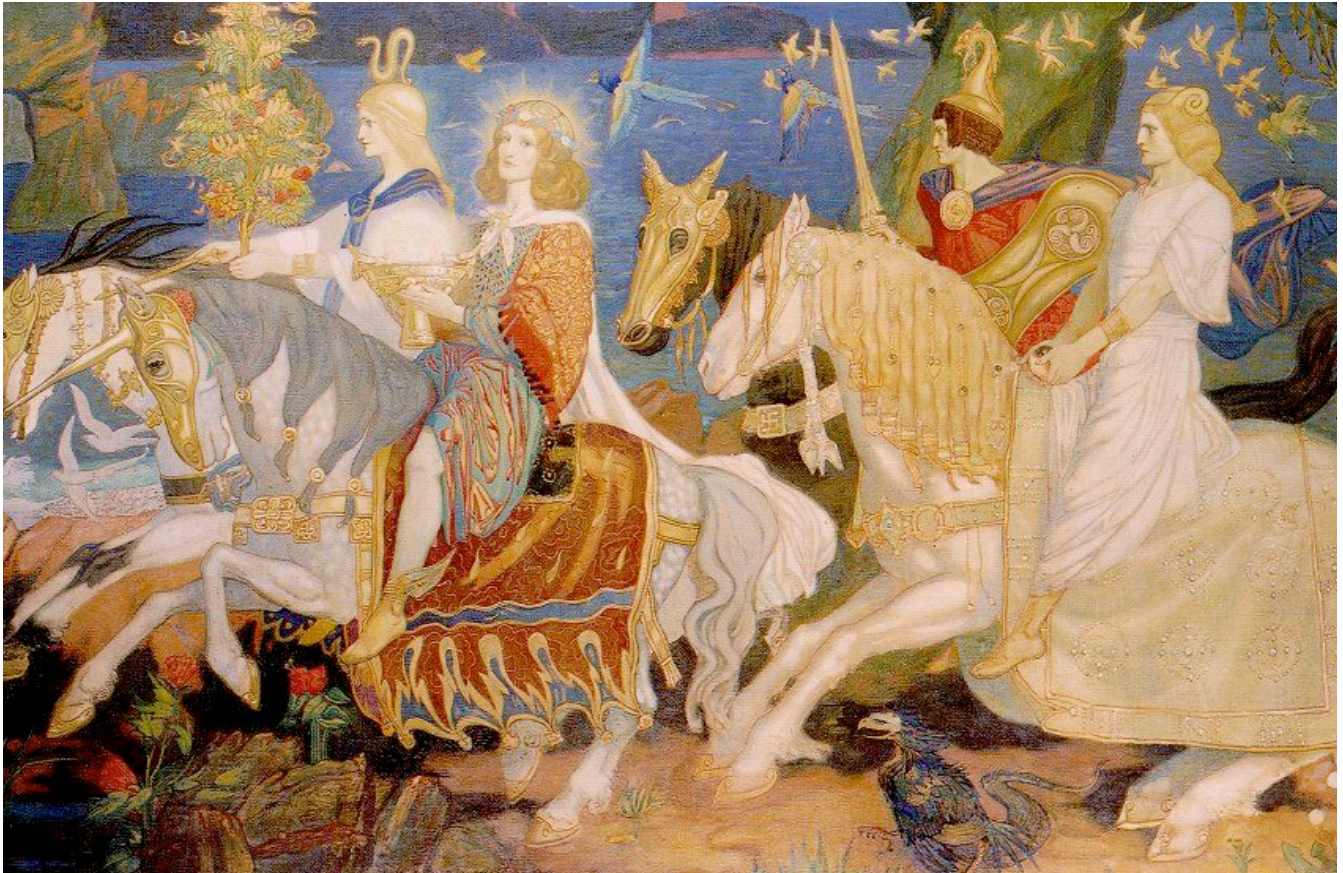


# BECOMING A SHINING ONE

AN ESOTERIC LOOK AT THE CELTIC FAIRY TRADITION



A Brief Study

J Kay MacCormack

Although this is a talk on “fairies,” it will not be your typical presentation of the subject. There are hundreds of books in publication which treat on this diverse topic, ranging from the academic to the new age. Rather than recycle others’ work, I wish to add something *new*. My presentation derives from my strong background (both academic and amateur) in Celtic mythology and history, archetypal psychology, trance, ritual and meditative work, as well as world religion and the esoteric tradition as found in Helena Blavatsky, Alice Bailey and Bruce Lyon’s writings. In other words, this talk is rooted in academic, experiential and intuitive knowledge.

Before we begin, one thing you should keep in mind is that Truth is many-layered. It’s possible for the Fairies to be many truths, many things--perhaps they were a historical people; perhaps they were the hallucinatory spirit guides of a shamanic trance; perhaps they were the ghosts of dead ancestors or a pantheon of ancient pre-Celtic and Celtic gods; perhaps they were elementals or angels, spirits of the land or spirits of place; or maybe they were just stories conjured up by the human imagination. We can’t really know for sure. But because many truths can exist at the same time on different levels, all of these could be true!

My own interpretation is simple and does not preclude any of the above possibilities. The Fair Folk were originally not diminutive little elementals (as the Victorians popularized), but rather Wise Ones, Awakened Ones ... the spiritual guides of their peoples ... and this path is still open to us today. We too can become *aes dana*, Shining Ones, fey.

To elaborate on this premise, we should start with a basic overview of the Fairy Tradition--looking at its history, mythology and psychology.

## Fairy Terms & Etymology

One of the best places to start with any kind of study is to look at the various names and etymology of your subject. The history of a word also contains the history of how that idea evolved. Here are related terminology that would be good to keep in mind:

- “Fairy” - First entered the English language c. 1300 as *fairie*, “enchantment, magic”; derived from Old French *faerie*, “land of fairies, meeting of fairies, enchantment, magic”; derived from *fae* or “fay” from Latin, *fata* (plural) “The Fates”; derived from Proto-Indo-European *\*bha-* “to speak” (related to words like “fame”). The sense of “a supernatural creature” did not enter English until the late 14th century, with perhaps intermediate forms such a *fairie knight* “supernatural or legendary knight.” The diminutive winged beings so-called in children’s stories did not first emerge until the 17th century. <sup>1</sup>

Here we see that fairies were not imagined as little elemental creatures until the 1600s onwards. Much of our Celtic and Continental fairy folklore comes from this time period, where house brownies, garden fairies, and so forth emerged as popular concepts. Instead, the older concept of “fairy” simply means some

---

<sup>1</sup> This etymological entry from <http://www.etymonline.com>

thing/ where/ one that is magical or “other.” The connection to the Fates is also of particular interest, but I will elaborate more on this shortly.

