

Global Tea Hut

NEWSLETTER #18, JULY 2013
the true



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.



July 2013

In July, the year passes its zenith on the summer solstice, and we enter the decline. The peak is a time of celebration, warmth and light, as well as a reminder to start preparing for the winter—literally and metaphorically—in all that we do. Crossing over into the second half of the year also teaches us about impermanence, as every upward climb reaches a peak and heads downward. And falling into the second half of this year makes it feel as if time is moving quickly, summer fleeting by us. A human life is precious, indeed. Let us celebrate the remaining warmth and light, cherishing our priceless time on this earth!

July is the perfect time for tea outdoors, and for being in Nature, traveling and moving. Birdsong is the perfect rhapsody for a summer tea session near a river. According to traditional Chinese wisdom, summer is a time for eating less, moving more and getting up earlier. It is also the perfect time to align yourself with the stars; perhaps sleeping outdoors under the open sky. Our teas get lighter with our spirit, and often move with a vibrant Qi that matches the world around us.

In the tea world, summer is a time for farmers to take it easy. There are some exceptions, of course. Some of you can remember the Eastern Beauty Tea we sent out last summer, made by Master Gu and his son. (You can read about it in the June 2012 newsletter—all of which are posted on our site.) Well, they are very busy this time of year, harvesting the bug-bitten leaves that will be heavily oxidized into this year's Eastern Beauty Tea. They aren't sleeping much these days, as the tea needs to be monitored day and night. Send some light out to them: for a good harvest, with juicy buds and delicious, golden liquor!

Summer is also the main harvest of Sun Moon Lake Red Tea, which we plan to send out again some time soon. As some of you remember, we get our SML tea from Mr. Shu, whose simple life in harmony with Nature has always astounded us. (You can read about him in previous newsletters as well.) This year there was a drought and a rare insect infestation around Sun Moon Lake. Mr. Shu told us that many farmers were busy spraying and re-spraying pesticides on their tea,

hoping that it would help. The particular bugs attacking the tea only come once every ten to twenty years, and together with the drought, many people there are struggling. Despite all the trouble, Mr. Shu has stayed committed to organic farming. With great wisdom, he told us: "Better to accept what Heaven gives us—fortune or misfortune—and thereby live in alignment with Nature and the Heavens, than to try to force our will onto things, which only brings greater misfortune in the long run. I may have less this year, but I will have more in another. It will all lead to balance..."

In the Chinese lunar calendar, this month will pass into the Lotus Moon. On the sixth day of this sixth moon, there is a Buddhist tradition of "Airing the Sutras". The old scrolls and teachings are taken out of the vaults, cleaned and were traditionally aired out to prevent molding. According to legend, the great monk Xuan Zhang returned to China with many scriptures only to drop some in water on this day. He rushed to dry them and ended up saving them all, allowing Buddhism to flourish in his kingdom. This small holiday has spread to other areas of life, and many Chinese Buddhists have traditionally used the occasion for washing bedding, clothes, books and even ritually bathing themselves in some regions.

On the thirteenth day of the sixth moon, some Chinese people celebrate the birthday of the God of Carpenters, Lu Ban. Lu Ban is said to have lived in the fifth century BCE, and was also an engineer, inventor and philosopher. In so many of the old Daoist tales, simple people end up showing great and wise people the true essence of life and Dao. Fishermen, carpenters and wheel-makers were equally able to achieve great enlightenment through dedication to their craft, with deep understanding of the roots of their life in Dao. As *Chajin*, we can also heed their example, finding a path and Way of life through something as simple as tea. The *Lu Ban Jing* (*Classics of Lu Ban*) gathers his wisdom on carpentry and life. The manual has been central to Daoist geomancy (*fengshui*) for thousands of years, detailing all aspects of how to orient a building so that it will be in harmony with the Earth and the Cosmos.



YOUR TEA OF THE MONTH, JULY 2013

White Puerh, Spring 2013, Yong De, Lin Cang, Yunnan

More varieties of tea originate in Yunnan than anywhere else on earth, and most all tea varieties are grown there as well. It is an amazing place, and the birthplace of tea and this life of tea. All tea traditions must ultimately trace their roots back to those old forests in Yunnan, and the ancient shamans who first steeped this medicine.

Yunnan is a magical forest: vibrant and radiant with life, it is home to more than twenty-five percent of all China's living species. Crystal waters flow down from the top of the earth, mineralized on their way down from the Tibetan plateau. Plants are larger here, boasting astonishing blossoms and greater crowns than could be imagined. The mists and rain, minerals, crystals and water all effuse the forests of Yunnan with an unbelievable abundance.

The old tea trees have roots that delve deep into the earth: over thirty feet for a five foot tall tree, and much deeper for taller, old-growth trees. This fills Yunnan tea with trace minerals that can't be found in any other substance on earth, and which help connect us to our source.

Unlike other plants, these ancient trees grew out of the earth solely in response to the human presence on this planet. Tea is an avatar of love—Mother Earth's love for us. There are 3,500-year-old cave paintings in Yunnan with pictures of ancient people offering prayers to old tea trees. The De'ang tribe believes that people are in fact descended from tea trees—leaves that were scattered upon the earth from Heaven.

Tea is a sexual plant, which means that it is cross-pollinated by insects from a male to a female plant. A tremendous amount of natural energy goes into this cycle, lending the seeds great power. Unfortunately, very little tea is seed-propagated these days. Every tea seed is completely unique, alive and full of its own soul. This is an issue for industrial and/or commercial tea producers as every tree will have a different flavor profile and may also have different requirements than the others (providing the trees are domesticated). For that reason, clones are used (splittings or cuttings) so that when you look out upon a tea plantation, all of what you see is genetically “one tree”.

The difference in life force between seed-propagated and cloned tea trees is obvious. Large-leaf tea trees, defined by a single trunk and roots that grow down, can live thousands of years (The oldest dated so far is 3,500 years old!). Small-leaf tea trees, which have many trunks, are more bush-like and have root systems that grow out-

wards, can live centuries. Cloned tea trees made from cuttings cannot survive more than a few decades, and many farmers have recently reported that they are, in fact, living shorter life-spans (One farmer recently told me that the average life-span of a cloned tree used to be 30-50 years in Taiwan; and while that is the case for some trees still, he said, many only live to be around 15-20 nowadays!) There is no comparison between a soul that can live thousands of years and one that can live decades. Furthermore, birds and insects stop eating the delicious and oily tea seeds after the second generation of cloning—Nature knows the process is unnatural!

In Yunnan, so many trees are wild or semi-wild. So-called “semi-wild trees” are the offspring of ancient gardens that were planted long ago and have since been abandoned and uncultivated, producing new, wild children over hundreds of years.

Because every seed produces a new and unique tea tree, Nature has provided us with a tremendous variety of trees (some are man-made, called “cultivars”, but most are natural). And, as we mentioned above, there are more varieties in Yunnan than anywhere else, in part because tea has been growing there longer than anywhere else, and in part because the tea is left alone and seed-propagated in many areas. There are even some varieties that are considered to have mutated strongly enough to be a new species, and not *Camellia sinensis* anymore!

