



## **Part 12 – The faerie realms**

Here we arrive at the last stage of our year's course and still there is so much to explore, so many tales untold, so many avenues to pursue. This of course is the joy of tradition and especially the inner realms for they truly are inexhaustible.

The key principle and overriding element of the Celtic tradition that has spanned the centuries has to be its connection to the Faerie realms, an understanding that we share our lives with many types of beings which is reflected in many if not all of the Celtic stories.

The last invasion tale explores the retreat of the Sidhe (faerie folk) into the hollow hills. This marks a change in consciousness as we begin to disconnect from the sacred and therefore with the Earth and with the feminine principal. After this tale it is us, the human race who has inherited the Earth and the Sidhe are now a shadowy race positioned on the fringe of things reminding us of our contract to the Earth Mother whenever we are open enough to listen.

Our story begins once again with Tuan mac Cairill as our guide...

Weary beyond belief the eagle managed to fly into the cave having seeing yet another bitter battle between the ancient races of Erin. He could feel the distress in every fibre of his being and cried out:

'Will we ever learn to live together in peace!'

His wings folded, his feathers frayed, his bones cracked and he fell onto the cave floor. The serpent approached and she consumed him until he was ground to dust except for a single hazelnut which fell from the cave and into the sea and down, down, down into the depths.

The blue expanse engulfed him and as he drifted down huge sea monsters passed him. Creatures with sharp teeth, impenetrable skins and spiny scales. A peace infiltrated every part of his being as he noticed everything was in harmony with itself and that there was no discord but an acceptance of place in an ever-changing web of life.

He arrived at a perfectly formed hazel tree and felt himself drop once more as a shimmering purple hazelnut falling through enchanted winds and magical waters until he arrived at a beautiful cascading fountain that hummed with joy and splashed with pleasure.

Once again, he felt his form change. He grew silver scales tinged with a blue luminosity and swam in one of the five streams following out from the fountain back to the lands of Erin.

Every memory of every time of every being was known to him. His powerful body jumped up stream, his unique form marked him as the king of all fish and as his legend grew every human and animal hunted him.

Finally, he was caught in a fisherman's net and was consumed by the Queen of the Milesians and as a human reborn again with all the knowledge of all the worlds.

He went to the North once more to find his cave...

When Tuan was a young eagle the Sidhe were triumphant and civilisation was at its peak for every science, art and craft was perfected. The land rose in love of a harmony between all beings. The mountains reached their peaks, the stars sang in exaltation, the streams bubbled with enjoyment, animals moved in excitement and deep lochs groaned in bliss whether calms or storms:

*'This grand show is eternal. It is always sunrise somewhere; the dew is never all dried at once; a shower is forever falling; vapor ever rising. Eternal sunrise, eternal sunset, eternal dawn and gloaming, on seas and continents and islands, each in its turn, as the round earth rolls.*

*How boundless the day seems as we revel in these storm beaten sky gardens amid so vast a congregation of onlooking mountains! Strange and admirable it is that the more savage and chilly and storm-chafed the mountains, the finer the glow on their faces and the finer the plants they bear. The radiance in some places is so great to be fairly dazzling, keen lance rays of every colour flashing, sparkling in glorious abundance, joining the plants in their fine, beautiful-work- every crystal, every flower a window opening into heaven, a mirror reflecting the creator.'*

**John Muir**

Lugh Lamfada the undisputed champion of the Sidhe stood on top of the hill of Tara gazing upon the Lia Fiall, the stone of destiny. He could feel change was coming and as shadow passed over stone, he prayed to the Earth Mother and rode hard and fast to the coast. He saw them.

Ships were approaching in the distance; a new race of people were coming to the shores of Erin. Lugh was not impressed by them, they seemed slow and dull as if the Glefiosa, the bright knowledge had left them, they were smaller, less radiant and unskilled. How could such a race dare to challenge the Sidhe and yet Lugh couldn't help but feel that change was upon them, that life would never be the same.

He summoned the Druids and Magicians to protect the shores. They chanted and cast spells and felt the spirits of the ancient wild landscape respond as every time this new race, the Milesians approached the land, the power within it rose in a boar's back.