- **“Tuatha de Danann”** - Irish Gaelic. Generally translated as **“People of the Goddess Danu”**; a closer look reveals more nuances. In Old Irish, *tuath* means “people, tribe, nation”; *de* is genitive case of *dia*, “god, goddess, supernatural being, object of worship”; and *Danann* is thought to be derived from *Danu* or *Anu* who is a land goddess (hills were called the “Paps of Anu”, in other words the Irish saw the actual landscape as the contours of the land goddess’ body). Danu is also a water goddess of some sort, and the river Danube’s name is thought to be of Celtic origin.

The Tuatha de Danann are the basis of the Irish Fairy Tradition. They first appear in the *Lebor Gabala Erenn* (“Book of the Invasions of Ireland”) as the fifth group to settle Ireland. In various surviving mythological and folkloric stories about them, the Tuatha were represented as mortal rulers and heroes of an ancient past, but often ascribed with magical powers, special knowledge--where each was able to shapeshift, cast curses or blessings, see into the past or future, etc. This suggests that they were probably pre-Christian deities (and some of them became Christian saints like Saint Brigid). In the stories, the Tuatha de Danann are not seen as entirely human.

Two possible interpretations of this name: the Tuatha de Danann as **“tribe of the goddess Danu”** or **“tribe of the land Danu”** -- either is possible, or perhaps it is both, because the ancient Irish saw their land as a goddess. In my mind, *Danu* or *Anu* was the ancient name of Ireland, before it was named *Eire* (Erin or Ireland) by the Milesians (Iron Age settlers from Spain).

- **“Aes Dana”** - Irish Gaelic. “Dana” here derives from *dan* “art, poetry, gift, skill, fate, destiny.” Thus, the Tuatha de Danann were seen as: **“The Gifted Ones” “The Artful Ones” “The Skillful Ones” “The Fateful Ones”** - or also, **“Gift-givers” “Skill-givers” “Fate-givers”** - and it is interesting how *dan* and *dana* resemble “Danann” in *Tuatha de Danann*.

Three things here. 1) When the Milesians (Celts from Spain) migrated to Ireland around the Iron Age (500 BCE?), supposedly the Tuatha de Danann taught them many arts like healing, smithcraft, poetry, farming, animal husbandry, war, etc. So in the mythology, the Tuatha de Danann were literally gifting humanity with knowledge and skills. 2) This idea of gift-giving may be related to the later traditions of leaving out gifts for the fairies (such as milk, cheese, bread, cake, mead, pretty ribbons) in exchange for blessings (this could be intangible like good health, wealth, or more tangible like in the story of the fairy cobblers who helped a kind shoemaker each night<sup>2</sup>). 3) Notice again the relation between the Fair Folk and fate!

---

<sup>2</sup> That’s not to say that there aren’t also “Little Folk” as the tales speak of--for example, Theosophy and other esoteric groups speak of elementals (who can be tricky), devas and all manner of other beings who make up the literal substance of the world of form. So perhaps the Fairies are of different types--tall Wise Ones (the Seelie Fairies), their shadow counterpart (the Unseelie Fairies) and then the elementals. They would all be “devas” though--just as we are actually devic beings, again according to esoteric traditions--with our consciousness made up of the substance of the Solar devas or angels, and our bodies made up of the substance of the Lunar devas or angels.

- **“Aes Sídhe”** - Irish & Scottish Gaelic. When the human Milesians arrived, a great battle ensued between the Milesians and Tuatha de Danann. Through trickery, the Tuatha de Danann were forced to retreat and live underground in the cairns, burial chambers and tombs of the Neolithic past. These places became known as “sidhe”--and can be found all over the Celtic Isles. *Aes Sidhe* then means “ones of the mounds”--and their underground habitations were considered entrances to the Otherworld, their realm, to the palaces, courts and residences of the Fairy People who will abduct humans if given the chance.

There are a number of “fairy” types who bear this *sidhe* name. The banshee or *bean sidhe* is a “woman of the sidhe”--used to describe the eerie phenomenon of hearing a keening woman before the death of a family member. A *leanan sidhe* is a fairy lover, a very beautiful man or woman who entrances some poor mortal and leads them off to the Otherworld, never to be seen again. *Cat sidhe* are fairy cats. *Cu sidhe* are fairy dogs. The *sluagh sidhe* is the fairy host who rides through the sky and land at Beltaine, Midsummer, Samhain and Midwinter--similar to the Wild Hunt archetype. Another name for the Sidhe was *daoine sidhe*, the people of peace.

The *Aes Sidhe* or *Aes Dana* were called the Fair Folk (in both senses of the meaning; beautiful and also balanced), the Good Folk, the Good Neighbours, or just The Folk out of respect. To call them directly by name was to invoke their gaze and interest. Also, as folk belief and practice attests, the Fair Folk were to be appeased with offerings and careful right conduct to avoid angering or insulting them--for example, not walking through their fields or too near their sidhe mounds, not boasting too much, not being too beautiful, and observing the old customs.

