Zen Buddhism, they returned with tea plants, tea and teaware and told their countrymen that the masters in China had said that in order to promulgate Zen in Japan it would be necessary for tea to take root there as well, for “Zen and Tea are one flavor!” They said this because they recognized the spiritual value of tea. Daoist mendicants and Zen Buddhists both had their own origin legends for tea, highlighting various qualities they value in tea. Zen monks and nuns were likely the first people to domesticate tea.

Tea is a very sensitive plant, and the fact that it's brewed with water makes it doubly sensitive. Water also has been proven time and again to be greatly influenced by words, thoughts, music and energy, like the water crystal studies of Dr. Eomoto for example. He photographs water crystals and then exposes the water to positive and negative influences before re-photographing the crystals. He has found that the positively influenced crystals—exposed to positive, complimentary words or power words like ‘love’, as well as good music—are always symmetrical and beautiful, whereas the negatively influenced ones—exposed to hatred, anger, etc.—are all asymmetrical, distorted and ugly. Since tea and water are both so sensitive to the mind of the one brewing, even beginners quickly realize the influence their mind is having on the tea: a nervous mind makes nervous tea and a quiet mind also quiets others. Understanding this experientially, one can quickly realize why

tea has sat in ceremony between master and student for so many thousands of years. After all, what could be more poignant, metaphorically and literally, than to have the student drink in the mind of the master? And this ceremonial exchange goes the other way too: there is a long-standing Chinese tradition of preparing tea for masters, elders or even the husband in a Chinese wedding ceremony, and the acceptance of the tea is an acceptance of the student or wife, for they have put themselves into their tea. This ability to transmit is one of the most important and wonderful qualities of tea preparation, and one that has endeared it to spiritual aspirants for so long.

The fact is that tea is a Dao—always has been, always will be. The lineage of tea sages, using tea to cultivate themselves and then share what they have cultivated with others dates back before the pyramids. This incredibly vast heritage of devotion, prayer, study and meditation surrounding tea answers why it is a spiritual practice better than any article could. The why isn't as important as the fact that it works, and has for millennia!

The Virtue and Purpose of Art

It is not sufficient merely to be a great master in painting and very wise, but I think it is necessary for the painter to be very moral in his mode of life, or even, if such were possible, a saint, so that the Holy Spirit may inspire his intellect.

—Michelangelo—

In James Joyce's portrait of himself as a young artist he mentions that the true, high arts cause a person to experience great stillness, meditation and contemplation while lower arts catalyze movement in us. When people enter the church and look up at Michelangelo's work they are awestruck, silent and agape. When we look at an advertisement or more entertaining movies that depict sex and/or violence our animal nature is stimulated, and our desires start churning. Though it is true that art has expanded to limitless realms of understanding and imagination, as our creativity has been socially and psychologically liberated, the true purpose of art has always and ever will be to channel the sacred into form and then share that form with others in the hope that it help encourage their own return to the transcendent.

There is a whole genre of art meant to expose, hash out or even defile boundaries: art that attacks closed-mindedness or perhaps uncovers aspects of culture that need addressing. Such art is a testament of the times and can indeed be usefully cathartic, or even lead



to positive changes. And there is no artist that would wish for a return to the days when art was constricted, forced to create religious images or beholden to certain fashionable criteria. However, the true purpose of art has always been to convey the sacred—dating back tens of thousands of years!

If you believe that metaphysical truth and spiritual upliftment are aspects of great art then it only stands to reason that the artist who wishes to create such art must spend as much or more time attuning their spiritual sensitivity as she does honing her skills with brush and paint, clay or stone. If you want to create art that evokes the sacred then you must have a connection to sacred inner space, and the greater that connection is, the more powerful your art will be and the more moved those who approach it will be.

And what about the effects the artistic process has on the artist herself? There is a tradition in Zen of using the arts themselves as a means of cultivation; for if the artist is meditating and achieving mystical states before and during the creative process, then she also

will be as transformed as those who perceive her art—or more likely much more for standing within the light itself.

You reach the point in the mastery of any art where it is necessary to begin working on the self in order to achieve greater results, because the true artist realizes that the way she treats people, what she eats, how she sleeps and walks all affect her art tremendously. Emerson said that while the lesser artists create to enhance self and are therefore prone to seek inspiration in wine or drugs, the true artists efface themselves in pure spirit and become its instrument; and moved by the Holy Spirit, they then create the masterpieces that still the soul even thousands of years later.

In other words, if you want your tea to be a transformative experience for you and those who join you then you must cultivate yourself spiritually. If your mind is wandering, and you haven't mastery over your thoughts, you will not create a sense of the sacred in the tea you serve others. The more peaceful you are, the more peaceful will be the tea you pour, which will bring

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you more peace and allow you to share it, and so on in a deepening spiral...

There is a story of a Daoist who was quite old and his career had kept him from progressing very far spiritually, but now that he was retired he had an earnest desire to grow. He came across a painting in the market, which was an antique but still cheap because the ink and colors were faded; it hadn't been well cared for. For the first time, the old man saw a glimpse of the Dao. He knew that whoever painted it was surely illuminated. He bought it and took it home. He then enshrined it and spent hours every day meditating in front of it. The bridge, stream and mountain trail led past a grove of trees to a distant temple. One day, after some months of such meditations, he found his feet upon that bridge. He could feel the wood and hear the water flowing beneath him. He looked back and saw himself meditating in the distance. He smiled, turned and rounded the corner and was never heard from again.

