



## **Pine- Tree of Seers**

'Few are altogether deaf to the preaching of pine trees. Their sermons on the mountains go to our hearts; and if people in general could be got into the woods, even for once, to hear the trees speak for themselves, all difficulties in the way of forest preservation would vanish.'

**John Muir**

The pine tree encourages us to soar above heights undimmed by challenges to arrive at a higher perspective. In this essay we will explore how we can tap into the world soul by plumbing the depths of a tradition.

Exploring tradition is never rigid and fixed but is an acceptance of all walks of life, the pine invites us to look beyond what is in our own perceptions and reach out into the world at large.

Indigenous traditions see the soul as many things beyond the individual soul. In the Celtic tradition we may speak of the 'Celtic folk soul' which is part of those who explore its tradition and then we speak of our family soul and also the world soul.

In modern times we are more aware of the world soul than ever before, we can know in an instant what is happening all over the world, we can connect with different cultures and bond with people who we may never see in the physical world. The pine reaches out in the same way through the web of life. All the beings of the natural world are connected through the web of life. The tiniest insect makes a contribution and communicates along the threads of this web.

*'An ancient connection is embedded in the heart of all creation and it is only now that technology has started to tap into this role. The responsibility of this profound awareness is making sure we bring peace and positive action to this connection instead of highlighting the differences. A tribal mentality is a key component of who we are, a sense of belonging and identifying with a certain group which can be a satisfying and nurturing. However, if the tribal*

*mentality joins in a union of superiority and becomes fixed in its beliefs it can harm rather than heal the world soul that connects all of life.'*

### **Jonathon Huet 2020**

In the Celtic tradition there is a concept of the Sleepers, great forces within the earth that awaken to heal the land. In true Celtic style these tremendous forces of change are personified into forms we can relate to such as the sleeping King Arthur.

In the elder essay the sleeper was the Queen of all the world and we acknowledged the humility of sharing her presence through the acknowledgement of our dependence on her form and all that she gives.

Below is an invocation to the Sleepers drawing from the works yet again of Fiona MacLeod:

*Chorus:*

*Sleepers awake, Sleeper's awake; Awaken the soul of the world*

*Erupt, erupt we'll erupt, once every soul is tried and tested.*

*There is no law set upon beauty, it has no geography, it is the domain of the spirit. All are welcome for what they bring, nor do we demand that they be dark or fair, Latin or Teuton or Celt or say of them that their tidings are lovelier or less lovely because they were born in the shadow of Gaelic hills or nurtured by Celtic shores.*

*Each should learn the Mother song of their land at the cradle place of their birth. But it is not well that because of the whistling in the wind of the heather that nowhere else does the wind suddenly stir the reeds and grasses in its incalculable hour.*

*Every nation of the world has its soul and every nation can find it, if it will, and the soul of every people whose lineaments may be found not in the mythical Gods themselves but in what they represent, destined each to find its alter of its brother and sister soul in the temple of the grail- which is the world.*

This invocation sums up beautifully the importance of the individual landscapes, for they each have their individual characteristics and yet that does not mean that the same is not true of every land on the globe and therefore every culture and nationality.

Climbing the heights of maturity of the pine tree enables us to truly honour our own individual landscapes whilst connecting with the bedrock of the world soul.

Dig deep and climb the heights of the tradition that you are drawn to:

*'Once we have connected with our spiritual home and its ancestry, provided we plumb the depths of its well we come to the bedrock of the world soul. The fiery magma of the earth unites all races with a common thread of dependence. But its dance expresses itself uniquely upon every patch of soil we call home.'*

**J.Huet 2020**

### Qualities of Pine

Ailm, a Fir tree, a Pine tree.

Loudest of groanings that is wondering, Ailm or ah is what a man says while groaning in disease or wonder.

A, beginning of the weaver's beam, ahh.

Beginning of answers.

### **Book of Ballymote 1391**

#### **Pinus sylvestris ( Latin) Ailm ( Ogham)**

Pine woodlands often form what is known as high forest where trees are allowed to grow unhindered by the practices of coppicing and pollarding. Pine is associated with the moors and open areas of Britain as well as colder climates and free draining mineral soil (peat).

The Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) is a native to all of the British Isles but the true native probably now only grows in Scotland in places such as Loch Rannoch which is still home to the rare wild cat and at one time home to wolves up until at least the 1700s. Today pine woods such as these are still home to a number of specialist species such as the red squirrel- our only native European species, and birds such as the crossbill and goldcrest.

*'How beautiful the ground beneath this pine thickly strewn with slender needles and grand cones, and the piles of cone-scales, seed wings and shells around the instep of each tree where the squirrels have been feasting'*

## John Muir

Pine is associated with the Winter Solstice or the period of time known as Christmas. In Europe great fires were lit of pine to welcome back the light and they may well have been decorated with shiny objects to also attract and encourage the light to return. This festival simply marks the longest night (21st December) and therefore from then on the light is returning. The rising sun is often depicted as the birth of a solar deity such as the Mabon, Oak King or Jesus. This is probably why the Pine is associated with rebirth and the image of a crane nesting in its boughs is indicative of new life.

In Welsh mythology the Pine plays a key part in the story of the Lady of the Fountain, standing as a threshold guardian, a tree of life and just like the ash in Norse mythology and the hazel or rowan in Irish mythology it has a sacred well at its foot.