- **“Y Plant Don”** - Moving over to Welsh mythology, we find the same title as “Tuatha de Danann” but this one means, “The Children of Don,” with *Don* being the equivalent to *Danu*. *Y Pedair Cainc o’r Mabinogi* (The Four Branches of the Mabinogi) tell their stories, with many parallels between Irish and Welsh deities--but the stories are different.
- **“Y Tylwyth Teg”** - this Welsh term did not emerge until the 17th century or so, according to Welsh historian WJ Gruffudd. It is a literal translation of “Fair Family,” “Fair Tribe,” or “Fair Folk.” *Teg* here in Welsh does not mean the “beautiful” connotation of “fair” but literally balanced “fair” such as in *chwarae teg* (“fair play”). This title matches well with the Gaelic Fairy Traditions.
- **“Bendith y Mamau”** - WJ Gruffudd found this term being used in South Wales, and it translates to “The Mothers’ Blessing.” Now this is particularly interesting because there are a couple possibilities. The “mothers” here could perhaps be the ancient goddesses or fairy women attendant at children’s births. Or the term could refer to the spirits of ancestral mothers. Either way, such a title evokes the feminine, earthy, underground spiritual presences of the Fair Folk. But more interestingly, in Greek mythology the Fates were also known as the “Three Mothers,” so this could be another connection between the Fair Folk and the Fates.





### ***Aes Dana: The Shining Ones - Who Are They?***

Having examined all these many names relating to the Fair Folk of Celtic legend, now let us turn to how they have been experientially described. What are they like? Although later folklore describes the Fairy People as little pixies, elves, brownies, goblins, etc.--this is not how they were described in the older Irish and Welsh mythologies, nor by the native seers/healers of Ireland, Scotland and Wales. In 1911, W.Y. Evans-Wentz interviewed an anonymous "Irish mystic" in his excellent book *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries*, who described the Fairy People as "Shining Ones" or "Radiant Ones" who burn with a radiant, electrical fire.

*"... those which are opalescent and seem lit up by a light within themselves. ... there was first a dazzle of light, and then I saw this came from the heart of a tall figure with a body apparently shaped out of half transparent or opalescent air, and throughout the body ran a radiant, electrical fire, to which the heart seemed the center. I then thought that I had visions of Aengus, Manannan, Lug, and other famous kings and princes of the Tuatha de Danann ... I now no longer would attribute to any one of them personal identity with particular beings of legend; though I believe that they correspond in a general way to the Tuatha de Danann or ancient Irish gods. I think that amongst the opalescent or Sidhe beings, in the heaven-world, there is an even closer spiritual unity, but also greater individuality."*<sup>3 4</sup>

This description is wonderful. The Fairy People were anciently perceived not as vindictive pixies but rather as tall, beautiful, and awful/terrifying in their power, perfection and radiance. They are the poten-

---

<sup>3</sup>Evans-Wentz, W. Y. *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries*. London: Oxford University Press, 1911. 60.

<sup>4</sup> This is also nearly identical to how I have encountered the Tuatha de Danann and Y Plant Don during trance states. They appear clothed in this warm glowing aura, but it's the kind of glow that you imagine from a very healthy person--every cell and atom of their being is glowing with health, well-being, peace. Even the dark chaotic gods / goddesses of their kind, like the Morrighan--I experience again as glowing, but it is a dark luminosity. I am reminded of the physics concept of matter and dark matter, energy and dark energy. The same here.

tial of everything that humans *could be* in a perfected state. But also, they abide by different rules and laws than ours--a kind of wild law which is aligned with the patterns of the seasons, the flight of birds, the bend of a reed under rain, and the ebb of the tide. They possess the power to bless or to curse, seeing right into the human condition with an amoral, more-than-human wisdom. This description of the Fair Folk is how many mystics, seers, dreamers, poets, and storytellers have encountered them. There is also a lovely old song and poems called, "How Beautiful They Are" which speaks to this:

How beautiful they are,  
The lordly ones  
Who dwell in the hills,  
In the hollow hills.

They have faces like flowers  
And their breath is the wind  
That blows over grass in showers  
Filled with dewy clover.

Their limbs are more white  
Than shafts of moonlight:  
They are more fleet than hound and hare,  
Than the March wind's sweet airs.

They laugh and are glad  
And are terrible:  
When their lances shake and shiver,  
Every green reed quivers.

How beautiful they are,  
The lordly ones  
Who dwell in the hills,  
In the hollow hills.

What does all this mean though? Are the Shining Ones actual spirits? Are they external presences or are they archetypes and aspects of the mind made manifest in the phenomenal (experiential) world? Perhaps, as a friend of mine Jason Kirkey wrote in his book *The Salmon in the Spring: The Ecology of Celtic Spirituality*, "The Sidhe are both internal and external as well as neither internal and external. They transcend this entirely. They are a presence in the land, in myth, and in consciousness. It is in the interaction of place, myth and psyche where they sometimes break forth into form. Ultimately, the only way to come to know them is through direct experience, which may take different forms for different people."<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Kirkey, Jason. *The Salmon in the Spring: The Ecology of Celtic Spirituality*. Danvers, MA: Hiraeth Press.

Patricia Monaghan, a well-known author on Celtic Spirituality, writes about the Sidhe:

*"I am reminded ... of the concept of kami in Japanese Shinto. For kami, although often translated as "gods" and "goddesses" means nothing so simple or personified. The best translation of the word is "outstanding." It describes moments and places and myths and beings in which divine presence makes itself felt. The blossoming of cherry trees, a sharp outcropping of rock, the sun bursting through the clouds: these are kami because they remind us of the order--the divinity--into which we are born. In Ireland, similarly, the goddess is experienced as a hierophany, a breaking through, of divine power into our human consciousness, with specific natural settings and moments as the medium of communication."*<sup>6</sup>

Terrence McKenna, who is well known for his research into the science of consciousness, shamanism and hallucinogens writes:

*It is a belief in an invisible co-present dimension in which the transformed souls of the ancient dead, able to interact with humans who wander into the lonely enchanted landscapes that seem partial doorways between the fairy world and our own ... a cosmos where the diminutive souls of the dead and vanished races coexist invisibly with our own, a world of haunting elfin music that is outside of time, for one day spent in the land of the Sidhe is sufficient for the great wheel of many centuries to turn in the ordinary world.*<sup>7</sup>

So yes, the *Aes Dana* may be the spirits of ancestors and the dead, or an ancient pantheon, the guardians of places, or personifications of the land. But whatever they are or are not, whether they are hallucinations of the mystic, insane and dreamer, or actual corporeal beings ... it doesn't matter. We do not have to pin them down to a categorical answer. Reality is an ever-shifting creature, and who's to say what is real and what's not?

