

#### IV. The Way of Tea

Tea is a word that emphasizes the Way in daily life by adding the drinking of tea (喫茶).

Although we have already talked about the mental attitude of the person who prepares tea, and the ways and manners of actually making tea, it seems necessary to look into the mental aspect of tea in more detail.

Regarding the way of tea, in his Dongcha-song, the Tea Saint Cho-ui says that even if the t water, which is the body of tea, and the 'spirit,' which is the essence of tea are perfect, one must not go beyond the balance of the Way, which means that the divine energy of tea and the true nature of water must harmonize well with each other.”

Also, when gathering tea, it must be done carefully; when preparing tea, it must be done sincerely, when making tea, it must be done with pure water, and when brewing tea, it must be done with moderation. He said that the quality of the tea and the water should be well suited to each other. When this is achieved, the way of tea is achieved.

From this point of view, the ultimate purpose of tea is to satisfy in everyday life, and all you have to do is boil water, season it, and drink it.

This symbol is based on the practice of the great path of balance in a sound human life.

And the main meaning of the life of a tea person is to take the joys of Dharma and seon (法喜禪悅) as its form and the silent pursuit of Great Compassion as its goal. In a poem sent by Chaseong Choui to Sancheon Doin (山川道人) Kim Myeong-hee (金正喜 阮堂 Kim Jeong-wi's younger brother) we find

Since ancient times, all sages have loved tea, because tea is like a gentleman and has no malice.

(古來賢聖俱愛茶 茶如君子性無邪)

In addition, the way of tea aims at awakening a true human life. The fact that the life of awakening is emphasized in the way of tea, and that one can advance to the life of awakening through a tea life means that one should become aware of and learn wholeness through daily life or experience, which is known as ‘Keeping a normal mind is the Way (平常心是道).

First of all, we focus on the physical properties of tea. The truth is that while alcohol makes our human consciousness hazy and confused, tea clears our brain and refreshes our body.

Cho Ui makes this point in “Dongchasong (凍茶頌)” “The Duke of Zhou testified that tea relieves drunkenness and reduces sleep”, and Heo Jun (許浚)'s “Dongui Bogam” (東醫寶鑑) also says 'It brightens the legs and eyes, makes one do wonders, relieves thirst, reduces sleep, and relieves severe poison.'

The properties of tea, such as reducing sleep, relieving body fatigue, and clearing the mind, have also been pointed out in the analysis of the chemical components of tea by modern science.

It can be said that there is a fundamental significance here in emphasizing a life of awakening through tea drinking.

In addition, the self-awareness that must be learned through tea life is required and expressed in all aspects of daily life, such as the atmosphere of the tea room, clothing, tea ceremony, flower arranging, and cleaning, and is integrated into a frugal life.

Moreover, savoring the five tastes of tea and stressing the atmosphere in the tea room of quietness, brightness, harmony and etiquette (寂 . 清 . 和 . 禮) means living a life of frugal awareness.

In other words, it is to savor the meaning of bitterness and the joy of sweetness in life through the five tastes of bitter, tart, sour, salty, and sweet, and in the atmosphere of the tea room, one can calmly settle down and become quiet, clean, and peaceful. It is said that the power of reverence and harmony is in the air, and eventually, the person drinking tea acquires a spirit of quietness, brightness, harmony and etiquette.

To be more specific, when flowers are placed in the tea room, the flowers should be natural, and the atmosphere and clothing in the tea room should create a cool impression in the summer, a warm feeling in the winter, and a cheerful and refreshing feeling in the spring and fall.

It also means handling things well with a high and free perspective without losing the sense of the season as the seasons keep changing.

Processing and coping well with life, where nothing remains unchanged in time that never stays still for a moment, is a frugal life as a living person, a mature person, and an awakened person.

We realize the importance of real life through trivial tasks such as lighting a fire in a brazier, boiling water, washing a teacup, and cleaning the tearoom. The sound of boiling water is called ‘the sound of wind in pines’ (松風聲), and as we take the moon and white clouds as our friends we quietly meditate and discover artistic style and beauty in tea, calligraphy, painting, or gardens.

Also, in order to be able to drink a cup of tea, you need to have various things, including carefully made tea, water, fire, and other tea utensils, and we know that when each of these things helps each other and they work together to create a harmony, it becomes a really good tea.

In this way, a tea person can only lead a fully awakened tea life if he or she can handle realistic, artistic, and philosophical things with free observation and insight.

In this respect, one of Cho Ui’s tea poems says it very well,

Tasty rice is found everywhere  
but we obtain pure unsullied teachings in a silent place.  
(無底鉢擎衆香飯 沒根耳聽無言說)

The eye that tells you that there is fragrant rice in a bowl with no hole at the bottom is the eye of a tea person who discovers the quality of its creation in any object, and even the ears that have fallen off and are silent are able to hear the voice of truth is an amazing realization. If we live a tea life with a frugal attitude, our eyes and ears will open.