It is common for tea to produce “white buds”, and many varieties—both small leaf and large leaf—have been found. The buds aren't actually white; they are just covered in white hairs (fuzz), which lends them a silvery-white tone. White Tea is made in a few regions of China, mostly from small leaf varieties. The buds are picked, withered and then dried (traditionally in the sun, but often by oven nowadays). Silver Needle (Baihao Yinzhen 白毫銀針) is one famous kind of White Tea, originally from Fu Ding in Fujian Province. Another modern White Tea called White Peony (Bai Mu Dan 白牡丹) incorporates some leaves together with the silvery-white buds.

Our Tea of the Month should **not** be confused with such White Teas. This month's tea is a Puerh from ancient trees in the county of Yong De in Lincang, Yunnan. These particular trees have mutated to have whitish buds, but this tea is not processed like a White Tea, but rather similar to a Puerh: picked, withered to oxidize the tea, fried to de-enzyme and arrest oxidation (there was no rolling since the tea is all buds), and then sun dried. Afterwards, it was steamed and compressed into cakes using



stone molds that are danced upon by farmers, cake by cake in the traditional manner.

Silver Needle White Tea is sometimes also compressed into cakes, along with Oolongs and some other kinds of tea, which began as a gimmick because of the popularity of Puerh Tea. But White Tea, compressed or not, will age very slowly, taking around fifty years to be noticeably different, and will not ferment with the same grace as a Puerh. (What tea does?) This has to do with the symbiotic relationship Puerh has with hundreds of species of molds and bacteria, and before the leaves are even plucked. Our tea is indeed a Puerh, and can be aged. It comes from a grove of wild, mutated and rather old trees that happen to have thick, fruity white buds.

This is one of our all-time favorite summer teas. It is delicious and refreshing to the body and soul. You will find it uplifting, elegant and fresh, while at the same time deep and earthbound—truly a unique and paradoxical tea!

Another feature that distinguishes it from White Tea is that it is incredibly patient, meaning that it can be steeped many times. Usually, White Tea can only withstand ten to fifteen infusions at best, but this white Puerh can go all day...

And you will definitely want to set aside at least a morning to appreciate this magical tea, uplifting and grounding all at once—it is sure to change your day! Of course, it is 100%-guaranteed to be packaged and sent with prayers of love, gratitude, health and happiness...

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.



THE GLOBAL TEA HUT PROCESS

Article by Shane “Mcphane” Marrs

These are the countries to which Global Tea Hut was lovingly sent out to last month (June) and the list is increasing all the time:

Russia. Spain. England. Estonia. Sweden. Japan. Thailand. Costa Rica. Italy. Norway. South Africa. Holland. Germany. UK. Australia. Czech Republic. New Zealand. Italy. Taiwan. Canada. America. China.

As I sat at the post office I wrote down these countries in my notepad along with their phonetic Chinese counterparts, which helped me to communicate with the postal workers, and when you're mailing envelopes to 22 countries around the globe, the more communication the better. That being said, the language barrier also provides a little quiet time to infuse a little more loving-kindness (metta) into each parcel making its long journey towards you.

When all of the GTH packages are sealed and ready to go, Joyce always drives them to the post office. In the post office, I search for one of three women who often assist us. I say one of three women because she in particular has the process finely tuned, which not only paces things along nicely but much more importantly aids in the energy exchange involved. An energy that can't really be defined, but one that borrows from the splendor of this simple poem:

*Each Package a Prayer,
Each a Warming Hug.
Deep, I Bow to You,
Deep, Eternal Love*

I sit on a small stool, the only foreigner in the post office. The postal lady weighs each package as I hand them to her. She runs the information through her computer, and hands me the receipt, upon which I jot down the name of the recipient before the next envelope is handed over. I write down some of the especially long Russian names in advance in my notepad, for otherwise the package is out of sight before I can finish writing the name on the receipt. One by one then, off they go in the eight directions of the world, as symbolized by the eight “Zhong (中)” characters circling the image of tea (茶) on many Puerh wrappers. And so the process unfolds, with only the occasional break

to refill a paper roll or to shuffle the first hundred envelopes around in an excessively large postal bag (or to pause and shake my wrist after writing one of the lengthier Russian names!).

Some of the locals will stand agape at the sheer volume of GTH envelopes, possibly wondering what on Earth this foreigner is sending to so many individuals. Slowly but surely, each parcel passes over the counter and into the grand system that is the Miao Li postal service! I've made it sound slightly mechanical, but it's a sacred act, and in one sense, the most important job of the Global Tea Hut process. It really is the final stage at which the parcel can directly receive a last infusion of Loving-kindness. From the moment it leaves our hands it needs preservation, safety and skilled navigation, which our final input at the post office can really help orchestrate.

It's a postal celebration lasting about an hour and a half at our current membership. With four new countries already on board this month and with Wu De having completed his workshops in Russia, our community should grow significantly for the month of July, meaning more celebratory time at the post office and more brothers and sisters to share tea with.

GTH at the Tea Sage Hut

Global Tea Hut is one of the most enjoyable activities here at the Tea Sage Hut each month. It brings us all together under one thatched roof for the majority of a day or two (or three!), working side by side, listening to spiritually uplifting music, and hand packaging these parcels to send to all of you. On the surface level, each parcel contains a newsletter, a tea-related gift, and a donated seasonal tea. The tea rests for about one month in the heart space of our main altar, beneath none other than Kuan Yin, of which this particular statue offers 800 years worth of Compassion and Mercy onto the very tea we all share each month. Within each package, there is a lot of energy to be consumed and assimilated. Let the tea guide you. She will convey that energy far more accurately than any written word. And then share that energy with all those whose paths you cross...

On the day of GTH, group meditation at the Tea Sage Hut precedes the actual process, followed by a bountiful breakfast together. When the sacred music begins, it's game on. The addresses are printed, cut and glued onto each envelope along with a green customs form declaring



the contents. Wu De details each brown sachet with the date, the tea description, and the tiny picture of a teapot and cups, which means there's always a cup for you here and also that no matter where we are, we drink together. One of us weighs the tea for packing, while others contribute to wrapping up the gifts if needed. More often than not, guests are visiting the center during this joyful occasion and participate with great appreciation. It's always special to be involved in the process of something that inspires you! Once assembled with newsletter, tea and gift, we seal each envelope and prepare them for the post office. This process alone takes at least one full day, not including any time at the post office.

These parcels contain so much more than just tea, a gift and a newsletter, and if I may, I'd like to quote our beloved Tea Brother Maximushka who so poignantly said in our first Global Tea Hut video, "It's more like receiving the whole package of love and warmth which lives in the center in Taiwan and which lives within the hearts of all those people who create all the Global Tea Hut and all the love which lives within all the people around the world who are members of this Global Tea Hut." Max—such a beautiful being—letting the Truth be spoken through him, reminds us that just by being members of this global tea community, we too contribute to the energy involved in this gift exchange.