The Milesians cried out:

*'We have come to Muc-Inis, Pig's Island'*

The Milesians circled the entire Island three times until finally they saw their chance and finally:

*'On the seventeenth day of the moon, without fail,*

*The Milesians landed in Ireland;*

*At Inber Scene of the sails*

*They took the shore on the seventeenth.'*

**Lebor Gabala Erenn translated by Caitlin Matthews, The Encyclopaedia of Celtic Wisdom.**

It was the seven Queens who stepped upon the shores first:

*'The seven wives of Mil's sons, a bright honour!*

*I know the names of them all:*

*Tea, Fial, Fas- it is good to tell of them-*

*Liben, Odba, Scota and Scene.'*

**Lebor Gabala Erenn translated by Caitlin Matthews, The Encyclopaedia of Celtic Wisdom.**

Amergin white knee then put his right foot upon Erin's soil and his whole body filled with her deep memories as he had complete identification with the land becoming all aspects of it from mineral and soil to plant and tree, to animal and bird to the landscape itself.

He chanted:

'I am wind on sea,

I am ocean wave,

I am roar of sea,

I am bull of seven fights,

I am vulture on cliff,

I am dew-drop,

I am fairest of flowers,

I am boar for boldness,

I am salmon in pool,

I am lake on plain,

I am mountain in a man,

I am a word of skill.'

### **Glamoury Steve Blamires**

Amergin white knee impressed the Sidhe, he may not have had their prowess and stature but the glefiosa shown out of his every cell and he stepped upon the land as if he already held its sovereignty.

They landed at Kerry at the eastern end of the Dingle peninsula and as they did so a new loch burst forth called Loch Luigdech. This was a sign the land had accepted them, a sign of fruition but as they celebrated this good fortune, they then saw her.

Slieve Mis was before them, a foreboding sight, its top covered in cloud and its roots the bedrock of the worlds.

A cackle of laughter, deafening screams as a thick fog filled the air. Warriors huddled together as terrifying sounds arose from the deeps. An eagle cried, a raven croaked and then chaos became their reality.

For three days and for three nights the enchantments raged on as phantoms and wraiths, visions and apparitions surrounded them. Spirits haunted them day and night as undersea beings checked their every move. There was no battle worse than this as they fled from the terrors that awaited them.

Eventually they broke the spells but as they moved on, they were met by gigantic monsters sent by the Sidhe, the battles raged on as much of mind and spirit than just of body.

They defeated the monsters and just as they settled what they thought was yet another apparition glided through the mist it was Banba, a Queen of the Sidhe, the wife of MacCuail the son of Hazel.

She spoke 'If you have come with the intention of taking Ireland, I ask for a gift of you for myself?'

'What is it?' they replied

'That my name Banbha shall be upon this land' she replied.

'Then Banbha shall be a name of this Island', they agreed.

Banbha left and another Queen of the Sidhe appeared this time Fodhla, the wife of MacCeht, the son of the plough.

She also spoke 'If you have come with the intention of taking Ireland, I ask for a gift of you for myself?'

'What is it?' they replied

'That my name Fodhla shall be upon this land' she replied.

'Then Fodhla shall be a name of this Island', they agreed.

Banbha left and yet another Queen of the Sidhe appeared and this time it was Eriu, the wife of MacGreine, son of the Sun.

She was radiant and powerful and greeted the army with ease, charming them before also stating:

'If you have come with the intention of taking Ireland, I ask for a gift of you for myself?'

'What is it?' they replied

'That my name Eriu shall be upon this land' she replied.

This time they agreed ' Eriu shall be its name forever'

The contract was made and the Milesians made their way to Tara where the three Kings sat, the sons of Ogma, the grandsons of the Dagdha.

The Milesians agreed to retreat beyond the shore to the ninth wave and if they could retake Ireland, it would belong to them. Amergin knew this was treachery but he had his own plans and retreat they did.

As soon as the Milesians left the shore the Sidhe called to the ancient mother and she rose and with her the entire sea floor erupted to the surface this was a storm to end all storms and crush these new invaders.