## Entering the Sidhe-Mound

What many people don't realize is that we can still meet them and engage with their reality today. These Deathless Ones, the Ever-Living Ones (another name for the Fair Folk) emerge from the soul of the land and places--from the Otherworld, this co-present dimension of reality, and from the depths of our unconscious.

What is this Otherworld I speak of though? What is the Fairy Realm? *Yng Gymraeg*, in Welsh, the name for the Otherworld is "Annwn" (medieval, *Annwfn*) which *Mabinogi* translator Sioned Davies says breaks down into an "inner" and *dwfn* "world." In other words, the Otherworld of our ancestors was the **World Within, the Inner Realms, the Deep**--a place magical and different, but only subtly so--for in the stories it is often very like our own homes and lands, but experienced with heightened sensation and emotion. One only need listen to heroic journey stories to know what I mean. Taking this a step further, the Otherworld

---

<sup>6</sup> Monaghan, Patricia. *The Red Haired Girl from the Bog: The Landscape of Celtic Myth and Spirit*. Novato: New World Library, 2003. 9-10.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Evans-Wentz, W. Y. *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries*. New York: Citadel Books, 1990 (reprint), ii.

then is not so much a place of difference or otherness, but a slower, deeper current of *reality* and *memory* that runs through all places, mingling together past, present and future as seamlessly as a dream. Indeed, perhaps this reality is what the Aborigines in Australia refer to as the Dreamtime?<sup>8</sup>

Another way of saying it, this world, our dimension of reality that we are aware of in our conscious waking lives is the World Without, the world as manifested from the deep potential of the Otherworld, the World Within. John Moriarty, an Irish philosopher and mystic, called it the “immaculate dimension” of the land. Ken Wilber though I think sums it up best:

*“Thus in transformation (or self-transcendence), whole new worlds of translation disclose themselves. These new worlds are not physically located someplace else; they exist simply as a deeper perception (or deeper registration) of the available stimuli in this world. They appear to be--and might as well be--“other worlds” ... but these “other worlds” disclose themselves, they become this worldly--via transformation and self-transcendence.”<sup>9</sup>*

What Wilber speaks of is the evolution of consciousness. As we expand our identity and consciousness, as we let go of the too-small ego and concrete mind, we discover whole new dimensions of This World opening up to us. We find colours to be more brilliant, light to be more electric, movement to be more vivid, and earth to be more lush. This is a lived, actual experience. It is a way of Seeing. I am not speaking in metaphor but in literal human experience. The Fairy Realm or Otherworld of Celtic mythology is in essence--*Presence*. It is the luminous light of divinity and numinosity (mystery) which emerges from the heart of all things and beings. When we can see with this Second Sight, with the enlightened eye, the world radiates with the electric hum and pulse of the One Life that is in all. And we find that we too are divine and radiant.

The Sidhe-mounds of Celtic mythology and landscape then are a potent symbol. They are darkness. They are death, the tomb, as well as the womb and reincarnation. They represent the pre-conscious and transcended conscious dimensions of the cosmos. They also represent matter, the world of form, and our actual bodies.

Now we come to it! What if I told you that we are also the Shining Ones? What do I mean by that?

---

<sup>8</sup> When I am in the “Celtic” lands, I find it easiest to contact the Shining Ones at the fairy hills or Sidhe mounds--although I have also found any part of the landscape that is “liminal” or betwixt two areas--like a river or old spring. It is possible to contact them anywhere in the world though--and each land has their own Shining Ones. In fact, if you look at world mythology, *most* of them, be it Africa, South America, Northern Europe, the Mediterranean and Mesopotamia, or Asia--they all have a similar story of this phenomenon: shining wise beings who teach humans the arts and skills of civilization. Even the Apocrypha Bible has this story--where the Sons of God (angels) fell in love with the Daughters of Men, married them, and taught humanity the arts of music, husbandry, pottery, etc.

<sup>9</sup> Wilber, Ken. *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution*. Rev. Ed. Boston: Shamballa Publications, 2001. 81.



## The Druids as *Aes Dana*

To understand this mystery of ourselves, we must look at who the Druids were. Knowledge was the primary societal function of the Druids. In Welsh mythology, Gwydion is the archetypal Druid (note the 'wyd' or 'vid' in his name) and his name translates as 'Divine Knower'. It wasn't just that the Druids were the educated elite either. Instead, I suggest that the Druids valued knowledge above all else. To bring this home, I would compare their love of knowledge to the traditions of Buddhism, Platonism and specifically *jnana yoga*, where knowledge is freedom—where the removal of ignorance brings release from *samsara*.

Knowledge (shifting our awareness to ever greater dimensions of knowing, identity, experience, from the personal to the cosmic) in the Eastern sense is the path to enlightenment. We don't think of the Celts having any philosophies akin to enlightenment, but I believe they did. Celtic enlightenment is to become *aes dana*, to become a Shining One. 'Aes dana' (pronounced 'ash DAH-nah') was a term not only applied to the Fair Folk or Tuatha de Danann *but also to the Druids!* And the Druids, through various trance or meditative practices, could enter the Otherworld, this other layer of reality, and have access to the hidden Shining Ones for wisdom, prophecy, and healing. Druidic knowledge in some of the old Irish stories is claimed to have been derived from the Fair Folk—that the Tuatha de Danann taught humans all their wisdom and knowledge. Also, important for us today, a couple different ancient Irish stories show that the Fair Folk could be contacted again when knowledge had been lost to living memory.

The Druids were called *aes dana* not only because they were indeed gifted or skilled, but because they had been gifted with knowledge from the Aes Dana (in capital letters) or Fair Folk. But what does all this have to do with enlightenment? As we have been discussing so far, this means that the Fair Folk can be interpreted as the actual and archetypal enlightened beings hidden in deeper, higher layers of reality and the Druids were their disciples and initiates. Essentially, druids were Fair Folk or Shining Ones in training.<sup>10</sup>

Because the Otherworld is the subtle realms of This World—and because the Shining Ones are the wisdom-keepers who dwell on these ever living, ever young inner planes, it is possible for us to re-awaken this ancient, yet new *path of presence*. The Druids of Today are remembering what it means to be a Shining One.

