

## **THE CEILE DE – THE LIVING CELTIC SPIRITUAL TRADITION**

*“For he comes... the human child,  
To the water and the wild...  
With a fairy hand in hand.  
For the world's more full of weeping  
Than he can understand.”*  
- WB Yeats

The Celtic Spiritual Tradition is just one of many noble and beautiful paths in the world. One of the many expressions of the Great Truth – the only Truth there is. It is a Truth that cannot be named, for it is all-inclusive and, when it becomes divided in our minds by concept and identification, we can lose sight of its purity. It can only be alluded to by those who beckon and call to us from further along the path... then yearned for... then kindled and experienced in the heart. Finally, it can be embodied, incarnated into the world, by those of us who have been challenged, won over and forever changed by its undeniable reality.

This gradual birthing is the aim of any spiritual path. The end of the journey – if there ever is an end – lies in a unitive experience, beyond dogma or creed, for God has no religion. But all paths leading to the Heart of The One begin at home. And there lies the first paradox of the great adventure... for home is where the Heart is.

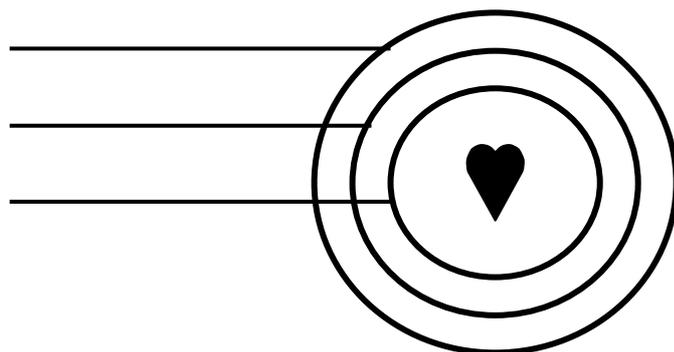
### **THE CELTIC HEART-JOURNEY**

Perhaps we can say the same for all traditions in the world, but certainly on the Celtic path, the story of the individual's journey towards The One is reflected in the spiritual history of the people. But, with regard to our individual progression, rather than thinking of our history as being a linear movement from Pagan (magical; nature-oriented; many gods) to Christian (mystical; heaven-orientated; one god) the *Ceile De* view is that our journey is through a holistic series of worlds within worlds, leading towards unitive consciousness at the centre. It is possible to view these planes of consciousness as levels of awareness that co-exist within our psyches. Although we will inevitably as individuals have a natural disposition towards one, we will experience each of them at different stages on our journey... The ultimate goal is to live simultaneously in them all, but for one's impelling force to come from the centre:-

Body /This world

Psyche /The Otherworld

Spirit /The One



What is Spiritual Transformation? It is the shifting of one's over-riding impulse, in stages, from the outer circle of consciousness to the inner. And it must begin with an awareness of the different levels of one's being.

### **THIS WORLD**

*"Ta Tir na n-og ar chul an ti – tir alainn trina cheille"*  
*"The land of eternal youth is just behind the house –*  
*a beautiful land, fluent within itself."*

...And so the call to journey begins for the Gael, at the threshold of his own home. The home is the land of the familiar. It is the place that forms both us and the way in which we experience life. The Celtic realm is moist, verdant and elemental. There is a strong sense of the cyclical in this part of the Earth, where the seasons are pronounced and effect us deeply. The world's earliest forms of spirituality are those that revere Nature in all Her aspects – and this sense of Divine immanence is an abiding quality in the Celtic Soul.

### **THE DRUIDS AND THE OTHERWORLD**

For the pre-Christian, the Gods and Goddesses were the invisible qualities and powers that inhabited both our natures and Nature Herself. As such, they were known as the children (aspects) of the Mother Goddess - the Earth. The Gaels call these luminous beings the *Sidhe* – the people of the hollow hills, or the people of peace. Because the Celtic eye is so brim-full with the pageant and detail of Nature, the Sidhe in Celtic myth do not descend to us, like the Angels and Gods of many other cultures, from the Heavens above. They come from the *Otherworld* - a land intermingled with this world. Our psyches have been formed by twilights that are long and slow, casting dim lights and shadows that move in firelight. Nature has formed us into a visionary people, whose culture has been richly coloured by this Otherworld – "*Tir na n-Og*" - the *mundus imaginalis* of the Celt... But this world is not imaginary in the sense of fictional. To the Celt the imagination is a boat, in which our seeking hearts may sail from the land of outer cares, concerns and illusion to the shores of Beauty. The first call to journey is the call of Beauty... Ultimately we will discover, with heart-breaking simplicity, that the highest Beauties and the highest Truth are one.

In legend, the Sidhe appear to us through the green veil of a forest, or the glimmer of moon on wave. Their emergence in our dreams and sacred imagination disturbs our complacent, habitual selves with a numinosity hitherto unknown. They shapeshift like the landscape we inhabit and so one of the lessons we learn from them is that our experience of life is ephemeral. They hint to us that there is something more enduring than the pleasure of the passing moment we chase. They offer us an experience of otherness... of magic.

The Sidhe bring us wonderful gifts from their world. Legend tells us they brought art and science to humankind. The doorway to the Otherworld is in the mind... both our minds and the mind of Nature.

When we first enter the world of the spiritual seeker, we cross the borderlands into Tir na n-Og in the sense that our consciousness begins to partake of its character – one that seeks for the beauty and magic in things. There, we leave behind some of the values of the mechanical, “mundane” world. We have entered the world of the Sidhe. We sense marvels, miracles and have visions. Our inspiration and creativity increases.