When you brew tea with mastery this doesn't mean you have learned all there is to know about tea; all the information about tea history or lore won't make a tea that transforms people or yourself. Quite the opposite. Such know-it-alls are usually egotistical and spend their tea sessions discussing and debating, writing opinions in notebooks—opinions about the tea or something else altogether. And mastering how to hold a teapot, how to pour, the proper temperature, etc. also won't make tea that heals you or others. To do that, you will have to liberate yourself.

True mastery isn't about control. It is about finding that place in you that connects to the Dao and

allowing it to act through you, so that *it* is preparing the tea. When Stillness itself prepares tea, of course those who drink it will be inclined to become still!

It is the noise of the world and our conditioning in it that has separated us from our goodness. If we do not do wrong, we do the right thing. Without evil in our heart, goodness shines through; and if we're not selfish, selflessness is abundant. All of the saints of all the traditions have verified the inherent goodness of man, and that the return to our inner child, our true nature, is a softening and returning to the Dao. Following tea is finding the Dao in our heart and allowing it to run things, for it is connected to the universal intelligence that has organized the cosmos in perfect alignment and dance.

If tea is to be an art that uplifts those who practice it, and those who participate in it—the guests/observers—it is therefore important for the artist to be all that she hopes to convey. This is a life of tea. And in such a life, the Chajin realizes that in all that she does, from her awakening mind to the last before sleep, in every step, in every breathe, in the way she eats and treats people, in her meditation and all that is between meditation sessions—she is brewing tea!







GIVING IT UP

Article by Steve Kokker

It's often paraphrased from Michelangelo that if you wish to make a sculpture of a horse out of a block of stone, it's really very simple: all you need to do is remove everything that is not the horse.

It's a lovely thought in reference to our own strivings for self-improvement. We seek to be better people and naturally we plan all sorts of ways in which to achieve this only to then get stuck in complex lists of 'Things To Do'. It's a giddy joy to think that we need not add anything at all to ourselves. In fact, quite the opposite, we simply need to remove all that is not necessary to let that higher self stand unencumbered.

Yes, I wrote the word 'simple' twice already. I did so not without irony. Getting rid of that which is unnecessary is much more difficult than the adding on process, just as it is much easier to create habits than undo them. It's how we're wired: once a patterned behavior/thought is neurochemically fused in our brains it takes much more active effort to break this connection than it did to make it. Also, humans are pretty crappy at imagining things they have not yet experienced and at imagining future consequences of totally new behavior.

Yet what a great time of the year to give all this a sporting go: Spring! It feels so right, so organic to clean up and clean out at this time. Suddenly, everything looks truly resplendent when cleaner, leaner. Suddenly, inspiration floods the brain to winnow through boxes and drawers, to wipe neglected window sills, vacuum the inside of winter-encrusted cars... and get rid of that which is unnecessary.

There are three main, sometimes cluttered areas of one's life in which Spring Cleaning can be needed... year-round: the world of Things, the world of Beliefs & Knowledge and the world of Humans. Allow me to reflect here on my own attachments to these worlds and muse about ways to disentangle...

Firstly, though, I should mention that I don't quite agree with the notion that 'there is a time to expand and then comes a time to contract'. It's not quite so simple. It's not like acquisition of all kinds suddenly comes to an end after some specific stage of development, and after that only reduction. Further, I'd caution against looking upon any kind of accumulation as somehow negative, guilt-worthy or evil. For example, we have minds and need to use them, to develop them humanely. There is sometimes an anti-intellectual trend in the spiritual community that seems knee-jerk suspicious of all intellectual or philosophical pursuit. Doubtlessly, urban-dwelling, modern humans can benefit massively from less brain activity and less over-analyzing (even bands from Hall & Oates to the Support Lesbians wrote songs called "No Brain No Pain", so there's gotta be something to the idea!). However, focused development of knowledge, improvement of skills through understanding and proper use of the greatest tool we will ever be handed is a show of duty, love and respect to our physical and mental selves that can be cherished, nourished and not dropped after some arbitrary point.

And yet, now onto the joys of reducing, becoming smaller... the delicate lessness of things...





The World of Things

I've had a collector's mentality for as long as I can remember. And hey, I wasn't a collector of junk, no way! I collected really cool items! Heavily into all things antique in my teens, I collected old objects with signs of splendid decay: old books (no matter their content, as long as their bindings were crinkled brown and dusty), worn, old photographs (posed groups photos from 1880s-1930s were my favorites); later I had an enviable mini collection of American religious kitsch items (the 3D Last Supper wall ornament and Jesus candle were among my favorites); I liked 1970s TV-show-themed board games (envious were the eyes that beheld my Bionic Woman Game) and memorabilia (you can imagine my joy at discovering, in a post-Soviet market, a Farrah Fawcett shampoo bottle); vinyl-wise I was crazy about everything from Ghostly Sound Effects to Obscure Ukrainian Marches, with protracted stops on the way for disco, electronica and Glenn Gould; and books, well, I collected everything I could about the Pre-Raphaelites, William Morris, and anything at all to do with the history of cinema or photography and the occult. I was also the *de facto* historian of my extended family and collected my grandparents' memorabilia

alongside my self-generated ones too (photos by the thousands, videos in the hundreds of hours...)

