Tea and Chan Practice

Master Jiqun

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Contents

Two years ago, we held a tea-related event in Wuyi Mountain, where I talked about "Calm the mind with tea, cultivate the body to enhance well-being." I stressed the importance of a tea-specific initiative and briefly explained the relationship between tea and Chan. This is the first tea-specific retreat camp. What kind of understanding should we provide to everyone? What is the purpose of hosting this specific initiative?

Currently, the tea market is vast, with tea houses spread across various regions, diverse tea ceremony schools emerging, and numerous tea practitioners and related

training classes popping up. On a material level, tea mainly serves to quench thirst, similar to grains, fruits, and vegetables, fulfilling the body's needs. If one has money, they can be more selective and drink premium tea; if not, they might keep it simple and drink basic tea. Ultimately, both can quench thirst and enrich leisure life.

However, tea is not only a part of material life; it also carries traditional culture, especially the essence of Chan culture, elevating it into a diverse spiritual life. Throughout Chinese history, tea and Chan Buddhism have been intricately connected. Later, this connection spread to Japan, forming the tea ceremony. In recent decades, with the revival of traditional culture and exchanges between China and Japan, people have started to delve into the cultural attributes of tea in ancient texts and draw inspiration from the spiritual qualities of the Japanese tea ceremony. Phrases such as "Go Drink Tea," "Chan and Tea are One Flavor," and "The Beauty of *Wabi-Sabi* (imperfection)" have become increasingly popular, and related decoration styles and utensils are

also highly sought after.

It's easy to copy concepts and not difficult to imitate forms, but what is its significance? This requires understanding the ideological connotations behind these concepts and forms and knowing what purpose we aim to achieve through them.

The reason why tea can become a "Dao (Way)" lies not in the tea itself. No matter how rare or high-quality the tea is, it is merely a scarce luxury item if it is not imbued with spiritual meaning. For instance, when tea was introduced to Europe and became popular among nobility and royalty, leading to a significant influx of silver currency into China, it did not develop into a culture related to the Way in the West.

Evidently, only within an appropriate cultural context can tea serve as a vehicle for the Way. Of course, this vehicle could also be flower arranging, playing the *guqin* (a plucked seven-string Chinese musical instrument of

the zither family), calligraphy, painting, etc. Compared to other forms, tea has two advantages: first, it is inherently a part of daily life, loved by the public, and beneficial for both body and mind; second, it does not require highly specialized skills to get started. With a certain amount of training and practice, we can leverage our unique advantages, making the tea-specific initiative feasible.

This advantage lies in the understanding of Chan culture. Based on this, conducting tea ceremony activities through Chan wisdom is a convenient way to guide the public toward awakening. Therefore, we need to explore two aspects: first, understanding the relationship between tea and Chan and their important anecdotes; second, using tea as a means to the Way, knowing how to implement the Chan spirit in the tea-specific initiative, and guiding the audience accordingly.

I

Historical Anecdotes of Tea and Chan

There is much to explore regarding the relationship between tea and Chan. Here, I will share insights from five aspects: "Go Drink Tea," "Tea and Chan are One Flavor," "Harmony, Respect, Purity, and Tranquility," "Once-in-a-Lifetime Encounter," and "The Beauty of Wabi-Sabi."

1. Go Drink Tea

Many tea rooms display a calligraphy scroll "Go Drink Tea" or "Go Have Tea," only differing in character (the former is a simplified character and the latter is a

traditional character), both originating from an anecdote of Chan Master Zhaozhou. Master Zhaozhou, also known as Congshen, was a prominent monk of the Tang Dynasty. In his eighties, he resided at Guanyin Monastery in Zhaozhou, now Bailin Chan Temple. He preached Chan Buddhism for forty years and was revered by both monks and laypeople, earning the title "Ancient Buddha of Zhaozhou."

According to the *Collection of Ancient Chan Teachings* , the story goes:

Zhaozhou asked a newcomer, "Have you been here before?"

The newcomer replied, "Yes."

Zhaozhou said, "Go drink tea."

He then asked another monk the same question, who answered, "No."

Zhaozhou also said, "Go drink tea."

The abbot asked, "Master, why do you tell both those who have and haven't been here before to go drink tea?"

Zhaozhou called out, "Abbot!"

The abbot responded, "Yes?"

Zhaozhou said, "Go drink tea."

