

GLOBAL TEA HUT

國際茶亭

TEA & TAO MAGAZINE

February 2022

ZEN
&
TEA





SUBTERRANE

This month, we return to our annual tradition of Zen & Tea. This time we focus on maintaining a practice in a busy world, especially as it relates to family life in a hectic time. Of course, we will be drinking a deep, aged and internal tea to help inspire our meditative month.

*Love is
changing the world
bowl by bowl*

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John Zapanta, USA



recycled & recyclable



Soy ink

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From the editor

In February, we cross into the Lunar New Year. Happy Year of the Tiger! For some of us, this will be the time when early signs of spring come in. Spring is wood element and all about growth. If that is how you are feeling and the weather is starting to turn, it is a good idea to nourish the wood with some water teas. Water is most strongly championed by green teas, but they aren't fresh this time of year and may be a bit too much watery anyway. Young sheng puerh can also be watery. Though this year's fresh tea is not ready, we like to bring out last year's sheng at this time—on the days when spring starts to show its face. The year of aging usually means the tea is less water element, often by the perfect amount. If it is still cold where you are, or for some days this month, keep drinking earth teas like shou puerh, aged sheng and some black teas. Our Tea of the Month is perfect for this. Boiling tea is wonderful for cold winter days, nourishing our warmth from within and encouraging stillness and rest.

Chinese New Year is also a time for cleaning, changing and growing. People clean their houses, get haircuts and buy new clothes. This lunar reminder of cyclical change helps us remember to shake out the dust, clean under our dresser and throw out the things that no longer bring us joy. We can simplify and make space for new things. Of course, such purification can be metaphoric if we wish it to be, and we can also reflect on our schedule, diet and other areas of heart-mind and life to see what is dusty and needs a good shaking outdoors, what can be tossed out and where to make space for the inspiring things we have yet to encounter and don't even know we yet need. That leaves space for Mystery, giving the world room to move through our lives.

February is therefore a wonderful month for retreats, going inward and letting go of all the vicissitudes of life so that one can return to life and clean, rearrange and move into the new. If we cannot attend an organized retreat, we can still conduct a self-retreat at home, even if it is short. We can also make an effort to do a spring cleaning. Moving things around to clean under them shifts the energy of house, and sometimes we create new organizations that are better than the old. Even if things wind up where they started, we will still have cleaned underneath and shaken off some dust.

Every year, we mark the Lunar New Year with an issue on Zen & Tea. This is, in fact, the sixth annual Zen and Tea issue. We do so to inspire reflection and a return to simplicity, but also to celebrate the centuries that Tea and Zen have spent together. Tea throughout Asia has all been touched by Zen in some way, and Zen has also been deeply influenced by Tea. Every tea lineage with any longevity must at some point pass through the halls of Zen. Living in Taiwan, we are surrounded by Chinese New Year and all the ways it

marks our year, ending and beginning. It is wonderful to celebrate this return each year with an issue devoted to Zen as expressed through Tea, and Tea with a flavor of Zen. We are committed to covering tea holistically—from teapots to tea art, history and science to spirituality and self-cultivation. We want to explore Tea, Dao and the Dao of Tea. Tea can be approached as a beverage, a hobby, an art and a ceremony and all these approaches are wonderful. They are also not mutually exclusive; we enjoy tea in all these ways. We also find that these approaches stand to learn a lot from one another: sometimes we need more grounding and other times we need to be inspired to look deeper.

For this year, we thought we would turn to a topic that we felt could be helpful to so many of us: practice and family life. Many of us living in the world struggle to begin or maintain a meditation, tea practice or other forms of self-cultivation. We asked several brilliant members of this community to share some experience living busy lives, often with new families, while also maintaining a practice. We wanted to share insights and inspiration, since so many of us around the world are facing similar issues. Even if we don't have new families, we can still relate to the feeling of being busy, overwhelmed by the news or stressed out by the complicated world we must navigate. It can feel like we are all too easily distracted and that there isn't room in our busy lives, worlds and homes for consistent meditation or tea practice. Most all of us have been through some version of this. Sharing our insights and inspiration with each other can help encourage us to make new efforts in the Year of the Tiger and also provide some guidance for how to go about making positive changes for ourselves, our families and the world. Of course, we have a beautiful, deep and internal tea to share throughout the month, one that encourages inward movement and long, powerful sits.



—Further Reading—

This month, it is worth reading all the wonderful annual Zen & Tea issues we have done. There are five and each one is a February edition. They are filled with insights and life wisdom, wonderful memories from our retreats around the world and guides for self-retreats with groups or at home on your own.

TEA OF THE MONTH



ver the course of this month, we will be once again exploring the relationship between Zen and Tea. We chose a beautiful 2001 8592 shou puerh that we call Subterrane. This name is significant, as the tea itself is earthy and deep; it was stored in Hong Kong for some time, but also because it has a grounding, inward-moving energy that reverts to stillness, so it is also “Subterrane” in the metaphoric sense of leading us beneath the surface of our every day to where its roots are nourished from the deep silences below.

Subterrane is a well-aged shou puerh. Most shou is piled to a high degree in the Newborn era (post-1998) so it doesn't really age like older shou teas that were only artificially fermented to a partial degree. In the modern era, they have found it easier to fully ferment over forty-five to sixty days. This doesn't mean such teas aren't ageable. In fact, we find that they are far better when they have at least ten to fifteen years of storage, since the pindy piling flavors (*dui wei*, 堆味) mellow out. But these teas don't oxidize and ferment in the way a sheng tea does over time (or the partially piled/fermented shou teas of the Chi Tze era, 七子時期, 1972–1998). Most of the shou tea reviews we do for Chinese magazines include a category for “mellowness” with some form of scoring for this criteria—the “mellowing” out of the piling flavors. Some say these are akin to pond water, others to ammonia. Piling flavors aren't nice, whatever they taste like, so mellowing shou tea is a good thing.

Our Tea of the Month is an 8592, which means that the blend began in 1985. These internal factory codes were important back in the day. In those days, the incoming raw material was much more stable, with similar teas from the same gardens coming each year. Of course, there were variations in the weather, yield and flavor, but overall they had much more consistency and were therefore able to create blends that could be continued each year. Eventually, these codes became famous and

the market started selling the code, even though the materials used to make them had changed. This tea probably falls into the category of an homage to the old blend as opposed to such a blend as it was envisioned when it was made in 1985. The “9” refers to the “grade” of the leaves, referring to the size. This tea has lots of large, mature leaves, bordering on what are called “*huang pian*” (黃片). The “2” refers to Menghai Factory (勐海工廠). Since there were so few state-run factories at the time these codes were created, a single digit was enough.

Subterrane is a bit wet in terms of storage, meaning strong humidity. Since it was aged in Hong Kong, it is worth clarifying the two types of “Hong Kong storage.” Hong Kong is relatively humid, so tea stored there will be wetter than in Taiwan or Malaysia. However, there is also what is called “traditional storage,” which is a type of intentional cellaring that has been common in Hong Kong for decades or perhaps even longer. Puerh is put in humid rooms (though called “cellars,” they may just be near the sea or be humid for a number of reasons) and then rotated out of that room to drier rooms. This is a way of controlling the speed of fermentation/oxidation that goes into aging puerh tea. It also means that each cellar will have its own unique flavors, aromas and energy. This process is similar to how Liu Bao black tea is cured in Guangxi. Subterrane is not cellared in traditional Hong Kong storage; it was just stored in Hong Kong, which has higher humidity and so may be relatively wetter than other aged puerh teas you have tried.

Subterrane is deep and bold, patient and strong. It moves not just to the ground, but beneath it. It is the kind of tea that you can spend a whole morning drinking and then get up feeling centered and stable, wondering why the day ever felt so hectic. If you take the time to have a few bowls in quiet, letting the earth hold you up, the everyday becomes fertile for Zen insight. This is the kind of tea that grounds and softens us, leaving us to be who we already were before.



Subterrane



Menghai, Yunnan



2001 Shou Puerh



Yunnanese Aboriginals



~1,000 Meters



下地



Brewing Tips

冲泡技巧 完成好茶

Of all the teas worth boiling, aged shou teas like our Tea of the Month, Subterranean, are usually the best. You can boil this tea on its own or as part of a blend, mixed with a loose leaf puerh like Samadhi or even with four other teas to make a Five Element blend. We can use a cauldron or sidehandle pot to boil this tea. Of course, Subterranean is also wonderful steeped either in a sidehandle for bowl tea or gongfu tea as well. If you don't appreciate wetter storage, you may want to start with a longer rinse to remove such flavors. If you are just starting a boiled tea practice, you can use most sidehandle pots to boil tea, especially if you have a larger one. You may need to check the clay to make sure that it can go directly on heat. We designed our sidehandle pots with the same rings on the bottom that a lot of kettles have so that they can be put directly on heat.

Subterranean is also wonderful brewed gongfu. When we brew such aged shou puerh teas, or any puerh for that matter, it is helpful to have a larger pot with a wide girth in the center that has plenty of room for the cake to open. Breaking up the cake is paramount as well. When we break up a sheng puerh cake, we try to preserve the leaves as much as possible. Since shou teas are compressed immediately after piling, the leaves stick together much more, making it very difficult not to break the leaves. Still, we should try to insert our puerh knife into places where it goes in easily. Try not to force the knife, but rather test the edge and find the place where it goes in naturally. When brewing a shou cake like this, it is good to have some chunks and some looser tea as well. This means that the early steepings will be strong and that the tea will remain consistently so throughout the session.

A larger zisha (purple-sand) pot with a wider belly allows shou to open and expand. But strong heat is also needed to open shou puerh cakes. They won't even open unless the water is very hot. For this reason, we also want to fill the pot with a strong and fast flow from the kettle, pouring from lower down near the pot. Also, experiment with showering the pot both before and after steeping the tea to increase and maintain the temperature, which will help Subterranean to open and the tea will be more patient as well. Of course, the heat source is also more relevant with shou puerh. (It is for all teas, but especially shou or aged sheng puerh.) We recommend charcoal if possible. If not, gas or infrared are the best for getting deep, penetrative heat.

Our last tip for brewing aged shou teas like Subterranean is to use larger cups. Different types of tea actually enter the flow of Qi at different points in our body. Oolong, for example, moves upward through the sinuses and is ideally drunk from as small of cups as possible and taking as small of sips as possible. Shou and aged sheng puerh, on the other hand, enter the subtle body through the chest and stomach. They are much more enjoyable in larger cups and larger sips. This means that we may need a larger pot and a bit more tea than with other types of tea. Using a larger pot will also help provide more room for the tea to open. As with all things gongfu, this is worth experimenting with. Try using a small and large cup for a shou puerh and try small and large sips. See how the tea tastes and smells, but also pay attention to the sensations in your chest and stomach—to the ways the tea enters the subtle body. If you are sensitive, you may notice the difference between a small and large cup by just holding them up to your face before you even take a drink. If possible, repeat this experiment with other types of tea like oolong.



Sidehandle



Boiled



Gongfu



Water: spring water or best bottled

Fire: coals, infrared or gas

Heat: as hot as possible

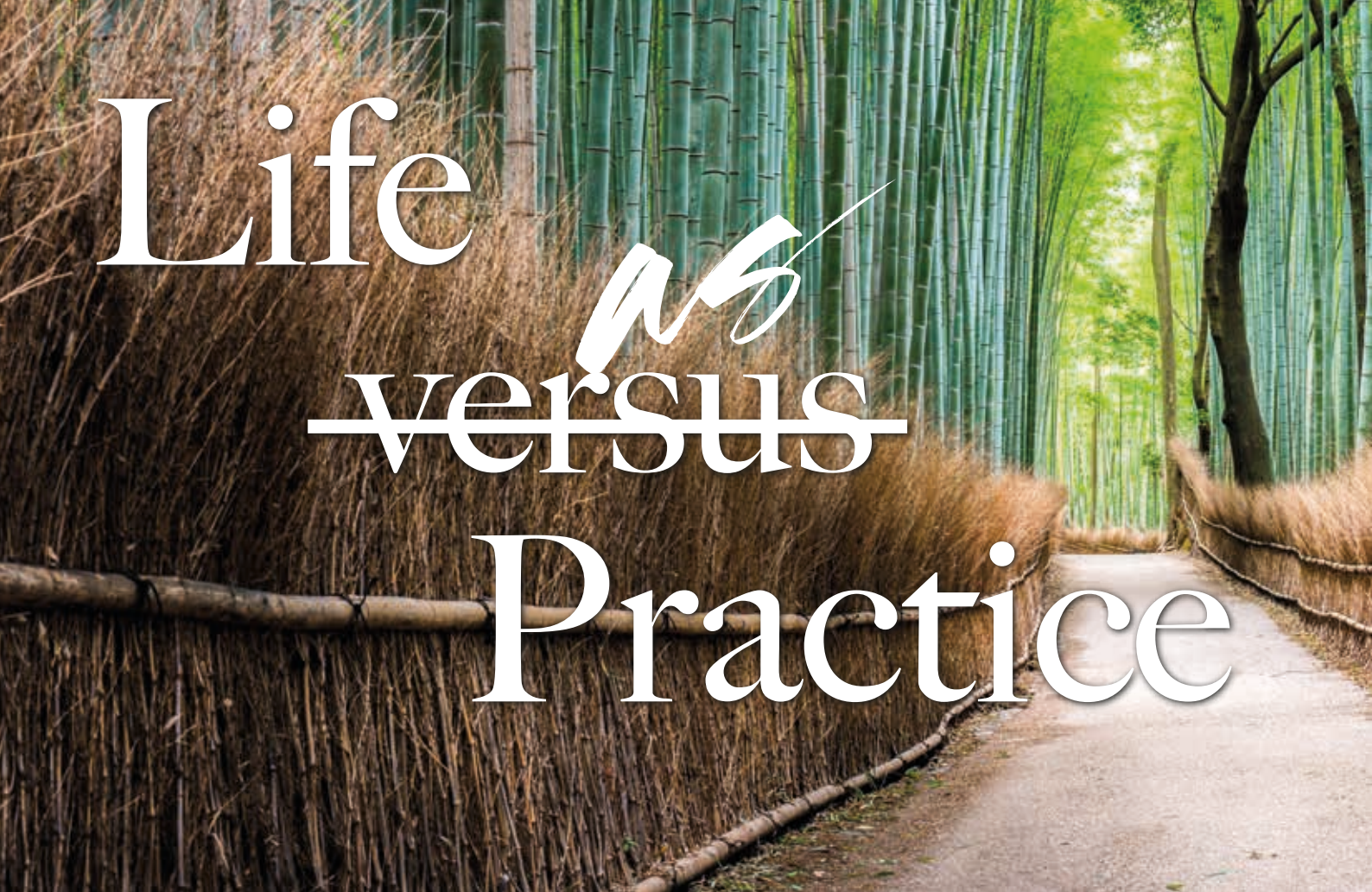
Brewing Methods: sidehandle, gongfu or boiled (boiling is special)

Steeping: This will depend on the brewing method; lots of leeway with this tea

Patience: Very patient, so up to you

Try using a larger pot when drinking aged, compressed teas, especially shou puerh, which needs room to open. Shou also needs strong and constant heat to open properly.