'A tall tree, whose branches are greener than the greenest pine-trees. Under this tree is a fountain, and by the side of the fountain a marble slab, and on the marble slab a silver bowl, attached by a chain of silver, so that it may not be carried away. Take the bowl and throw a bowlful of water upon the slab, and thou wilt hear a mighty peal of thunder, so that thou wilt think that heaven and earth are trembling with its fury. With the thunder there will come a shower so severe that it will be scarce possible for thee to endure it and live. And the shower will be of hailstones; and after the shower, the weather will become fair, but every leaf that was upon the tree will have been carried away by the shower. Then a flight of birds will come and alight upon the tree; and in thine own country thou didst never hear a strain so sweet as that which they will sing. And at the moment thou art most delighted with the song of the birds, thou wilt hear a murmuring and complaining coming towards thee along the valley. And thou wilt see a knight upon a coal-black horse, clothed in black velvet, and with a pennon of black linen upon his lance; and he will ride unto thee to encounter thee with the utmost speed. If thou fleest from him he will overtake thee, and if thou abidest there, as sure as thou art a mounted knight, he will leave thee on foot. And if thou dost not find trouble in that adventure, thou needest not seek it during the rest of thy life.'

**Lady of the Fountain by Lady Charlotte Elizabeth Guest**

This abstract from the Mabinogion speaks volumes of the role of sacred trees in Celtic lore.

Their connection to the elements and the very forces of nature as well as the oracular connection to the exquisite sounds of birds and then as a guardian who must be confronted if you wish to pass the threshold of this indomitable tree.

This puts the Pine in the role as the tree of life, the gift of knowledge and an entry point to the inner worlds, the workings of the soul.

When we refer back to the kennings of the pine, we find references to the weaver's beam and 'beginning of answers' bringing us back to the lore of the Weaver Goddess explored in elder.

Pine therefore is lifting us up to more exalted states of understanding of the soul and the weave of life and as already stated a higher perspective of seeing just like the role of a 'Seer'.

This is further understood in the exclamation of 'Ah' and its link to bird song. The importance of vowels is stressed in world mythology as well as Celtic lore as the sound of creation. The most known is in the word 'Aum' from the yogic traditions but it is also implicit in Welsh lore through the sound of Awen which is a Welsh term for poetic inspiration. The poets in Welsh were known as 'Awenydd' which means inspired one. Iolo Morganwg in his writings speaks of raising the Awen using vowel sounds.

However, the sound of Ailm or ah may well be the sound expressing pain or ecstasy or even a state of awareness between these states for the power of these vowels runs true throughout world tradition.

The sounds of birds is undeniable an experience which takes us into spheres of beauty and love and is believed to hold messages of the otherworlds, the pine tree after the storm filled with the melody of song birds captures this exalted feeling associated with the pine tree.

The root meaning of the word Ailm for the pine tree can be interpreted as 'that which goes forward' and 'will or desire'.

Therefore the qualities of the tall pine on the summit of the hill with its fresh-heady scent and tall gracious form can be seen as a symbol of elevation and positivity. It calls us to use our will as a positive force and to know things from our own innate wisdom that has accumulated through life's experiences. It is the wisdom accumulated through years of experience and represents high states of elevation.

Breathe fresh positive life into all situations with Ailm, the Pine tree.

## The Uses of Pine

Pine trees will grow up to a 100ft with long tap roots that will enable the tree to cope with strong winds.

The wood is yellowish and fairly soft and has been imported into Britain including Scotland since early times. The main historical use of its timber was as scaffold poles to build structures such as churches.

Pine timbers can be found in Ely cathedral which probably started out as scaffold poles before being integrated into the structure. The timber was also used in its own right in the form of tongue-and-groove boards rather like Baltic oak to help build the doors of York Minister and Lakenheath church in Suffolk.

In the 1500s an extra storey was built of pine on an otherwise oak property. It has also been used to make chests and strong boxes, pit props, railway sleepers, telegraph poles, furniture and ship masts. Pine resin has many uses including sealing wax for violin bows, to coat the insides of beer casks, a glue, and as sealant for boats known as 'brewers pitch'.

Pine when used as medicine is a powerful bronchial disinfectant, antiseptic and expectorant. It is an effective stimulant and a treatment for bladder and kidney problems, gout and skin diseases.

Its needles and buds can be taken as an infusion (cup of tea) for bronchial infections, cystitis and rheumatic ailments. The same infusion could be massaged into aching joints. An alternative to tea is to make a syrup which can be used as a bronchial tonic. The same ingredients could simply be inhaled as steam to help clear your sinuses.

## SUMMARIES AND RESOURCES FOR THE PINE TREE

The pine tree as explored is inviting us to see a higher perspective, to be open to different opinions and ways of being. To see beyond our own lives and ideas and embrace all cultures while staying true to our own convictions.

Are you able to embrace opinions which are opposite to your own?

Are you able to see the bigger picture whilst holding true to the life you have chosen to lead?

Can you accept different cultures no matter how different from yours from around the world?

Are you open to changing your deep held beliefs if you realise they no longer are true for you?

### Deepening your connection to Pine

What could be more refreshing and invigorating than a visit to a pine woodland where you can breathe in the scents the trees exude and meditate with its graceful presence.

As you spend time with the pine you may wish to tune into the landscape around the tree. How is it different from other landscapes that you know intimately. You may wish to get a sense of the energies of the land beneath you. Can you sense the sleepers, the energies of this land and the mood they hold? As you meditate imagine entering the earth and see what impressions you receive.

### Practical Tasks

Breathe in the heady scent of the pine wood. You can collect the needles of the tree to make a refreshing tea or infuse them in a bath or bowl of water. You can soak in the pine infused bath or breathe in the vapours from the bowl of water.

If you can take some wood from the tree it carves beautifully as it is soft with a yellowy tinge.

Enjoy connecting with the pine and its many gifts.