By the time I moved away from Canada, I had two truck-loads worth of "Very Interesting Stuff" to store: some 3000 records/CDs, 2000 books and endless boxes of trinkets—from a 1950s wooden school desk to clippings from my first haircut. It has taken me many years to reduce this amount by 90% (and endless hours on Ebay and Amazon. At least others have appreciated my eccentricities to the tune of some \$10,000. One rare book alone I sold for \$1100, and these sales allowed me to live the life of a lowly, traveling journalist for a few years).

I realized at some point that 'things' are part of my karma in this life, specifically the proper dispensing of them (not just tossing them out but finding a good, new home for them). I have learned a deep respect for the material world all the while gradually disentangling myself from the automatic desire to collect and possess.

I've also learned that 'cleaning out' is never just a case of good sorting and throwing out skills; it is more about not bringing in extra items into your life in the first place. It's very easy to buy some interesting item, and there is always justification for doing so, but I remind myself now when contemplating any purchase:

this thing represents future time, effort and expense—it might break and need repair, or it will have to be moved from one place to another, cleaned, attended to, put away, disposed of or carted away to someone else or brought to some landfill. Is this item worth the future expenditure of time and effort? Sometimes yes, and I take it with me (hopefully with some awareness), but often it definitely is not worth the effort and it stays where it is.

This is still an ongoing process for me, but I've made progress, and *wow*, does wide-open space in my apartment feel great!

The World of Beliefs & Knowledge

We are a curious sort, us humans. Literally. We need to wonder in awe, to ask why and seek explanations. A beautiful quality. Yet the acquisition of knowledge gets tied to the entrenching of belief systems and patterned ways of responding to the external world. In our pursuit of new knowledge we often abandon our initial curiosity and become satisfied with an illusion of knowing and the comfort of repeating over and over again habitual behaviors and ways of responding.

Separating the wheat from the chaff is more difficult here than in the world of things. Our beliefs and how they guide our lives are less obvious to us; our pursuit of knowledge seems to be unquestionably a positive thing. Giving these things up is tricky. Knowing when to stop reading every book about a certain subject, to stop turning the pages and start living is a mini-art-form in and of itself. Seeing how we close ourselves to what's around us behind a veil of our knowledge-backed beliefs is the beginning of a high level of non-attachment.

I don't recall how I started this, but as a young kid I somehow got the notion of trying to 'believe without believing' in things. If I felt my brain making a judgment, I'd experiment with not believing it at the same time as I believed it. Somehow I got the idea (probably from one of those dusty old books) to think the opposite of any thought which came into my head and see if I could find any truth in that as well. If I heard myself think, 'Oh that's good, or bad,' I'd think the opposite just for fun and see if that was also true to some extent. The damnable thing was that there was *always* truth to be found in the exact opposite of my stated belief, no matter how firmly I *really* thought it to be true.

I recall, for example, loathing to go to big parties or events where there were lots of other kids around, like children's Christmas parties organized by my mom's workplace where we all had to straddle Santa's knees and be cute. I would repeat to myself, "I don't want to go! It'll be boring and I'll hate it!" I tried out

the opposite: "I do want to go. It'll be interesting and I will enjoy it." At first I grumbled but then remembered previous times when I was dreading something and it turned out to be great; there was nothing inherently dread-worthy about this event, and my anxiety over it was weakened. Byron Katie would have been proud of me.

I practiced this kind of 'maybe it's true, maybe it's not' thinking for many years... and then forgot about it as I plunged into life from University on, and collected many rigid thinking patterns which I became, unbeknownst to myself, attached to. Only in recent years have those early lessons returned to play a soothing role. Trying to accommodate the opposite of whatever thought the brain generates is one great practice. Anything which breaks patterns and shifts perspectives can be helpful, for example, the technique of doing things which one is not used to doing, even trivial things, is amazingly helpful at retaining flexibility of mind and spirit (for some cool suggestions, check out www.theundolist.com).

The World of Humans

For me, by far the hardest of all to trim out of life are extra persons. Even that line sounds incredibly harsh to me. Maybe it's my years of psychology and social work training. Maybe it's because at the age of 13 I thought, "If I were to die now, well, I wouldn't want to, but it wouldn't be that bad as my life hasn't been wasted—I've helped some people." Yup, a bleeding heart with a tendency of placing other people's (perceived/imagined) needs well above my own. A familiar story, really.

With the unexamined motto of 'help others at all costs' as one's *raison d'être*, one cannot then ever say no to others. This has resulted in hundreds of hours of telephone conversations where, even after an hour of steady listening, offering advice and saying, 'hmmm, oh-ho,' I've been unable to say, "Ok, well, gotta go now," instead. They *needed* to talk, after all. Always a dangerous territory to enter: assuming what other people need. It can be kind and sweet and other-focused to be attuned to other people's needs. But it can also be the height of arrogance ("I know what they need..."), arise from self-importance ("...and I know how to give it") and lead down murky pathways (people often hope you have what they think they need but can turn away or even turn nasty when they realize you don't).

Best to stay away from others? Certainly not. Best to never be of support and assistance? Certainly not. We all need and benefit from that. Wu De reminds us that we are here to serve. Indeed. Yet not blindly and higgledy-piggeldy. To serve wholly also necessarily implies that one's time must not be wasted on energy-



draining or time-swallowing activities, including social ones. What's wrong with meeting friends, chillaxing, bonding? Nothing necessarily, but if we were to take a hard look at what we do, for how long and with whom in our lives, we'd see that quite a bit of that socializing is not only extraneous for us and them but also gets in the way of the progress we keep saying we wish to make.