Life *as* versus Practice

The world seems to have grown louder than it once was. It is difficult to know how much of this is new noise, and how much is just an amplification of what has always been there, aspects of the human mind, our markets, politics and society now intensified by the microphone of modern technology. Whatever the cause of this clamor, many of us feel bombarded by an ever-expanding social network, relatively constant advertising across platforms and an increase in the amount and intensity of political discourse. On top of that, the pandemic has exacerbated the complexity of home and work life for many, creating even more stress and what feels like an increasingly complicated world to navigate. Moving through a dense and thorny life, society and perhaps even home life, many feel that well-being is a challenge and that practices like meditation, slow tea ceremony or other healthy habits are extremely difficult to start and harder to maintain. Even before the pandemic, retreatants around the world and visitors to our Center would often ask how they could bring the practices we taught

home with them when their life was so busy and challenging to navigate already? How can I practice in such a busy world?

A Chajin tends to orient toward the holistic and practice that relates the heart-mind to the ordinary, aligning mind, body and spirit into living cultivation. In many ways, our life is our answer to the Zen koan—we are the tea art that expresses our Zen. This day is a living truth that explains why Bodhidharma came East. Zen and tea encourage us to live our practice, becoming what we know. It is not enough to believe in liberation, we must experience it. There is a Zen slogan that captures this poignantly: *know who you are and then be what you know*. Both sides of this powerful truth are worth summarizing.

Knowing who we are is the true vision and insight into ourselves that forms the core of the Zen awakening experience. *Kensho* (Chinese: *jianxing*, 見性) means seeing the truth—our true nature. This eye for truth is the pure knowledge without a teacher—the treasury handed down outside scriptures, philosophy or dogma that

forms the core of Zen. In Buddhism, our suffering is primarily derived from our misguided experience of the world as distinct from the self. Sometimes Buddhism is mistakenly charged with denying our existence, which is a misunderstanding. Your existence is not in question. The fact that you are reading this makes your existence self-evident. The issue is not whether or not we exist (we obviously do), but the *manner in which* we exist. For many of us, there is an underlying separation that grounds our experience of the world. We see the world as two: me and everything else. Once this distinction takes hold of our experience, it governs our language, thought and behavior. Separation becomes the foundation of how we live, and cherishing, protecting and enhancing the distinct self become our primary motivations in life.

Once we sit with ourselves and observe our true makeup, seeing who we are with the treasury of the Dharma eye, we come to understand the fundamental truth that the world dependently co-arises. We come to “know who we are,” not as distinct entities moving through the world,



茶人: Wu De (無的)

through time and space, but as connected co-arising interbeings. The interconnection of being is foundational and a clear and visceral truth. Physically, we are the sun's energy, the rain and mountain and the plant that feeds us. Our qualities are also shared. Like an actor accepting an award for "best performance," we realize that we couldn't have done it without the director, the makeup artist who made us look nice, as well as all the supporting actors who were a necessary part of our performance. My patience is not mine alone, as it arose through my relationship with others who fostered it in me. True seeing is a vision of all the ways we inter-are, connected and a part of the world. As much as I am a being moving through space and time, I am also space and time moving. I may even be more of the latter—more environment expressing itself through the individual as opposed to an individual moving through the environment.

Once we begin to "know who you are," sitting within our true self as interbeing, we then have to "be what you know." This may be the more challenging of the two. Sitting with our self

over time, through Zazen and tea, we all eventually see the interbeing of our makeup, but how do we then live that truth? We have to architect a life that is an expression of the wisdom we know. We have to become what we know. By doing so, we fully embody our truth, and our lives inspire the same in others. Only living truth matters, as the experience of interbeing, the *satori* of awakening, is temporary. *Satori* is the seed lifted from its delusion and carried by the wind to the fertile soil of the awakened eye. Cracked open by a *satori*, and now sprouting, we must now tend to our wisdom plant, letting it grow up around us until the landscape of insight is our home, and our way of life is indistinguishable from our wisdom. Knowing who we are and being what we know is the foundation of healing the difficulties we face in starting or maintaining a practice in a hectic world.

The most important step in healing the dilemma of life versus practice is erasing the "versus." The biggest mistake practitioners make is pitting life against practice. So long as the orientation is opposition, practice itself

will always feel stressful. It will always feel apart from actual life—something we have to make time and space for. Then we will begin to see our lives as a distraction from practice, something in the way of knowing who we are or being what we know. As with all wars, healing this issue starts with a peace treaty. "My life and my practice are friends. They love one another." Say it out loud! In fact, it can be helpful to make a list of the ways in which you feel as if your practice and your life are in conflict and forgive them one by one. For example, instead of "my schedule is busy and I have no time for meditation," how about "learning to live in harmony with my schedule *is* my meditation?" The consequences of not doing so means that your life and your practice will always stand at odds, with an insurmountable abyss between them. This can lead to guilt and even resentment toward your loved ones, your colleagues, job or even the world. These things aren't really in the way of your practice, they *are* your practice. Making them into obstacles, or worse yet excuses not to practice, isn't fair to you or to them.

Like my practice, I want my advice to be holistic—root to trunk, branch to leaf. And this “versus,” this sense of antagonism is always the root of the life “versus” practice dilemma. If you are feeling that it is difficult to start or maintain a practice because your life or the world is too noisy, busy, hectic or distracting, you will have to heal this divide before or along with any of the practical advice I will offer in this article. As long as you view your life and practice “at odds” with each other, they will *always* be at odds and practice will *always* be a struggle and rarely “win.” But just as the false sense of separation between us and the world is at the core of our existential dilemma and suffering—this sense of separation between practice and life is at the core of why practice is challenging. This doesn’t mean practice will ever be “easy,” just that it need not be an enemy of life, and life need not be an “obstacle” that we have to “overcome” to get to our practice. This approach creates problems rather than healing them. If you are having struggles beginning and/or maintaining a practice, in whatever form, I highly recommend you start by “practicing” a different orientation. My friendly advice is, as I suggested, to go through all the areas, reasons and points where there is friction between so-called “life” or “the world” and “practice” and heal them. The most foundational way to heal these divides is, of course, to experience the way in which truth flows over, across and through the divide—the perspective from which the separation is not real. Life is practice and practice is life.

Start by making your practice a living one, and your life your practice—that is a practice in and of itself. Along with that, here are some more tools that coupled with the sewing up and ending the “battle” between life/the world and our practice, can help us to start or deepen our practice *in the world*, not apart from it.

Life as Practice

The easiest way to start practicing a union between life and practice is simple, so this section will be short but sweet. We can start to see our daily activities as practice, utilizing everything

we do as an opportunity to practice. This grows naturally from an orientation of friendship between practice and life. Zen means we stop defining practice as certain activities like meditation or tea and life as everything else. These categories aren’t helpful. Washing dishes is practice, and the bathroom is as good a place as any for a Buddha eye. Anything I do is a chance to practice, not something I need to get done so I can get to practice.

There is an old Zen saying that the everyday mind is Zen, but Zen is not the everyday mind. If we add the word “just” it may help us understand this slogan better, meaning that Zen is not *just* the everyday mind, though it is also the everyday mind. Everyday life lived for its own sake is Zen. Living Zen means just this: stop doing things for the sake of other states, places, attainments or goals and start living for living’s sake. Life as life, everyday as everyday. Zen is not ordinary life plus some secret sauce, like heightened awareness, supra-consciousness or “mindfulness.” Zen is just doing everyday things, only doing them for their own sake. We sit to be upright. We walk to walk, stand to stand. Doing then comes from being and life itself becomes a rich practice ground.

Comparison

Another foundational, philosophical issue that can get in the way of living practice is our habit of comparing ourselves to others or to an ideal. We create an ideal version of what we think a spiritual or enlightened person should be and then we try our best to fit into that suit. This can quickly become the entirety of our practice, which is, in essence, trying to be something we are not. No matter how hard we try to be somebody other than ourselves, our true self pops out of this ill-fitting suit and we quickly try to stuff it back in. We feel guilty about this, and this then furthers the tension between our life and our practice, encouraging the feeling that the two are at odds.

This comparison starts with the idea that practice is something apart—over there—somewhere we need to get to. However, the quest to become something, add something and more,

more, more is actually a part of the problem, not the solution. The “not here, not now” mind is at the core of our experience of separation. We feel a lack without the connection that is our source and try to fill it with something outside ourselves, seeking connection in the “other,” instead of in sitting with our true selves. There is no real difference between trying to fill this hole with material possessions or with experiences, spiritual or otherwise. The different “me” I seek to become is still an other, an outside delusion of craving and desire that will never satisfy me, like the material objects I yearn for.

The main problem with seeking something over there and then is that this frustration itself will become our habit, so that even when we do attain something, this habit itself will prevent us from truly inhabiting and enjoying the thing we sought so hard. As soon as we get the thing that motivated us before, we turn to something else. This is as true of material possessions as it is of spiritual states. We could even turn true seeing (*kensho*) into such a goal, thinking that once I have a *satori* experience, then I will be “enlightened” and all will be well. But seeing isn’t an end; it’s a beginning. Once we know who we are, we still have to be what we know. Learning to see is the start of learning how to live, and a big part of that seeing is the truth that everything we need is here and now, in this present moment. True seeing is a seeing through the grasping and clinging at the heart of an experience of separation. We see that the “not here, not now” mind itself *is* the issue, not the lack of whatever thing, experience or connection it seeks. Seeing means realizing that nothing needs to be added to our experience. We don’t need to be more than what we are or have more than we do to see or live truth.

The excuse that I don’t meditate enough, am not good enough or skilled enough is itself a part of my issue, not a motivation toward a solution. We don’t have to get more, be more, experience more or practice more to become something. If anything, true practice is a letting go. Our true nature is there, like the sky behind the clouds that obscure it. The clouds of the day, or our minds, may obscure truth from our limited perspective, but interbeing is always there beyond.



Gaze at the stars, but walk on the Earth

When the clouds part, the moon is revealed and we see what was deeper, more lasting and vast—what always underlies our experience. The more we connect to those truths, the more our motivations become immersed in them, and we are inspired to live our wisdom and connection, as easily and readily as we are inspired to live our separation when our horizons are hemmed in by the ego.

A major part of healing the divide between our lives and our practice is found in the tea we prepare each day. When we start out, we may find tea exotic, far away and pronouncedly “other” or “spiritual.” We start by using tea (or meditation) to get away, escape from the jaiyard of our daily, “ordinary” lives. But as we practice Zen and Tea, the clouds begin to part and we begin to see the truth—to see with the treasury of the true Dharma eye. We see that the spiritual isn’t “other;”

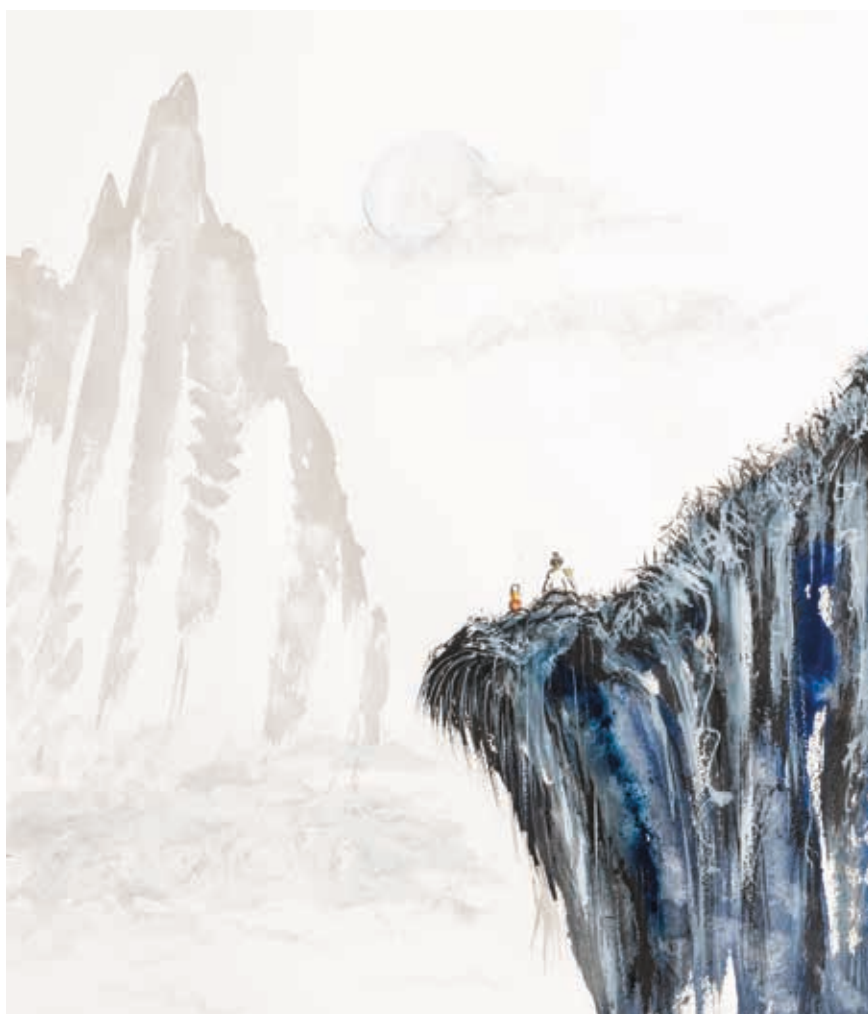
it is the sky that has always surrounded and informed the clouded-in world we thought was smaller. We have been like the frogs in the *Zhuangzi* (莊子) who think the world is their well and the sky but the small ring they see above; they know nothing of the sea. Coming out of our wells, we begin to see that the spiritual is not something apart from the ordinary, but within it. We then stop trying to use tea to get away and experience more and turn in the opposite direction: channeling the universal into the ordinary.