Most artists inhabit this plane of consciousness when they are creating. Their daily life, whether they are aware of it or not, is an ongoing relationship with the Otherworld,. This is the realm of the Muse who teaches us new, deeper ways to perceive life. When art is used with spiritual intent it becomes a powerful tool for transformation. It is, after all, how the Sidhe want us to use their gifts – to grow and change.

Tir na n-Og is the secret, enchanted inner life of Nature. It is the intuitive land frequented by artists, inspired scientists, magicians, seers, shamans and spiritual seekers. All who work in these fields have some degree of interaction with this level of consciousness. Within the Celtic tradition, because this world is known and visited, natural gifts often become heightened through working with the Sidhe.

Many people stay there forever, partaking of the nature of the Gods, weaving beautiful spells over the world with the dreams they dream. But for some even this is not enough. A longing for something beyond this realm troubles their hearts. For them the gifts of the Sidhe are like the rainbow, hinting at something forever just out of reach, forever luring them toward an impossible beauty. The Sidhe offer us, the legends say, feasting without satiation.

What does this say to us about their role in our spiritual journey? It tells us, as the druids hinted, that there is something *beyond* both the everyday world and theirs. That perhaps the role of the Sidhe is to bring us to a point where we can no longer be fulfilled solely by the aspects of life that they represent... They have initiated in us an unbearable hunger that no thing or idea can satisfy. They have made our hearts ache for some new understanding that can bring us closer toward the core of reality. As they first lured us out of the mundane into the magical, something else calls to us from a new horizon... It is time to leave.

### **MYSTICISM - THE YEARNING FOR THE BEYOND**

*“...It is Beauty I seek... not beautiful things.”*

- Fiona MacLeod

This ever-leaving is embodied in Celtic myth by the image of drifting in an oarless coracle. If we wish to enter the world of Spirit, we must be willing,

if necessary, to surrender all that we have gained so far. There is no room for attachment of any kind, we cannot enter this little boat if we still carry baggage. For this part of the journey we must lose all sense of who or what we are... we leave all things behind, except the yearning that brought us to this state.

As we sail further and further across the Sea of our Inner Being, we leave behind, one by one, like little islands, every identity we have explored, believed in and rejected or lost. Each island we encounter reveals a new facet of the Spiritual that, for a while, seemed like it was all we ever needed. But eventually the glamour fades and we seek beyond that which we have experienced. The hunger that has been planted in our hearts at birth – and took root in the Otherworld - drives us on.

At last, we find ourselves drifting aimlessly in the open sea. There are no more islands. There is only one place left to discover... the place that is, and always has been, the very centre of every spiritual landscape over which we have travelled. Our very yearning has somehow transmuted into the Beloved we longed for. We find that the vastness is not empty. It is filled with Love, emanating from its very core. And because there is *no-thing* in this place, this love is a Love that requires no object to sustain itself. It is One - and all there is - and of itself... Being... Consciousness... Bliss...

From here there is no place new to explore. We have journeyed through the tangled thicket of our hopes, fears, concepts and passions to the inescapable finality of the sweet loss of everything after which we have ever chased ...

...And we have let go... and we have gained Eternity.

### **TRINITY - UNION - THE HEART OF THE WORLD**

Our journey has taken us far. We have known ourselves as children of both the Earth Mother and of the Transcendent Father. We have one final task. We must reconcile this duality and embody it. How can we achieve this? It happens when we bring our invisible treasures back to the threshold we left behind all those journeyings ago. We must accept the challenge to live in all worlds at once, led from the Heart's Core. Then these imperceptible treasures become manifest – in us. Then:-

Our Heart (for now we know there is only one Heart) is the marriage bed of the visible and the invisible faces of The One - of Mother Earth and Father Sky.

Our Heart is the conception of that sacred union.

Our Heart is the womb of our spiritual re-birth.

We become an incarnation of the Divine Child.

Two thousand years ago, these islands were awash with an awareness of the Divine Child. In the Brythonic tongue he was called *Mabon ap Modron* – “Son, son of Mother”. In Gaelic he was *Oenghus* - “The Chosen One”. Beings of Light and Unconditional Love, these divinities were the earliest native mythic depictions of what we now call the Christ Consciousness. Legends carrying the possibility of this level of attainment for human beings abound in all parts of the world. It is both stirring and significant that Druidism was moving over the brink of its own Mythic exploration of the Christ Consciousness at the same period in history as Middle-Eastern scriptures and the mystery traditions of the Mediterranean were finding their fulfilment.

Myth has it that those Druids who wished to journey beyond the realm of the many Gods – to find the place where all Gods become One – called themselves the Companions, or Spouses of God... The Ceile De.

### ***THE “CEILE DE” - THOSE WEDDED TO GOD***

*“Gun tigeadh Solas nan Solas  
dha m’ dhrìdhe doilleir o t’aite.  
Gun tigeadh ais an Spioraid Air mo chridhe...”*  
- *“Come... Light of Lights to my blind heart from thy place.  
Come... Spirit’s wisdom...to my heart.”*

To wish for this is to wish for the anointing – the Christing - of one’s own heart, in the profound recognition that this heart is also the Heart of the world. To attain this is to lose oneself in divine union with whatever enters one’s field of experience in every God-given moment of eternity. To the Ceile De, the holy presence that infuses every part of the world is the Living Christ, alive deep in every human, animal, bird, rock and blade of grass. This mystical insight represents the flowering of centuries of earlier druidical experience and is the natural fulfilment of the Pagan faith, rather than its successor.

As we embody this in the world(s), following in the footsteps of others who have done the same - the Christ-ened ones of the world - we have one final hunger... the longing to beckon and call to all who struggle through their many hungers. We have become no-thing and they have become the all.

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(For Foilan... who washed my feet)**