A decision to do one thing is in itself an active decision not to do another. By doing *this*, we are actively choosing not to do *that*... so later we cannot fret that we have no time to do *that*. Often we continue meeting people long after our karmas have come together and walked their paths together out of habit, a sense of duty, guilt, or out of an avoidance of doing something more challenging with our time.

Once we become more certain of our particular life direction, with a deeper sense of what we need to do, and stripped of self-illusions, many aspects of our former selves naturally and easily fall away: things, rigid belief structures, and people. We no longer play with the same people we did at five or fifteen years old, right? That we don't says nothing bad about them. Just that our time to walk down a common path together has ended and that we have both moved on, enlightened and perhaps wiser by our having spent important time

together. It can be incredibly hard to part ways when one person does not recognize the need to do so, but in the end it can be much more costly to continue a relationship which has outrun its course and which leaves no free room for others to move in for the next dance.

Oof! As usual, I have been long-winded and yet only said one-fifth of what I could about this massive subject. I shall likely tackle Giving Up another time, as I myself continue to learn more the value of what Laozi already wrote long ago in the Dao De Jing, verse 48 (another paraphrasing): the worldly person devoted to learning seeks to gain something every day; the person devoted to the Dao seeks each day to give something up.



TAME TEA LOVER

Article by Siim Loog

Lately I read Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Le Petit Prince*. For many months, my dear girlfriend recommended it, but I didn't read it. Something kept me from it. Maybe I just wasn't ready. Maybe I was too grown up for it. The months passed and passed until finally, I grabbed it from the shelf, opened to the first page and started. I felt happy; the book had lots of pictures, big letters and it was thin. I read it really quickly—forty minutes and done. After that I felt even better. It was the perfect time to read it, as I am on a path of self-discovery through tea. I guess that if I had read it a few years or even a year ago, it might not have had any effect on me. There was a lot of truth in it which resonated with me, especially about our “important” grown-up life and how we are always busy—how we have to *do* all the time. We don't have any time to just *be*...

Of the several interwoven stories within the book, the one that struck me the most was the tale about the Little Prince and the fox. They met one day and Little Prince told the fox: “Come and play with me. I am very unhappy.” The fox replied: “I cannot play with you. I am not tame.” After which Little Prince asked: “What does the word ‘tame’ mean?” “It is a long forgotten thing” replied the fox. “It means making connections.” At last, the fox said: “Please tame me, Little prince. Then we can play and be together. We will love each other and it will give my life meaning.” At first I didn't pay much attention to the story, but later I started thinking about how it was such a beautiful way to explain the word ‘tame’.

I'd previously thought that tame means to compel something or somebody, and always thought of it as

a bit of a bad thing. Like a trainer who tames an animal; this always seemed to me a bit harsh or violent. Maybe the animal doesn't want to be tamed and wants to be wild, so why tame her/him? Do we always have to interfere? But now I think I have seen it wrong all along. Of course there can be abuse between master and pet, but sometimes there is something else behind their relationship. It is connections that they are making. They are doing something extremely beautiful: trusting each other! The trainer gives the animal a bit of her soul and takes some back in exchange. They are then soulmates forever. Tame can be something beautiful, though we may not notice it...

The point of this story may be that I feel that tea has tamed me. If I start to look at my present life and how I am living it, I see that tea is everywhere—mostly in my heart. I am living more peacefully than ever. I am healthier; my thinking has improved and some of my fears are vanishing. Tea gives me the strength and wisdom to carry on. We are soulmates, I need her to continue my path. Something beautiful has happened: I opened my soul and tea came and tamed me. Now she is part of me and I hope I am hers. And I believe most of you have experienced the same. So to all of you tamed friends, lots of hugs and be well...





FIRST HOUSE RULE

Article by Lindsey Goodwin

Recently, Wu De painted two house rules on the wall above the kitchen table. The painting reads:

HOUSE RULES (non-negotiable):

1. Hug everyone in this house everyday.
2. Be in Love.

—*Your Heart*

I went to art school, so unusual rules are not new to me... but these are some pretty awesome rules! In this issue, I'm going to talk about the first rule. Next month, I'll try to talk about the second rule...

What I'm about to say may shock some of you, but I'm going to say it anyway: I used to hate hugs. No. Not hate. Loathe. I abhorred hugging. Yes, that's more like it. Abhorred.

With a few rare exceptions, hugging generated in me not so much a discomfort as a deep distress coupled with a feeling of wanting to either run out of the room or crawl out of my own skin. It pressed play on a bizarre mental tape that usually went something like this:

Oh, no. This person wants to hug me. Ugh, ugh, ughhh. Maybe I can get out of it... No! Ack, I can't! They're going in for the kill! What if they just took out the trash and their clothes are all germ-y or they just touched money and their hands are all germ-y and they get germs all over me? What if I bump into their nose or poke their eye with my nose or elbow them somehow? (And, if hugging a male, What if I accidentally bump into their junk and they feel uncomfortable or they think I did it on purpose???) What if the other person doesn't like the way I smell or I breathe on them and my breath is bad? Ugh, now we're hugging and I HAAAATE it! Ick, I can feel their heartbeat! I can feel my heartbeat and it's beating all weird and hard! Eww ewwwww! Deep breath. NO! WAIT! They'll feel me breathing. Gross. I'll hold my breath until after it's over... starting... now! Are they going to be one of those long huggers? Yestheyarenoooo... Makeitstoppleeeeeease... Umm, umm, panic? Yes, panic! Now I'm in a panic and that makes my nipples hard and of course I'm wearing the bra that makes my nipples look really pointy today and they're going to see my nipples and think I'm aroused from hugging them when, in fact, it's because I am terrified of hugs! I really,

really, really hope this is over soon. No, forget hope. This is a hopeless situation, and I think I'm going blue in the face from not breathing. I'm ending this! Hug officially OVER!