When we are bored or look from a perspective of separation, we want to experience miracles as something apart from our world—something supernatural. But Zen teaches us that the real superpower isn’t flight or x-ray vision, it is the absence of superpowers. It is easy to see the extraordinary as extraordinary. Everyone does that. When superheroes clash, everyone is

in awe. What is truly extraordinary is seeing the extraordinary in ordinary—seeing the miracles in a cup of tea, an *ordinary everyday cup of tea*. Instead of using practice to get somewhere else, we start to bring the somewhere else to our practice. In other words, we stop trying to get from the bowl to the spiritual and start bringing the spiritual to the bowl. In this way, we really do become “more spiritual.” The true path to a living, breathing practice and embodiment of our wisdom—to being what we know—is not found in more meditation, yoga or tea ceremony, but in bringing the mind we cultivate in meditation to all our activities, from walking to cooking to brushing our teeth. And we stop doing these things with an aim, seeking something through or beyond them and realize that the living breathing ordinary experience is chock-full of miracles. We live our days through a sea of wonders.

It is a blessing to be alive. Billions of years of wondrous branching karmas have gone into our bodies, and our lives are truly delicate, amazing and miraculous. To see this is to shift our perspective on what we thought were “obstacles” to our practice. The obstacles in our path are actually the path itself. If there were actual obstacles, the Buddha could not have achieved enlightenment. Upon awakening, the Buddha said that enlightenment was spread across the world, only because beings are deluded, they fail to see it. For the awakened mind, there are no obstacles. The Buddha turns all obstacles into offerings, and all offerings into Dharmas. Life is practice, not an obstacle to it. Whatever challenge we face is not something in the way of our path, it is the path—an offering, a teaching to show us our limitations, cultivate our strengths and help us let go. These are offerings. When we realize this, these offerings become our living dharma, which we can then share with others. The bowls of tea we make are now infused with our true being, and with the treasury of the true Dharma eye that we can share with others so that they too may see: not see beyond the world, the tea or themselves, but see into this ordinary moment and how special it is. With such vision we know that we don’t need to get somewhere, add something to ourselves or compare ourselves to some ideal. We are already perfect, in all our glorious imperfections.

Enlightenment is not an island where our problems go away, nor is it a future, more spiritual version of us that is cooler or less busy. Practice letting go of doing things for the sake of something else—to get somewhere other than here, to find the future away from now. Practice seeing the miracle in what you are doing, as opposed to using what you are doing to get to the miracle. Tea is perfect for this. Rather than tea as a vehicle for something else, use tea as a vehicle to drop the “not here, not now” mind and *just drink tea*. Let tea be tea and let go of the desire to be more, to be other than this, whatever this is. Ordinary every day life is practice, is Zen. There is no need to add anything, just let go of the desire to add something, be something or get somewhere. Practice letting go of comparisons, comparing yourself to others



or to ideals of what your life “should” be. There are no “shoulds” save those you yourself impose, setting your life at odds with your practice. Instead, practice letting go of “shoulds,” so that life itself *is* practice. *Meditate for the sake of meditation, drink tea for the sake of drinking tea*. The more we do that, the more we practice living for living’s sake instead of living toward some other place we cannot ever get to.

Making Space

Finding a balance between our practice and life starts with making friends between the world and practice and ending the war we make on the moment. Most of us have a habit of using the moment to get somewhere, attain something or avoid discomfort. But when we stop pitting our life against our practice, we find that practice flourishes and grows strong. To achieve this balance, we sometimes need to take from our life and give to

our practice, but a balanced, peaceful approach is not one of battling for space to practice against life or the world, but of two allies sharing and giving to each other. Instead of asking how I can wrestle out the two hours for my meditation practice each day, I ask what part of my life would like to give up the time willingly. This shift in orientation should not be underestimated. There is a huge difference between fighting and struggling, versus sharing and encouraging growth.

One of the ways that I find helps me to achieve less strife and a much easier pathway to beginning and maintaining practices and/or habits that are good for me is to focus on the space the practice happens as opposed to the details of the practice itself. I also try to avoid evaluating my practice. Wasting energy on details and on evaluation can use up the much needed energy that it takes to practice. Better to focus on the space itself and let the practice take care of itself. A good example of this in my life is exercise. Instead of focusing on what I will do at the gym or how I

*A life in the world,
a heart in the mountains*



did last time I went, I focus on getting there. Knowing what to do in the gym is helpful, and, of course, needs to be refined, especially as I get farther down the road and better at exercising. However, in the beginning, it is much more important that I establish a habit of *getting to the gym*, and any energy wasted worrying about what to do there or how well I do it may tip the balance and make me feel like I cannot go. In other words, just get to the cushion or the tea table each day. The rest will take care of itself.

There is a wonderful Buddhist slogan that “making space for meditation is the primary meditation.” This means that the core of our practice is actually making space for practice. *Making space for practice is itself our practice.* If I spend all my energy making the time and space to get to the gym, I will encourage a new habit of exercise and increase my discipline. Over time, going to the gym will get easier and I can then hone in what I do there. Sometimes we focus too much energy on studying about practice, learning, gathering,

trying new techniques and not enough budgeting the time and space to practice. Focus on making space first. Making space is primary. Once the space is there, practice will start to integrate into our lives, and this includes our schedule and our homes.

Self-Discipline

There is a need to practice discipline. Forming a friendship between life and practice does not mean that there is no need for discipline, but self-discipline can be thought of as the highest form of self-love; it need not be regarded as a battle. Self-discipline fosters my highest good, health and happiness. Just as it is not really and truly loving to spoil a child, giving myself the so-called pleasures that will cause much more suffering and limitation down the road is not really being compassionate to myself. If I eat junk food thinking I am comforting myself, over time, I will cause more suffering

for myself and those who love me as I may bring about disease due to my unhealthy diet. What’s more, the habit of eating unhealthy food won’t really bring me comfort and will in and of itself become a limitation that I will have to overcome down the road if I want to be free, happy and healthy. I will be making my burden greater and forcing myself to walk a more difficult, uphill road as time passes. Self-discipline slowly tilts our journey downhill and makes things easier. Once we discipline one area of our life, we can use that discipline toward anything good for us. This is why it is said that just by waking up super early for a year, like at 5:00 a.m., we will find the power to achieve anything. It may seem like a small matter, but it is not really the waking up early that is important, but the habit of discipline which will infuse into other areas of life over time. The same discipline and strength we cultivate in waking up early can be applied to exercise, diet and even beginning a practice of meditation. Every ounce of discipline increases determination.



You don't have to abandon worldly activities in order to attain wu wei, effortless action. You should know that daily activities and wu wei are not separate, but if you keep rolling in craving and aversion, you make them two.

—Zen Master Yuanwu Keqin (圓悟克勤, 1063–1135)

When I was young, my martial arts teacher's teacher (my grandmaster) was a very old man, yet he seemed incredibly vibrant and apparently more energetic than some of the young men who were studying there. One time, a young man asked the old master why he had more energy than they did when he was so old. He laughed, saying: "Are you kidding? I am in my seventies, and you are in your twenties. You have way more energy than I do! I just don't leak any of my Qi." That exchange had a profound influence on me, and I have spent my life since trying to understand and embody his wisdom, paying attention to the areas of my life where I leak energy and shoring them up. Oftentimes discipline doesn't need to be a struggle against life, just a plugging of leaks. When it feels like we don't have the time or energy for practice, we are often leaking far more time and energy than it would take to have a strong daily practice.

Self-discipline is just a synonym for organized priorities. From my perspective, my purpose in this life is to serve the Sacred. I do this by making my life beautiful, my heart pure and by offering as much as I can of my energy to the Holy. I may not be able to achieve this, and I regularly fall down

(often several times a day), but if I make Sacred my priority, getting back up and trying again is always important enough that it happens (I do get up). If I don't feel like I have the time or energy to self-cultivate, then I am not serving my primary meaning in life. It is then time to prune my garden. I am always willing to prune my garden for the sake of my life's purpose. And this is never a battle, as pruning the garden is good for *all* plants that live in the garden. Cutting back some of my life activities, work or commitments to make room for the Sacred in my day makes me a fulfilled person with a purpose and decreases my stress, which in turn serves all my commitments. In essence, what I am saying is that self-discipline is easy when my priorities are in order.

Making life and practice allies means that all of my responsibilities understand that my practice makes me a better and more responsible person who grows and becomes better and better at doing my job and fulfilling my roles. A good boss knows that providing proper rest and vacation, facilities and resources to her employees means that they will work hard, better, more efficiently and with greater passion and a feeling of pride and ownership

for the company they contribute to. Similarly, our life responsibilities—our job, loved ones, etc.—need to understand that the time and space to practice makes us more patient, loving and better at our role as brother, mother, employer or employee. All my friends, family and loved ones benefit from my practice, as do all beings since I devote the fruits and merits of all my practice to all beings each and every day.

Small Changes Matter

Zen is not of the world, but it occurs within it. Zen can be applied right in the midst of our normal, day-to-day life. This is important, since any freedom granted by the world could then be taken away by it. The liberation we seek is rooted more deeply and never outside of ourselves in the world; it is not an achievement. As our lives and practice merge, we begin to realize how powerful small and incremental change can be, like an avalanche starting with a pebble.

Do not underestimate very small changes. If we find that we are leaking lots of Qi in an area of our life, plug up a small amount of this by giving just a



If you wish to realize the subtle mind of Zen, it is easy to do so: Just step back and lift it with an earnest strength throughout all your daily activities, whatever you do, even as you eat, drink and talk, even as you work with the vicissitudes and worries of the world.

—Zen Master Yingan Tanhua (應庵曇華, 1103-1163)

few minutes of that time to practice. Over time, add more. This will be easy to do. The more we practice, the more our life becomes practice and the co-operation between our lives, the world and our practice will grow. If we woke up five minutes earlier for a year, for example, we would eventually get to an early hour that facilitates a quiet start-of-the-day meditation and tea practice that would change the whole day, which changes weeks and then lives. If we add an earlier rest time of five minutes to this, over time, we will balance in a wonderful way.

One final bit of advice I would like to share that has helped me tremendously is to regard my home as part of myself, part of my life and therefore part of my practice. There are enough distractions and challenges to overcome in the world without making my home another one. Dogen Zenji said that when we arrive at the space, practice begins. We don't get to the gym and then leave before exercising. Similarly, a Zen temple inspires introspection and peace the moment we arrive. Of course, most of us cannot live in a temple; our homes have to serve other functions as well. However, it is very easy to create a living space that discourages practice and encourages our

bad habits. I try to make a conscious effort to leave open, empty space within my home, create altars that foster prayer and devotion and remind me to practice, as well as practice spaces that I have to walk by every day, reminding me to be the man I want to be. I also try to keep an eye on the balance of comfort to uprightness that my home offers. When things are too soft, I find myself drowsy and less inclined to live the way I hope to. This is akin to the days when we oversleep and find that oversleeping has the opposite effect that you would think it does, making us groggy and disconnected throughout the day as opposed to feeling well-rested. On the other hand, I wouldn't want my home to be too spartan either. This balance is different for all of us, so we each have to see how much comfort is good and how much is too good.

Having a home that inspires practice the moment we enter will go a long way toward making it easier to begin and maintain healthy lifeways and practices. Rather than making our home another obstacle to overcome, it becomes an ally that fosters our highest good and supports us when we are struggling. There are, of course, many variables each of us face, especially

since we often have to share our living space with others. But even a little effort can go a long way toward making our space a reflection of our ideals.

A clean, open space is the product of such a mind, and reinforces that type of mind, creating a feedback loop. On the other hand, a cluttered space comes from a jumbled mind and will encourage more of the same. Cleaning therefore *is* a practice, and Zen centers spend a tremendous amount of time doing it. Never underestimate what cleaning can bring to life, practice and a space—physically and energetically. Cleaning is, in fact, the perfect example of how our daily lives can be our practice and our practice find expression in our daily lives.

Zen is a source of ideas, not an ideology. It is the moon which shines as brightly on your door as it does mine. There are many, many ways of entering Zen—as many as there are eyes of the world. Beyond these ideas, there is your life and that is where your practice must be planted, grow and thrive. This is my practice.





