The Sadhana of Hosting

In its essence, hosting is about:

- Offering self to Self, an offering to God.
- Participating in and experiencing the aspect of Reality that is hosting everything.
- Creating a container for the alchemy of sadhana to take place.
- A recognition that, as humans, we require special places to engage in the process of waking up.
- Creating the bhava of care through taking care of teaching spaces and the people in them. When cleanliness is thorough, people feel cared for and can relax more. When cleanliness is partial, or sloppy, people feel (consciously or not) that the hosts had something else other than the guests in mind.
- Helping people to feel welcomed and that they are crossing a bardo from the ordinary to satsang.
- Providing space for people to wake up, to have an experience of enlightened Shiva nature, to relax their tensions, a place to ask the teacher questions, a place to let it all go. Relaxation is at the heart of our practice. Hosts are given the tools and help they need to do their seva, and the students being hosted have their needs consistently seen to so that they can focus on teachings and transmission instead of ordinary concerns.
- Supporting Shambhavi as a way to participate in the alchemical student-teacher relationship. As an almost entirely seva-run organization, students take on hosting responsibilities as part of their sadhana so that Shambhavi can focus on teaching.
- Greeting and opening our hearts to people exactly as they are.
- Celebrating the opportunity to take refuge in God by serving in a concrete way.
- Creating opportunities to experience continuity.
- Contacting and expressing natural generosity and feeling wonder that we get to help others to receive teachings.
- Embodying alliance, hosting each other, and relating to each other as sadhana.
- An opportunity to remember that everything we do is practice, to bring everything that happens onto the path, and remain (as much as possible) in the state of our practice.

Quotes on Hosting

"As you know, Lord Shiva is called the Host. Hosting the teachings, all of the people who come to teachings, and each other has always been an important part of our practice.

Hosting helps our process of waking up by showing us our tensions and opening us to devotion, grace, precision, collaboration and love. The culture of hosting we are developing together is also a key reason why Jaya Kula is such a strong community. Hosting is important to me personally as a primary way of expressing devotion, compassion and concern for the well-being of others.

Some people have tangled feelings about hosting. There are gender karmas that impact people's willingness to host. There are class karmas, karmas of attachment ('I don't like to clean') and also karmic patterns of stagnation (fatigue, shyness, laziness, anger, stubbornness, etc.) that impact our capacity and willingness to embody the host.

When we are practicing Tantra, we understand that when resistance arises, that is our material. We are always asking ourselves, 'How can I work with this circumstance?' We are not hiding from self-understanding, letting our karmas rule the day, or being fatalistic—using our karmas as an excuse not to work with our condition. We are having the understanding that hosting is one of the fields that constitutes our sadhana.

For initiated students there is another level. You have the understanding that following the instructions of your teacher is part of your sadhana."

"The only reason for Jaya Kula to exist is as a vehicle for our realization and to provide a gateway for others to enter. When we develop our ability to host, we are doing a profound sadhana that brings us closer to discovering Shiva Nature - our real nature."

"Playing Cruocracy is one of the main vehicles that I have established as a form of embodied/integrated sadhana. It reflects my unique personality as a teacher and my vision for Jaya Kula as a creative zone of spectacularly beautiful hosting. It is an expression of my devotion to everyone and desire to concretely demonstrate to all who access the teachings the 'already included/always included' nature of this reality."

~ Shambhavi Sarasvati

"Seva does not mean that you will cook food for your Master. It is not seva. Seva means abhyasena [being in the state of your practice], when you try to stay in that state of God consciousness—that is seva."

~ Swami Lakshmanjoo

The Fruits of Hosting

Written by members of the Jaya Kula Mandala, June 2016

“One fresh fruit for me is realizing that everyone does what they can. If people choose not to participate, or participate less, it's because of anavamala. Limitations. We all have 'em! To the extent that any of us is being helpful, it's because we want to, and we want to because we have that capacity. And hopefully someday we'll all have the capacity to be really selflessly helpful! So now when I host it's with the hope that everyone will feel loved and welcomed, and that over time this bhav of hosting will wear away everyone's sense of anavamala, mine included.”

"Hosting is a friendly and natural way to care for others now. My fears about not getting it all right and what that might say about me have lessened, and my love and genuine care for others has grown. Life is more relaxing. And I laugh more.”

"I am much less driven by compulsion. I have greater ability to feel into a situation with my heart and to read my energy body. When I feel the rush or the heat of my compulsion now, I have much more ability to recognize it, to slow down, to not react in as much of a karmic way. I feel the energy and I stop. I step back. I wait. I have more patience now. I have a much, much stronger understanding of, recognition of, and appreciation for the call and response that is this Reality. And I am much more aware (sometimes painfully; sometimes joyfully) of how I am participating in it. My desire to be of service to my fellow being is now what organizes my life. Before I started this practice, that would have been unfathomable to me (I kinda hated everybody). I now have a beautiful relationship with my ancestors. Before this practice, being adopted and all, I didn’t feel that I had any ancestors…and I certainly never imagined that I could communicate with them. Ancestor puja gave me my family back. I am no longer floundering about all alone in this world. I’ve got ancestors, I’ve got a community, I’ve got a teacher, I’ve got Ma. Rockin’ it!!! Shall I go on…? That is just the tip of the iceberg really. My entire everything has changed. Everything. Even all the crap I am holding onto has changed. That awareness thing again.”

“Hosting regularly and with View (to the level of my capacity) has helped me taste the fruit of.... It's not all about me! Surprise! When I first started hosting I was much more concerned about doing it right, having it look good, not being vulnerable to critique, etc. I noticed how others, especially [one student], who truly has a God-given ability for hosting, would anticipate the needs of those around them and go above and beyond to help others be comfortable. I mourned that I didn't have the ability to see what others needed and respond appropriately. I was very wrapped up in my own mediocre hosting abilities. But after a while of just plugging away at it, I feel my capacity has grown, and what's more, I am more oriented to serving others and not as anxious about proving myself as a good host. The real fruit is the nourishment that comes from hosting others. It is so yummy!”

“The biggest thing I've noticed in hosting practice is the awareness of how transferable this skill set is to the rest of life as integrated practice. Hosting happens in all situations involving beings - myself and others. Whether someone is coming to my place or I am going to theirs or we are just meeting somewhere, I can actively help them to feel at ease and comfortable. I feel useful and kind in these interactions. Still struggling with how I look or seem or whether I'm acting appropriately, but less on and more focused on the other person's comfort. And, I see I also host myself and can endeavor to create comfortable welcoming environments for me.”