Now I will tell you what that means for me, experientially and intuitively.

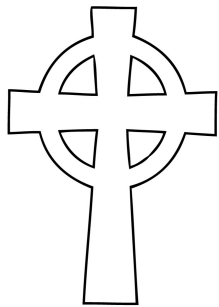
## Becoming Aes Dana: On Fire with Life, Realizing Our Potential

---

<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the descriptions of the things that the Tuatha de Danann could do also suggests that they too were magicians or druids. So perhaps they were these Celtic islands' first druids—and passed on their knowledge to the next wave of human settlers (the Milesians, in the old stories). I also think that the connection between snakes, druids and the Tuatha is interesting, especially when you consider that snakes, serpents and dragons symbolize ancient wisdom, often the knowledge of power, life-energy, in the body (much like kundalini is spoken of as a curled "serpent" in the base of the spine). Saint Patrick drove the snakes out of Ireland (the druids). And at different Celtic fire festivals, like Imbolc, snakes were said to come out of the sidhe-hills. Again, is this a connection between snakes/Fair Folk and their sacred hill-forts and fairy mounds?

For me, becoming a Shining One is not a cutesy metaphor. It is a reality, rooted in the dual process of enlightenment and embodiment. To become a Shining One is to reveal our refined potential as a human being. For me, it means radically awakening to our *buddha* nature, our wildest Self. When we radically awaken *where we are*, we discover that Earth is already Eden, already the Fairy Realm, from the soil of the ground, to the rocks, mountains, rivers, animals and trees. We see that our bodies, our minds, emotions, physicality and sexuality are already divine, and through this *non-dual* realization, we see how all beings, including ourselves, radiate a unique frequency of Life. This unique frequency, our *full presence*, is our gift to the world (remember, *Aes Dana* means “gifted one”!). Life itself is the One Living Presence at the heart of everything. As we awaken to this One Living Presence, then the schism between spirit and matter is healed, and all kingdoms and grades of matter and consciousness are revealed as radically divine. I speak of not only a head knowledge, but a heart knowledge, a body knowledge, a lived and experiential reality of knowing, feeling, breathing and embodying this realization of Oneness and Presence.

The body, emotions, thoughts and soul are already God / Goddess shining though as such. But it is the role of awakening (through enlightenment and embodiment) to build and manifest this wholeness and the presence of divinity in all dimensions. Like a seed already holds within it the potential for a perfected oak tree, we must go through the stages of unfoldment to express this wholeness.



The *Aes Sidhe* or *Aes Dana* represent this potential and power that we have inherently within each one of us. They represent a way of *being in the world*. It is radical. It is electric. It is the cosmos manifesting through us with a mighty roar of freedom, wildness and joy.

And therefore, perhaps that is what the Fair Folk were once upon a time--perhaps they were and are *the enlightened ones* who inhabit the subtle and inner dimensions of reality. They are human like us--but also something more. They awoke to greater depths and heights of consciousness and beckon for us to join them. They point the way to our human evolution. Suddenly, the connotation of the *Aes Dana* with “fate” takes on a new meaning. They represent our fate, what we are in the process of becoming--and they live in the sidhe-mounds, in the world of potential, after death and before birth.

Becoming an Ever Living One means to be completely alive to the fullest capacity, and to transmit Life to everyone around you. This is the deeper meaning of *shining* or *radiating*: shining and radiating Life, energy, power, the vibration of the cosmos manifesting through you.

So I keep talking about all of this as an actual lived experience. But how do we achieve this then? What can we do day by day? Well, first of all, all I have are intuitive hypotheses--but these hypotheses are based on what I have learned from world spirituality and also experientially through meditation, trance work, and other body practices. Ultimately, you must carve your own path, peculiar to you, in order to manifest your divine gifts and destiny.

I envision the path as three-fold but also like a Celtic Cross. There is the upward path through the mind, the downward path through the body, and the center horizon path through the heart. And once these three threads are brought together, the Circle of Life, of enlightened consciousness, the halo or aura of light breaks forth through us as the fourth element, the child of these three--that is, Presence, which is also Power.