Insights from the Community

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Searching for a Way to Practice

茶人: Jasper Hermans (Jing Ren, 靜仁)

As a new father, it has become a bit more challenging to find the time to properly sit down for tea, but this morning I managed. I grabbed one of my first sidehandle teapots, just large enough for one, as well as a small and simple bamboo tea scoop, which was the only scoop at the start of my tea journey. I went up to the tea cabinet and opened the storage jar with our Dian Hong cakes and picked one of the earliest Light Meet Life teas called Golden Vajra, from back in 2014 (a similar cake is out this year!). These early Light Meet Life teas always have a special place in my heart. I have been watching them change and grow over the years. And they were the teas I started my journey with back in the day when having a “beginners mind” was not something I needed to practice, but something that came naturally to tea. I have to admit that by now I too often take the medicine that tea brings into my life for granted, as well as pretty much every other blessing in my life. But this morning, I felt gratitude for the time and blessing to be able to sip tea peacefully and recognized how miraculous the experience of drinking tea really is—the

warmth of the tea liquor, the endless complexity of flavors and aromas and the multi-layered psychosomatic experience of the tea becoming part of my body. For some time, I looked out at the world with a kind of awe, curiosity and grace, a feeling I had lost for some while. How did I manage to forget to experience the uniqueness of the moment? And how did I find myself back here experiencing the momentariness of life again?

This morning, I watched our three-month-old son smile as he just about turned from his belly to his back independently for one of the very first times. For Leo, everything is new, and his body and mind are developing at such a pace that the impermanence of it can hardly be overlooked. His moods change from one moment to the other, and there seems to be no filter holding him back from expressing them either! I sometimes wonder what it is that he experiences. But it is a question that cannot be answered. Even if Leo could somehow verbalize his experience, words would probably fall short to describe what it is like to experience

the world as completely new, mysterious and constantly changing. And yet at some point, he too will start to take things for granted. And he will have to find his own way to reconnect with his “inner child.”

Everything is Practice

One of the first things Wu De told me after I became a father is to see everything as part of my practice. I have always considered this an important lesson, but since even my time spent on the cushion seems uncertain these days, it has started to feel of utmost importance to take this lesson to heart.

Most of our lives consist of doing ordinary things like brushing our teeth, commuting to work, eating breakfast and so on. If we only view a handful of activities such as seated meditation or tea ceremony as part of our practice, we miss out on a lot that life has to offer. Although this truth is easy to understand, I have always been amazed at how difficult it is to put into practice! Simple but difficult, indeed.



Most of the time I completely forget about it. My mind tends to say, “Yes, most things are part of practice except for this one thing!” or “Yes, this is part of practice. But I can focus on that next time. For now, let me focus on just getting the job done.”

One of the things that gets in the way of experiencing everything as practice is that I still prioritize certain activities above others. When I am doing one of the activities that I label as being of “lesser” importance, I don’t fully give my attention to what I am doing at that moment because I feel I should be doing something else. This becomes especially evident on days when I don’t manage to do my regular sitting meditation in the morning. After more than a decade of daily meditation practice, I have gotten so used to this activity being part of my morning routine, that I have gotten as addicted to it as some people are to their morning coffee. Of course, having a regular meditation practice can be very helpful, and it has been very helpful to me. But when I prioritize it above other activities to the extent that it doesn’t feel like I can start my day without it, then it no longer serves its purpose. Or perhaps I have given this essentially purposeless activity too much purpose.

In essence what I do on the cushion can also be done during other activities throughout the day. Sometimes I pay attention to my breath, or to bodily sensations, and other times I practice “just sitting.” No matter where I am or what I am doing, I can always take a moment to come back to this throughout the day. Or I can choose to be fully present with another aspect of my consciousness in that moment, such as fully immersing myself in the activity of smiling with Leo while he offers me the opportunity to transcend my attachment to sitting meditation. Is this moment any less of a present moment than a moment spent observing the breath on the cushion?

Just Work

One area in my life where I have recently experienced everything as being practice has been at my job. As someone who isn’t especially gifted and has never been interested much in having a “career,” I have struggled for years



to find a livelihood that supports my practice. For some of us, this can be difficult in the modern world.

Right Livelihood is considered an important aspect of the Buddha’s Noble Eightfold Path. The Buddha encouraged his disciples to engage in compassionate activity, and to make their living in a way that does not cause harm to others. If we are living a householder’s life, the time we spend earning our livelihood makes up a substantial part of our lives. What we do for a living and the way we do it can have a huge influence on our practice. Although I did realize this quite some time ago, it took me about a decade to actually find something that I consider to be “right livelihood.” At the moment, I work for a social enterprise and teashop in the Netherlands where we employ people who, for one reason or the other, cannot work in a regular work environment.

We attempt to provide a workplace where people can explore their possibilities and develop themselves. And in this way, through the sales of organic and sometimes even living tea, we hope to offer people the opportunity to one day find a livelihood they can continue to develop themselves and do what they love to do. Since I have struggled so much with finding a livelihood that I love doing myself, I very much recognize the importance for places such as these to exist in our society. Both within our working environment as well as within the greater context of society we promote inclusivity and cooperation. And these are values that are very much dear to me. I explain a bit of the context behind my work, and why I love it, because the fact that my livelihood aligns with my values and sense of ethical conduct is why it is so easy to relate to all aspects of my work as being part of my practice.



Whether I perform some simple stock-keeping tasks or having meaningful communication with my colleagues, I have full confidence that the activity I do is important and meaningful. And because I feel it is important and meaningful, it is easy for me to give it my full attention. Respect is a virtue of tea for good reason: we honor what we respect with our attention.

This was a challenging year for us as a business, one in which we faced all sorts of challenges, as have so many businesses around the world. Many of these challenges felt quite serious at the time, and there was always something to worry about and something to plan through or work out. In any other situation, this would have made me feel stressed and I'd have wanted to run away, but because I support every aspect of what we do as a social enterprise, I welcomed every challenge. I happily took on the responsibilities

that needed to be picked up, knowing that by doing so I'd not only help myself, but also help others.

Practice is Everything

Now that I have found meaning in my livelihood and view most aspects of it as part of my practice, I feel it is about time to reexamine how I can further integrate this teaching into my everyday life. It is time to renew my effort to see life as practice and practice as life, finding my heart in daily life. Why is brushing my teeth not as essential as sitting on the cushion, laughing with my colleagues over a cup of tea at work or smiling at Leo?

There is a way to turn everything into practice, and practice in everything I do. I have experienced the living possibility of this at my job, after

all, and that possibility is inspiring, especially as I drink this old Dian Hong out of my first pot.

However wise and sensible it sounds to live life this way, it is simply not a reality for me yet. I suppose that this is what it means to "practice," and highlights what we are practicing, what we are becoming. So, with experience gained, a whole area of new lessons waiting for me, and a living example of what it means to have a beginner's mind, I look forward to giving this teaching another try and asking myself the question, "Is this part of my practice?"





Tea of Life & Practice

茶人: Mike Baas

The person of the Dao retreats to their sphere of influence. — Wu De

It starts with *Yin*... There was a point in time a few years ago when I found myself confused and at a crossroads. I was following each chapter of the human manual to the letter—exercise, diet, meditation, sleep, all in good measure. But the fifth of the “basics,” following and practicing my Way, my Dao, each and every day, continued to remain indiscernible to my mind. At that time, I had just returned home from my third trip to the Tea Sage Hut. Participating in the conscious communal life of Tea as practiced there further emblazoned my desire to take that life home and apply it. And so I did, and yet I knew that a life of cleaning, cooking and serving Tea to guests was, at least for me, not only not a Dao but also financially unsustainable. Unlike the monastically bent service life of the Hut, my own responsibilities were that of a householder. Saddled with three children and my loving wife, but not making

the money required to sustain us, was a drain. The trip to Taiwan stirred up many business ideas revolving around tea, but like most of my self-made ideas, they all ended up falling short of the mark. I fashioned myself a tea seller in my mind, but the support I hoped to find was absent. Sheer effort of will kept ricocheting into skepticism and ill-fated opportunities.

There is more to the story. In the background, laying in wait, was a future inheritance in the form of a multi-generational family business. In that arena, at that time, there wasn't even a single stepping stone upon which to exert my will. The business was in the death throws of mismanagement and confusion abounded. The family was unable to skillfully navigate much of the road without blowouts, both strategic and emotional. Month after month, finances became more and more unsustainable both for the family business and me. I began to

feel like all I could do was drink my tea, endlessly talk on the phone, wait things out and hope that reason would win the day.

Yin to Yang

Eventually the collective confusion of the family yielded to the consensus that my brother and I jointly take over the company, albeit somewhat reluctantly. Months of biding my time now had me stepping on board a ship that had taken on a tremendous amount of water—not exactly the Watercourse Way I was hoping for. But at long last, the Way had presented itself. The previous hours spent meditating over tea had yielded a business plan that I was so sure of, I barely had to write any of it down. Throughout all that time with tea, I didn't know when my ideas were going to make landfall, but I sure did know how.

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As I now reflect on the beginning stages of what has clearly become a Dao for me—the life of a family business owner—I want to underline how challenging it was to maintain a life of Tea in the midst of such great uncertainty. Having Tea stimulate my inner knowings about my path, while not being able to take action in any meaningful way, was extremely stressful. I feel for anyone finding themselves in a similar situation to mine. The combination of the certainty and clarity that tea meditations bring together with a lack of empowerment and direction was a wretched equation. Your heart wants an ocean upon which to sail, a means to exert positive influence, and yet there feels as if there is no water.

I know now that I was deeply biased in thinking that practice was a mechanism that would open a portal and manifest my path. The practice of Tea, inherently an aimless activity, does not function to create opportunity in life. Had I valued Tea's more receptive, open, wide, expansive oceanic qualities as I waited without a path, I could have applied myself to deepening my com-

fort in dark waters and found the Way there, rather than abiding in a feeling that the Way is "not yet here." Success in a life of Tea is as much in knowing how little control you have over it as it is in doing anything about it.

Yang

Having overcome this limbo phase made the onset of the pandemic, coming right as my brother and I took the helm, child's play. The pandemic forced us to bail out the business through austerities, shedding the old heavy weight of a ship that was sized for a different type of travel. People, technology and infrastructure were rapidly sloughed off. Although we were not intimidated by the economic climate, we still had to make extremely bold decisions fraught with risk. Phoenix Dragon became a daily staple; its Yang energy fusing itself with all of my efforts. By contrast, other teas with less Yang qualities were mostly unwelcome distractions. The more aimless a tea, the less grounded in my purposes I

felt—and purposefulness felt required. Eventually, I began to feel the requirement of "stay with the tea," the fifth basic of tea, to be all consuming. Meditation, sleep, diet and exercise all took a backseat and the Dao was the only chapter I ever practiced from the manual. Phoenix Dragon was now basically the same as my blood, at the helm of the ship steaming full speed ahead.

Yang to Yin

I write this having traversed a huge swath of ocean, finally reaching land in the form of a right-sized business, paying suppliers on time and contributing to retirement accounts again. Now on land, the intensity of my travels has naturally diminished. Meditation, diet, sleep and exercise rejoined the Way and helped provide more normalcy to my life. Having applied my energy within a narrowly focused sphere of influence, bereft of nearly all face-to-face interaction, and having little to no interpersonal tea ceremony in my life beyond my own immediate family,



There is no mastery in self-service. In this tradition, we don't learn to make tea but to serve tea. True mastery must be in the service of mankind. As we progress, we come to understand that we serve the evolution of consciousness itself, and that the growth and awakening is an impersonal process—the natural movement of the light into life. In offering tea, we offer our spirit in true kinship. All movement into the sacred realm is an effort to bring back boons that will support our community.

—From The Five-Fold Essence of Tea

it was easy to recognize an opportunity to get out and serve my community once the difficulties of both business and the pandemic eased. As the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) kicked off its fall season, my wife Tracy and I volunteered as both coaches and referees. Phoenix Dragon was now a much less attractive daily drinker, yielding to deeper aged sheng, like Forest Path or Five Element shou blends.

Many of the lessons learned from holding space in a tea ceremony were now easily applicable in this secular context. Coaching, but most especially refereeing, required me to carry myself in a such a manner that the game would be respected by the players and parents. It also required sustained application of my concentration in quite challenging situations, coupled with swift judgment calls made in the moment. There were a number of circumstances that made me doubt volunteering for these roles, particular when testy parents were involved who didn't agree with my calls. On more than a couple occasions, I questioned wheth-

er spending hours on a Saturday at the expense of my formal tea practice was worth it.

At the end of a long season full of learning and growing, Tracy and I were invited to a special end-of-the-year volunteer dinner. Many people I now considered friends were there, all rejoicing that evening in a long overdue gathering to celebrate the success of our service efforts. Tracy was even presented with a "Volunteer of the Year" plaque! The night ended with a very restful, peace-filled sleep.

The next morning, the final day of league playoffs, I awoke quite early and began a long stretch of meditation, allowing entire swaths of tension from work and volunteering to unfurl. As the sun peaked over the horizon, I decided to throw my old pal Phoenix Dragon into the pot to give me energy for the day's games. Shockingly, where before there was a constant bold-and-awake feeling upon the first sip, the tea traveled deeply inward and laid forth a calm all-encompassing *samadhi*. An inner voice manifest, "Look at your life," it said. I realized that my life-as-

object was indeed, somehow, perceptible and I took it all in, boundlessly grateful, and particularly grateful that a tea I had leaned on for such mundane purposes was now showing me an entirely new side of itself at the deepest level. I concluded the morning ceremony with a deep bow of respect. As I left the house, my radio played Tears for Fears "Everybody Wants to Rule the World," which accompanied me like a soundtrack until I reached the field. Shedding tears of joy, I realized again and again that I had always been serving Tea throughout, that my practice was my life and that all was right with the world. Seeing meditation and tea ceremony as our only practices, we miss out on a lot that life has to offer. Although this truth is easy to understand, I have always been amazed at how difficult it is to put into practice! Simple but difficult, indeed.