As a great Chan master, regardless of who he was speaking to, Zhaozhou always said, "Go drink tea." Doesn't this sound simple? Some might even think it is perfunctory. Why is this worth recording and passing down through the ages?

I believe it reflects two main connotations. Firstly, Chan is not some mysterious or extraordinary action; it is not detached from everyday life. The ancient sages said, "Walking is Chan, sitting is Chan; in speech or silence,

in movement or stillness, the essence is at ease"; "When hungry, eat; when tired, sleep"; "Fetching firewood and carrying water are all opportunities for Chan enlightenment"; "The green bamboo is true nature, the blooming yellow flowers are prajna." These sayings tell us that Chan wisdom is omnipresent. So why can't we see it in our daily life?

This requires understanding Zhaozhou's profound intention. The Chan master's words and actions are grounded in ordinary affairs. The so-called "ordinary affairs" refer to recognizing the true nature of the mind. When he tells you to "go drink tea," the purpose is not merely to drink tea but to contemplate "Who is drinking the tea?" Ordinary people drink tea and quickly try to taste what kind of good tea it is, whether fragrant or sweet, always seeking outwardly. However, the Chan master's "go drink tea" makes you reflect inwardly and recognize your true mind. This is a highly sophisticated guidance in Chan Buddhism.

Secondly, the lifestyle in Chan monasteries used to be very simple, consisting of daily activities like meditation, work, and meals. The practice was not limited to sitting meditation but extended to all activities. Chan Master Baizhang once proposed, "A day without work is a day without food." When the temple needed communal work, a bell would be struck, and everyone would go out to work. Therefore, the teachings of Chan masters often occurred in daily activities. Unlike other schools of Buddhism that explain the principles of practice through scriptures, Chan masters provided direct guidance in everyday life without adhering to any fixed method. Drinking tea, as part of daily life, naturally became an essential opportunity for instructing disciples. In the *Jingde Record of the Transmission of the Lamp* , there are hundreds of records about tea, including dialogues between Chan masters and instructions to practitioners.

We know that Chan Buddhism was introduced to China by Bodhidharma during the Northern and Southern Dynasties, but it did not establish itself as a distinct school

until it flourished in the Tang Dynasty. Similarly, the tea ceremony began to mature during the Tang Dynasty. In the *Classic of Tea* by Luyu, he elaborated on the history, origin, current state, production, drinking, and tea arts, marking the formal establishment of the tea ceremony. Luyu grew up in a monastery and had close relationships with many monks. He described his life: "I built a hut by the banks of the Tiaoxi River, lived in seclusion with books, avoiding unrelated matters. Renowned monks and scholars would talk and feast all day long. I often traveled to mountain monasteries by boat, carrying only a gauze cap, straw sandals, and a short coat. I frequently wandered alone in the wild, reciting Buddhist scriptures and ancient poems." Especially after meeting the poet-monk Jiao Ran, who had a deep understanding of tea, they created harmony through tea and understood each other through Chan, becoming famous lifelong friends in the history of the tea ceremony. Given this background, the tea ceremony has been inseparable from Buddhism since its inception, imbuing tea with a spiritual significance beyond daily life.

From another perspective, sitting meditation can easily lead to drowsiness, and tea is an excellent remedy for refreshing the mind. Jiao Ran's poem, "One drink washes away sleepiness, filling the mind with clarity and freshness; a second drink clears the spirit, like a sudden rain washing away dust; a third drink attains the Way, what need is there to laboriously break through vexations?" It vividly portrays how drinking tea aids in practice. To this day, Chan halls retain the tradition of drinking tea. The encounter between tea and Chan was timely, mutually enhancing each other.

As Chan Buddhism flourished and established large monastic centers, a set of communal living and practice regulations was needed, including procedures for Dharma assemblies and ceremonies. This was a significant marker of the Sinicization of Buddhism, leading to many localized practices, encapsulated in the saying, "Mazu established the monastic centers, and Baizhang set the pure rules." The *Pure Rules* contain hundreds of references to tea and have formed a series of rituals. For example, on

commemorative days of the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and parinirvana, offerings include incense, flowers, lamps, candles, tea, fruits, and delicacies, with tea offerings and incense lighting being part of the Dharma assembly process. In the daily life of the monastic community, such as during the abbot's inspections, receiving the Dharma robe, welcoming honored guests, or offering meals to the monks, there are also segments for drinking and offering tea. This illustrates the importance of tea in the lives of the monastic community and the high regard people have for it.