However, Amergin stood strong and proud and called to the Sovereignty of the land, he called to the three ancient Goddesses that he had made a pact with:

'Eriu, Banba, Fodhla, I seek the land of Erin, Fruitful be her seas, perpetually green her forest, I feel her in my bones, I feel her in my blood.

*Danu, soul of the ancient mysteries,*

*Wanders forever under the canopy of heaven,*

*Wrapped in her mantle of bluest aether,*

*And the vision of her calls every human heart.*

*Her shadow is the forgotten mysteries*

*And lives in the sadness of Celtic Twilight tales,*

*When hearts wake again to the longing for forbidden lands,*

*Or for the shining hosts of the Sidhe,*

*Or for the caves of the hoary sleepers.*

*The Celtic folk soul is the soul of a spiritual awakening,*

*The touch of a Woman of Beauty who will*

*Come into the hearts of men and women*

*Like a flame upon dry grass,*

*Like a flame of wind in a great wood.'*

They agreed to honour this pledge Ireland would never be the same again.

The Milesians now held the sovereignty.

Manannan rose from the undying lands and a mist covered all that could be seen, a cloak that hid the Sidhe, an invisible protection known as the Feth-Fiadha as they all descended into the hollow hills. They would not give up Ireland but would share it with the Celtic races unseen and unknown only revealing themselves if they wished to.

Manannan extended his gifts to assigning each of them with a palace of their own where age and decay would never touch them and a constant feast would sustain them and keep them forever safe in Tir na nOg- the land of promise.

They would be the guardians of the old traditions, the knowledge of the ancient mother and would appear when called to help the new race align with the sacred duty owed to the land and the great Goddess.

A new era has began...

### **The Spiral continues**

This story brings the course back to where we started as we arrive once more at the sacred well which is the source of all creation renewing all that is in Mannann's country, the land of promise where the tree of life drops its perpetual fruits. In stage 1 we called to the three Queens of Ireland, the sovereignty of its land and to Danu the mother figure of the Sidhe just as Amergin did in the story above.

We then entered the well, lifted the Feth-Fiadha and met the Sidhe in one of their key palaces known as Brugh na Boinne. Since then, we have continued to lift this veil to meet the beings that share this wonderful Earth with us to renew our contract with the sacredness of life and connect with our true nature.

We have followed only part of the paths that flow out of Connla's well exploring the invasions of Ireland as well as the stories of Boann, Brigit and Fionn MacCuaille. There are many more paths to explore but first we must maintain the path we have started and learn to trust in our guide whether it be an animal and/or ancestor so that we too can witness the story of the Earth and even transform in our cave of knowing.

Once the veil is lifted, we open up our lives to limitless potential and to a knowledge which calls us to take responsibilities for every action that we perform, a responsibility which brings incredible freedom and kinship to all life. We shall never look back but keep moving towards a brighter future which paves the way for the next generation and beyond.

All of this is only possible if we maintain our pathway daily and never settle for one side of reality.

### **Meditation 12- Enter the faerie realms.**

Arrive once more at the shore line where you met the Mountain Mother in stage 11 then climb up the cliffs to enter your cave. Meditate on the immensity of the Mountain Mother and feel a connection to her, only when you are ready, feel yourself drop from the cave and into the deep sea, spiral down into her depths until you reach a beautiful land:

*Delightful land beyond all dreams!  
Beyond what seems to thee most fair —  
Rich fruits abound the bright year round  
And flowers are found of hues most rare.  
Unfailing there the honey and wine  
And draughts divine of mead there be,  
No ache nor ailing night or day —  
Death or decay thou ne'er shalt see!  
A hundred swords of steel refined,  
A hundred cloaks of kind full rare,  
A hundred steeds of proudest breed,  
A hundred hounds — thy meed when there!*

### **Michael Comyn - Oisín in Tir na nÓg**

You enter the undying lands, the abode of Manannan mac Lir and here is a shining fountain from which flow five rivers which represent the five senses. Here is the source of all inspiration, the abode of the Sidhe.