Back to Heart Space

 **Matthew Barbour**

I wake to the sweet and still air of a spring morning in Perth, Australia; it's time to begin our day. My wife Odile and two children Elodie (five) and Micah (one) begin the dance of family life: cooking breakfast, telling stories, playing games and music flowing seamlessly. Each morning with little ones is different, but amongst the organized chaos, I always make time to share tea. However, it's only the evenings that provide the stillness for tea in ceremony.

For us, the daily ritual of tea practice brings a constant connection and communion with Nature, each other and within. This is medicine that this modern world needs, and I am very grateful to be able to share it with my loved ones. Tea continues to impact our life in the most beautiful ways: my wife and I no longer watch TV at night; instead, we sit for tea ceremony. Sometimes we sit in silence and sometimes in deep, soul-nourishing conversation. This has been such a gift, and I wouldn't trade it for the world. After you step off the train of constant content you see it for what it is... just

more stuff, and we trade our time with our loved ones for it.

Truth be told, I don't find parenting easy. In fact, I find it very challenging. I am someone who needs a lot of space. I prize my time for contemplation and just being in my own energy. All this changes when you have kids and run a business. Parenting has brought to the surface all of my shadows and undesirable attributes that I would much prefer to leave under the rug. I often feel like I have a brutal old Zen master, in the form of my children, armed with a stick to coax out and whack away all my of defects. When I refuse to grow... out comes the stick. I have been truly humbled by this journey. I used to be heady and lofty—living out of heart space. I have been carried kicking and screaming back down to earth by my children to learn the basics: compassion, putting others first, resilience and ultimately surrender. While I craved the tea hut in the mountains, my children have taught me to be here, with this emotional release, holding space. As a result, I have finally landed back in the heart space. There is a quote by

Shunryu Suzuki in *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, "One who thinks he is a good father is not a good father; one who thinks he is a good husband is not a good husband. One who thinks he is one of the worst husbands may be a good one if he is always trying to be a good husband with a single-hearted effort." I think a lot of parents are too hard on themselves, as am I. This quote gives me sustenance and lightens the load a little. We have all felt like the worst parent at times.

I understand why the Daoist priests of old would get their students to live in the world before retiring to a life of solitude. First comes the gauntlet of life to bring out all of your darkness, and then only after integration of the shadow comes transcendence. Otherwise, arrogance and lack of compassion may arise (not always, as the examples set by many masters throughout history show us, but for me that is where I was headed). Whenever I feel like I'm developing on my path, my ego bubble is always popped by my kids. I think this will happen until I can progress without my ego tagging along, clinging to



the image of a “serene sage.” Head in the clouds but always feet in the mud is the gift of children to any parent on the path of self-cultivation.

I have met my edges as a parent. I have seen my flaws, and I accept them. Each day, I improve a little, sometimes going backward, but always striving. Having a consistent self-cultivation practice has been my savior. The time and space to shine a light on all the nuances of family life gives the opportunity to correct things in real-time. Digesting situations and events of the day with tea moves stagnant energy and provides insights I may never have discovered otherwise.

My wife is a great guide and living library of parenting wisdom, and to sit with her each night over tea discussing ways to handle situations strengthens not only my parenting abilities but our relationship as well. Over our fourteen years of being together, we have developed a way of communicating our flaws in a way that does not feel judgmental and is grounded in compassion. We try to pass this on to our children as well.

When my daughter was four, I felt it would be a good idea to sit in ceremony together outside of our family. Andjelka, a fellow Chajin here in Perth, does an absolutely beautiful ceremony and was okay with having a little one along. Elodie was so excited for the ceremony, and I could see she felt like she was in for something very special. When we arrived, we had a beautiful heartwarming welcome from Andjelka and her two cats. Her apartment had such a warm and rustic aesthetic that I can only describe as “very tea.” There were four other adults, Elodie and myself attending. The ceremony began and Elodie was still, reverent and stared very intensely at Andjelka, absorbing it all. She placed her hand in mine and it remained there for the whole ceremony. It was so beautiful to receive together like this and to expose Elodie to this way of being at such a young age.

The importance of sitting in ceremony with Elodie was to share a sacred moment connecting to Mother Earth through Tea. I want her not to have to relearn how to feel connected to Na-

ture, but to keep what is already alive and kicking within her into adulthood. At home, we have built sacred practices into each day, including tea, oracle cards, prayer before meals and time in Nature. With so much uncertainty and change on the horizon for humanity, this is one thing that I can do right now. Being the best parent I can be, living in heart space, always pointing to Nature and simplicity, both overtly and through my actions.

Zen and Tea have impacted our lives very deeply. I feel so grateful for the ancient practice of tea, handed down through so many hands all the way to Global Tea Hut. This community makes this practice very accessible and alive with inspiration and abundance. From our family to yours: Thank you! May you find peace and connection through Tea.





Family, Zen & Tea— One Flavor (sometimes)

茶人: *Herkko Labi*

First, let's get the big elephant in the room out of our way: Tea, family and zen is a challenging combination. And most of the time—if you still have *any time* left to consider these things and even write about them—the marriage of the two seems more like constant dragon water bubbling than calm shrimp-eye water opening in anticipation of the coming Zen and Tea. But as every family holder with soft persistence and good survival skills at some point learns, holding and caring for these bumping bubbles is also an art form, and if used wisely can be turned into tea practice.

Some background: Our family has two cute daughters, Elliko (four) and Hiie-Mai (six). The parents (us) are Triin and Herkko. We both have been part of Global Tea Hut from its first days. We serve tea in Estonia with a community of tea servers called “Teeline,” which just celebrated its eighth

birthday. So, tea was in our lives for a few years before we had children. What this means in the context of full-time tea life is that before we had children, our tea cupboard was already filled with bowls and pots, lots of tea and also lots of devotion to Cha Dao. And after having two children and living now full-time family life, we are still filling the same cupboard with new tea, and sometimes even with new bowls and pots, but our devotion to Cha Dao, on the other hand, has been quite a roller coaster with many lessons. We'll kindly share a few of them here for all future moms and dads in this global community, and hopefully, you can all find some support in them, whether you are parents, parents-to-be or just interested in hearing about life and tea practice.

One the first things you'll learn being a new parent is that your free time is a very, very valuable commodity.

Even if you've already read some puzzling lines from Dogen about time's relationship to the meaning of Zen and its utmost value in sitting and seeing, you will come to know this viscerally. Dogen taught that objective and subjective time are very different. Time as something ticking on the wall and human experience, having a certain number of hours available for our daily activities, this understanding of time is revolutionary after having your first newborn. To be perfectly honest, you really don't have available time anymore. Of course, you have time for your children, as taking care of them is now your main priority, but having time to sit down and sip some tea for a few hours—that quickly becomes a rarity. Over the months and years, as baby girls and boys grow older, this will change, but not so as to get back to some lost treasure from “those good old tea times” before you had a family.



茶 Collecting spring water is a great way to involve children in tea and get them outdoors in Nature. Bring a picnic if the weather is nice!

It seems obvious that children turn your life upside down and everything around us then changes so fast. Still, it's something totally different to really live through it yourself and discover that "two times a day laying out a *chaxi* to have tea in calm and quiet" has invisibly transformed to "twelve times before baby changing table fixing new diapers." You will, at some point, naturally start to crave "those good old tea times" when you were the master of your own life and could sit down for tea any time you wanted. And I would say that such a craving is really normal and okay. To answer why leads us to our second lesson.

One of the most valuable teachings from the Buddhist tradition is the never-ending relationship between craving and renunciation in the human mind. I'm not suggesting that no other spiritual tradition has had insights into desire, but Buddhist lore and centu-

ries of practice diving deeply into the chemistry and quantum physics between the mostly subconscious act of craving something or somebody and a conscious incentive to let go of this craving have provided unique insight. If you have noticed this constant play between craving and letting go of craving in your mind, you'll know the merits gained in consciously watching and understanding it. And in a way it is hard to find a better setting and practice for looking into this than family life with young children. This is true not only from the point of view of a parent craving for "those good old tea times," but even more from empathizing with the point of view of your children: seeing them start craving for things they are interested in or even for the things vital to their survival, which you must provide. This all happens quite naturally. From a child development perspective, for example, learn-

ing to grab objects is substantial. And you'll also notice the beginning of such patterns in their behavior and understanding the world. How much have you thought about the hardwired connection between your daily cravings today and the candy craver you were in your childhood? It's a silly example but hopefully clarifies the message: having children can be your best practice in following your own cravings and letting them go to benefit others. For example, letting go of your *chaxi* hours for the time spent wrapping up your baby to go out cold but fresh winter weather; or letting go of your morning meditation minutes to fix a breakfast for an early bird child, or letting go of your precious tea serving event in the evening because your child got sick that very morning and someone has to be there for her. These sacrifices are powerful opportunities for you to confront desire and where it comes from.

As with cravings, everything else in your life after having a child will also change. You can be certain about this! But is this something truly unique to having a family? Maybe the speed and intensity of this change, yes. But after a period, it will slow down and family life will get quite structured and routine. However, change itself is there in any life, as is adversity; it is universal to all of us, be it in a family or an ascetic living in a cave. And this is related to the third lesson we stumbled on after some years of intense family life: children change quicker than you can possibly imagine. They are small and cute but still pretty loud crying babies and then they rise, start to walk, say their first words, form funny sentences, go to kindergarten, and before you notice, they are young individuals with their own way of seeing the world... It has been many years but seems like a few months. And if you look closer, you can really and truly “touch” that process of change. Children can be the mirror through which you have an insight into the everlasting wheel of impermanence. But they make fun of it, they enjoy it, they laugh in it! And this laughter is for you to discover again—the inner child’s lively perspective to this “serious” thing called impermanence. It’s all a dance, a game; it’s a buzzing field of endless possibilities. You children will show you these truths you once knew.

Okay, that’s enough of philosophy—time for some practical tips, too!

Kitchen Tea

The fourth lesson we have gathered is something called “Kitchen Tea.” Where do parents of young families spend most of their time (except phones, *ahem*)? Yes, the kitchen! Having children really emphasizes why there is a saying that the “kitchen is the heart of every house.” It is the place where family members come together, where food is prepared and where candies are in the cupboard. Maybe you already see where this leads: the kitchen will also be the place where in most likelihood you’ll have any chance to have some tea. With years as parents, we have come up with a new way of serving tea. And if you don’t mind adding a sixth to this tea tradition,

it is called “Kitchen Tea,” and it provides its own magic and wonder. It also can change lives, like any type of tea. Here are some tips:

1. There is a certain amount of shou puerh that you can drink around 9 p.m., which does not take away your valuable sleeping hours but will give you needed refreshment after the kids have fallen asleep. You can prepare this tea when they are getting ready for bed and are still constantly asking for anything that pops into their minds.

2. Tea can boil throughout the day, for you to grab some bowls between the constant “Everything Else.” Find an easy to fiddle around boiling pot that also does not break (since you are constantly changing the location of this pot in your kitchen), but don’t take any kitchen pot that is available. Buy a new one that suits this and use it exclusively for boiling tea in the kitchen during those times when you are busy; for example, fixing food for the family.

3. A bowl of tea with few leaves can fill those ten minutes of relative quietude after children have eaten their breakfast and their stomachs are happily full, while they figure out what to do next.

4. Getting a separate all-purpose, side-handle pot for the kitchen will increase your willingness to drink tea and at same time hold you from falling into the oblivion of going back to tea bags (which is not bad in itself, but you know the drill).

So, Kitchen Tea gathers your loving, precious gem(s) so that while running around all the time, you still have some bowls of support from tea. Don’t mind letting go of rules or preparing the tea in a lazy (=tired) fashion. More important is that even if your life is upside down, you still remember to find a moment for a good bowl or cup of tea. Then at some point you’ll meet the next lesson, which is one of the most beautiful you could have in your path, and this is specially reserved just for those of us who have children in our day-to-day tea life.

The fifth lesson is when the tables turn, and you have the upper hand by surprise—the time when you can sit

down with your three- or four-year-old and for the first time in life have some tea with them. Perhaps you let them choose the utensils and decorations for your *chaxi*. Maybe you ask them which tea they want, and they answer “Elevation.” And then you sit there together, sipping cups of tea while they drink warm water with a few drops of tea in it. At the same time, you are, of course, rescuing the fallen bowls and answering a thousand, thousand questions, even if you said we are playing the game of “who says something first is cow poo.” Then you’ll see the heart-breaking joy of being a parent and a tea lover at the same time. You’ll notice your children’s outstanding ability to instantly learn and adapt to such a new situation with an open heart. And at some point, you’ll exclaim, “Wow! Where did they learn how to hold the bowl properly?” Then you realize that you have been holding a bowl yourself all these years. It is not just them who have been growing, but also you. And the thing about children is that they always observe.



✿ *Having some back-up, random teaware is a great idea. You can use it in the kitchen, let the kids play with it and you don’t need to worry about it if something happens. Many people in the community even get small tea sets for the kids to start practicing and we have some amazing junior Chajin around the world as well!*



Cha Dao Meets Parenting

茶道

盲兒

茶人: Stephan Van Der Mersch

Precious teaware attracts the curiosity of still clumsy little fingers. Open flames and “hot!” water eventually teach the meaning of that word with pain. Upon the birth of my second child, my early morning tea practice was devastated by my baby’s fractured sleep. Our *chaxi* began to feature toy dinosaurs, Legos and half-eaten cheese sticks—the flowers dissected and scattered by the educational delight of experiential botany. Our tea table, perhaps a metaphor for our life, is stained with the pen scribbles and blueberry smears of these artistic youngsters. Is this wabi?