During the Song Dynasty, due to Emperor Huizong's fondness for tea, the practice of drinking tea became widespread, influencing both the court and the common people. Emperor Huizong himself had exceptional artistic skills and aesthetic taste. His work, the *Treatise on Tea*, elevated the development of tea culture to its peak. Tea ceremonies in monasteries also became more sophisticated, especially the tea ceremonies at Jingshan Temple in Hangzhou, which had a significant influence. Jingshan

Temple, a Chan Buddhist monastery built during the Tang Dynasty and flourishing in the Song Dynasty, was renowned as the foremost among the five great mountains and ten major temples in the Jiangnan region. Many Japanese Zen monks came to study there. After returning to Japan, they brought back not only the Chan lineage but also Jingshan tea and the procedures of the tea ceremonies, which gradually evolved into the Japanese tea ceremony. It can be said that Japanese tea culture, both in form and substance, is deeply influenced by Chan Buddhism.

2. Tea and Chan are One Flavor

"Tea and Chan are One Flavor" is a concept that has gained wide popularity in recent years, but not many people can clearly articulate what it truly means. Some merely echo what others say or use "Chan" as a symbol of sophistication to market tea and tea houses. In fact, only by integrating Chan wisdom into tea culture and combining tea drinking with Chan can the practice truly be

considered "Tea and Chan are One Flavor." If one cannot imbue tea with the essence of Chan, it remains entangled with greed, aversion, and ignorance, unrelated to Chan.

What is Chan? It is the awakened mind, which is also the essence of all things. Therefore, Chan is pervasive, not limited to tea; Chan can be integrated into food, walking, dressing, eating, carrying firewood, fetching water, and interacting with others. Chan can be found in the pleasing aspects of nature, such as the green bamboo and the blooming yellow flowers, as well as in the despised, such as ants, rubble, and excrement. As the saying goes, "The Way is in the ants, in the rubble, in the excrement." Everywhere, the manifestations differ, but the essence is the same. With the wisdom of Chan, one can experience Chan in all things.

In the stories of ancient Chan masters achieving enlightenment, some were awakened by the sound of a tile hitting bamboo, realizing their true mind in an instant, "With one strike, all knowledge is forgotten, and

no further practice is needed." Others were enlightened upon seeing peach blossoms, as in the case of Lingyun, who was awakened by the peach blossoms, "Lingyun was enlightened by the peach blossoms, and every tree in the ten-mile spring breeze leaned." In essence, the mind can open through various causes and conditions, provided it is well-trained, with thin layers of delusion, allowing one to grasp that fleeting moment of insight. In our daily lives, we may have similar experiences, such as being startled by someone suddenly hitting our back while walking, causing the mind to go completely blank. This moment of blankness can also be an experience of the true mind, as all delusive thoughts vanish. However, for those without practice, this moment passes too quickly to grasp.

How can we clear away the fog and realize our true mind? It requires diligent and continuous effort at all times and in all places. "Tea and Chan are One Flavor" means experiencing Chan in the very moment of drinking tea. Drinking tea has two directions: one leads to the ordinary mind, and the other returns to the true mind. Without

wisdom, most people fall into the ordinary mind, entangled in habits of greed, aversion, and ignorance, influenced by the six dusts—sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental objects. When picking up a cup, they only see how good or exquisite the vessel is; when tasting the tea, they only perceive its flavor and aroma, whether it's fragrant or mellow. Such tea drinking, no matter how refined or profound, is merely a worldly practice and fundamentally different from using tea drinking to realize Chan.

The concept of "Tea and Chan are One Flavor" originated from the famous Song Dynasty Chan master Yuanwu Keqin. Master Yuanwu authored the *Blue Cliff Record*, which contains one hundred Chan koans and is regarded as the foremost book in Chan tradition. Koans are cases illustrating how Chan masters guide their disciples. These methods are often unconventional and challenging to understand. Master Yuanwu's ability to comment on and interpret these koans demonstrates his profound understanding of Chan. Additionally, he was skilled in the tea ceremony. His notion of "Tea and Chan are One Flavor"

reflects his realization of the true mind, embodying deep wisdom. Among his Dharma heirs was Dahui Zonggao of Jingshan Temple, a great Chan master who advocated investigating the critical phrase (*hua tou*) and had a strong connection with tea.