There is also a lot of time spent in preparation before any of this can manifest. We're always thinking about what gift to send each month and where to source the tea. (Often times the gift and the tea source us.) Additionally, we of course write the articles for the newsletter, tweak the

newsletter format itself, and take lots of photos weeks in advance. We always have a grand editing party around our main tea table, usually in the evening, and over tea. We all use different colors so that Wu De knows whose editing comments to ignore (i.e., Lindsey's). I'll always remember the evening when Wu De gasped in surprise at how little editing one of Kaiya's articles required, as opposed to the red slew of ink that so often smothers each paragraph. (My articles are otherwise perfect, and require not more than humble praise and slight bows of acknowledgement.) We can get pretty silly at times when editing, as you can see...

Back on topic: it's kind of funny to say Global Tea Hut is our favorite time of the month because it's an ongoing process all month. In fact, none of what goes on at the center would even be possible now were it not for all of your participation in this global process. I can't help but think about everything that goes on at our center and how directly connected it is with your involvement. Remember, the Tea Sage Hut is a physical space of community and meditation, healing and humility, well-being and laughter, connection and cultivation of skill, medicine and tea, and is as much yours who live outside Taiwan, as it is ours who physically live here. All the more reason to make time and take the journey over here to see what you've helped create—Abundance!





GONGFU TEA TIPS

July 2013

In a life of tea, one will brew tea for many kinds of people in many different situations. There will be deep and serene tea, celebratory tea—making new friends and celebrating the old—tea indoors and outdoors, in familiar and unfamiliar settings and so much more... Throughout our journey, it is important to remember that this is not a tradition of *making* tea, but of *serving* it! We are here to serve the awakening of our guests, or even the vanishing of guest and host in one heart space. Consequently, it is central to all our tea brewing that we stay centered in the heart, and view connection as our highest aim: connection to Great Nature, our own true and higher self and connection to others.

Every guest we serve will be a reflection of our world and our selves. And not every guest will be a *Chajin* (tea person). Those who aren't may not understand the etiquette at tea sessions. It is important not to be judgmental, as that won't facilitate our highest aim of creating a heart space to connect. Sometimes we can gently inform our guest of a better way of being a guest, showing respect and helping further the magic of the tea ceremony; but most of the time, we will just have to forgive and move on—to be tolerant and patient, remembering that we are here to serve, and the true servant serves in whatever way is needed. If you can help someone learn more about how to be a guest, do so kindly and in private so you don't embarrass them in front of the other guests.

As *Chajin*, however, there are certain etiquettes that we should practice when we are guests. These principals help us show our host respect; and, more importantly, demonstrate a respect for the session itself, which encourages the Tea's healing qualities. Here are a few guidelines you can practice, as a person of tea, when attending other people's tea sessions. (Remember to be patient if you encounter any of these when you're serving tea!):

1) Never wear perfume, cologne or essential oils. Such aromas interfere with the flavor and smell of tea, clouding other guests' ability to fully appreciate their tea. It is often the flavor and aroma of tea that first introduces tea spirit and life to a person, maybe changing them forever.

2) Don't shake the tea. People often want to shake the tea jar/bag/container when they are unable to smell it. This disturbs the tea and potentially breaks the leaves. If the tea's aroma is too subtle, try calming down, breathing deeply

and relaxing—going down to its frequency rather than trying to shake it up to yours.

3) If you get up and then return to the table, pay attention to the rhythm of the cups/bowls. It is polite to watch the rhythm of the brewer and neither rush or slow them down when you are returning to the table. You might wait a round and drink with everyone else the next time, or sip slowly so they can catch up.

4) Pay attention to the energy that the brewer is trying to create and help encourage it. If the host is trying to help the session move into silence, help amplify that. If she is trying to move the tea in a certain energetic direction, help her to achieve that. This helps merge guest and host.

5) Don't fragment conversation. It is much nicer when the guests at a tea session have *one* conversation. *Chajin* are attuned to this and keep the room together, rather than turning to the person next to them and starting a separate conversation, dividing the room.

These are just some of the ways you can show respect to the host of a tea session. There are many more. Also, these are just guidelines; not hard rules. It is important to be flexible and open to anything when serving or being served...

*A place to escape to
When one cannot ease one's cares
in the mountains.
The hut beneath the pine
within the city.
—Toyohara Sumiaki*







SILENT SPACES

Article by Kaiya

It probably isn't common these days for a child to grow up with as much quiet as I did, surrounded by trees, water, animals and fields, not attending public schools, with more time to explore than anything else. I was always more comfortable in silence than out of it. I liked fishing with my grandfather so much for that reason too. It was tremendously peaceful, floating gently on the water, listening to the dragonflies and frogs and watching the herons stand in their graceful poses amongst the reeds. Often as not, we would spend eight or nine hours out there and not catch anything, but there wasn't any sense of disappointment or boredom, and I was always eager to go again. The fishing was at least as much an excuse to get out there and sit in those tranquil places as it was anything else. And when a fish was caught, like the sudden strikes of the herons, the excitement and action and all the noise were there and gone again in an instant, swallowed up by that pervasive stillness before you knew it.

As I grew up, I went through an awkward phase. I would force myself to attend parties or invitations to go out to bars and other social gatherings, in hopes that I might discover the appeal or the trick to the constant conversations and interactions that apparently were fulfilling aspects of most peoples' lives. Inevitably, however, those conversations struck me as strange, pointless or impossible to understand. Time and again I would go, watch, listen and wonder where all that motivation to talk was coming from, then finally shrug in frustration and leave early, wondering why on earth I dragged myself there in the first place. I seemed to be missing something, but I sure couldn't see what. Eventually I came to embrace my love of silence instead of feeling like I was strange.

As an adult, I continued to seek that silent space in Nature through rock climbing, canoeing, hiking, camping, etc. Unable to understand the noise, I wanted to share those silent spaces and the inspiration they always instilled in me (or so I perceived at that time) with others. It always tore at my heart when I would witness something incredible alone, knowing so many people were back in the city locked in their living rooms playing Xbox. From this urge, I came to love photography and the extra incentive it gave me to seek out the quietest, most ephemeral moments at those golden hours of the day in the remote corners of woods, streams, swamps and fields and do my best to bring them back to share with those less motivated, or perhaps unable to find those places and moments themselves. I

wanted to catch the silent spaces and carry them back to the world, to remind people who might have forgotten that such spaces still exist.

Space and silence; silence and space. Amidst the endless energies and interactions that surround us, there are perhaps no two greater Presences than these, entwined like lovers as they are throughout every corner of the Universe. Wherever we look (or listen), Silence is always there, patiently waiting to be heard. Silence is the space out of which noises arise and the space into which they pass away, like so many air bubbles arising and popping on the surface of the Ocean. As so many Daoist stories and adages point out, it is the space within the teapot, between the walls of the house, within the circle of the wagon-wheel that gives them their forms and enables their functions. Without space, there would be only an unwieldy, functionless block of matter. Eckhart Tolle often urges us to begin to listen to the all-pervasive silence surrounding the noise, and to notice the space between the objects wherever we are, instead of the objects. Or even to take note of the spaces between the words on this page instead of the letters. In shifting our attention away from these obvious, dense, solidified forms, our consciousness naturally focuses on the subtle, the transparent, the sublime; it shifts towards the light that surrounds us and then to the light which fills us, opening us to the tremendous power and Presence of the silent stillness that lies within.