**-meditate-**



*'No pain here, no dull empty hours, no fear of the past, no fear of the future. So compactly filled with God's (Nature's) beauty, no petty personal hope or experience has room to be. Drinking this champagne water is pure pleasure, so is breathing the living air, and every movement of the limbs is pleasure, while the whole body seems to feel beauty when exposed to it, entering not by eyes alone but equally through all one's flesh like radiant heat, making a passionate ecstatic pleasure glow not explainable. '*

### **John Muir**

As above so below and truly know you are here:

We repeat:

*Welcome to the land of Women,  
Welcome to the faerie realms,  
Welcome to your soul's journey,  
Welcome to Manannan's Country.'*

# EVERYDAY TRADITION

## Key elements on the Celtic Path

Our soul's journey is paramount, no matter how we feel we can enter our inner landscape to replenish, what could be more important in our lives.

Here I summarise the key points of our year's journey and the practices we can use to traverse the Celtic lands and embark on the soul's journey:

### 1/Sovereignty of the Land

'Brought into right relationship with the wilderness he would see that he was not a separate entity endowed with a divine right to subdue his fellow creatures and destroy the common heritage, but rather an integral part of a harmonious whole.'

How the above quote used in stage 10 of the course written by John Muir brings together the Celtic belief system.

Being in 'right relationship with the land' is key to being in harmony with all life including ourselves. When a spiritual path strives to perfect the individual without acknowledging this simple truth it is arrogance, dominance and misconception which is bred.

Religion has sought to subdue and oppress the female aspects of life in cruel barbaric ways. It has sought to dominate the female to the point where all sin is traced back to her roots and all creation is owed to a male principle.

This belief is reflected in our relationship to nature and although ultimately a deity of creation does not need any gender, would it not be true to say the female qualities are imperative for our society to move on and once again be in good relationship with all creation?

*'Mother nature is too often spoken about as in reality no mother at all. Yet how wisely, sternly and tenderly she loves and looks after her children in all sorts of weather and wilderness...'*

It may be a new generation can move beyond a gender related concept and simply come back to being in harmony through an androgynous concept given equal focus to all of life. We find the oldest of deities often are non-binary and the oldest life forms do not require male and female reproduction but in the same way that we must honour the different races across our lands we must continue to address this terrible gender imbalance still reflected in our society.

When the Milesians landed in Ireland they battled with the forces of nature until finally it was the sovereignty of the land itself which accepted them.

In Celtic lore the sovereignty is personified through the feminine which we explored in the last stage and it was stated that she appears in the form she wishes to and must be accepted for who she is.

She appears time and time again in the Old Irish tales for example to King Conaire as Calib which means spear. She is also known as Flaitheas Eireann who has a blue robe (see the invocation to Danu in stage 1) which like Brigid's robe covers the land itself, appearing most famously to Niall of the nine hostages. She is the protagonist as the Morriginia and the seer Fedhelm who appears to Queen Medb.

Her later appearances call her the loathly lady most known from Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Wife of Bath's Tale* and Dame Ragnell in the famous 15<sup>th</sup> century poem entitled the wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell.

These women are powerful with distorted features which only change when the tested King or person accepts them in this form just as we must all accept nature in all her guises.

In the tale of Sir Gawain, the hag reveals what a woman most wants is her sovereignty which can be interpreted as what a woman wants is her own way but the deeper truth is we must all respect the sovereignty of the land and on a more personal level of course we should have the sovereignty of our own bodies which is a basic right that should never be questioned!

It is clear the Celtic stories address the neglect and oppression of the Goddess.

In the story above the new Queens are the first to set foot on Ireland and their names are given to the land which again reiterates all of the above.

## **2/ Acceptance of all races and lifeforms**

Hospitality is a key aspect to Celtic culture. In the stories we have to accept there are many races of beings and this contract to live in harmony with these beings is essential for all life on earth. This is reflected in honouring every rock, mineral, animal and landscape as well as strangers that come through the land. The wells along the pilgrim's path are places where the Traveller may refresh themselves and seek sustenance for their journey ahead.