The calligraphy of "Tea and Chan are One Flavor" by Master Yuanwu was brought back to Japan by a monk who had come to China to study. It eventually reached the hands of the renowned monk Ikkyu. Ikkyu then passed it on to his disciple Murata Juko. Juko, who became a monk in his youth and was passionate about tea, later studied Chan under Ikkyu and received his approval. Juko introduced Chan principles into the tea ceremony and established the practice of Soan tea ceremony (grass hut tea). Before this, tea activities in Japan were mainly popular among the upper class and often involved competing over extravagant settings or valuable tea utensils, with little focus on the tea itself. The Soan tea ceremony shifted away from luxury, returning to simplicity and integrating tea drinking with Chan practice, elevating it to

the level of the Way. Juko also placed Master Yuanwu's calligraphy in an alcove of the tea room, where people would bow to it upon entering, calming their minds and bodies before experiencing the profound meaning of "Tea and Chan are One Flavor" through the process of preparing and drinking tea.

Murata Juko is regarded as the "Father of the Japanese Tea Ceremony." Juko, along with his disciple Takeno Joo and Joo's disciple Sen no Rikyu, are the most significant founders of the Japanese tea ceremony. Sen no Rikyu, in particular, is considered the great master of the tea ceremony, and his aesthetic philosophy of life has had a comprehensive influence on Japanese culture.

3. Harmony, Respect, Purity, Tranquility

The philosophy of "Harmony, Respect, Purity, and Tranquility" originates from Murata Juko's concept of "Carefulness, Respect, Purity, and Tranquility." Sen no Rikyu modified one character to its current form, which

has been passed down to this day. These four characters fully embody the spirit of the Japanese tea ceremony and can also be said to reflect the essence of Chan.

The first is Harmony. This includes harmonious relationships between objects, between people and objects, and between people themselves. In a broader sense, it denotes the unity of heaven and humanity. This harmony arises from an inner sense of equality. While drinking tea, one should eliminate dualistic oppositions and let go of all attachments to external forms. Realizing there inherently exists nothing is the ultimate form of harmony.

The second is Respect. This involves maintaining a sense of profound respect for all things in the universe, seeing a world in a flower and a buddha in a leaf. In the tea ceremony, this respect is manifested through a sense of ritual, with proper order and decorum among participants. Some may argue that Chan aims to break free from all forms, so why is ritual important? These rituals are merely tools to calm the mind. Since ordinary people are

influenced by their surroundings, a chaotic environment can disturb both body and mind. Conversely, in a serene setting, with solemn and deliberate actions, the mind is more likely to settle.

The third is Purity. Simply put, this means cleanliness. The tea room can be simple, plain, small, or old, but it must be spotless. More importantly, it refers to inner purity. The tea ceremony is elevated to the level of the Way because it uses the external environment and rituals to help purify the mind. Therefore, when participating in a tea ceremony, one should strive for a mind as clear as a bright mirror, reflecting objects without retaining them, free of delusive thoughts and impurities.

The fourth is Tranquility. In Chan practice, the sudden cessation of a frenzied mind is an expression of tranquility; the "Nirvana is Perfect Tranquility" in the Three Dharma Seals represents the ultimate achievement of tranquility. In terms of the environment, this is reflected in simplicity, quietness, and minimalism. For example,

the tea room should not be too large. The "Juko Hermitage," the birthplace of the grass hut tea ceremony, is merely a small space of four and a half tatami mats with very simple furnishings. Such an environment helps gather our six senses, maintain focus, and encourage introspection rather than outward seeking.

I don't specialize in researching the tea ceremony, and my interpretation of these four characters mainly comes from my understanding of Chan. Naturally, the spirit of the tea ceremony originally stems from Chan Buddhism. Returning to this fundamental perspective, I believe, offers a more direct insight. From this, we can also sense the cool, refreshing atmosphere of the Chan forest, as if seeing Chan masters living in mountain huts, sitting together and drinking tea, transcending all worldly concerns.

4. Once-in-a-Lifetime Encounter

The concept of "Once-in-a-Lifetime Encounter," introduced

in the Japanese tea ceremony, is influenced by the Buddhist view of impermanence. It reminds tea practitioners to cherish the present moment when hosting or participating in a tea ceremony. For some, attending an event today might be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, something to be deeply treasured. Others might think they will have a second or third chance, so much so that this occasion seems less important or special.