There's no way I can know for sure, but I'm pretty sure that my distaste for hugs was palpable. It certainly showed in my technique, which I'll outline for you in case you aspire to being the world's worst hugger:

1. Try to get out of it by playing dumb/unavailable. "What? It's hug time? Oh, I hadn't noticed that everyone else in the room was hugging! Oh, gee-gosh-darn-it, I have something in my hand/something I need to go do that makes me magically unable to give/receive hugs right now. Maybe next time! Bye!"
2. If you can't get out of it, try to make it as quick as possible.
 - a) Making it extra casual helps get it over with quickly. "Oh, alright, chum! A hug it is. Quick little pat on the back and then I'm gonna run away, cool?"
 - b) Making it extra awkward also compels the other person to end the hug sooner. I found that hugging in a weird position does this well. Aim your face for their armpit or something equally strange. Don't just leave your butt sticking way out—make sure the only points of contact are arms, collar bones and above. For many women, this means leaning in an extremely contorted way. All the better. In most cases, the other hugger will quit long before you do.
3. If they aren't getting the hint that speed is the key, try an awkward, overly jovial laugh followed by a gentle shove off.
4. Above all else, do not look the other hugger in the eye at any point before or after the hug. They will see your panic and that is unacceptable. Take any and all necessary steps to avoid eye contact. Laughing extraneously gives you a good reason to look at the floor/the wall/nowhere in particular/*not at the other hugger*.
5. (Optional) If there are multiple people in the room and you've just gotten through the first hug, back away slowly (or quickly). If necessary, make an excuse about some urgent thing that you 'need' to do right away.



This foolproof method to messing up a hug works on everyone. I mean *everyone*. A while back, I even tried it on Amma (the so-called “Hugging Saint”). Lemme tell you, it worked!

For those of you who have met me recently, this information may (or may not) come as a surprise. I love hugs now. So how does one get from having an ego that reacts so negatively to hug time to being cool with hugs and living in a house where hugging is one of the ONLY two rules in the house? Here’s how I did it:

Tea

Tea is the most beautiful and gentle gateway to presence and acceptance that I have ever felt. When you’re so twisted up inside that you can’t even stand the feel of your own heartbeat (much less someone else’s), trying to do a ten-day meditation course is probably *not* the best medicine for you. You need something to bridge doing and being. Tea was, for me, the remedy. It helped (and helps) me to be comfortable in my own skin and, through that, to be comfortable in other people’s arms.

Furthermore, tea helps me feel comfortable being present with and accepting of other people. You can only sit down in silence and share a deep experience with a small group of people so many times without letting them into your heart. Sharing tea with fellow students and new visitors alike is a deep healing of the heart that opens me (and, likely, you) to sharing genuine bonds that transcend the mundane and the material, bonds that recognize the divinity in each and every person present. From that vantage point, where the holy permeates all of us, hugging is easy. It’s no longer just an ego bristling up against another ego or a body clumsily wrapping itself around another body. It’s godliness connecting to more godliness. And what’s not to love about that?

Meditation

Did that mental tape loop I played for you earlier feel at all familiar? Maybe it isn’t hugs for you, but there’s probably something that does or has pressed play on a similar recording for you. Meditation is incredible medicine for this. Through the simple act of sitting still and focusing on your breath or physical sensations or *anything* other than your mental garbage (or even by

First House Rule

focusing on your mental garbage *as* mental garbage), you can begin to turn down these recordings or to erase them completely.

Meditation can also help you connect more to your body, learning to recognize where you are holding muscle memories, anxiety, tension and other energies that prevent you from being who you really are underneath all the trash you've been building up for the bulk of your life (or longer).

When you acknowledge these sensations as mere sensations, these energies as mutable and these habits as nothing more than habits, you can initiate a profound transformation. This can mean (amongst many other things) going from a person who goes into a tizzy every time the possibility of hugs arises to someone who loves hugs. I'm not a betting woman, but whatever your equivalent of hugging is, I'd hazard a guess that mediation can fix it, alleviate it or help you transcend it.

Living in an Intentional Community

Living in an intentional community is wonderful. I mean, it's really hard. Which is to say that it's rewarding. By which I really mean difficult, but also incredible. Do you know what I mean? Because I don't know what I'm talking about. Except for this: Living in an intentional community promotes intentional, conscious living, thought and action. It takes whatever issues you might have simmering and cranks up the heat on them until they've boiled away.

In my case, part of this has been getting over my charming little hug problem. It all started with Wu De recognizing that I wasn't comfortable hugging pretty much anyone when I first moved here. (Tea and meditation had been helping prior to me moving here, but I still had a lot of work to do!) So what did he do? He started telling everyone to hug me: Resident students. Visitors. Anyone. "Hey, welcome! This is Joyce, this is Fresco, this is Fiona, this is Lindsey... Hug Lindsey. A lot. Every day." At the time, I was all, "Gee, thanks, Wu De. I really need more panic in my life. Don't we all?" But on some level, I still knew that I DID need the panic until I DIDN'T need the panic. What I mean to say is that you can overcome these mental habits by forcing yourself to face them head on, over and over, until you realize how completely unnecessary they are. For me, hugging lots of people countless times was a training drill. It was practicing the same maneuvers over and over in preparation for an anti-battle/hug-war. And that hug-war arrived around the same time as the rule. It came in the form of Greg Wendt.

