



## *Shiva Rose, USA*

The roads were dusty and meandered among abandoned buildings. Surrounded by Cypress trees, wild mint bushes, and rose gardens, one had to be aware and awake because of the random wells that littered the earth. “Stay away from the wells, Shiva! You could fall in and be lost forever.” But being a curious and rebellious spirit, I dismissed my mother’s warnings and I would find myself near the deserted wells, peering down in search of fairy worlds, lost kittens and a way to fill up my lonely child heart. This memory came flooding in... This memory of the beautiful villages of Iran—a memory that is linked to who I am at my core. I am now peering into an abandoned well, but now I am not in the village of my beginnings in Evin, Iran. I am now a grown woman, in a Chinese village in lush, green Huangshan. I am now kneeling to see the bottom of this Chinese well, but now my heart isn’t a lonely hole wanting to be filled up, it’s rather full from the teachings and healing beauty of Tea.

Leaving my child, animals, home, businesses and life is no easy task for me. As much as I still have the nomadic, gypsy longings to travel in my

blood, my life makes traveling not as easy as it is for others. When I heard about the Global Tea Hut trip, my spirit called out a big “Yes!” When I saw the mountain ranges of Yellow Mountain online, I just knew I had to find a way to go. I know now it is Tea and Her spirit that led me to make the impossible possible. Months later, when climbing those mountains with our group, my yearning to be there had become a reality. This was an example that we can manifest anything when we are connected to a mission or a practice. On those mountains, sitting in meditation with my brothers and sisters is a moment I will always be grateful for. Spending time on the tea farms, and later watching Master Zhou make a teapot, has only enriched my love for this practice.

The memories that have etched their mark on my spirit are the ones in the village where we learned how to process tea over charcoal. That village where we all sat—sat as one, sat as a family, under a grandmother tree after an arduous day of tea picking, is what I keep going back to. Being united with these souls that came from Russia, the Czech Republic, New Zealand,

Australia, Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, Taiwan and beyond, from other places—these souls and I are all united through Her, through Tea.

Wu De has graciously shepherd-ed us, brought us all under his wings, brought us here under the canopy of this ancient tree so we can feel Her in Her truest form. Tea has linked me to the Earth again, and to a community of like-minded spirits. Tea has reconnected me to my lost childhood by awakening me to the similarities between villages—ones in Iran and ones in China—the villages we forge and steep through Tea. The emptiness I have had from a tumultuous childhood and broken families is somehow filled with every cup of Her leaves.

Tea has shown me that self-love and a deep, intimate connection to the Source of all things is the only way we can fill up the wells of our hearts. Now, when I kneel down to peer deep into this well in the outskirts of a village in China, it’s not unlike peering into my teacup as its being filled: I don’t see an empty well or an empty cup, I see only the capacity for more expansion, more growth, more bonds, more mountains to summit, more tea, more love . . .