Parents know that silence is suspect, and the few quiet moments we can seize often come at the expense of wall drawings or a bedroom thoroughly dusted with laundry detergent (true stories). We find we take those precious, quiet moments any way we can. And you never know when—as you quietly lift a hot cup of fine tea to your lips—you might be attacked from behind by a two-year-old ninja. And then the ninja wants to nurse...

Every once in a while, however, those little ninjas sit still and quiet with you for a dozen cups of tea. Or, to your horror, delight and amazement, you spy your eighteen-month-old carefully pouring water between your treasured

Yixing pot, Qing cups and *jianshui* in a startlingly accurate imitation of his parents. More than once your baby walks into a tea ceremony buck naked dragging a sheepskin and lays himself down for a nap in the middle of the circle, a perfect reminder to your guests of the beauty in the mundane. And, of course, in the morning, they come downstairs to find you at the tea table and for now still curl up in your lap while they ease into awakeness.

You notice that these little boys understand to take their shoes off before they enter the tea house. You trust they know and will know from your example what reverence is, what introspection is, what beauty is, what service is; that they will understand the benefit of sitting quietly. And they will definitely know what good tea is (whether they care will be up to them).

And for me, thank goodness that I have tea to keep me sane, to find my bearings in my reality, which usually feels a little upside-down. Parenting is a relentless and exhausting external mindfulness practice, and tea helps me guide that energy inward. I notice that the first baby broke a lot more teaware than the second; have we become more mindful as parents thanks to our tea practice? Even broken teaware now elicits a relatively equan-

imous sigh rather than anger; I think Cha Dao might have something to do with that. And as a family we have had many lovely mornings—cheese sticks, blueberries and dinosaurs included—around the tea table. And when we are there, we are really together. Our tea table is truly the heart of our home.

Sometimes I can escape to a “proper” tea session alone thanks to surrendering and letting the boys watch Dino Dana on TV (admittedly not the best soundtrack for tea). I wonder if I should feel guilty about that. I don’t rest enough elsewhere in my life, and so at times, I have worried that my tea practice is at the expense of parenting the way I want to. And then I become aware that I would like to balance my life without that trade-off. But how? Fortunately, I know I will soon be able to carve out a quiet morning to feel into that question with a pot of good tea, though I expect to be interrupted before I figure it out... And with or without interruptions, I am certain that in the not-too-distant future, I will dearly miss *this* version of Cha Dao, the one with ninjas armed with cheese sticks.







茶人: Colin Hudon (Qing Yu, 清愚)

Raising a child puts everything into perspective, for what could be more important? Children are the vital link in our chain of humanity—our future, the gifts we leave for the next world. So much of Zen and “spiritual work” is about service, and what better form of service could there be than to raise a compassionate, awake generation of human beings? What better charity to give our hands, hearts and the fruits of our labor? Children are reminders of who we were, and who we might become. They are our innocence, purity and potential. They draw from us a deeper reservoir of love, patience, kindness, compassion, attention and care than we ever knew we harbored. As James Baldwin wrote, “Children have never been very good at listening to what their parents tell them, but they never fail to imitate them.” Thus, true parenting teaches us that we are not simply providers, but educators—and the true work of education comes from being present. Parenting has yielded the deepest teachings, and my son Linden is my greatest teacher.

Linden is eighteen months old. It’s taken his entire life for me to really realize that parenthood is a path of growth. Like any developed skill, we must practice. While having children is a capacity bestowed to us by biology, raising them well is an art form learned by doing. Comedian Jim Gaffigan puts it aptly, “I don’t know what’s more exhausting about parenting: the getting up early or acting like you know what you’re doing.” The truth is that parenting is a circus of bungling in every direction—an incoherent, chaotic, spontaneity-filled adventure, captained by a small drunken pirate! As parents, we do our best and often fall short. And yet, all the craziness changes us, and if we do it with real care, we just might help the child to find their fullest and most authentic expression.

As the proverb goes, “Mature adults don’t necessarily create children, but children help create mature adults.” And while one of Linden’s greatest gifts has been his ability to reeducate me in the art of being a kid, my maturity has grown by the simple fact that I strive moment-to-moment to put another’s

needs and development before my own. Perhaps the greatest gauge of maturity is our capacity for deep external consideration and the attendant tag-along virtues of reliability, accountability and trustworthiness. Up until eighteen months ago, my life revolved around me (and still does much of the time). Yet, I find with each passing month under Linden’s expert tutelage, I become more skilled in widening my circle of love and consideration, while more frequently noticing the ordinary wonders of life—all of which seem intimately related to this thing we call “Zen.” So, what does a life of Zen, Tea and parenting really look like?

I often wonder what I did with all the “free time” I had before becoming a parent! It seems that I must have enjoyed far more “leisure” than I even understood, but the truth is that I somehow can’t remember. It’s a bit like a long-term romantic relationship where it’s hard to imagine life without the other person. Becoming a parent has meant learning to prioritize my time and energy far more efficiently than I used to (if I did at all).





I get up two hours earlier in order to maintain my practices of meditation, tea, reading, writing and Qigong. This time in the morning is sacred and essential to maintaining balance, equanimity and openness in the face of a demanding schedule. To get up early, I've had to become more disciplined at going to bed early, and typically I try to be asleep by 10:30. Oftentimes, I get into bed soon after Linden has fallen asleep, doing my best not to wake him. We also have two dogs that require a lot of exercise, which means that in addition to the other morning practices, I take them on a run in the mountains. This excursion is also an essential part of my day as the subsequent eight hours is often spent working. I am fortunate that my job includes weekly tea ceremonies, classes and meditations at our teahouse. When I return from my run, I get an hour or so to spend time with Jade and Linden. This is my favorite part of the day. We take the time to play with him, discuss our plans, eat breakfast and generally enjoy time together. Then it's off to work, which often goes well into the evening. The

truth is that I wish I were able to spend more time with my family, but the pandemic significantly sidetracked our well-designed plans, which has meant working extra hours to maintain financial stability in our home. It hasn't been easy, but we've certainly grown a lot on the journey. Linden keeps our home a place of laughter, lightness and joy. His sense of humor and silliness is infectious and helps us immeasurably when the stresses of modern life are heavy. Parenting without a sense of humor is like being an accountant who is awful at math. Humor (and dancing) have been the glue that holds us together.

It's so important for parents to take care of themselves because their state of being profoundly affects their children. When we can be serene, joyful, content and peaceful, we are leaving this legacy for our children to develop these qualities. As parents, Jade and I make time for meditation, tea and movement, eat a clean diet, take adaptogenic herbs to wind down at night and manage stress, spend time in Nature, sleep as much as possible,

take the weekend seriously and talk to friends who have more parenting experience than we do. We try to model contentment, limiting the amount of clutter, toys, gadgets and distractions in our house. While Linden needs ways to engage his curiosity, it's also important to learn contentment playing with the dogs, his parents or a pile of leaves on the lawn. Especially with technology these days, developing the ability to be at peace without stimulation is essential. So many young people suffer from depression and anxiety, largely caused by the influence of technology. We find all sorts of creative ways to interact, which also invites engaged, active parenting, rather than the easier default of putting on a show for the child. This active engagement will contribute to the way that Linden develops his own active attention and imagination. Of course, there are thoughtful, uplifting shows, and at times, they are a great support to our parenting. Like all things, moderation is the key. We stumble a lot as parents, but more importantly, we're getting better at it as we all grow up.

赤子之心

Children are our teachers

As I mentioned earlier, Linden is my greatest Zen teacher, and integrating some of his lessons have helped me to become a better parent and human.

When I walk with Linden in the forest, there is always a moment when I must tell my mind to stop pushing. Linden likes to check out every plant, rock, tree, bug and animal. He moves slowly and aimlessly, but with great attention. When I slow down, and drop my agenda, I begin to notice every little thing that catches his eye and I begin sharing things that catch mine. In just noticing together, the lesson teaches itself.

Another big lesson that Linden teaches is equanimity. When he's upset and crying, the ego in me starts reacting in all sorts of ways. It says, "I wish he would stop crying," "What's wrong and how can I fix it" or "Why right now when we are trying to leave the house." When he is happy, joyful, agreeable or calm, I notice the ego putting his behavior in the category of "good." This assigning of "good" and "bad" behavior is based on my own faulty and limited assessments.

Over time, this would lead to me wanting to change his behavior through scolding, becoming authoritative or some manipulative strategy based on reward and punishment. I've worked recently to create a different habit that I believe will help as he grows: I work to stay in my center and to look beneath the behavior—into Linden's heart. There I find only good, and I often then know what to do. When he's upset, and I can go to the heart, oftentimes he stops crying and starts laughing. Jade has also been a profound teacher in the art of equanimity and patience. Her ability to stay calm, centered and open during challenging moments, is a true inspiration. Her joy in being a mother comes through moments of ready laughter, caring sweet words and consistent consideration of Linden's needs. She intuitively understands what Linden is requesting with tremendous empathy, and even in the face of great exhaustion, summons a seeming supernatural tenderness. Hers is the art of softness and love in action. As much as we can learn from children, we can learn from mothers as well.

There are endless lessons every day. Jade and I feel honored and blessed beyond words to care for our son. He's the most beautiful gift, and we hope to support him in developing his uniqueness. The truth is that I don't truly know the origin of my child beyond the biological. Like many things, birth belongs to the great Mystery, and the truth is that Linden is a child of that Mystery. Sometimes, through his sense of wonder, I catch a glimpse of it, and I sense that he is not "mine," nor is it my job to "raise" him. Rather, my job is simply to help him stay open to the marvelous mystery of life and not limit his possibilities. As a child, he is so utterly filled with possibilities, and so often parents begin pushing from a very young age, telling children what is or is not possible for them. My job is just as I learned in Cha Dao: to share tea, presence and the space for any and all possibilities.



Perfect Imperfection

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茶人: Tracy Conti

Becoming a parent has completely changed my Zen and Tea practice. I used to think that being a mother would take me away from my practice and that I would envy others who didn't have the same responsibilities. What I found is, in fact, the complete opposite.

Becoming a parent broke the illusion of control, liberating my old self from perfectionism. Time is just time now, and it's always time for tea and meditation! My daily practice was very important to me during my pregnancy, and once Dylan was born, he spent almost every day at some point sleeping and nursing on my lap while I drank tea. (We joke that he is a tea pickle!) Also, once you become a parent, strict times to sit for a session go out the door. Flexibility is key!

Some of my best tea sessions have been with Dylan—an old soul who insists I only practice Gongfu. He has become my teacher in many ways. He sits on the floor to the right of me, watching carefully, but also quietly playing with a toy until it's time for the tea to be placed inside the teapot. I pick up the tea scoop, or as Dylan calls it the tea “coop,” and slowly, using the tea pick, slide the tea into the teapot. He sits quietly and patiently while the first bowl or cup is served. Once it has cooled down, he mindfully picks up the bowl or cup with both hands. Drinking the tea, he'll often exclaim “Yummm!” out loud. He also knows the difference between red tea, aged

puerh and oolong without me telling him! He prefers the tea to be strong, not watered down, so he only has a few bowls or cups with less liquid inside.

Motherhood is humbling, a true ego death, as your main objective shifts from merely meeting your own needs to complete devotion and service to the being who grew in your body. My tea ceremonies used to focus on perfectionism. I wasn't aware of how much control I had placed upon my practice, with the illusion that if everything were in order—a clean house, complete silence, everything in its place, etc.—I would have the “ideal” session. A tea session now may look like so many distractions and disruptions. Getting up from my tea table to get snacks, assisting in the bathroom, answering questions or doing art projects next to the tea table could have meant the “destruction” of my serenity according to my old criteria. But in those moments between interruptions, my mind is able to drop in deeper, letting go of the idea of a “perfect moment.” And that is Zen!

Dylan helps me set up for our morning tea ceremony together. He polishes the tea table with some wood oil and a rag while I search for a *chabu*. I ask him what we should drink; he often replies with “puerh!”

As parents and brick-and-mortar shop owners, we do not have the leisure to gather with others to share tea. For us, this is another layer of our parent-hermit life, of full devotion to Dylan

and our store. Occasionally, if the timing aligns, I will have a dear sister come over who is also a new mother and I'll serve her tea while our little ones are out with the Dads. Parenthood and my personal tea practice are one and the same Way. I cannot imagine being a new mother without tea and meditation. Tea makes me a better parent. Connecting to self, gratitude and Nature balances me, and all of these elements bring oneness and patience. Parental pressures squeeze time into a handful of diamonds: windows of clarity through which the monkey mind is silenced of the chaos.

My advice for parents with small children who want to drink tea is to discard the illusion of separateness! Welcome and include little ones for tea. You can set the tone by playing music that's soft and meditative. If they go to grab the teaware, help them feel the bowls and teapot while also helping them understand that hot water will be moving through it all, so it's very important to sit still while hot water goes inside or outside the teapot. This can be challenging when they are young (toddler/babies), so having tea with a friend or partner is ideal. I truly feel that because I included Dylan from day one, he has a very clear understanding of how to handle teaware, and now joins me for several bowls when I sit.







Tea Sage Hut was a place where people from around the world could come to learn about Tea and Zen free of charge. It was cozy, quaint and small, offering an intimate learning environment with tea ceremonies, formal lessons, meditations and a healthy vegan diet. We fostered tea community and housed tea traditions from around the globe, which we shared with wayfarers who stayed with us. Year after year, the Center evolved and grew, developing into a highly refined ten-day retreat twice month. In 2019, we had to move out, which turned out to be a blessing in disguise when 2020 unfolded in the way it did.

Back in the days of Tea Sage Hut, we offered guests a chance to experience what a Life of Tea was really like in this tradition. It was ten days of meditation, tea ceremonies, experiments and tea classes, healthy food, farming, hikes to fetch spring water, and trips to farms to process tea by hand. Each night was closed by a post-meditation discourse.