In fact, whether you attend once or many times, each occasion is shaped by unique circumstances and is an unrepeatable "Once-in-a-Lifetime Encounter." A Western philosopher said that one cannot step into the same river twice. Why? Because the water is constantly flowing and changing, just as time flows ceaselessly, day and night. Consider yourself: are you the same person today as you were yesterday? Will you be the same tomorrow as you are today? Are you now the same as you were when you were a child? Will you be the same at seventy or eighty as you are now? From birth to old age and death, countless cells have been replaced, and countless thoughts have

changed, with both physical and mental elements continuously arising and ceasing in every moment.

Feng Zikai wrote an essay titled *Gradual Change*, discussing the impermanence of life. Time quietly steals away everyone's years, making people age and die without realizing it. This unconsciousness leads to the illusion of living forever, fostering the mindset of "not living a hundred years, yet always carrying the worry of a thousand." People often dwell on the past or the future, wasting the only moment they can truly grasp—the present.

Especially in today's world, with so many uncontrollable factors, the fact that we can sit together and gather over tea is a result of accumulated merits and favorable circumstances over many lifetimes. We should participate in learning and in every future event with the mindset of "Once-in-a-Lifetime Encounter." From brewing tea to drinking it, we should do so with sincerity, reverence, and seriousness, fully present in the moment. If we do not stay present, this segment of life will be squandered,

and there will be no chance to make up for it.

5. The Beauty of Wabi-Sabi

Wabi-sabi is a life aesthetic advocated by the Japanese tea ceremony and represents a certain state of being. It was proposed as a counter to the pursuit of wealth and luxury. Simply put, it means returning to simplicity and embracing naturalness, simplicity, austerity, and even the beauty of imperfection and poverty. This inclination began with Murata Juko's grass hut tea and has its roots in Chan Buddhism. Ancient Chan practitioners lived by the water and in the forests, with thatched cottages and straw sandals, owning very few possessions. Additionally, Buddhism has a tradition of cherishing blessings, so many items in temples are passed down through generations, weathered by time, possessing a quiet, ancient, and rich beauty.

In recent years, with the spread of the wabi-sabi trend, many places have emulated this aesthetic, offering a

refreshing change. However, some designs remain superficial, deliberately seeking to appear old and worn without understanding the deeper meaning behind these appearances. In fact, wabi-sabi cannot be embodied merely by copying some materials or arrangements. Understanding why this is done, what spirit it expresses, and what state it represents requires the wisdom of Chan. I believe that as times change, the form does not need to remain constant. The key is to understand the underlying spirit and then express it in a way that suits the present moment. The main lessons we can draw from this are two of the following:

The first is moderation. In an era of abundant material wealth, we can easily acquire many things, making moderation all the more important. Moderation in the quantity of items allows for spaciousness and clarity, reducing resource consumption and ecological damage. More importantly, it helps us overcome greed, resist external temptations, and avoid being burdened by material possessions.

The second is respect. As consumers, we should choose items suitable for long-term use and care for them meticulously. Tea practitioners have the habit of nurturing their teapots; similarly, we can treat other items with the same mindset, cherishing and enhancing them rather than discarding them on a whim. As designers, we should elevate our aesthetic and moral standards, creating products through good design and recreation that elevate the materials we use, rather than merely catering to popular trends or stimulating consumer desire.

By adhering to these two principles, we can create our own wabi-sabi beauty appropriate to our context: beauty in minimalism, beauty in simplicity, beauty in antiquity, and beauty in tranquility.

The above five aspects encompass the philosophical origins of the tea ceremony and its development in Japan. Understanding their spiritual essence will help us excel in this specific initiative.

II

The Practice of Tea and Chan as One Flavor

After understanding the background of tea culture, we need to further explore: How do we fully appreciate a cup of tea at a tea ceremony? How can this specific initiative support our Chan practice?