Perhaps my favorite analogy is that of an instrument. So many instruments produce their beautiful tones by virtue of the empty spaces within, with each one's unique construction of this space within giving it a unique character—its own voice. Even within the same genre of instrument, no two are alike, and famous instruments are passed on from generation to generation, renowned in their own right in much the same way the famous instrumentalists themselves are remembered and renowned. The same is true of us. Without space, we don't resonate; we are like guitars that have been filled with concrete. If not for the fact that such silent space was present within me, I wouldn't have been so touched by those vistas I sought—I wouldn't have resounded with the music.

The advantage for me of those beautiful, wide open places in the world was also my disadvantage. They are literally brimming with so much Presence, so much Silence, that even the occasional noise or two is totally drowned out. Out there, the Presence of space and silence is so strong, so overwhelming, you feel as though you can reach out and touch it. It presses upon you physically,



overpowering your mind, washing over you and purifying you like a swim in the ocean. Perceiving the vastness and power of it to be so obviously ‘outside’, so much bigger than me, how could I ever imagine it might be no different than myself? In a way, it parallels the tendency to look to the dense objects in the room instead of the space. The Presence without was so much more obvious to me than the Presence within at first, it was easy to miss.

Trying to catch it and share it with my photography was a nice idea, but now I’ve come to see how flawed it was. I was treating those spaces as places I had to go to, as something I had to catch, to bring back and give to people, never realizing that it was within me all along. Best of all, I know now that it can’t be given to anyone. This seems depressing at first, but then you realize it’s actually so much better, because everyone has it already! It doesn’t matter if they live in a Villa on a cliff in Malibu or are serving a life term in prison, anyone can find it at any given moment; and it doesn’t take hours of hiking and scrambling through

bushes and rocks to find. All that is required is a skillful word, a finger pointing in the right direction—or perhaps a bowl of tea...

For me, of course, it was the bowl of tea. Tea finally introduced me to the recognition and discovery of those hidden pockets of silent space within myself. At the time I actually thought the quiet was “in the tea”, making that same mistaken distinction between it and myself. But as with those mountain vistas, tea has within it a natural inclination to touch that space within us, to find that chord in our hearts that resonates with Nature, Presence, silence and space.

As anyone who has drunk tea with us will tell you, paying respect to that place within us is an integral part of the tea we drink. So much so that it is often misconceived as some kind of ‘rule’ that tea ‘should’ be drunk in silence. I can’t count how many times I’ve had emails from afar along the lines of “We had such a nice tea ses-

Silent Spaces

sion, but we weren't quiet like we should have been," or "We probably shouldn't have talked so much, but..."

But that there are no such "shoulds" or "shouldn'ts" is the great beauty of space, and a tea space is exactly that: the one serving tea is holding space for guests, and space allows for anything to happen. It has, well (How else to put this?), plenty of space! At the same time, it is important to approach a tea session with space *for* that space, as it were. After all, why is it that we are all sitting here gathered together at this table? If there were no pot of tea sitting there steaming away, waiting to fill our bowls, we wouldn't have sat down in the first place. That tea has been sitting in constant meditation longer than I ever could, be it a week, years, decades, or longer. For the sake of bringing us all there to commune with each other, this tea has willingly broken its devoted meditations to come out of its chamber to greet us and preside over this coming-together of spirits. It's no small gesture, and deserves our respect.

Sometimes we hear the old "Why tea?" question paired with wise words such as "the Dao can be found in anything, so why not apple juice?" Wu De recently gave us an awesome answer to this, and it was that although the Dao can be touched anywhere, be it walking up the stairs or drinking a glass of apple juice, it isn't everywhere you look that it touches you back. And as we have all discovered through these Living Teas that have found us, tea touches back! Tea is Nature; I spoke of thinking that silence was my friend, of growing up with silence. But tea was *born* in silence, and raised with it for a million years and more before I ever came kicking and screaming my way noisily into the world.

As such, how much greater is Tea's appreciation for and desire to share silent space than my own? So it should come as no surprise that, often, Tea asks us to spend a little time in communion with Her first, thus finding the silence within ourselves, purifying our spirits and opening a space out of which we can then turn to each other with brightness in our eyes and joy in our hearts and celebrate the light in one another, in whatever form that takes.

Taking that moment to introduce ourselves to the tea and find that space within ourselves opens us up and then enables us to truly communicate with each other in a meaningful way, instead of simply jumping uncomfortably from one topic to another for no reason. And what an opportunity it is, this chance to be introduced to silence by one so intimately and anciently acquainted! Perhaps someone at this table at this very moment has the opportunity to be introduced to that place within for the very first time in their life, as I once was, or perhaps someone who found it and lost it long ago is about to find it again! Such an opportunity may not present itself again for a long time, and I wouldn't want to interfere with anyone's chance to find what I have found.

Just imagine for a moment that you have received news that an ancient and wise old sage has broken

twenty years of meditation in distant mountains to come and share his wisdom before he passes away, and a group of your friends plan to attend. He sits in silence at the center of a great table, preparing to speak, when someone blurts out "Wow, it sure is a lot more humid here than where I'm from." Then across the table "Really? Where are you from?" A conversation ensues for the next hour, and suddenly everyone looks up and realizes the old sage has passed away right there in their midst, never to be encountered again.

We have our whole lives to be noisy, to talk about the weather, to discuss my story and listen to yours. Everywhere you look and everywhere you go, especially in cities, opportunities for noisiness and the facilitation of my own inner noisiness abound. It is a rare opportunity indeed to sit at a table with someone who can lead us into stillness. But that introduction only takes a moment, it need not go on for hours and hours, and in truth even a chatty tea session still has silence in between the gaps, there for the noticing by those that are awake. On the other hand, once that introduction is made and we begin to appreciate what is happening, the mind's silly questions and discomfort-driven conversations quite naturally fade and melt away, and nobody wants to talk anymore. Which is really what it boils down to. *Neither silence nor conversation should be contrived. Silence that springs from some 'should' and conversations that come out of discomfort or boredom are both unskillful.* But, when either of these arises spontaneously from our inner Center, then there really isn't any difference between them anymore.

Even if we didn't ignore the sage in our little story and engaged him in the conversation about the weather, he would happily tell us all about the temperature fluctuations in his cave with a twinkle in his eye and a smile on his face as he chatted away his last hour on this Earth. He looks around the table and sees only stillness anyway, whether the people there recognize it in themselves in that moment or not. Tea doesn't mind any conversation you care to have; She will preside over arguments and disagreements, negotiations, crude jokes, ridiculous songs and silly-faces (the last two abound around here). Tea is kind, compassionate and understanding. She knows that whether we are hearing what She has to say or not, we are moving ineluctably in that direction, even when we do our best to avoid it. After all, it makes no difference how noisy and cluttered we may make our lives, we will return to stillness and silence at the end of them...