I was fortunate to participate in countless ten-day retreats over almost seven years of service at Tea Sage Hut.

That meant I was able to hear the discourse time and again. The repetition was a rich opportunity to peel away the layers of wisdom deep in each discourse. And, as my life changed, day to day, week to week, year to year, the ways in which the same discourses applied to me also changed. I picked up on different aspects of the discourses that most pertained to what was going on in my life. I'm sure that experience is true for everyone. Many of the lessons heard in any one discourse unfolded and came to fruition in unpredictable ways at later times in my life. Some lessons are still seeds within me, waiting for the waters of transformation to sprout them at some future time when I need it most or when I'm ready to finally integrate the lesson. Some lessons I am constantly working with while others have served their purpose and moved on. This kind of rhythm is continuous; the lessons and the way you work with them just continue to change and adapt as your life unfolds.

Discourses such as these, that address topics of importance and truth, are a different kind of "information"

to integrate. In fact, they aren't information at all; they are wisdom. And the difference is crucial. It's not like watching a YouTube video to learn something at a random time of the day. Nor is it the kind of information that you tackle with a notebook and pen making sure to write down all the most important points so that you can review them and get "the most" out of each discourse. The data isn't important—your state of mind as you listen is. Wisdom is an opening, not an encapsulation. Listening to a discourse requires a different kind of receptivity. It requires a kind of faith that what you remember by listening single-pointedly is what you needed to remember, and everything else will settle where it needs to, springing up later in your life, perhaps a week later or many years... The mind with which you listen to these discourses is most important. An open, single-pointed, calm and relaxed mind is going to yield more results than any amount of notes you take from an information-thirsty state of mind. There's nothing wrong with taking notes, writing reflections, or journaling, but that linear approach

Ten-Day Discourses

本A: Shen Su (聖素)

is very different than simply listening with an open mind, an empty bowl.

At Tea Sage Hut, we framed our days with morning and evening meditation. In the morning, by meditating, eating breakfast in silence and drinking tea in ceremony, we cultivated what we called “being before doing.” That simply means to rest in a space of stillness for a time before getting on with the activity of the day. Not surprisingly, that changes the entire outcome of the day. In the evening, we ended the day with another period of meditation. The meditative mind is calm and awake, preparing us to really listen to the discourses that followed. Not surprisingly, this changed the way in which we received wisdom. Preceding the discourse with a period of meditation is the ideal way to listen to these discourses. It helps you to internalize and metabolize the information so that it can be applied directly in your life. That can be accomplished in at least two very simple ways.

The first way is to organize one or two meditations a day around the discourses that you’re listening to. If you live a normal life with a job and family

to support or have other responsibilities, it’s easy enough to set aside some time for meditation before listening to a discourse. An excellent option would be to meditate once in the morning and once in the evening, followed by a discourse. Immediately after meditation, you could simply listen to a discourse, letting it seep into your life in whatever way is necessary. There’s no pressure to take notes. There’s no test at the end of this. Just sitting and listening intently is enough. In that simple scenario, you could absorb two discourses a day. Because this would require some effort on your part to organize your days around this, you would also notice the direct impact such a schedule would have on your life. Both the meditation and the discourse will likely influence your normal routine greatly. If your schedule is really that busy, an even simpler version of this would be to meditate once each day followed by a discourse, either in the morning or in the evening.

A more serious approach would be to organize a self-retreat around the discourses. We have featured in detail how to organize your own self-retreat

in previous issues of Global Tea Hut, including one day, three day, and longer self-retreats (February 2017 and 2018 issues). These require a lot of planning and organization, usually with the help of a volunteer or two to prepare meals and clean up. Without question, this would greatly influence your ability to receive the wisdom of the discourses, as you would be listening to them with the same mind from which they were expressed. These discourses come from the meditative mind, so resting in that space will improve your ability to absorb their truth.

When I was serving at Tea Sage Hut as a student and volunteer, there were rare periods without any guests or other students. I took advantage of these times to do a handful of self-retreats over the years. I had the chance to do a three-, seven-, and even a ten-day retreat by myself. I also carried out several weekend retreats for just one or two days. During all of them, I had to plan and organize meals, meditation periods, time for tea and time for discourses. The organization of your retreat can be thought of as part of it, just as preparing for tea *is* the ceremony.

Before these recordings were available, I had to use other discourses for self-retreats, but I can't tell you how much more suitable these ones are because they are so perfectly tailored for students of Tea and Zen. Tea is often described as a meditation in motion or a bridge that connects meditation to our daily lives, and isn't that what Zen is really all about? Taking that which we cultivate on the cushion and applying it to our daily life so that we can be of benefit to ourselves and all beings is what Zen means to me. Of course, that's easier said than done, but the discourses guide us to more clearly understand how to live our Tea and our Zen.

Again, the important thing here is to listen with the meditative mind. These discourses cover a lot of important topics, including a special method of cleaning (inside and out), a brief history of the Buddha, Buddhism and Zen, endless lists and principles that can transform our lives, and a lot of deep (and sometimes hilarious) stories about Tea and Zen, just to name a few. There is way more than you're ever going to be able to fully integrate. There's enough in any given discourse to last a lifetime if we approach it, nurture it, and open up to it with the meditative mind. You can always come back and listen to these discourses again. The wisdom is timeless and always applies to our ever-changing lives. The future you one year from now will take away completely different lessons than the current you will.

Below are just a few of my favorite points on some of the discourses, interwoven with some memories of Tea Sage Hut and some ways I think anyone could utilize the discourses in their own lives, regardless of whether you live in a Tea and Zen Center or not.

Osoji

The first discourse starts with the important theme of *osoji*, a traditional form of deep cleaning that happens around the Lunar New Year. It's an intensive method of cleaning whereby you remove everything from your house, top to bottom, and clean thoroughly. It's like an extreme spring cleaning. As you can imagine, everything gets moved around, and many

things thrown away, reorganized or given away, leaving your house clean, fresh and simplified for the coming year. And it's no surprise that a space like this leaves your mind feeling clean, fresh and simplified as well.

After listening to this talk on cleaning, I found myself motivated to give it a try. In conjunction with Marie Kondo's book *The LifeChanging Magic of Tidying Up*, I ended up with a cleaner, more organized room than I ever thought possible (at least by my standards), and it has stayed that way ever since. The process was transformative and completely shifted my perspective on the objects that surround me and the space in which they live. It has since influenced the way I clean and organize all of my living spaces, especially my tea room and workshop.

Every great teacher I've worked with, be it an academic professor, martial arts sensei, or spiritual teacher have all emphasized the importance of cleaning in one way or another. They all know from experience that there is something much deeper to the act than just cleanliness. The act of cleaning is an act of respect. What is the first thing every host does when preparing for a guest? They clean. And since cleaning is just a natural part of daily life, we might as well embrace it and make a practice out of it that we can grow and learn from.

That's part of what the lesson in this discourse is pointing out, the discipline necessary to clean and organize a space that inspires us to be the person we want to be. Whether in the kitchen, tea space, meditation room, workshop or office, our living spaces should flow and welcome us to cook, drink tea, sit in meditation or focus on our work – and that requires cleaning. But the lesson isn't limited to cleaning spaces; it is an opportunity for us to do an internal *osoji* over these ten days. It asks of us to empty ourselves, see who we are and what we have buried or covered in dust, and then rebuild ourselves into who we want to be.

I have learned that external cleanliness is a reflection of our internal cleanliness and vice versa. The more internal cleaning I do on myself, the more I want to live in a physically clean space. Tea Sage Hut was a very clean place, top to bottom. Together with guests, we cleaned the vast ma-

jority of the Center every course. It was the equivalent of doing a spring cleaning twice a month! Course after course, guests were astonished at how inspiring the cleaning day was because they were experiencing the physical expression of the introspective work they were doing.

The Five Basics

In Buddhism, there are a lot of lists in the form of rules, precepts, vows, guidelines, etc. Many are covered throughout the discourses, but one of my favorites are the five basics.

They are the five things we can do in our daily lives to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They include daily doses of proper sleep, healthy diet, routine exercise, meditation and connection to your Dao or Way of Life. For me, that's tea. Again, whenever things are off keel in my life, this is the first place I can look to for my own guidance. Because until all of these basics are in balance, I'll never really know if the problem I'm facing is the result of failing to keep these basics in order or something deeper. The five basics must be in place before any deeper personal work can be done. And let's face it, as easy as they are, it's just as easy to let them slip, which is why self-discipline is so important to maintain them. They don't need to be adhered to militantly, but very consistently over a reasonable amount of time if we are to benefit from them.

Before coming to Taiwan, I didn't have a strong meditation or tea practice, but I had the other three basics down really well. Once I started incorporating more meditation and tea into my daily routine, there was a short period of what seemed like perfect balance. I say a short period because as life goes on, I became more and more involved at the Center and took on more responsibilities. Slowly, I let my sleep cycle go and I wasn't exercising nearly as much as I used to. The balance had shifted in a very different direction than what I was accustomed to, and I found my body yearning for more sleep or physical exercise. After awhile, I adjusted and found my balance again, learning that balance isn't achieved and then forgotten, but an ongoing practice we must maintain.



I'm sure many of you can relate to getting your work or service in balance but then realizing your sleep and exercise have waned as a result. This is part of why I like this list so much because they indirectly taught me how to intuitively listen to my own body. When you experience balance, it's easy to detect imbalance. And what's more, balance isn't about achieving some state of perfection; it's about enjoying the process of striving for an ever-changing state of balance. The reward isn't sustained balance, but living as a human that constantly works toward a healthy living and balance. Perhaps that *is* balance. "We are creatures of journey not of destination," as Wu De often says.

Part of what these discourses are pointing toward is a very old way of life that is just as applicable to modern times as it was centuries ago. To me, spirituality is following a way of life that helps us navigate the chal-

lenges that are inevitably coming our way. The challenges are unpredictable, so all we can do is prepare and orientation for how to face them. Ways of Life are rare these days. What I didn't expect was how much getting back up when life knocks us down was a part of the path and the teachings. A lot my lessons at Tea Sage Hut came from watching what my teacher and fellow students did when they fall flat on their faces and needed to rise up and try again. "We are building a temple of error," Wu De often says. Sometimes that means we use sheer determination, while other times it is about acceptance, forgiveness or tolerance. Sometimes we return to the small things like cleaning or tea and that reorients us.

I never fail to find the guidance I need in contemplating the content of these discourses as they relate to my life. Whether I'm just stuck in a rut,

facing a deep personal problem or going through a major transformation, I look to the wisdom found within these talks. And it's not just about using them in times of peril, but also how to celebrate life when things are relatively aligned. Those times are certainly worth celebrating and more frequent than we might think. In that way, I find these discourses help me to strive toward a more balanced life. They both lift me up in inspiration and keep me grounded and rooted in the day. I know by listening to them, you too will find countless ways to apply them in your daily life.





Voices from the Hut

So many of us have faced challenging times these past two years. Tea and this community have been a solace. John Zapanta bears his soul and shares with us some of the gorgeous poetry, the writing of which has helped him pass through an unraveling so many of us can relate to. His poems are beautiful and touching, and as therapeutic to read as they were to write.

If you would like to contribute some writing to Voices from the Hut or have an idea for an interesting topic, email: voicesfromthehut@gmail.com. We cannot wait to read all the exciting articles to come!

PASSAGEWAYS OF POETRY & TEA

茶人: John Zapanta

Imagine you have or someone close to you has deeply cared for another, something, someone, some purpose, some idea, some way of living that has come to an end or is coming to an end—consciously or subconsciously—and with that end, something new is beginning... You may not know what/why/how/who is changing, words may not suffice to describe this metamorphosis, nor does any logical reasoning appear helpful. However, underneath it all there is some greater rhythm that ties us together. This is my journey, my passageway with grief through tea and poetry.

This pandemic is a great, yet ordinary time of death and loss; and the beautiful chaotic renewal that is grooving, unraveling and tying an intimate knot out of us all is changing how we relate to our environment, work and relationships. Through this time, I have come to deeply realize that I have been calling my own self here the entire time. It is as if “Be with me...” became a mantra of calling not just my highest self here but also my lowest self, and everything in between. Only through unexpected and intense losses, through dark and unknown places, accompanied by Tea, was I able to engage in an

intimate journey and come “home,” to tenderly sit with this human form, right here, right now.

Like the fifth basic of Tea, “to stay with the tea,” I have secretly been calling myself here *to stay with myself*, instead of escaping, neglecting, numbing out, dissociating with whatever it is that is arising, falling, twisting, turning, churning, dying, birthing, evolving in my conscious and unconscious self. Gratefully, Tea allows me to feel safe enough to sit with “it,” however painful, overwhelming or uncertain the experience is. I sit with just enough courage, compassion, grace, wisdom, patience and reverence to get through it.

At the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, with all the unrest in the world, at the end of 2020, and within a short period of several weeks, everything that I believed in, worked for, formed an identity around from relationships, career, investments and even my own health of my body and psychosocial emotional resilience was challenged—crumbled, vanished and dissolved. An intimate relationship with a woman who had a three-year-old son—both of whom I greatly loved—ended suddenly. A local clinical practice that I trusted as my family, where I poured

my entire spirit into and shared everything with, sold the practice in a way that was unsettling. Six months later, I resigned, losing my job and friendships. Another company that housed an educational course that I spent my whole entire career researching, developing, creating and teaching ended. Local business investments and community ties dissolved. A physical body that I tirelessly trained to the limits in all planes and dimensions was stricken with Covid-19. Unable to get out of bed, walk down the block, talk on the phone for greater than ten minutes, cold and alone, Covid-19 was for me the final “nail in the coffin” that ended everything that I thought I was and ended every motivation for doing any of it anyway.