1. Let Go and Relax

In Chan practice, the first step is to bring the mind back to the present moment, neither dwelling in the past nor living in the future. However, people today often feel restless and anxious. Even when sitting down to drink

tea, their minds are preoccupied with various thoughts, pondering what happened yesterday or worrying about what needs to be done tomorrow, making it difficult to be present. Some might even see a tea ceremony as an opportunity to boast about their wealth or career achievements. Drinking tea with such a worldly mindset reduces even the finest tea to just a beverage or a mere prop, making it impossible to savor its true flavor. Only by letting go of all attachments to identity, career, status, and worldly concerns, can one truly enter the Path through tea and experience the unity of Chan and tea.

To help calm the mind, we should create a relaxing atmosphere, possibly by arranging the ceremony in a natural setting among mountains and rivers. In such open environments, amidst sunlight, gentle breezes, trees, and rocks, the mind can relax more easily. This is a prerequisite for aligning with Chan. Additionally, it is important to ask everyone to put away their mobile phones. In that moment, let the distractions of the mundane world fade away, allowing oneself to be quietly present with the tea

and with oneself. Such is the process of letting go, relaxing, and emptying the mind.

2. Emptiness and Formlessness

In Buddhism, "emptiness" does not mean that nothing exists. Rather, it refers to emptying our attachments to the external world and internal emotions. Why can't we realize our true nature? Because we are stuck in various attachments. Whatever we care about, we become stuck on. Only by letting go can we avoid being obstructed by anything, both inside and outside. This is what Buddhism means by "If you can remain unattached to all things, what does it matter if you are always surrounded by them?" Thus, what we truly need to empty are nothing but our own preconceptions, attachments, and troubles.

Another concept related to emptiness is formlessness. Ordinary people live in a world of forms, influenced by sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and thoughts. The emptiness that Chan practice aims to realize is based on

formlessness. The three main principles of Chan practice are: "No-Thought as the Principle, No-Form as the Essence, No-Abidance as the Basis." "No-Thought as the Principle" means recognizing the mind's essence behind thoughts, like the sky behind clouds. We usually live in our thoughts, obscured by clouds, and only by transcending thoughts can we return to our true nature. "No-Form as the Essence" means that the true nature of the mind has no color or shape, transcending all forms. It is not dazzling or earth-shattering. "No-Abidance as the Basis" means that the mind has a quality of non-attachment. No matter how many clouds drift by, the sky does not try to hold onto any cloud, nor does it discriminate between beautiful and unattractive clouds, as in the saying, "The vast sky does not hinder the white clouds from flying."

In conducting a tea ceremony, we create various forms, arrange spaces, choose utensils, and design processes, each movement imbued with a sense of ritual. This can easily lead to attachment to forms and a worldly mindset.

Does this mean we shouldn't pay attention to these details? No, that is not the case. Our purpose in holding a tea ceremony is to guide people, to settle their bodies and minds, which requires atmosphere and a sense of ritual.

The key is to grasp the proper measure. We must understand the significance of forms while recognizing that "all forms are illusory," knowing that everything is like a dream, an illusion, inherently empty and tranquil, without falling into attachment to forms. In Buddhism, this is called "a moonlit ashram, a dream-like Buddhist ceremony." With this understanding, we can create forms while transcending them, freeing ourselves from attachment to sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and thoughts.

The Japanese tea ceremony benefits from Chan philosophy, especially the enlightenment verse of the Sixth Patriarch, "Inherently, there exists nothing." This is also the source of "Harmony, Respect, Purity, and Tranquility." To achieve peacefulness, reverence, coolness, and stillness, both inside and out, we need the wisdom of emptiness

and formlessness. This determines whether our tea ceremonies are worldly or transcendental, whether they lead to samsara or awakening. Therefore, we should pay attention to form, but not overly complicate it. As Sen no Rikyu said, the tea ceremony is simply about boiling water and making tea. All forms serve to realize the formless mind essence, which is the highest realm of Chan and aligns with our true nature.

3. The Ordinary Mind

Chan Buddhism teaches that "the ordinary mind is the Way." This "ordinary" does not refer to our usual worldly mind. Ordinary people live in a world filled with various preconceptions, attachments, desires, pursuits, conflicts, rights and wrongs—all products of ignorance that lead to delusions and the cycle of samsara. Only by removing all these can we attain the true ordinary mind, which is pure, bare, and unobstructed. This is the original face that neither arises nor ceases, neither taints nor purifies, neither increases nor decreases.