## 1. Upward Path: Through the Mind

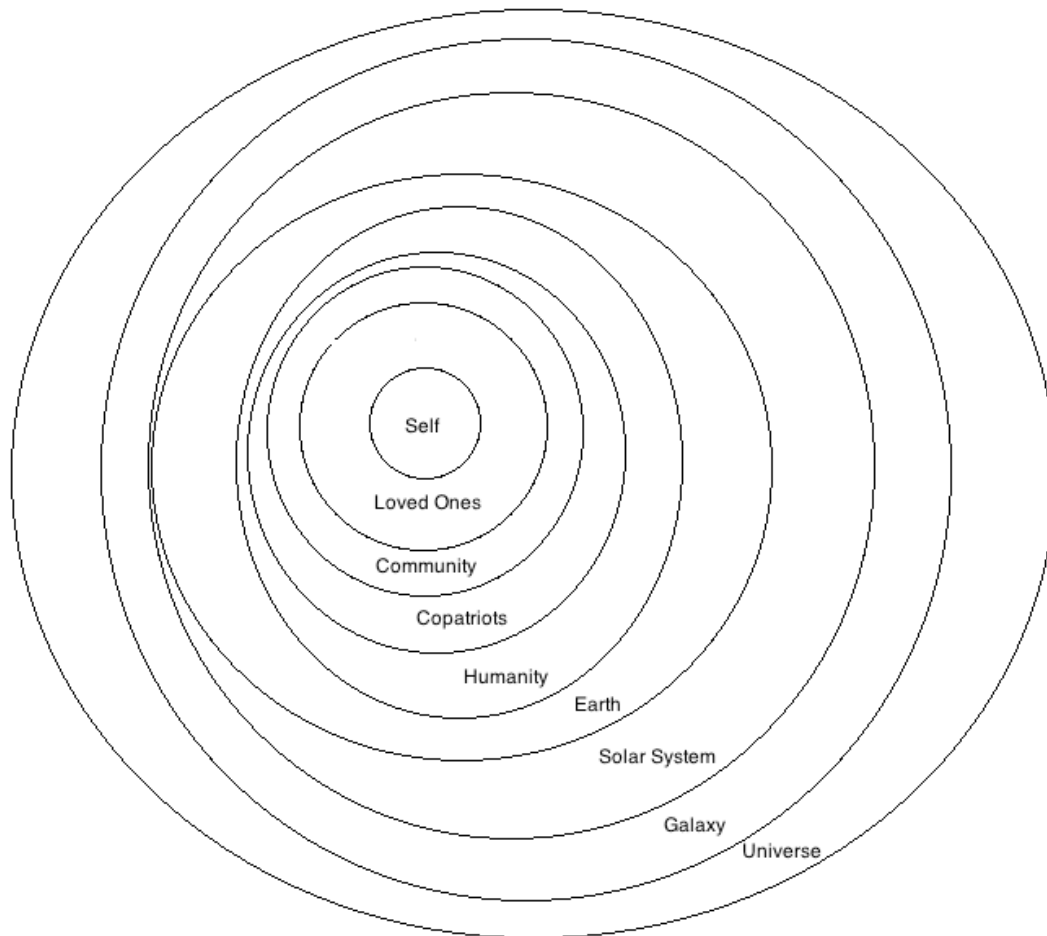
The journey begins with gaining knowledge. After sleepwalking in the world around us, we begin to sit up and pay attention a little deeper. We enter fully into the Life of the Mind. Here, we develop our mental capacity to discern and learn. The path through the Mind doesn't necessarily mean that we are academics or geniuses, but it does mean that we learn to question the world within and around us, that we are dissatisfied with the pat, easy answers we were spoonfed. We become disillusioned with the old ideas and forms. Here, we develop the capacity for abstract thought, for a symbolic intuitive consciousness that engages with the archetypes and energies that exist in the exterior and interior of the Self. Many practices and things can help with this--for example: reading, journaling, and meditation (where we learn to still the babbling mind and concentrate)--although just about anything can feed a hungry mind, from films to people-watching to every single experience, thought, feeling and impulse that arises.

In the esoteric traditions, we talk about the fires of *manas*, the higher mind, which burn bright and were lit in early evolving man by the solar angels (and thus, human "consciousness" with our capacity for language, abstract thought, and self-awareness was born). *Agni*, which means "divine fire," is a symbol commonly used for Spirit, for the substance of the universe. This is not just a metaphor. The universe, when it came into being at the "big bang" was actually a giant conflagration of energy. Everything burned. And although within the time-space continuum, we do not perceive the universe to be on fire, it still burns at another level--for time and space do not absolutely exist (they are only relative). Even the Bible says, "Our God is a consuming fire." This speaks of God, the Cosmos. And as we push up ever more through the individual mind into greater identities of mind, the more we open ourselves up to this raw, powerful Cosmic Fire, which is Life-energy - the electromagnetic spectrum.

Learn then to expand your mind. Shift your thinking from just ego-centric self-absorption. Through contemplation and active service to others, learn to shift your mental identity from focusing just on yourself to also including others. Think of the mind as a series of concentric circles, with our identity placed in each. Today in the modern age, thanks to technology, we are beginning to identify with humanity as a whole and with the Earth and her ecosystems and many other inhabitants besides humans. But we are also only just beginning to look out beyond our planet, into the solar system, the galaxy and the wider universe.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> If you are interested in this as a spiritual evolutionary process, you might be interested in Bruce Lyon's book *Occult Cosmology* which can be read for free online (along with a number of other excellent books) at our Shamballa School website: [http://www.shamballaschool.org/?page\\_id=462](http://www.shamballaschool.org/?page_id=462)



The importance of the upward path is that it pushes our boundaries, expands our consciousness and levels of awareness so that it can hold space for ever deeper and greater expressions of divinity. If we carry this path to its proper end, “enlightenment” occurs.

To become *Aes Dana* means opening up our minds to the fire of consciousness and the fire of the cosmos--and to let it burn through us with passion, inspiration and power. Interestingly, the ancient Celts understood this. Their seer-poets, akin to shamans, were said to possess *imbas*, that is a “fire in the head” where the mind was seen as a cauldron into which divine inspiration was poured and burned with alchemical creativity.<sup>12</sup> This is still a real experience--to feel the mind on fire while in the act of creation. It burns through you and until you manifest or express that creativity, it will not stop feeding on you.

To become *Aes Dana* means to be on fire. One possible translation of “shaman” is *one who is on fire*. Therefore, to become *Aes Dana* is to become a shaman, one who walks between realms, between This World and Otherworld, and with the eyes of non-dual perception, one who sees *and experiences* everything as One Life, one reality--full of numinous presences, voices, and beings.

---

<sup>12</sup> In fact, of all the elements, the Celts were most attuned with that of Fire. They built their round houses with the hearth (heart!) at the centre. All their sacred festivals involved the use of fire (Imbolc, Beltaine, Lughnasadh, Samhain) but also the older festivals like Midsummer and Midwinter are bonfire festivals. And in Ireland, one of their most popular goddesses, Brighid, had a fire shrine with priestesses in Kildaire who tended her fire, day by day.



## 2. Downward Path: Through the Body

But all this expansion of awareness and identity is not complete without going down deep into the body too. Enlightenment is meaningless without embodiment. We are not here to escape life and incarnation, but rather to fully embrace and embody it. The question on this path is--how can I be fully human? What does it mean to be wild, to be divine presence, god/goddess incarnate on the earth at *this time*, and in *this place*?

Today, in an age where mental intelligence and consciousness is valued over the body, there is a lot of healing work for us to do with our bodies. Through the course of human development from birth until adult, we acquire numerous areas of pain and suffering in our bodies and minds. We are not always true to ourselves and our needs. We each have shadows and inner demons. Perhaps we have also undergone trauma. The result is that our bodies carry an enormous amount of grief, abandonment, anger, longing and a sense of betrayal.