Noise takes energy to produce. Cities must be eternally burning energy to produce all the noise necessary to constantly keep the silence at bay. But the moment there is no more energy to release, silence prevails again, effortlessly. It is very, very quiet the moment after a nuclear bomb has landed and expended itself. Silence and space are the letting-go of the universe. Zen is often described as letting-go. It takes no energy to let go of something, but a

lot of energy to hold on to it. It is natural to let go when drinking tea—to drink a few bowls in quiet reflection. We honor the silence in the tea, and the silence in ourselves. Yet even this distinction still leaves us missing something important. After all, what is silence if not space *for* noise to arise? You can't really separate the two, so if you imagine that the silence is somehow *against* the noise, then it's, well, just your imagination...

As all who come here soon discover, this tradition has a deep respect for and appreciation of that silent space, and its cultivation. But then there are those wacky, silly moments filled with noisiness and celebration too, which somehow seem to pass under the radar sometimes as “not it”, or even “breaking the rules”. Yes, without silence, the noise has nowhere to arise from, and nowhere to pass away into. In this sense, we can speak of the silence, the space, as being the greater powers. They are there before the noise, before the forms; they encompass them effortlessly, without expenditure of energy, which is the true definition of infinite power. They are the letting-go of the Universe itself; they are the spontaneous movements that arise from that letting-go which we all have the power within us to do at any time. When we bring our full Presence into any of

these moments, this is the binding force that encompasses all of them together, and the distinctions finally fade away.

So go on, don't judge yourself. Drink your tea naturally, without contrivance and without “shoulding” on it. The tea doesn't mind, only you can do that. At the same time, don't forget that this tea has had a long journey to come here and meet you today, and that She is old and wise and might have something of great value to share with you if you can shed a bit of that endearing human hastiness for a few minutes. It might well be that She just wants to have one last chatty evening of jokes and playful banter before She goes, just as much as She might want to give you a taste of what it's like to have been sitting in perfect stillness for a thousand years, you never know. Leave it up to the wisdom of the Tea to decide—she has an eye on what's good for us...





Light Meets Life

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This year we have started what will become an annual Puerh pressing! We decided to press our own Light Meets Life cakes once a year to help build and then maintain our new center. The cakes will not be sold, but rather offered at cost with the option of adding a suggested donation to the price. These funds will help us get started building the greatest tea center ever!

This process is important to us for more than just fundraising: It is important that our financial proposal for potential donors demonstrates that we are able to maintain the center once it is built. (Of course, actually maintaining the center financially is equally important once we reach that stage.) Potential donors want to know that they won't have to donate more once Light Meets Life is built—that we will be self-sufficient. Having an annual “Puerh Drive” will not only provide us with an additional source of funds, but also with evident figures that we can show prospective donors regarding our income.

We have done some meditations to connect to the spirit of these old trees in Yunnan—the source of all Cha Dao and one of the Four Pillars of our tradition. The trees are in alignment with a center that will help educate people about plant medicine, respect for Mother Earth and harmony between humans and other life forms. Their energy will consequently also be a part of Light Meets Life, as they give their leaves to encourage us.

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.

The following pages contain a short description of each of the cakes, all of which will be available in Los Angeles for Wu De's trip in August or at the Tea Sage Hut, should any of you come to visit. Each of them is decorated with an important tea saint, painted by Wu De:



Shen Nong's Brew

Shen Nong means “Divine Farmer” in Chinese. He is the legendary emperor who ruled China for a thousand years, teaching the people to farm, boil water and the use of medicinal herbs—bringing them civilization. He most likely represents the collective wisdom of all the tribal chiefs and shamans of pre-civilized China. They say he discovered tea while meditating in the forest. A single leaf fell into his boiling pot of water, and he exclaimed: “This is the ruler of all medicinal herbs!”

The first cake is a 2007 organic Lin Cang Shou Puerh blended with Kun Lun snow chrysanthemums. It is very rare to find a shou Puerh that is organic and has some old-growth raw material, especially since the price of such old tree tea has gone up recently. In 2007, however, it was still possible. The five years have also helped to mellow out the tea, adding depth. Snow Chrysanthemum tea is a rare and highly sought-after high altitude flower tea from Kunlun Mountain, Gansu Province, China. The flowers are picked and sun-dried once a year (late summer), then hand-sorted into various grades. This is the highest grade available, and it brews a lovely liquor with a strong sweet and spicy flavor. It is thought that properties within the chrysanthemum flower have a calming effect that aids sleep. In the Traditional Chinese Materia Medica, Snow Chrysanthemum is said to restore respiratory fitness, regulate blood pressure and prevent cancer.

Lu Yu's Classic

Lu Yu wrote the oldest known book on tea, called simply “The Classics of Tea”. In it he extolled the virtues of tea, discussed water and fire, processing and preparation methods and a deep and spiritual love of tea. One of the most poignant aspects of the book was when he declared that tea was the only time of day that he could rest assured that at that very moment he was sharing the same activity with the august emperor himself—ultimately, expressing the equality inherent in a life of tea. The tea space is one where we leave behind the dust of the ego: our names, our jobs, our social or economic status, our gender—none of it matters in a space of one heart!

This cake is a 2013 Wu Liang. The Wu Liang Mountains peak out at about 3300 meters, making them the tallest mountains in Simao prefecture. The Wu Liang mountain range is in the county of Jing Dong, which borders both Lin Cang and Da Li prefectures. This tea is grown in the area of Wu Liang known as Zhong Cang village at an altitude of 2300 meters. The trees are around 200 years old. These tea gardens are remote and pristine, untouched by any of the environmental problems that other parts of Yunnan face.

Even when young this tea is full in the mouth giving the drinker a persistent warmth and lubricated mouth feel. It's never harsh and never drops off suddenly, thus revealing the healthy characteristics of the trees and environment from which it came. This tea will develop gracefully through years building its character and providing the drinker with ever more complex textures as it ages.

This tea was compressed with traditional stone presses in a small tea factory near Kunming. The tea was also sun-dried according to ancient ways.



Light Meets Life

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Ai Lao Mountain
Spring 2013
Sheng Puerh



Baisao's Single Bowl

Baisao was an eighteenth century tea sage whose bright spirit illuminates our tradition in more than name alone. A Zen monk for most of his life, at the age of forty-nine he traded in his robes for what was paradoxically the more Zen-infused life of a roadside peddler of tea. His bowls were steeped in the ancient and priceless Spirit of Tea, unclouded by money, theory, ritual or even mind itself—a spirit from before the first fingers plucked the first leaves. And those who came by his wayside hut just might have passed by the old man so strangely donning the crane robes of an ancient Taoist hermit, but for the way the spirit twinkled invitingly in his eyes or the softness of his hands as he poured his tea into worn and cracked bowls... And after such a bowl, the passerby left changed somehow, though perhaps not able to grasp the importance of what exactly had shifted their perspective. Commenting on the famous poem by the tea saint Lu Tong called “Seven Bowls” in which Lu Tong describes the higher and higher reaches of each successive bowl of fine tea, Baisao cheekily declared that “Old Lu Tong needed seven bowls to get there, but you’ll only need the one of mine...”

