**The Oneness of Tea and Zen**

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**1** The Oneness of tea and Zen occupies a dominant position in Zen thought in the tea ceremony. There is a common Chinese saying which says the most indispensable daily necessities in a man’s life include firewood, grain, oil, salt, sauce, vinegar and tea, which indicates what a significant role tea plays in the daily life of the Chinese.

**2** The belief in the Oneness of tea and Zen experienced constant development until gaining maturity in the Song Dynasty, when the Zen school was established as the mainstream in Chinese Buddhism. This Buddhist school valued unexpected comprehension, which means that Buddhist practitioners could spontaneously achieve enlightenment through introspection. In this process, monks relied on tea to relieve exhaustion and restore inner peace when lost in meditation. In daily life, monks also resorted to tea to dispel distraction from worldly lusts. For this reason, many elements of tea ceremony evolved from Buddhist practice.

**3** There is an oft-quoted Buddhist story concerned with the Oneness of tea and Zen. It is said that a Tang Zen practitioner in Zhaozhou Prefecture had a monk visitor. The practitioner asked, “Have you ever been here before?” His visitor answered, “I have been here once.” The host replied, “Go and have some tea.” One day, the host asked another visitor the same question. The visitor said that he had never been there. The host’s reply remained the same, “Go and have some tea.” His servant, after observing his replies, asked out of curiosity, “Why are you replying in the same way regardless of others’ answers?” The host called his servant by name and said to him, “Go and have some tea.” This anecdote is believed to be of milestone importance in the establishment of the idea of the Oneness of tea and Zen. Zen thoughts can be interpreted in various ways, just like the host’s replies concerning tea.

**4** Zen thought in the tea ceremony is not only restricted to historical anecdotes and cultural research, but also associated with tea ceremony masters. These thoughts are present in each and every tea brewing and drinking practice in our daily life. If we seek peace and relief by experiencing the beauty of ordinary life through every practice, then everything happening in life can be transformed into a valuable opportunity to appreciate the beauty of life.

**5** The “let it be” mentality is a significant element of Zen thought that we should think about. Each day, we may have several cups of tea, some brewed by ourselves and some served by others. When brewing the tea by ourselves, we might inadvertently make the tea too strong because we are caught up in a business call. When served by others, we may regret that they have made black tea rather than our favorite green tea; or perhaps the tea leaves are not as good-quality as we thought. Real tea lovers will not be influenced by their personal preference and dilute the over-strong liquor with water, and might feel as if they are drinking an unfamiliar kind of tea. No matter what conditions, they will make best use of what they have in hand and try every means to optimize their enjoyment of the tea. This mentality and behavior exemplifies the principles of Zen thought.

**6** The “all are equal” mentality is another significant element of Zen thought. In the tea brewing process, every steeping will produce different flavors. Therefore, tea brewers are supposed to first pour tea liquor into a pitcher which is commonly known as the “Justice Cup” and then share it among different drinkers, rather than serving someone before others. If we have no justice cup in hand, we can find other solutions. For example, if two drinkers are served, we should fill the teapot with two cupfuls of water. When pouring the tea liquor, we should pour half a cup into the first cup, and a full cup into the second, and then fill the first cup. Steady hands and the continuity of movement will also help to ensure that the liquor in the two cups is of the same strength. If four drinkers are served, this rule also applies. This way of sharing crystallizes the wisdom of the ancient Chinese, and their insistence on treating everyone as equal.

**7** In addition to “let it be” and “all are equal”, other Zen thoughts are widely observed in the tea brewing practice. The key lies in whether we can understand the Oneness of tea and Zen in daily life and the most ordinary things around us. For instance, the importance of ensuring balance and harmony in our lives. These elements can also be expressed in the tea brewing process through careful consideration of the amount of water and tea used, and how long the tea is brewed. In daily life, we make preparations in advance for the tasks we plan based on previous experience. Similarly, we can learn and make adjustments to the way to prepare tea based on our own evaluation of the tea liquor. Also, the consistency and fluidity of the tea brewer’s movements can help to concentrate the brewers’ mind in a similar way to Zen principles. The brewer can also identify the care with which they treat their tea ware as a microcosm of wider conduct in life. Even in cleansing the tea ware following the brewing process, we can express gratitude for the tea and the gift of nature, a metaphor for our overall gratitude for life in general.