The body possesses great power and the will to survive and love. It is the seat of the senses, of our desires and sexuality. We feel the heat of longing, the burn of passion, and the shiver of fear. Our nervous systems are wired for electro-chemical "fire" to pass through to all regions of our body and carry the tingle of Life there. There is *chi* (as the Chinese call it) or *mana* (as the Pacific peoples call it) or the life-force inherent in matter, in physical form. In the base of our body, we are told that kundalini resides coiled up like a serpent, awaiting release.

Kundalini here is an important point. As we work with the fires of the body *as well as* the fires of the mind, then kundalini begins to uncoil from the base of the spine and flow up, orgasmically, through the heart and crown. In other words, when spiritual realization and its dynamic power are experienced *as the body and its energy*, then we can speak of kundalini awakening. And its results are to transform our subtle body, chakras, nadis, and other aspects of the psycho-physiological self. "Kundalini is not simply an energy like electricity – it has wisdom, love and even conscious presence within it."

But for most of humanity, kundalini is "asleep" or dormant. Part of this may be because there is so much work humanity needs to do with the mind-body before it can be a fit enough container to hold this powerful release of kundalini. So often though, we ignore our animal selves and shut down our senses--because either it is too overwhelming or painful--or because we are too busy on the path of "mind" in order to stop and pay attention. Then we wonder why we become ill and have emotional, sexual and social issues. These are all related to a mind/body problem.

That's why today, a greater emphasis and awareness has emerged in humanity around the body. We find people becoming increasingly interested in earth spirituality and ecology, shamanism, yoga, exercise, sex therapy and sacred sexuality, ritual, and other activities that aim at getting us "back" in our bodies, rooted in the earth and connected to the living, animate world and its existing wholeness.

Another thing we can do is a form of mindfulness--learning to simply BE and identify fully with ourselves as bodies. This is a powerful experience when we can learn to let go of our expectations and demands on the body, and simply be present.

The story of the Tuatha de Danann entering the Sidhe mounds is also a parable for human incarnation. As the human soul (in esoteric literature, relating to the Solar and Lunar Angels that we are) incarnates, we incarnate or go down into matter, into the "land" or body.

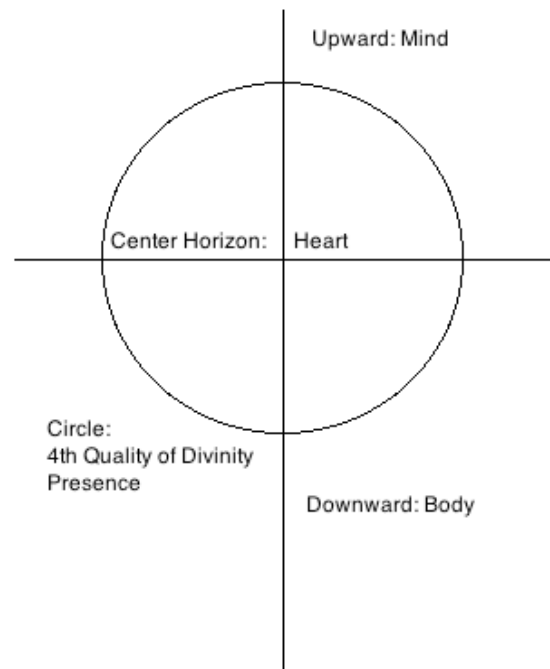
And if the Tuatha de Danann are to be found in the land, in the Sidhe mounds, then what a beautiful symbol for the necessity upon us, that we *sink our minds back into the land, back into the body*, to discover our inherent buddha-nature of awakened Life.

**The Celtic Cross** has many layers of meaning to it. This is just my own utilisation of this sacred symbol.

Notice the **vertical path is mind and body** (because actually, mind-body is nondual, even though we treat it as two different paths sometimes). Imagine it also as a time-space continuum.

The **horizontal path is the Heart** because it can be experienced at any point in the Now of the vertical path. The Heart also is what cuts through or gets to the "heart" or core, no matter how developed or undeveloped you are on the vertical path.

Then, the **Circle of Life, of Presence**, is what emerges from the interaction of the vertical and horizontal axes. This is like the aura or halo that we see in Christian iconography -- it is the presence of divinity, of radiance, of love-wisdom and peace.



### 3. Center Path: Through the Heart

The third path, which cuts like lightning through the centre of all layers of our being, consciousness, and evolution -- is the path of the Heart. I am sure many of you are familiar (to some degree or another) with the concept of the body's seven chakras. Well, if you count up four from the base chakra or down four from the crown chakra, the exact centre of the body's energy systems is the Heart. Thus, the Heart is like a bridge, between the lower and higher, between the fires of sexual, material creativity and the fires of abstract, mental creativity.

Presence is non-dual. The "goal" of experience is to dissolve the boundaries of our minds until we are permeable, until all dualities fall away (although we can still perceive dichotomies) -- where inner and outer, macrocosmic and microcosmic, self and other, light and dark, mind and body, god and devil -- are

no longer perceived and experienced as at odds or war, but rather as myriad facets of the Self, the One.<sup>13</sup> In this place of full embodied Presence, there is only Living and Being. We do not have to “attain” anything or “be” anything other than what/who/where we are. And the best thing is that this is open for *anyone* to experience NOW, moment by moment.

It is through the Heart that we can be fully present. It is through the Heart that the holy communion occurs, this communion of inner and outer, higher and lower. And it is through the Heart that the *kundalini* in the base of the spine rises up and the *agni* fire of the cosmos rushes down, meeting, mingling, merging and marrying in the Temple of the Heart. Then and only then, can we become transfigured, radioactive, ever more on fire with Life incarnate through us. We discover that we are indeed *Aes Dana*, gods and goddesses, the wise ancestors and druids, the buddhas and Christs. We always *were* that, but now through this process of identification and embodiment, we have brought forth that Potential into the world, fully manifest—a power, radiance and glory the like which has never been seen before.

#### 4. The Circle of Life

This then is the Circle on the Celtic Cross, the Circle of Life—the emergent 4th quality: divinity, presence, awakens, pure awareness. Christ consciousness some might call it—that is, Emmanuel: God with Us, God as Us, God is Us. God, the Cosmos, Life, incarnate and walking on earth. And this emerges through the Heart.

