




USING OUR TRUE NAMES

Article by Jasper Hermans



Since I stepped onto the spiritual path I'm hiking now, it's become more challenging to stay connected with the family and friends that I grew up with. During this relatively short life (I'm only twenty years of age), I've often felt like I'm racing along at an incredible speed. And coming back home to my parents' house after an internal and external journey, in which time cannot be measured, nor the transformation that has taken place within my being, is often jolting. Even a thousand empty peanut butter jars wouldn't be enough to symbolize my transformation, and I instead come home, open the drawer to get some peanut butter and find it's still the same jar, almost as full as when I left. In light of the changes within my being, showing my true face and recognizing the true faces of my family and friends is a challenge. By the time we recognize what we know in each other, we realize that we've become different people.

And, of course, there are frustrating times when I long to go back to the center or monastery and be with people with whom I can share from the heart, and with whom I could live in peace. But such projections aren't truth, and going away wouldn't always be skillful, or even helpful for that matter. These people are beautiful people too, and they have guided and taught me along the way, so giving back some wisdom and presence by way of thanking them, and learning to just be with them, is, I feel, the best thing I can do. But it hasn't been easy to return home to ordinary life after any of the retreats or trips I've taken—not until now.

After returning from my stay in the Tea Sage Hut during March and April of this year, I felt that there was a difference. I felt I had fully begun to live a life of tea and that I was taking home with me this beautiful tradition, knowledge, wisdom (and many other things that are not possible to describe in words); and I could serve them tea! I had something to share with those I love—something that doesn't require words; that doesn't require them to sit in a "strange" position in silence for some time; that doesn't require them to talk about spirituality, feelings, God, Buddha or anything else. The only thing they have to do is to just drink tea! And it doesn't matter if they understand all that Tea has to offer, what treasures are hidden in Her, because they can just accept, perceive and feel Her in any way they want or are capable of.

And what I found to be truly beautiful is that although they might only notice the smell or taste of the Tea, Her spirit, energy and power are still entering every cell of

their bodies. And without them maybe even noticing it, there are, although maybe very subtle and small, things shifting within their beings from the very moment that they take their first sip. With some attention and awareness, I've found that these subtle changes are noticeable—right then and there in that very moment: a little smile, a spark in their eyes, the energy that they are radiating or maybe even some sensitive words that they would otherwise maybe not have shared. A heart space is opened in which we are able to share more from our heart and call each other by our true names. And that creates space to reconcile our different understandings and meet each other on a more profound level.

Now I feel that whoever takes the time to sit down in my tea space to share tea with me, I have the opportunity to offer them something truly beautiful and precious. I just make space in order for tea to travel—the Tea and this tradition do most the work—to let Her teach us what She wants to teach and guide us where She wants us to go. And in that space, magic happens...

Even when there is nobody sitting next to me to share a bowl of tea, I still often feel as if I'm serving tea. I'm serving tea to all the people that I have served tea to in the past and to all the people that I will serve tea to some day in the future.

The whole world is present within the leaves, the bowl, the water and our bodies. Therefore, I have the opportunity to serve tea to the people that are physically present within my tea room, and I also have the opportunity to share tea with the people that are not present within my tea room—with all of you—even on the other side of Mother Earth. I share tea with all the people I've known or haven't yet met. Maybe I even share tea with those who have already passed away, like my grandfather who passed six years ago. All is present within these leaves, this bowl and every cell of my body.





Dear Grandfather,
I pour this bowl of tea for you,
After you've called me to show me the fresh leaves on the
trees outside.
At a moment that summer is manifesting,
My being was in a state of winter.
Your love for sunflowers is present in me,
And I share with you this moment,
Looking out of the window at the beauty of Nature.
We transcend time and space to walk together in the gar-
dens of our Being.
Flowers bloom,
Birds sing,
And I hold your hand as you guide me....

I cry tears of joy,
As we share these bowls together.