It was said earlier that “for tea you just need to boil water, season it, and drink.” This is because the purpose of tea life is not in any form or formality, but in taste. However, even if quenching one’s thirst with a cup of tea is the most natural way to enjoy tea, there is a problem, and that is ‘doing it appropriately.’

In order to make good tea water, fire, tea, etc., must be appropriate, as discussed in detail in the mind of the Way of Tea (茶道用心), and this point means that one should not lose the balance (中正) emphasized in the way of tea. This is because balance in the way of tea ceremony refers to how well the tea is prepared.

Just as all food must be seasoned well, tea must also be seasoned properly. Just as you can taste the delicacy of food when it is seasoned just right, tea can only be good if it is seasoned well.

Also, in all of our human lives, it is good not to lose balance. This is how we discover the path of centrality in human life through the life of tea and lead a perfect life by maintaining an unbiased lifestyle and way of thinking. The basis is that it can be done.

The Way lies in life, and life means perfection without losing balance. A perfect life without losing balance is to achieve creation with one's own color and one's own essence. This is what Wonhyo Seongsa called 'the wonderful circle (妙契環中)'. It is necessary to appreciate the fact that it is 'in line with the great path of the inner world of balance.' Wonhyo's 'wonderful circle' means overcoming the polarity of existence and non-existence (有無), truth and convention (眞俗), pure and defiled (染淨), right and wrong (是非), not falling into either extreme (極), not falling into the center, but pursuing pure (獨淨) single mindedness (一心).

In other words, "What may not seem like right logic, but is the most reasonable, and may not seem like it, but is largely so (無理之至理 不然之大然)." That is exactly what it means. Maintaining balance in life through savoring good, seasoned tea means that just as food must be seasoned well to have a true taste, a person can have a true taste when he does not lose his balance.

The delicacy of seasoned tea, the life of 'the wonderful circle', etc., are very similar to the expression the 'meot' of our people, so we will talk about these points in more detail below.

The tea-person's true heart takes as its form the Dharma-joy Seon-joy (法喜禪悅) and its goal is the silent pursuit of the Great Compassion (大慈悲). This is because a tea person is a person who feels endless grace and gratitude through a cup of tea and knows how to repay that grace.

The person who quenches his thirst with a cup of tea feels infinite grace through the tea. This means that even a drop of water contains the infinite grace of Mother Nature. Therefore, at this time, the tea person reflects on whether he or she can drink a cup of tea filled with sincerity and effort, and therefore does not just crave for the momentary quenching of thirst or the taste and scent of tea.

When a person can realize infinite grace and gratitude through a drop of water or a cup of tea, his life can change into a joyful and welcoming one. The Tea Saint (茶聖) Cho Ui expresses these feelings of tea people.

I feel so happy when the true self appears,  
I become even more ardent to experience it.  
(一廻見面一廻歡 有甚情懷可更切)

and this in a cup of tea! Through this, we rejoice in the appearance of the true face of all things.

When this kind of feeling of gratitude arises urgently, the desire to practice great compassion becomes even stronger.

Even though there are many difficulties in life,  
let us definitely follow my wish.  
(三十柱杖會不畏 等閑隨雲下裁軋)

The phrase from Choui's tea poem indicates this feeling. Knowing grace and repaying grace (知恩報恩) is the fulfillment of human duty, and this is expressed through the practice of mercy.

Even if there are countless obstacles and hurdles blocking our path, we should not back down out of fear but achieve our great dream.

If you look at the ten thousand things in life, they are as meaningless as the spring snow, but there is one part of life that can never be eradicated. This is the joy of gratitude in repaying a favor, or Dharma-joy Seon-joy (法喜禪悅).

In this way, Choui said that if you drink tea with the joy of 'repaying a favor,' even if you crave tea excessively, it can be tolerated. This is because the life of Dharma-joy Seon-joy is a life that is in harmony with the life of truth, and is a perfect life of “不然之大然無理之至理.”

We call this perfect life, a frugal life, a correct life.

The etymology of the Korean word 'Salim, housekeeping' is from the transitive verb 'to live,' and the word 'life' is derived from the intransitive word 'to live,' and as the words 'Salim' or 'life' already imply, it is 'frugal.' 'Housekeeping' and 'right living' means not killing anything, but using it well, maximizing its value and utility, and giving it life.

'Housekeeping' is not just about keeping living plants and animals alive without killing them, but about making good use of everything around us in our lives to fulfill its true purpose, and the life of those who are good at this 'housekeeping' is also the right life.

Even if you want to live well and live frugally, it is difficult without a compassionate heart and a thrifty heart that 'repays others.'

When you think about it this way, you can see that the only way to live fully is through the clear awareness of 'giving back to others' and the practice of mercy through this. It is Being Compassionate and Not Killing (慈心不殺).

A tea person's frugal living consists in the practice of the Great Wish (大悲院) based on Dharma-joy Seon-joy), and in beautiful use (妙用).