**茶禅一味**

罗家霖

1 茶禅一味在茶道的禅宗思想中占据着主要地位。有种耳熟能详的中国说法：人们日常生活中最必需的东西就是柴、米、油、盐、酱、醋、茶。由此可见，茶在中国人的日常生活中扮演着何等重要的角色。

2 茶禅一味的信念历经发展，直至宋朝才臻成熟，其标志是禅宗学派奠定了中国佛教主流学派的地位。佛教讲究顿悟，这意味着佛教徒可以在内省中实现开悟。在此过程中，僧人在打坐冥想中靠茶解乏清神，恢复本心之清净。在日常生活中，僧人也借茶来清心寡欲，远离尘世纷繁。因此，许多茶道元素是从佛教修行中演变而来的。

3 关于茶禅一味，有一则常被引为谈资的佛家轶事。传说唐代赵州县的禅师接待一位僧人。禅师问道：“曾来此地否？”客答：“曾来过一次。”主人曰：“去喝茶。”一天，禅师以同样的问题问了新来的访客。访客说未曾来过此地。禅师给予同样的回答：“去喝茶。”侍者发现他总是如此回答，好奇地问：“为何不管他人怎么说，你都是一样的回复？”禅师唤了一声侍者的名字，对他说道：“去喝茶。”人们认为此则故事对于“茶禅一味”思想的建立具有里程碑式的意义。禅宗思想是仁者见仁智者见智，正如禅师关于茶的回答。

4 茶道中的禅宗思想不仅仅只留传于历史趣事和文化研究，也见之于茶道大师。这些思想在我们日常生活中每一次沏茶和饮茶体验中随处可见。如果我们能从日常行为习惯中感受平常生活之美所带来的平静与放松，那么生活中所发生的一切都可以变成享受生活之美的宝贵机会。

5 “顺其自然”是禅宗思想的一个重要内涵，我们应该加以重视。我们可能每天都会喝上几杯自己冲泡或者别人沏的茶。我们自己泡茶时，因在接业务电话，可能不小心把茶泡得很浓。别人为我们沏茶时，我们可能会为沏的茶是红茶而不是自己喜欢的绿茶，或者茶叶质量没我们想象的好，而惋惜遗憾。真正的爱茶者不会受到个人喜好的影响，不会用水去稀释浓茶，而会感觉仿佛啜茗一种没喝过的新茶。不管在什么情况下，他们都会尽可能享用当时所能享用的，以最大限度地享受茶带来的快乐。这种心态和做法充分体现了禅宗思想。

6 “人人平等”是禅宗思想的另一个重要内涵。在沏茶的过程中，每次浸泡都会产生不同的味道。因此，沏茶者应该首先将茶水倒入通常称为“公道杯”的茶具中，然后分享给不同的饮茶者，而不是先沏给某一个人。如果当下没有公道杯，我们也可以尝试其他办法。比如，两个人喝茶，我们应在茶壶中加入两杯水。倒茶水时，应该在第一杯中倒入半杯茶，把第二杯倒满，然后再把第一杯倒满。手势越舒稳、动作越连贯，两杯茶的浓度就越接近。如若四人喝茶，道理与方法也一样。这种分享方式是中国古人的智慧结晶，也体现了待人平等的主张。

7 除了“顺其自然”和“人人平等”思想之外，在沏茶的过程中还可以看到很多其他禅宗思想。关键在于我们能否理解日常生活中的茶禅一味以及我们周围最平凡的事物。例如，生活中保持平衡与和谐就很重要：泡茶过程中，对茶与水用量比例以及冲泡时长的认真考量，就体现了平衡与和谐；在日常生活中，我们会根据先前的经验，为所计划的任务提前做好准备。同样，我们也可以根据自己对茶水的品鉴，学会调整备茶方法。此外，泡茶动作的连贯与流畅有利于帮助泡茶者集中精力，这与禅宗原则一脉相承。泡茶者对茶具的爱护可以小见大，看到大是大非的态度。甚至，沏完茶清洗茶具，我们也能表达对茶以及对大自然馈赠的感恩，这也象征着我们对整个生活的感恩。