One of the other powers of the Heart is that it brings together and *synthesizes* the different depths or levels of life force into relation with one another where they can emerge as One. What do I mean by this? Well, there is One Life, but it expresses itself at different levels or depths. In an overly simplistic way, we could talk about the world of matter, the world of consciousness and the world of spirit (remember, these are all in a nondual sense, actually one unified reality). But when we, say, go take a walk out on the mountainside, there are these three levels of reality co-existing -- and the material world that you can see with your eyes is impregnated with the Life of Matter, but then also there is the “inner” world which embodies the Life of Consciousness which is experienced as radiant, brilliant solar light of love and wisdom, which pours through the material level and transmits that radiance through the world of form. Then finally there is the Life of Spirit, the dark lightning seed, which is the electric cosmic fire I spoke of earlier--and it brings with it identification with all dimensions and levels of the cosmos, and the power and will, the thrill and pulse of that universal Being and Life.

---

<sup>13</sup> Again, this is not a metaphor. You really do begin to start experiencing the world in a radically different way. For myself, I have had tastes of this. Sometimes, when interacting with people or in my garden or out on a hike, I find my awareness shifts and it's as though I can see that person, plant or mountain as a unique face of One Substance, and I am also of that same essence--and so we are, as this One Life, communicating and interacting with it Self. It is very beautiful to behold--and my senses do become sharper, like I am listening to something deeper unfolding around, in and through me.

What humanity has before us is something very special. Remembering the Irish mystic's vision of opalescent, radiant beings--in esoteric terms, we would say that they were expressing through etheric or astral bodies. But for humanity, our task is to bring that level of awakesness, that level of radiant energy down into the physical realm. This is the future of humanity. We will not just be radiant ethereal or astral beings, but literally radiant physical beings--a new kind of Shining Ones, a new kind of *Aes Dana*. Our actual flesh and substance, cells and atoms of the body will pulse with this Light and Life of God / Divinity / Presence, transmitting wisdom, love, and purpose into the world. And the beautiful thing about this is that Life calls to Life, so as one of us begins to transmit and stand in this place of power, it calls forth the same level of life and purpose in another--until it is a domino effect.

Let the Life of Spirit radiate from every cell and atom of your Being!!! Let your Self free!! Feel the roar of your divinity awaken and be FULLY PRESENT. Claim your power. You were born to be *you*, to be fully present, alive--and that is the greatest Gift you can give back to the world. That is how you too can be a Gifted One, *Aes Dana*.

"The goal of life is not to possess power but to radiate it." - Henry Miller

"True power is not an exchange of authority but the affirmation and revelation of essential Identity" - Bruce Lyon, in *Working With The Will*

The Shining Ones, the Radioactive Ones, are us and we have covered ourselves in earth/flesh - to resurrect the Dead into Life.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, do not be afraid then to BURN! Do not be afraid to live fully from your Heart.

### Heart Identification Meditation

(via Bruce Lyon & the Shamballa School)<sup>15</sup>

- **Centre in the Heart.** Do not attempt to raise your consciousness or change your ordinary resting state of awareness in any way. Simply focus on the breath and rest in the heart. This meditation does not so much employ the consciousness or the imagination. It is a sensing process using the sentience of the heart to feel into what actually is present.
- **Identify with your personal heart and feel the connections you have to the world**—to specific people and places and activities. Feel your personal love and heart-desire. Feel the way your heart goes out to

---

<sup>14</sup> I speak here in the metaphor of Christ, who after his crucifixion, descended down into "hell" (the dark parts of the Self that are trapped and suffering), into what could be considered esoterically "dead" on one level (perhaps alive as matter, but maybe not alive as consciousness or spirit). Then there, he resurrects, brings this dead back to Life, back to abundant Life, not just as matter, but as consciousness and spirit. This is why he then could appear in a "glorified" body, where he too like the *Aes Dana* radiated and glowed.

<sup>15</sup> We do this as a group each Sunday. It is one of the most powerful group practices I have ever done.



family, friends and lovers. Also sense the way those you may have a special responsibility for—such as children, animals etc—rest in your heart.

- *Allow yourself to go deeper and identify with the Christ or soul principle of transpersonal Love.* Identify with and as the source of that love which you may have had awakened by an inner or outer teacher. Feel that love opening and radiating outwards to all beings and forms including those lives, which make up your own nature and those others with whom you have a specific soul connection. As you allow yourself to move deeper into the heart notice how the sphere expands to include the causal body and also down through the base chakra into the earth. Notice your willingness to have others enter your heart and for the love that is moving through you to become present in the heart of all others.

- *Now deepen again to the level of the monad (your spirit) and feel into the love of the spirit aspect.* This is a deeply sacrificial love that expresses itself in the will to endure for the sake of the liberation of others. This love rests on the foundation of the fire of being and the inherent identification with the principle of freedom. Identifying with this love, sense how the sphere of the heart opens to include the core of the Earth, the heart of the sun and the galactic centre. Notice how naturally kundalini flows when it is not being repressed. Taste the experience of holding the space for the evolution of a planet with all its kingdoms and life forms. Sense the earth in your heart and your heart in the earth. Notice your deep longing for the freedom you experience to be experienced by all beings in your sphere of influence. Taste the experience of being in the centre of a galaxy holding the space for the evolution of consciousness in billions of systems.

- *Now deepen again to the level of the universal Self.* Surrender into being one with the heart that contains the universe within it. This love rests as pure presence and peace accepting and blessing the perfection of everything that arises. Notice how this love effortlessly contains the other levels of self and the other expressions of loving. Within the one great heart of perfection arises centres of pure being and spiritual virility like galaxies which contain countless systems where consciousness is evolving and liberating itself.

- *Maintaining your identification with the One Great Heart, re-enter the sphere of your spiritual responsibility and then the sphere of transpersonal loving and then the personal sphere of your heart.* In this way the saving force you essentially are brings all levels into integration and synthesis. The Avatar of the Presence of Divinity arrives in the midst of your personal sphere, reaches out and strokes the tabby on your knee.