The last cake is an Ai Lao. These mountains rise to about 3200 meters, making them second only to Wu Liang Shan as the highest mountains in Simao prefecture. The Ai Lao mountain range is in the county of Jing Dong, which borders Chu Xiong prefecture. This tea is grown in the area of Ai Lao known as Wang Jia village at an altitude of 2200 meters, making this some of the highest altitude Puerh in existence. The trees are healthy 200-year-old trees growing naturally on steep hillsides and ridges. These tea gardens are arguably some of the remotest tea gardens in all of Yunnan. Lack of roads and access has kept the environment of this area in good condition.

The tea itself is filled with hints of an orchid aroma, and a strong mouth-feel. Honey and grass essences are also present in this thick, soupy tea. This tea (in its young age) is subtler than the Wu Liang Lan Xiang cake, with less bitterness and a stronger aroma. The leaves are fatter and burlier than our Wu Liang tea. It features lots of hairy buds that make it somewhat resemble its close neighbors, Jing Gu Mountain teas.

Like the Wu Liang, this tea was also compressed with traditional stone presses in a small tea factory near Kunming. The tea was also sun-dried according to ancient ways.



THE TEA JOURNEY

Article by Wu De

Though we move further down the road with each passing day, it is the mountains and valleys we pass through that enrich our journey. If you barrel down the road full tilt you will surely reach those distant hills you seek at a faster rate, but you'll also have missed all the glorious countryside along the way. There was a river you passed by just last week that sparkles in a certain way at dawn, and what of that old man sitting under a tree just past the bridge? Do you think he's forgotten the journey? Lost his legs? Why don't we stop and ask him...

"They say," the old man begins, "that when the young Dhara heard that the Buddha had achieved enlightenment and was teaching at a distant monastery in Jetvana park, he immediately felt a stir in his heart. He packed before daybreak and immediately set off down the road—sure at last that he would find liberation at the side of the saint. Dhara pressed on through rainstorms, day and night, anxious to verify what his heart foretold: that the world had indeed raised one up to the Beyond. One day, Dhara passed a sickly woman. She was traveling home for the last time. She pleaded with him to help her home, as she wished to die near her loved ones. Dhara's heart longed to help her, but her road lay North and the Buddha was to the East. He politely declined and continued on his way, praying that another traveler would soon come upon the woman. At last, Dhara reached the glorious gardens, stopping only long enough to rest his fists on his hips and sigh a deep smile: the saffroned sages greeting him as he made his way directly to the main hall. As he entered, all the monks inside were prostrating to the Lord Buddha, shining radiantly on the dais—a testament to mankind's search for the miraculous. But wouldn't you know it," the old man grins slyly, tapping you on the knee with a long, bony finger, "Dhara couldn't see the Buddha at all! He looked at the monks and back at the dais in confusion, wondering what they were all looking at!" And from out his beard the old man under the tree chuckles, wondering what you're looking at...

We all have to start at the beginning. An open heart doesn't make you a saint any more than a vision will make you paint like Michelangelo. Before Michelangelo painted his masterpieces, he swept the floor as an apprentice, learning humility—learning how to learn. Then, he spent years studying how to grind paints and stretch a canvas. Behind every tea master there is a great "*Cha Tong* (tea servant)". This means, of course, that a master needs her

students to help her, for without someone to bring the water and help with small matters she wouldn't be able to serve tea so effortlessly, and the guests wouldn't be so moved. But the deeper essence of this is to say that the master herself was once such a servant, and learned all the basics herself, including how to never stop learning. A precocious boy asked his master how long it would take to master himself and the man laughed, answering, "Five years!" The boy thought that was too long and promised to work very hard. "Ten years!" Confused, the boy offered to move in with the master and work day and night. "Fifteen years!" was the reply. With one eye on the goal, that leaves only one eye to pay attention to what you're doing now and you'll take twice as long. Two eyes on the goal leaves no attention to the lesson at hand, and you'll learn all that much more slowly.

There are hundreds of Daoist stories in which an enthusiastic seeker travels into the mountains to find the sage and meets some ordinary person along the way, like a fisherman, and passes them by, only to find out later that the fisherman was the sage. These stories, like the Buddhist tale the old man kindly offered us, remind us to be content with where we are. There is nothing wrong with being a student. How do you think the master got to where she is? She got there by paying attention to the lessons at hand, one by one. I have a lot to teach because I spent so much of my life learning...

Though there is so much to learn, the Way—the Dao—isn't an accumulation; it is an allowing. The journey to mastery, in life and tea, isn't a gathering of power, skill or focus; it is a reduction. "The Dao is a returning", the Old Sage said millennia ago, as true today as it was then: He meant that the further we go, the less we get in the way and the more our environs influence us—work through us. Mastery isn't about power or control; it's about letting go. 'The worldly person puts something on every day, while the man of the Dao takes something off.'

To learn Cha Dao, we must pass through all the ten thousand lessons of water and how to choose it, laying coals and brewing tea, energetic work and even proper posture, but the most important lesson in Cha Dao can't be taught by a teacher. The spirit of tea isn't in a workshop; it's in you!

The things we seek are already within us and our growth towards the light is a natural process—nothing could be more natural. Spiritual growth is all an allowing. You didn't grow yourself, you just grew—and remember how magical it was to see yourself grow as a kid, measur-



ing and remeasuring yourself against the lines on the lintel. You can aid in the growth, just as you can hinder it, but it isn't your doing. Teachers and traditions can help point the way, and sometimes provide the nutrients we need for growth, but the process is ours and ours alone. And so tea isn't something you learn in a class, from a book or an internet article—tea is your heart when it is open, connected to the Dao and channeling its Divinity. When you are living from the space in you that is connected to spirit and oneness, rather than the disconnected small self—when you are resting in your higher self, present and alive—you have found the goal of all Cha Dao, and the place out of which all great tea flows. Tea prepared from the still center of our hearts stirs others towards that place where we are all one, and leaves them forever transformed and healed. That is medicine. That is Cha Dao.

There are plenty of people at tea shops all over Asia that have great skill in making delicious tea, know all about tea processing, history and lore and can handle many kinds of pots well, but even twenty years later they haven't learned much about their inner nature or how to share that space with others in a meaningful way. This isn't to put down what they are doing or how they're doing it, rather to show that all the training in the world can't open a closed heart. Tea can be so much more than a delicious beverage or a hobby; it can be the plant medicine we need to harmonize this world. It isn't wrong to ignore tea's ability to connect us to Great Nature, to ourselves and to each other, but it is unfortunate if you do. What a world of difference

such tea people could make if they awoke to the vitality and spiritual harmony in the Leaf, and instead of utilizing their amazing skills towards greater sensual satisfaction, focused more on healing the hearts of all the disconnected people around them!

It is when the great skills of a master meet the open heart of a beginner that the true magic happens. Though the greatest lesson in Cha Dao is the Dao, and not the Cha, this doesn't mean we should be lazy and not hone our ability to serve the medicine to others. If the tea is prepared well, its alchemy will flow much more smoothly. In the meantime, as we learn, enjoy the beginner's mind and be okay with being a student, with learning. If we stay centered in the most important lesson, that tea is in our hearts and we don't even need the plant to be with tea, then all the skills will harmonize with us and find their way into our hands in due course. There are a thousand not-so-perfect cups to be enjoyed along the way, each one a blessing and a gift!