The Patented Greg Wendt Hugging Method

I had been warned about Greg's mind-blowing hugs for months before he arrived, so I had plenty of time to prepare. Greg's hugs are the stuff of legend, so when Wu De announced an impending visit from Greg, I knew what was up. I didn't have to wait for Wu De to





say “I’m gonna sic Greg on you” to know that his visit would require me to transcend my hug issue.

Fortunately, we tend to have all the right guests at just the right times to help us learn all the lessons we need to learn just when we need to learn them. So in addition to hugging the usual suspects (Shane, Kaiya, Joyce and Wu De), I also got to practice hugging guests including Skylar (one of my favorite tea sisters), Tien Wu (a true tea goddess) and Merlin (the love of my life) before Greg arrived.

And you know what? Practice does make (room for) perfect(ion). By the time Greg got here, I welcomed his hugs, as well as the hugs of everyone else. I was even lucky enough to receive some hugging instruction from Greg on his patented hugging method, which I’ll do my best to paraphrase here:

1. Hug heart to heart.
2. Hug harder, softly.
3. Hug more yummiy. (Optional: Try to “out-yum” the other person.)

During his visit, Greg even shared some advanced tips with us, like always hugging heart to heart. And if hugging had a ranking system, all our hugs would have jumped like 500 points because of his visit. (Seriously, if you want to become a better hugger, go find this guy in LA and get a hug lesson from him. Amazing!)

Forgiveness

Sometimes, people mess up. That means me. That means you. That means all of us. Sometimes, we get

upset at each other and our egos and bad emotional habits get all activated and the idea of hugging seems terrible all over again. Sometimes, my ego takes over and I don’t hug everyone everyday. It usually uses a postponement (“It’s late in the day and I haven’t hugged anyone yet, so I’ll just skip today and try again tomorrow.”), a projection (“Wu De is busy and probably doesn’t want a hug right now.”), a rejection (“Kaiya is all farty right now. I’ll hug him after this round of gas passes.”) or some other inane excuse (“Oh, that says House *Rules*? I thought it said House *Ruies*! Ah, tomorrow, then!”) to get around rule number one. Sometimes, we all get into a little rut as a group and skip hugs for a couple days, and I start to blame my former hugging problem on some level. But to even begin to try to hug everyone everyday requires a lot of forgiveness of others and maybe even more forgiveness of myself. Was I terrible at hugging for a long time? Absolutely. Does that mean I am now, or that I can’t hug everyone everyday? Nope.

I might never hug everyone every day for a long stretch. But that’s what new days are for. Start again. Let go of yesterday. No problems? Hug everybody! Got a problem with someone? Hug it out! Don’t skip anyone. Don’t wait until tomorrow. Them’s the rules, and they’re non-negotiable!



When you begin down an Eastern path, and Cha Dao mostly heads East, you quickly realize the important role language can play in our thinking, and consequently our insights. For the most part, we come to love the ancient spiritual words in languages like Sanskrit and Chinese—for their subtlety and breadth. There is one English word we’ve come to like better than its Eastern equivalents, however: “Enlightenment”. When most people think of “Enlightenment” they see in the word the “light” and are reminded of the divine light in us, which we all travel towards. But “light” in English has another meaning: *not heavy*! Being enlightened means, literally, *lightening up*! Don’t take yourself serious, or anything else for that matter. There is an old Indian saying: “Beware the spiritual man that takes himself seriously!” And many of you know how we here do so love laughter and humor. We thought that these newsletters might be getting a bit heavy now and then and that we would en-lighten them up.

GTH SCRIPTURES

Nonsense by Maxim Shvedov

Confucius said: “Is it not delightful to have a GTH envelope coming from distant quarters?” (*Confucian Analects* by James Legge, 1893).

Lao-tzu said: “Opening a GTH envelope is like boiling a delicate fish. When the envelope is opened by the Way, Malicious influences lose their power” (*Tao Te Ching* by A. S. Kline, 2003)

They say that when Buddha was in *Grdhrakuta* Mountain he turned an envelope in his fingers and held it before his listeners. Every one was silent. Only Maha-Kashapa smiled at this revelation, although he tried to control the lines of his face. Buddha said: “I have the eye of the true teaching, the heart of Nirvana, the true aspect of non-form, and the ineffable stride of Dharma. It is not expressed by words, but especially transmitted beyond teaching. This teaching I have given to Maha-Kashapa.” Though there are many uncertainties about the interpretation of the materials in that envelope, it is widely recognized to be a Global Tea Hut monthly envelope. We hope that further studies will throw more light on the matter.

Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh teaches us: “You must be completely awake in the present to enjoy the GTH Tea of the Month”.

There are also Three Jewels (*Ratna-traya*) as referred to in Buddhism: Tea, Gift and a Newsletter.

I always knew this wisdom was here: I remember once, when I was a kid, I asked my father what a big metal bird in the sky was. He told me then that it

was a Magical Bird (presumably Crane) Lu Yu sat on to carry GTH envelopes to each member around the globe (Siberians did know the Earth was round by then). I didn’t know then it was my destiny to become a part of this Tradition, but these words somehow echoed in my heart.

