

# 乡愁永酒诗文集第四册

王超杰

【英文作品】

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# Tea Culture 茶文化

## 【Tea and Talk】

The word “Talk” begins with “T” or “Tea” for the matter at hand. It is not just a coincidence. There is a connection between the two. But before I go on to explain the subtle link between these two beautiful ingredients of life, let me first “tea” up the topic by talking about talk.

We talk every day. At home, we talk to our spouse, we talk to our children. At work, we talk to our colleagues, we talk to our customers. In addition to traditional face to face talks, we talk virtually through phone, email, and text messaging. We not only talk to each other, we talk to ourselves too as we reflect on everyday events, joys, and troubles.

Like foods and drinks, talk is an important part of our daily life. The most distinguishing characteristic that

separates human beings from the rest is that we are social and live in a society. Our survival as well as our happiness and triumph are so much dependent upon the interaction with others and talk is the most used form of interactions we have with each other.

Let’ s evaluate how effective we are at talking.

I find we are great at opening a talk. We say “how are you?” everyday to everyone, to our neighbors, to our co-workers and even to strangers. But I also find that we are not that good at talking when it comes to the real meaning of talk.

When we say “how are you?” we don’ t really mean it. We don’ t look at the person in the eyes and wait patiently to listen to his or her response. We don’ t really care about the answer. Even

when we do, we don' t have time to pause and listen.

We don' t talk much to our spouse, to our children and to our parents. When we do talk to them, we tend to rush the conversation because we are stressed from our long commutes and challenging jobs in addition to mundane day to day chores.

Many of us are sons or daughters as well as parents. We know we should call and talk to our parents on a regular basis. But many of us make the calls when we are on the road driving or waiting at the checkout line in a grocery store.

Not to mention our poor record of talking quality when it comes to challenging situations such as talking to mediate conflicts, disputes and differences in ideas.

Along with unhealthy fast foods, talks have become hasty and unfulfilled.

Tea comes to rescue.

Discovering the many health benefits of tea, more and more people are turning to the green leaves for the health of our body, mind and spirit. For the health of our human relationship, let' s add tea to our talk too.

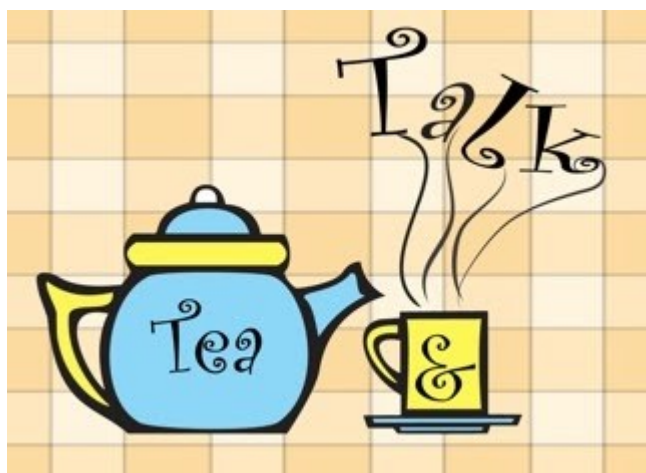
Tea can calm our temperament down and warm our heart up. Tea can slow down our pace and even help us pause when we attempt to rush. Only when we are calm and warm, we are able to enjoy the conversation and bring joy to others.

People from Eastern cultures generally are not as expressive as those from Western cultures. For example, they hardly show their passion for their loved ones in sentences like "I love you." That does not mean they talk less. They actually talk more. How

can you say less and talk more? Isn' t it contradictory? Well, the answer lies in the Tao of tea.

Next time before you pick up the phone and call someone; or when you and your friends get together, make a cup or a pot of hot and aromatic tea first. Let the rising mist, the unfolding leaves and the soothing liquid kick off the talk. Infuse the magic leaves into the interactions gradually and take the time to brew the conversation slowly. You will be amazed by the results of a talk infused with tea through time.

Tea, talk and time are the most powerful trio that works in tandem to enrich, enhance and enlighten our lives.



## 【Tea and Time】

Tea and time have something in common. They both begin with the letter “T”. There is a reason for that. Under that commonality also lies a lesson of life.

To enjoy tea, we need to take time.

First of all, even before the steeping starts, we observe the tea leaves. Leaves from different types of tea come in different shapes, texture and colors. The shapes are typically from the delicate hand rolling. The majority of the workers in a tea garden are women. Imagine how those beautiful girls and ladies pluck the leaves on a sunny spring morning. After the leaves are dried, they hand roll them to form a certain shape and sort them out at the end. Tea is no longer mere leaves but a form of art from beautiful hands.

Second, you pour hot water into the cup. You don’ t just sit and wait (and get bored and even impatient). Watch the leaves unfold and dance up and down slowly. This “agony of the leaves” is necessary for the flavors and nutrients to be released.

Steeping is also about timing. Not too long, not too short. The timing depends on our individual preference in taste.

Finally, we don’ t gulp a cup of tea as we do with a can of soda. We sip. Before we sip, we observe the color and the uprising mist of the liquid. We smell the aroma. These are all part of the enjoyment of tea.

It all takes time. All the good things in life take time to brew and to enjoy.

Time is the most precious thing. It is also the most constant

thing as well. We can't get more of it by rushing it. We could potentially lose it if we rush - not only time but also all the great things in life that must be enjoyed with and over time.

A Chinese proverb says it all, "Hurry and impatience prevents the enjoyment of hot tofu."

You may ask, what about the need for speed and convenience?

Yes, they are sometimes our friends. They are the propellers of civilization and evolution from nomadic to agricultural to industrial society. Mankind invented automobiles, aircraft and spacecrafts to move from A to B faster. Fast foods have become a part of our diet in the past decades as more and more families have two working parents and more and more people are into sports, travel and adventures. The faster pace of living demands speed and convenience.

But there is a limit. Overdose of speed and convenience can and have already hurt our quality of life. Recent years have seen increased health problems such as obesity and cancer. More people and families are suffering from stress of all kinds. Our physical and psychological well being does not improve even though economically we are better off.

It may be time to slow down a little bit and to get back to the basics of life. Tea can help in many ways with its powerful healing power and the lesson it teaches us about time and timing.