Before all this happened, I was on top of the world: in love with life, my relationship, career and work. I’d achieved everything that I sought to do, everything on the ten-year goal list and more. If I’ve learned one thing from all of this, it is that to love a lot is to lose a lot, and from what is lost there is something to be found, cherished and even savored in and through the pain. I have returned to the roots, physically and spiritually. I’ve been humbled down to the soil,



to feel the warmth and the nourishment of my own unique experience, being held within the greater rhythm of a larger context. A refinement of what makes me human, a remembrance of what is important, and a reflection on love are my takeaways.

Alas, what exhales eventually inhales in. And that is where Tea and poetry come in. Through destabilizing of all I leaned on, throughout the uncovering of cultural, societal, gender, immigrational and generational identity that looked me straight in the eye, the one thing that remained constant was my tea practice. Cha Dao. With the chaos around, the harmony of Tea created a rebalancing that allowed me to ride the crashing and seemingly relentless waves. Within the chaos of all the falling apart, the dark days, and the submersion into deathly nights, sitting with Tea allowed the things within to heal, to stitch back together. With that deeper inner self brewing, writing and poetry came of themselves—expressing themselves through me. It was the only way, it seemed, to get through the dark pathless night that became a deep reclamation of my self and of life. During this time, I received the December 2020 issue of Global Tea Hut, which featured a piece by Matthew

Grohne on tea and poetry. Within several weeks, I wrote to him:

Serendipitously, poetry has come deeply and timely in my life right now. Listening and writing poetry has allowed me to process, honor and move through tumultuous, difficult, yet beautifully life-shaking human experiences I'm going through. As the poet David Whyte describes, 'Poetry is language against which you have no defenses.' The exploration of poetry with Tea feels like a deep honoring of the soul, and of the experience of being human; it feels like I'm giving voice to the Spirit. Like Tea, poetry penetrates to the essence.

I offered a poem to be featured in a future collection with others and was surprised to be invited to contribute to a larger piece to be featured in the Voices of the Hut section. In the Winter of 2020–2021, knowing I was riding the rough parts and patterns of waves on an unknown sea, I accepted his offer and promised an article by the end of Summer 2021. Since that initial invitation, I continued to sit with Tea, listen and write. I've found deep waters of healing and reconciliation with myself, loved ones and waves yet to be explored poured out on pen and paper.

As I finish writing this article at the end of summer, I feel the changes of the seasons internally and externally. Externally, the ecosystem is slowly yet surely turning into autumn; and internally, my ecosystem is slowly yet surely turning back toward love and reconnection. Exploring new friendships, new partnerships, maintaining blossomed relationships, listening and tenderly letting past relationships be the fertilizer they need to be, I'm re-engaging with life. Although I notice a bit hesitancy and guardedness to open myself up to love again, I realize that for my spirit to live and love again there must be a deeper embodied understanding of acceptance that has to happen: Acceptance that pain, hurt and suffering *are* part of the greater rhythm of life and love. As I am part of that greater rhythm, this realization itself brings a greater acceptance of myself, with all the dark and light and the thousand shades of gray between.

With a deeper awareness steeped in Tea, I return to this life with all its potential for pain and loss, along with its joy and love. In that spirit, I offer these poems to you, my tea community, as a token of my gratitude, and to Tea, and to the great artery of Life that runs through all of it.

In the Dark

In the Dark,
The stillness lies
Where movement lies
The cold penetrates
The soul.

In the Dark,
The flame dwindles down
Dwindles down
Toward its center finding solace
In the aloneness of its core.

In the Dark,
There is nothing else
But the flame that resides
There is everything that lies
In the warmth that is the dark.

Density

The snow is dense
like this body...
Its oceanic gravity sinks
toward the depths of the Earth

A place where the levity
Of ideas and mind-made constructions
Drown in the stillness
And can die.

A kindle of kindness
Is all that is needed to spark a flame
Warm enough to melt
The heaviness of water

A radical act of exposure
Friction, tension,
To be venerable and vulnerable
With Nature and another.

A settling
A peaceful letting
A rising
A springing of hope.

Winter

I Breath
And so does
The Wind
In Harmony
I Remember

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Time

Time waits for no one
But do I wait for time?
Time supports, nourishes, holds.
Time has density, levity, buoyancy
Time is sound, attention, communion.
Time is but a minute
A wait-less one to live.

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October 2020: When everything started... Tea sat there with me.

Remember

Basking in the sun—I remember
 Listening to the leaves—I remember
 Walking to the waters—I remember
 Watching the moon—I remember
 Breathing the air—I remember

To remember is to become a member
 Of a deeper rhythm of what it is to be human
 A recalling of the conditional
 A restoration of the unconditional
 And the groove in between.

A deeper understanding resides
 Allowing refinement
 To encircle the core
 The core relationship between
 You and I, us and them, me and we

Confusion to understanding
 Mystery to meaning
 And so it is.
 This remembering of what
 Makes us human.

Corridors

Some corridors are hidden
 Some are narrow and wide,
 Some corridors engage directly
 Some are close or enchant from afar.
 Some corridors quietly emerge
 Some wind, thunder, rain,
 Some corridors spiral
 Some reflect realities of pain.
 Sometimes corridors bridge the heart
 to a deeper rhythm that unravels and unties

Sometimes corridors beat a rhyme
 that is uniquely alive,
 A someness corridor that is tenderly breathing,
 patiently calling,
 A someness day after day, moment after moment.
 A corridor bellowing for you to explore.

Waves

The waves crash
The winds bellow
The human stands
A coastal time.

The sunsets direct
The sunrises command
The Sangha pauses
A rhythm timeless.

The sands move
The paths flow
The Mandorla meanders
A beat grooves.

The redwoods speak
The waters reflect
The self moves
A celebratory self.

The bones hold
The patterns shake
The moment is
A living space.

Revel

Revel in the revelation
in the seen and unseen
in what is yet to come
in trust within tension

Revel in the redirection
in the celebratory journey
in the inhabiting
in surprises without effort

Revel in the response
in the listening spaces
in the landing process
in the natural flight

Revel in the resources
in the gain of loss
in the courageous act
in giving forth

Revel in the repurposing
in heat and combustion
in the uncovering
in the vitality embodied.

Anger

Bubbling
Rippling
Gurgling
Busting

How Dare You
Lie
Deceive
Mistrust

Born into Delusion
Greed
Hatred
Lack

I see through you
I eat you
I spit out you
I am you



November 2020: The end of a relationship; Tea was there.



December 2020: When Covid-19 knocked, Tea was there.



April 2021: The healing waters; Tea was there.

Forgive

Forgiveness is a peculiar thing
 What's thought in the head
 Is different than what's embodied
 To say "Yes, I forgive you"
 Without the other asking for forgiveness
 Is one thing.
 To say "Yes, I forgive you"
 When the other does ask for forgiveness
 Is another.
 Then there is a different
 Felt experience when the
 Latter happens...
 Can I?
 Am I?
 Really ready to forgive?
 No, I am not.
 Surprised.
 Why?
 To forgive another,
 I must forgive myself.
 To dive into the unknown,
 The darkness, the neglected parts,
 The numb parts I have never known.
 To dive into the sadness,

The rejection, the overwhelming feeling
 Of vulnerability ready to be known.
 To embody the grief that makes me human
 To fall down onto the ground
 That makes me human

I let go.
 I let go
 I let go
 I cry

From there I find,
 I stand, centered, at peace
 Human.

From that place
 To give forth this gift to me so
 I can give forth this gift to you

From that place
 Yes
 I forgive.

TeaWayfarer

Each month, we introduce one of the Global Tea Hut members to you in order to help you get to know more people in this growing international community. 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 Tea fuels some great work in this world, and we are so honored to share glimpses of such beautiful people and their Tea. This month, we would like to introduce John Zapanta .

I'd love to tell you my story... a tea journey of belonging, longing to be, the realization that I was never apart and returning to what was there the entire time; a great reconnection to Source, Nature, myself, others, community, love and back to the Great Spirit. Mine is a journey of returning to the Dao that everything is perfectly imperfect just how it is, returning to the mystery and harmony of it all, and returning to the potential magic that is the now. And all of this from a simple leaf.

The Leaf teaches me to remember my heart. Every time I listen to birds, I remember the essence of my Heart and of Tea. I am brought back to the first issue and tin of tea I received from Global Tea Hut in August of 2016. The theme of the issue was Music & Tea, the Tea of the Month: *Forest Song*. I laid in bed entranced by every word I read about the "Song of Tea" and how sound, most notably, bird song had the most profound effect on the growth of plants. During that time, I was in deep work in heart energies and meditation and learned that birds were associated with the heart. Through Gordon Hempton's work, an acoustic ecologist, I learned that our ears are most attuned and sensitive to the frequency to bird. Suffice it to say, a deep heart connection was birthed with Tea and Nature.

The Leaf teaches me to reorient the mind. I have a confession to make: *I am a recovering work-a-holic*. I'm a first generation Filipino-American from two Filipino doctors chasing the "American Dream." I am aware of the double-edge-sword of the "Pursuit of Happiness." On the one hand, determination, perseverance and service, and on the other, misaligned actions, me/mine and "don't tread on my ground" mentality with a neglect for others, Nature and oneself. Tea has allowed me to steady and clear the mind to transmute misaligned grasping, taking, staking and defending to align my intention with receiving, flowing and returning. From more, more, and more to doing less, better, loving more and just being.

The Leaf teaches me to return to the body. In 2013, after five years of graduate school, my body was talking back at me in new ways I have never experienced before, in a language of pains. I recognized something deep inside me was thirsty for growth, a longing that led me toward attending yearly silent meditation retreats—a longing to listen. In 2015, after practicing various meditation forms from sitting, standing, walking and movement, I questioned why I was even at a retreat at all as it appeared to me at that moment, that I had "mastered" meditation (I cringe as I write that). In response, I was humbled to receive a spontaneous teaching on mind-



🍵👤: John Zapanta , USA

ful eating. Since that teaching and practice, I started to love food, Nature and myself on a deeper level. The gut became my "second brain," and it ultimately led me to Tea via a podcast where Wu De shared the wisdom of living tea and tea as plant medicine.

Living tea encompasses all of it for me: a visceral return back to the body and remembering the interconnectedness of this body to the Great Body of Life. Tea is an honoring of all the parts of the whole and a returning to the great listening that encompasses all of it. Tea as medicine became a moving meditation integrating all my senses with Nature and everyday life.

The Leaf teaches me to reconnect to my spirit, allowing me to rise to the highest natural expression in alignment with my environment. This has brought tremendous love in my life in the forms of community, satisfaction in my craft, and meaningful relationships with friends, family and loved ones. Does a leaf ever long to be? Maybe? Maybe it just is—part of the all, part of the Dao, part of the mystery, part of the magic of the unfolding greatness that has been moving through millennia the entire time, moving through stillness and finding stillness through movement... That is my Teawayfaring journey. That is me, John. I'm satisfied to know, after a few sips of tea, that I am part of it all. Smiling, I sip again...

Inside the Hut

COMING SOON TO GLOBAL TEA HUT MAGAZINE

茶主题: Wood Firing

茶主题: Gongfu Experiments II

茶道

茶主题: Yixing

茶主题: Dancong Tea



We are currently designing a second shape/style of kettle for this year. We would use the same Cloudstone clay that we developed after years of researching clay and mineral blends for tea. Cloudstone is a mix of minerals, clays, crystals and iron to influence water for tea. The new kettles would be different in shape only and offer some variety. Like the first ones, this year's will be based on one of our favorite antique tetsubins. Do you have any suggestions we should consider for the new kettle?



Have you seen the new whisked tea webpage? We have some amazing organic matcha teas, including a rare one from wild trees as well as powdered red tea and Hojicha!



We have a new boiled tea to replace Pagoda, which sold out some time ago. Some of you will remember Prairie Sky, which was the Tea of the Month in April 2018. It is a 1990s brick black tea.



We have a new incense called Bright Mirror. It is a beautiful blend by Dr. Incense that is similar to Samadhi, only Bright Mirror also has some aloeswood in the blend. It is wonderful for tea or for meditation; it is centering, grounding and calming.



Hopefully we will be able to restart our annual retreat at Casa Cuadrau this year. Canceling the Spain retreat these last two years has stung. We love that part of the world and Casa Cuadrau itself, which is so beautifully run. Going there is always a highlight of our year. We hope things will open up and we can have a retreat this October. Please stay tuned to our social media and contact Casa Cuadrau for more information. It is hard to plan so far out, but we will put together some dates as soon as we are able.

Center News



It may feel like the Center is stagnating, but we are working hard to find a property, develop the course schedules and organization of the new Center. We have also enjoyed using these two years to create online courses and share more tea and teaware with you online. Without these ways of sharing, we would not have had an opportunity to serve. It has been a big shift focusing on sharing online content, as opposed to retreats and courses in person, but we have also learned a tremendous amount in doing so. And a lot of that will help us when the time comes to start sharing tea in person again.



We have rented a new building. We got very lucky as an office two doors down from ours came up for rent. This will allow us to increase storage, which is very helpful. It also allows us to have a better photography studio with more natural light—offering windows on two sides since it is a corner lot. And it will also provide much better lodgings for Connor and Jaanus, who will now have large, bright rooms and their own tea room so they can share tea with any of you who come over for a visit. Most importantly, Shen Su will get a new woodworking studio!

February Affirmation

I am a practitioner

Do I pit my life against my practice? Could I ally my work, home and life with my practice. I am a practitioner and this is my practice, no matter what it is.



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Sharing rare organic teas, a magazine full of tea his-
tory, lore, translations, processing techniques and
heritage, as well as the spiritual aspects of Cha Dao.
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lovers from around the world.*

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