I still remember the day I got a GTH envelope for the first time, like it was yesterday. I recall it especially clearly because it was the day after another winter day in Tomsk (If checking Google Maps try looking to the West of *In-the-middle-of-nowhere*). When I found myself holding the envelope, I felt a great power. I knew there was something inside for sure and felt it was huge, something that could change my whole life. I felt like pronouncing myself the High Priest of a new religion. And right at that moment, as I was imagining beautiful clothes covering my body and the golden throne I would sit on, my wife came over and asked what I had received. I was afraid she would like the clothes for herself and told her it was an invitation to the wedding of my boring uncle Ilyas because I was sure she would definitely not be interested in that.

The whole next day I was excited. I was walking around ruminating on the new life I was about to start: all the women were mine, all the bullies (plural) from high school were down. I went to the kindergarten and told the nanny I would never sleep in the afternoons again (and even made her go to sleep), because my power was limitless. But then I remembered a phrase from some very wise book an old shaman once gave me: “With great power comes great responsibility!” Responsibility was something I definitely didn’t want to take, and though one part of me was telling me that with that power I would be able to cancel the responsibility part, the other

was strong enough to make me share this power with friends and family.

From that time on, surprisingly, my life has indeed changed: women have started to come to my apartment (without any problems from my wife), guys from the neighborhood have stopped taking my lunch box and started to show up at my tea table instead. I've also got some nice shorts my master was wearing while giving seminars in Novosibirsk. Even boring uncle Ilyas and a wonky Buddhist named Denis (also haunters of the Hut as I learned later) look friendlier now.

Month by month the tension has loosened and I have finally told my wife that uncle Ilyas neither got married nor invited us. (She was not surprised, to tell the truth.) At first, I really worried about all this positive change, because it meant I was becoming a better man and I knew for sure from the American movies that happiness meant the end of the story...

Drop by drop, such worries have left me too. I felt my body getting thinner and thinner, my mind wider

and wider... until the moment I left my physical body and transformed into formless consciousness. I can travel limitlessly now, coming to all of you to share a bowl (and of course stare at you when you're taking a shower). I can even get into some people's minds and tell them what to do (This is, by the way, how I am writing this essay right now: poor guy with a weird name, "Kaiya", really believes the whisper in his head is Divine Wisdom. He is typing this, not me.)

Oh, I am sorry, the nurse has come to give me my pills; it's time for me to go now. To the nurse: "This is how you treat a holy man, Lindsey?! You promised me a comic book yesterday! Marrs-Man?! Okay, sounds nice!"

P.S.: Few of us know it, but after receiving a transmission from the Scandinavian Gods, our master (aka "Grandfather Stone") had to change his eye for a stone one that grants him the power to look beyond what the worldly man can see. I have proof:



We plan to introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you each month in these newsletters. We hope that this helps us all get to know each other better. It's also to pay homage to the many manifestations that all this wonderful spirit and tea are becoming, as the tea is drunk and becomes human. The energy of the tea fuels some great work in this world, and we are so honored to show you some glimpses of such beautiful people and their tea. We thought we'd introduce you to the radiance that is Dawn Olivieri!

Wayfarer: A person who travels on foot; traveler, wanderer, voyager. Yeah, I guess that's me, through my relationship with existence. What have I learned so far? That I'm here. Anything that comes to this space and meets me in this moment, I invite with the love and honesty that Truth embodies.

I wasn't always the kind of person with time for tea. For a long while I was consumed by a fast-paced, jet-set existence of superficial trappings fueled by the ever-popular cliché that the grass is always greener. After hitting a wall layered in mortar, and made of my own philosophies, I sat grounded by my unhappiness and commenced to work through a very simple greed equation: If everything you put merit in is clean, new, and "better than everyone else's", the second any of it loses its "shine" it immediately needs to be replaced. Trapped in this shallow philosophy of comparison, when are you finally satiated? When are you enough? The game goes on infinitely. The answer is never. It's a trap. Pulling myself from the wreckage of a toppled perspective, I began, beaten and broke, down my next path with only willingness as a companion.

I'm a girl that possesses a selective memory (not by choice) so the past and its events have always come in and out of focus—not always sure what is the mirage and what has actually happened. And the future has always felt so unpredictable and malleable, so aside from day dreams, I've kept clear of that tight grip on plans. But the present... that seemed delectably accessible. I call it my playground, my castle, my fort-made-of-bed-sheets, my Truth. I choose to spend most of my time Here/Now. I have also been blessed to share this moment with the vocation of an actress where being present is a commodity—a high priced bounty on the head of awareness.