LOVING YOUR WORK

Article by Lindsey Goodwin

Last month, I talked a bit about Love. My article had to do with the second of the two house rules here at Tea Sage Hut: Be in Love. There was pontification on loving your higher self, loving a romantic partner, loving friends, loving family and community, and loving a spiritual teacher.

I also promised that this month I'd talk about other expressions of Love, such as loving your work, loving tea and loving the Divine. So now I continue my talk of Love in a few of its other forms, ones which are not so much about loving 'individual' entities as they are about loving something greater. In each of the sections below, I've shared what little I know.

Loving Your Work

I remember going to "Take Your Daughter to Work Day" with my dad when I was little. Within ten minutes of being in his office, I asked, "Dad, do you hate your job?" He laughed, gave me a quizzical look and said yes. He spent more than 40 hours a week, 50 weeks a year, from when I was a baby until I was in my 20s at that particular job. When I was 20, my father was diagnosed with cancer, and eventually he died from it. In the years between his diagnosis and his death, he gained a lot of insight into how he had lived and how he could choose to live. He said his cancer was from hating his job. Over time, he found that he could experience great joy and growth from doing work he loved instead of work he loathed. He took up photography (and got his work exhibited in several galleries). He penned plays and screenplays (one of which was staged in a local theater). He also started writing about his peculiar-yet-fascinating hobby of collecting gourmet hot sauces (and got published in more magazines than you'd guess).

I learned some important lessons from his journey into loving his work. The main one is that doing work that you hate (or even dislike), day in and day out, is madness. Sure, it's a quotidian kind of madness, one which most people accept, but it's madness nonetheless. Despite any rationalization to the contrary, there is no reason to be complaisant about hating your work.

However, there's something else I've learned since then, something that my father's journey led me to understand through a circuitous route: Not being in a work situ-

ation you loathe isn't all about quitting a job you hate and finding a job you love. While a positive environment helps, the love and hate are all in you. If you quit a job you hate and start an exciting, wonderful new job, you may well hate it in a year or two. But if you can find a reasonably healthy work situation and learn to love it despite its limitations, you've figured out something magical—you've discovered a way to benefit the world and your growth, both on the physical and the spiritual levels.

As an aside, doing household work, running errands and the like can also take on a certain power when they are approached as enjoyable activities. I love to play music and sing while I clean, and often find myself dancing around as I fold laundry or do the dishes. Similarly, once I learned to accept that the post office line will always take longer than seems necessary (exponentially so in some countries!), then waiting in the queue got so much lighter for me, and I recently found that there can even be a kind of love and joy in it. (After all, how do I know what's necessary for the post office, and why would I assume that learning to wait in a post office line joyfully isn't an important part of my soul's journey?)

"I have found the paradox: that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love."

—Mother Theresa





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Loving Your Spiritual Work

There are three main kinds of spiritual work that I've experienced firsthand. One is personal growth. One is *seva*, or selfless service. And the third is *dana*, or giving donations. I'll start with the one that's connected to loving your monetary work: *dana*.

Giving *dana* out of Love is a wonderful way to learn to love your work more. It reminds you that you are

not just working for the benefit of yourself, but for many, and for a greater cause. It's also a great way to let go of monetary attachment. And as difficult as it can seem to give freely when you're feeling financially constricted, it is so much more rewarding in the long run. This is because it liberates you from the feeling that you need to have money to have status or financial security or anything else (or that you even need to have status or financial security!). It is something that many people need to ease

Loving Your Work

into, but something that you can learn to love with a little awareness surrounding it...

And then we have *seva*: Giving work to a spiritual teacher or spiritual community out of Love has many levels of personal benefits. These range from the physical (e.g., you helped clean the kitchen, so now you and others can enjoy a clean kitchen) to subtle (e.g., you gave a lot of mental work and energy to a project, so you were able to improve your skill in this area, reap the benefits of the project and, most importantly, learn to do work for the joy of doing work). But these are not yet *seva*. *Seva* is selfless service, and its benefits have much more to do with helping others in recognition that they are you, just as you are them. This starts with and leads deeper into a place of recognition of oneness; it comes from and feeds into being in a state of Love.

Finally, there's personal growth—working on your own stuff! Some of us have a lot of stuff to work through, and it can be difficult and painful to do sometimes. I can't really offer much advice or wisdom except to say that being present through the difficulties and pain makes a world of difference, as does having a spiritual teacher who can skillfully nudge (or, sometimes, shove) you in the right direction for your work. Beyond that, I can only say about personal work the same thing I say about sitting a ten-day Vipassana course: Is it challenging? Heck, yes! Is it worth it? More than I could have ever imagined it would be. And what's not to love about that?

Loving Tea

Loving Tea is a vast topic, one which we've devoted many a page to in these newsletters and in *The Leaf*. While loving Tea may seem, on the surface, like a limited scope for Love, it is anything but. Loving Tea means loving Nature. It means loving Goddess. It means loving the soul of each and every person who sits down for tea with you. It means loving each moment as a unique and beautiful expression of the Divine.

But I don't need to tell you these things. Instead, I'll simply say this: *Have a cup of tea!*

Loving Your Spiritual Tradition

While tea can be an excellent accompaniment to many types of spiritual work, it is also a path in and of itself. For this reason, tea appeals to a broad range of spiritual people. For some, it is a calling, a way, a Dao. Maybe it's that way for you, or maybe it isn't.

Love to serve tea? Wonderful! Follow that Love. Love to practice yoga and pranayama, or to be guided by crystals and tarot? Great, "follow your bliss!" But differentiate between what you're doing out of some surface level of "love" (like thinking something is cool or interesting)

and what you're doing as an expression of the Love that is the Divine energy of the universe, an emanation of Love from your higher self. If it's the latter, then that may very well be your path.

If serving tea is your path, then I welcome you to this tradition as my sister or brother. And if it isn't, then I welcome you as a beloved guest, and I offer one small piece of advice: If you are on your path already, stay on it and do not veer off course. If you haven't found your path yet, seek it as though your life depends on it. And when you find the path that calls to you, stick with it through the serene highs and the rockier times.

I'm not saying that you should go join some abusive cult. What I'm saying is that it's easy for the ego to make up excuses about why a certain tradition isn't the right one for you, or why now is the wrong time for spiritual work, or whatever. Forget all that. Let it fall away and let Love guide you. When you do this, you will likely find that your Love of your tradition grows and grows, and expands outward into all else in your life.

If your tradition is tea, you may find that your daily routines, your diet, your speech, your meditation practice, your taste in music and many other seemingly unrelated areas of your life are all greatly shifted by this Love of your tradition. Over time, as you surrender to your path, all of your life becomes Tea and the Love of Tea. And what more could you ask for, really, than to be consumed by that which you Love?