The faerie contact between human and Otherworldly beings is what brings balance to the world, it enables us to acknowledge the sacredness of all things and to be in harmony with ourselves and everything else. When we connect with a spiritual dimension our whole world opens up to infinite possibilities and we connect to the joy of non-duality.

### **3/ The Elements**

The acknowledgement that the ultimate power is in the three elements of earth, sea and sky. The most sacred oaths are made to these elements as they are the building blocks of all life.

The fourth element is the fire which runs through all of life as the source of inspiration.

Every action should be in harmony with the elements and in balance with the web of life. This ancient belief is reflected in our most recent scientific discoveries as we fall out of balance with the elements and lose our natural resources.

We remember the oath mentioned in stage 9 (see below) and understand that if we take from the earth and cause the elements to be imbalanced we will cause terrible problems. Classical writings note that the Celtic warriors feared the elements more than the loss of their own lives which is why Roman warfare which showed no respect for the land dumbfounded them. This also shows they had good common sense and were grounded in good ecology even though the word wasn't known then.

*'Heaven is above us, and the earth beneath us, and the sea all around us. Unless the sky shall fall with its showers of stars on the ground where we are camped, or unless the waves of the blue sea come over the forests of the living world, we shall not give ground.'*

**Extract from Tain Bo Cuailgne trans. De Jubainville**

### **4/ The Otherlands**

In Celtic belief there is no heaven or hell or higher or lower but simply Tir na nOg the land of youth, the place where our soul is complete and we can replenish and acknowledge our splendour and live-in harmony with all that is. This concept was explored in the above meditation.

This place is here and now and we only have to lift the Feth-Fiadha to enter it. This realm intersects our own physical realm and everything we know is imbued with this connection to the Otherlands.

This means we do not have to live and die in a certain way but aim to fulfill our own personal geasa, our contact with life which is unique to every individual.

There is a cycle of stories known as the Voyages or Immram and these stories map out the soul landscape as a series of islands which each hold keys to the mysteries of life.

It is the faerie women that take us there by shaking a scion of the tree of life known as 'crann beatha' and we are then greeted by Manannan mac lir who rides over the sea in his chariot or crystal boat that needs no oars or sails. He is the Celtic ferry man and his payment is our pure intentions.

It is he that takes us to the Land of Women.

This journey may well be the map of our soul, our inner worlds and travelling its route whilst still living in this world is highly beneficial meaning our route of passing will be known to us when we continue on into the spirit realms.

## **Individual Practice**

### **Four key practices to maintain your pathway.**

Here are a few pointers to help you with a daily practice of connection. As I have stated in other courses there is no need to wear buckskins or smoke a pipe but simply to be who you are as a modern indigenous person of the land you live on today.

1/ Upon waking light a candle and acknowledge the elements:

*'I arise today through the strength of heaven: Light of sun, Radiance of moon, Splendour of fire, Speed of lighting, Swiftiness of wind, Depth of sea, Stability of earth, Firmness of rock.'*

**The blessing of the elements – sourced by Caitlin Matthews. Original translation Kuno Meyers 1925**

Feel that connection to the Earth, Sea and Sky, feel the elements around you and within you.

2/ Call to your guide(s) by chanting or sounding in a way that feels right for you or choose a chant that especially resonates with you on this course. If you are not confident with your voice, you can recite a poem or prayer or just BE. Sit for a few moments and feel their presence or simply know they are there. Your connection will vary day to day but still hold that space even if only for a few moments and accept the connection no matter how small or incredible it feels.

3/ Honour the Earth Mother through a prayer or poem/prose that you especially connect with either from the course or any source that you choose. The non-verbal inner connection is

always paramount to this practice though please accept the process as above no matter how small or incredible it is. The key is always constancy not heightened experiences.

4/ Arrive at Connla's well and enter the Otherlands as described on this course. Meditate for however long you are able to or however long feels right to you on this day.

Bring your insights back into your day with you. As you go about your everyday life be aware of the guides that walk with you and your connection to all life forms. Remember you are 'an integral part of a harmonious whole.'

This course now reaches its conclusion but is by no means finished, the spiral continues whether you revisit all the material in this course many times or spiral out along the different paths that present themselves to you.

Many blessings on your path.