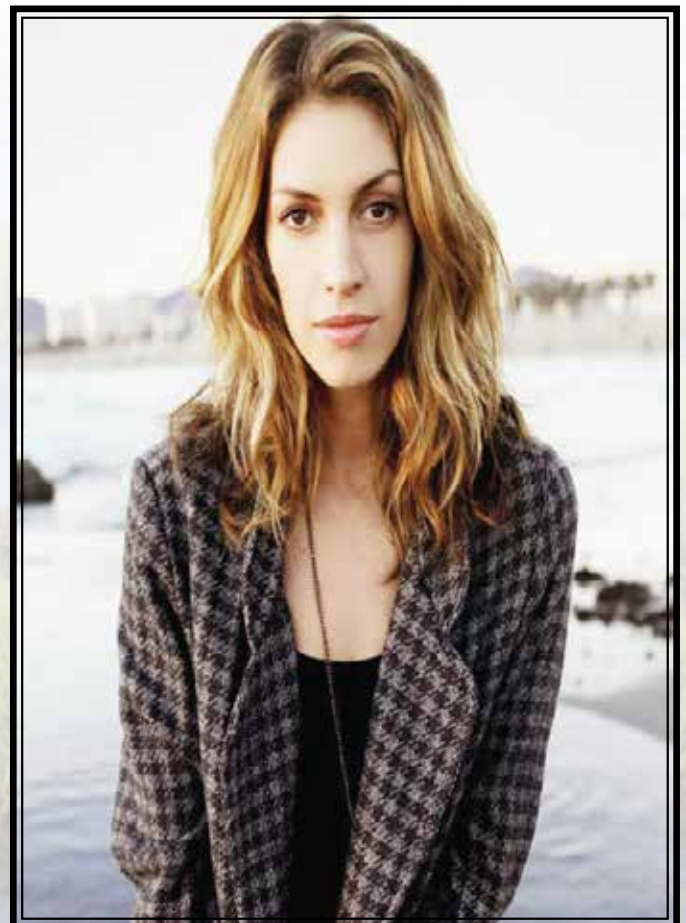
Even before the Leaf, I found myself hot on the trail of Truth—the elusive yet ever-present conceptual comfort food. Nature emits it, animals survive under its grace and tea invites you down its dewy path. So I followed. For me, tea holds an honest space. It requires only truthful reverence through presence and the more you give to Her, the more she gives back to you. It's the perfectly imperfect exchange. Imperfect because why should boiling hot water mixed with a simple leaf have the pow-

er to bridge a connection for you spiritually through the moment? Perfect in all accounts because of the very same notion.

She speaks to me in my moments that I share with Her. Maybe this whole dialogue is too philosophical or poetic in its explanation, but I find the way that Tea and I converse to be a bit difficult to translate. A tea wayfarer I am, for sure. Alongside the space the tea allows and encourages, we all as a collective, travel towards Truth. Imagine, all this happens in each sitting with a little hot water, tea leaves, and an energetic flow of reverence.

That's the Truth.
or at least my Truth...
But I am you...

Just have a cup of tea and you'll see...



The Global Tea Hut website has a forum, where we can all discuss this month's tea and ask or answer questions, as well as share our experiences. It is a great way to meet some of your brothers and sisters in the hut. Come and join us:

www.globalteahut.org/forum

(We are also on Facebook and Twitter now!)



We have a great video series online now. There are many videos about this tradition, tea brewing, the center and Wu De's travels and work. They are all very inspiring to watch. You can visit our Youtube channel via the GTH website or watch the video on the new page at our site. We will be launching regular videos all the time so check back!



There are currently 150 people in Global Tea Hut from all around the world: countries like Spain, Thailand, Russia, Estonia, Australia, New Zealand, America, Canada, USA, the U.K. and Taiwan. Our accountant, Kaiya the Magnificent (and Merciful) says that things are abundant nowadays so we should all live happily everafter, forever and ever! Membership will be limited to 200ish members!



If any of you are interested in seeing these newsletters in color, you can read them on the Internet at the GTH website, under the link for 'newsletters'. Some of the photography is worth taking a peak at.



You are all welcome to visit our center in Taiwan. All classes, as well as room and board are completely free of charge. We have tons going on. You can read more at:

www.teasagehut.org

We weren't able to send the envelopes without having them registered. This is because the post office informed us that they will be mishandled that way. If your envelope is returned to us, we will send it back. If it gets lost, please let us know. Try to choose an address where someone is sure to be home during the day to sign for it. Also, remember to pick it up from the post office. If you really, really require unregistered post, let us know...



Wu De' is planning a trip to Russia this summer. He will be doing workshops in both the east (Siberia) and the west (Moscow, St. Petersburg). We are also planning a bunch of events for this August in LA.



Atonio, our dear Spanish brother and past Teawayfarer, gave birth to a healthy baby boy this month! His name is Max Moreno. Congratulations to him! You are in all our prayers. Max is officially the youngest GTH member to date!



Our center here in Miao Li, Tea Sage Hut, just got a new kitchen! As many of you know, this was a long time coming. The new kitchen is gorgeous, complete with a kitchen god, new cupboards, stone counters, a kuan Yin, and much more. Come over and share a meal!

www.globalteahut.org
www.teasagehut.org
www.the-leaf.org

Be happy!



Our Project

Our center (Tea Sage Hut)

- Expenses (essentially covered by local donations and Global Tea Hut)
- Food and entertainment, trips and gas for visitors who wish to see Taiwan
- Bowls and tea for every guest to take home
- A Puerh Cave on the third floor
- A library of vintage teas for future students to study from
- A Large collection of various teawares to learn from

Future Center (Light Meets Life)

- ~~Mountain land (We got it! Chek this one off)~~
- Building (we will need from between 1,000,000-2,000,000 USD)
- Gardening (both landscaping and vegetables for eating)

Publications

- *The Leaf, Tea & Tao Magazine* (Online and free at: www.the-leaf.org)
- Translations of some Chinese texts for free distribution
- Printing of pamphlets and introductions for free distribution
- The purchase of copies of Wu De's books: *Faces of the Master*, *Tea Wisdom*, *Way of Tea* and *Zen & Tea*, *One Flavor* for free distribution at our center

Videos

- We still need around 500 USD worth of equipment
- We are also looking for alternative ways to better host/share our videos