How do we return to this ordinary state? First, we need to return to a simple life and learn to practice within our daily activities. When we think of practice, we often imagine chanting sutras or meditating, as if it is a separate system from our everyday life. In reality, practice is a way of being mindful, encompassing both seated meditation and daily activities. Our future Chan practice will focus on three key points. First, we use tangible actions as our focus. Through walking meditation, focused breathing, and other methods, we cultivate continuous and stable concentration. Second, we train in awareness. As soon as thoughts and emotions arise, we can immediately recognize the state of our mind, rather than letting it pass unnoticed. Third, we bring mindfulness into daily life. Chan Buddhism teaches that practice is "eating when hungry and sleeping when tired." We all eat and sleep, so why isn't this Chan? Because we do these things with greed, aversion, and ignorance, rather than mindfulness. Therefore, we need to cultivate mindfulness, turning our lives into a Chan practice of seeking truth and returning to our true nature. Such a life is truly valuable.

The essence of the tea ceremony lies in this as well. Sen no Rikyu said, "The secret of the Way of Tea lies in breaking free from the thoughts of mountains and water, grass and trees, the tea hut, host and guest, various utensils, laws, and rules, to achieve a state of mind of having nothing and peaceful contentment, like a field of pure white dew." Although we use various activities to conduct a tea ceremony, the ultimate goal is to transcend these forms. While diligently engaging in the practice, the mind remains unattached and transcends the material world.

4. Concentration and Awareness

Chan practice emphasizes two key points: concentration and awareness. Modern people often live in a state of distraction, with their minds jumping from one thought to another, unable to control themselves. This leaves us exhausted yet unable to rest. Concentration means anchoring the mind, keeping it settled and no longer drifting aimlessly.

In the context of a tea ceremony, tea itself is our anchor, the object on which we settle our minds. Beyond understanding the spirit, realm, and aesthetics of tea, we must learn to brew a cup of tea with full concentration and to drink it with full concentration. This training session will introduce practical techniques, such as the seven steps of brewing tea and the seven aspects of creating an ambiance. However, all these are meant to help us gather our minds. We do not brew tea for the sake of brewing tea, nor do we arrange the space for the sake of arranging the space. Rather, through these various methods, we gather the six senses, bringing the outward-chasing mind back to the present space, back to the current tea ceremony, back to the tea in hand, and ultimately back to the inner self. The minds of modern people are too wild; without appropriate skillful means, it is difficult for the mind to settle and focus.

But focus alone is not enough. We must further train awareness, awakening the clarity within. Everyone has an inherently pure mind, a mind that is always present. The

purpose of practice is to recognize, familiarize with, and activate this mind. As the saying goes, "The self-nature of Bodhi is originally clear and pure. Simply use that mind, and you will straightaway accomplish Buddhahood."

Of course, it is challenging to directly experience the true mind for the time being, but we can start by experiencing the awareness that arises when the mind is clear. When the mind settles through concentration, we can observe the entire process of brewing and drinking tea. From pouring water to steeping the tea, from raising the cup to smelling the aroma, and then drinking the tea, feeling its temperature, and sensing it entering the body, we maintain awareness throughout but without judgment or attachment.

When we learn to focus and be mindful, we can let go of our attachment to forms and integrate tea drinking with mindful Chan practice. In conducting a tea ceremony, we pay attention to the quality of the tea, the utensils, and the ambiance, yet we do not become attached to them. The tea ceremony is highly esteemed in Japan because

it brings the otherwise elusive practice of Zen monastic life to the public, creating a bridge between the worldly and the transcendental. It allows people to experience the essence of Chan in a cup of tea and to feel tranquility amidst daily life.

III

Concluding Remarks

Whether it is Chinese Chan tea or the Japanese tea ceremony, we must approach them with the wisdom of Chan. Only then can we clearly grasp the essence of each practice. If we focus solely on the form without understanding its spirit and meaning, we risk becoming rigid and fixated on the surface, which is like putting the cart before the horse.

What has been discussed above is merely a general framework. This tea ceremony serves as an excellent starting point. In the future, we will develop this into a specialized project. On one hand, a research team will delve

deeply into topics such as the application of tea in Chan practice, related rituals, and how it evolved into the tea ceremony after being introduced to Japan, forming a comprehensive aesthetic of life. We believe there are many practices we can learn from. On the other hand, we will continuously adjust our practice, making tea ceremonies an important part of a mindful and slow-paced life. Our goal is to develop a practical and easily replicable model that serves society and purifies people's minds.