Loving Life's Flow

Each of these forms of Love I've discussed so far contains within it a Love of life's flow. Loving life's flow means loving the swirl of energies, the cosmic dance of *anicca* (impermanence), no matter what it brings. It means allowing energy to flow through you; rather than actively seeking and avoiding things, it involves being an observer and, when needed, taking action. This is loving life's flow on the scale of one human life, and it is a high state of being in Love.

Loving life's flow can also occur on a scale much larger than that of a single life. It can mean giving yourself over to something greater, something which encompasses numerous people's lives or innumerable lifetimes. This flow may appear continuous or discontinuous on the small scale, but it is part of a greater pattern that is visible when you step back and look at it.

For many people, whether they are spiritual or not, it can involve passing on something gifted to you. For example, a wonderful woman mentored me in my teens and twenties, and much of the good I do today honors her by passing that on. Or it could be a discontinuous passing on of a material object that was gifted to you, and which you later give to someone else.



Loving Your Work

For those on a spiritual path, loving life's flow beyond this lifetime often means being part of a tradition, and surrendering to it as your greater purpose. Through this, you can release your ego in service of your tradition and the many people it benefits.

Either way, this surrender to the larger flow of life leads to a deep state of acceptance and Love for each of its little moments: each tiny, infinite Now.

Loving Reality

Sometimes, accepting life's overall ebb and flow is easier to swallow than actually accepting the difficult moments when they arise. When this happens, loving reality becomes crucial.

Loving reality means embracing the constant change and flow of all things and energies, from the surface level (such as the flow of money) to the spiritual (such as the flow of energy within a spiritual tradition). It means that no matter how difficult a situation is, you can trust in yourself and in the universe that you are completely and fully equipped to deal with it by simply being present for it and accepting it as it is (and, if taking action, by acting in symphony with the present moment rather than reacting to it out of non-acceptance).

On a deeper level, loving reality means accepting each moment as a lesson for your soul to learn on its cosmic journey. It means experientially knowing that "what you resist persists", so you might as well go ahead and get over the fact that something is the way it is and learn to love it for what it is (even if the only thing you can find to love about it is that it's a lesson in acceptance and Love!).

I've only begun to tiptoe into loving reality, and already I've found that my level of stress and suffering has plummeted as a result. And, more importantly, I've found an ability to Love the situations, people and events in my life much more steadily and deeply.

Being Love

Being Love is a very high spiritual state. It's something I've only tasted a few times. From what I can convey of these glimmers of being Love, it is a state without self expressing Love without any borders, and without any particular person/place/event/object to Love. It is completely independent of external circumstances. When people are in a state of Love, they are letting Love flow through them and become them.

This state is so powerful that it feels like a little sink faucet was turned on and it started pumping out as much water as a fire hose on full blast. It's like the antithesis of all those movies where the villain gets some kind of superpower and says something silly like, "Bwahahaaaa! Now I can control the world with my awesome power!"

The thinking mind and its machinations have no place in this; it's all heart. And there's no "I" to take action (much less control anything); it's all part of the infinite. The end result is what appears to be a person doing something completely normal (say, serving tea), but the individual is not there. While there physically, he or she has been replaced on an energetic/spiritual level by something much more powerful and beautiful than any one person could dream to be.

Tea has a magnificent way of bringing people closer to this state. It opens the heart, dissolves the ego and fosters connections so deep that the borders we perceive between all kinds of things (individual people, likes and dislikes, etc.) all begin to fade away. It is no coincidence that "guest and host become one" when drinking tea! I wish that all of you may be in Love and be Love through Tea. May you lose yourself in the bottom of your tea bowl, in the eyes of your guests and in the Goddess Spirit of Tea... and may you find your "self" replaced with something much greater as you surrender to this Love.

"The most important aspect of love is not in giving or the receiving: it's in the being. When I need love from others, or need to give love to others, I'm caught in an unstable situation. Being in love, rather than giving or taking love, is the only thing that provides stability. Being in love means seeing the Beloved all around me."

—Ram Dass





TEA WAYFARER

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. Tien Wu, née Baelyn Elspeth, is our Los Angeles ambassador of this tea tradition, and an incredible woman with a deep connection to Mother Earth and the Sacred Feminine. She took precepts in this tradition earlier this year, and received the name Tien Wu ("Heavenly Dance").

Tien first met Wu De at Temple Tea in Los Angeles. Taylor is a dear sister-friend and Tien had been going to their tea sessions. Then, they hosted Wu De and she got connected to the tradition through these wonderful bowls of tea. "In that bowl, there I was and everything was in it: Presence, spirit, love, beauty, truth, sadness, strength, kindness, compassion, joy, warmth, life, death, space, movement, and stillness. The spirit of Nature itself manifested through this Leaf, awakened by hot water, and served up by this tea monk to nourish me." What a beautiful memory!

Tea is for her a gateway into meditation: "Every morning, I hear the Leaf calling me to wake up and sit with Her. Every morning I find space, stillness, and magic. Every morning She is completely different, yet so familiar. As time goes on like this, I find myself carving out more and more time every day to sit in peace and silence, meditating with this plant."

"The simplest side is the simplicity of tea; of tea not having any dogmatic, linear nature. This is true for myself and for serving others. When I drink tea, there is nothing I have to wrap my head around. I can just drink tea. That opens up the unknown and the emptiness of the universe. And when you can open yourself to receive tea, there's a space of receiving and being in your true nature in the Daoist sense. In serving tea to others, I can give that to others without any expectations, unlike those you'd have with meditation or chanting. There's no, 'Whoa! I'm not ready for that!' Tea is so gentle. She meets anybody where they're ready to be. When I started drinking tea, I was ready for a meditation practice and ready to go deeper, so She met me there. She took my hand and led me to rest in the roots. But if you want to experience tea as something delicious and stay in a more linear, mental state about it, you can do that, too. Part of the beauty of tea is that it has such a sensory surface experience. When I started meditating with tea, any hesitation to meditate ceased and I would just go, 'Oh, I just really want to drink that tea! It's so good!' Then, I'd find myself in a really deep meditative channel. There's really something to this..."

Tien is our ambassador in LA, arranging and organizing events, hosting tea gatherings and always plays a pivotal role in Wu De's visits there. We couldn't imagine this Hut without her, and our lives would definitely be poorer as well. As of now, she is very committed to awakening harmony through tea and this tradition. With other Teawayfarers there is more to describe, other accomplishments, and she is also rich and deep, having acted, sung and worked in a tremendous array of other fields as well. But she's primarily a tea goddess, and we're honored to have her...



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 170 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 250ish members!



If any of you are interested in seeing these newsletters in full 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 peek 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 LA this August. He will be doing workshops in Venice, Ojai and even a trip to the Hopi Reservation in Arizona. Joyce is also coming, making this trip extra special. If you are interested in participating contact Colin "The Hudinator" Hudon! (303-842-4660)



Wu De just returned from a successful tour of Russia. It went incredibly well. There were workshops in the east and west, and dozens of people attended in all. In August, you'll be able to read about the trip and see some highlights! Thanks for all the support.



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 Projects

Our center (Tea Sage Hut)

- ~~Expenses (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! Check 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 need around 500 USD worth of equipment
- We are also looking for alternative ways to better host/share our videos