**EARTH-CROÍ – STEP FIVE – DÁN.**

Dán means **YOUR GIFT, YOUR SKILL OR YOUR POETRY.**

In ancient Ireland people knew their place in society – not by wealth or connections – but by their gift, their skill, their talent – their DÁN.

This is such a beautiful perspective for our lives. We’re here to become **fully ourselves** – and we do that by living our Dán.

How do you find your Dán?

 Ask yourself this question – *what is it that makes me most passionate* *about life?*

Some people say – ‘I’m not a passionate person’ – but even these people light up when certain topics and experiences are mentioned. This light-bulb moment is the red flag to your Dán, your giftedness and your reason for being here. It reminds me of words spoken by the amazing Albuquerque artist, Meinrad Craighead, “If I didn’t paint, I wouldn’t know where I am in the world.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

I remember many years ago, watching the film KUNDUN about the life of the Dalai Lama. The film showed the ritual process of choosing the new Dalai Lama. The young boy was shown particular objects that had belonged to former (deceased) Dalai Lamas in order to see if he recognised them. This is because Tibetan Buddhism believes that we are all reincarnated souls who carry with us memories of past lives. Whether or not you believe in reincarnation, it is true that we all carry memories in our DNA and those ancient memories also hold gateways to our own giftedness. It’s as if DÁN and DNA are interconnected soul-wisdom. So life will continually present us with objects and experiences which will trigger those ancient DNA memories. And so - it’s as you choose those that trigger your heart’s well-being and joy – those that speak to your ancient soul’s memory – that you gradually become your authentic self, entering fully into the power of your Dán.

However, there are many aspects of life in this world that may inhibit us from becoming completely our authentic selves. Some examples are limitations that are placed upon us by gender expectations, religion, family and social ‘norms’, and also our own fears about failure, poverty, rejection etc.

It takes great courage to step fully onto the path of authenticity and be yourself, irrespective of such heavy obstacles, which is why some have called this ‘journey to Dán’ – the Heroic Journey, because often, especially in the world we live in which is so out of balance with the earth, it requires the heart of the warrior.

In the Irish mythological cycle there’s a story about Lugh, the God of light, arriving at Tara, the royal court of Ireland. The gatekeepers endlessly question him about his gifts and his identity. In response Lugh lists his skills and talents and tenaciously answers their endless questions. He’s determined to enter into Tara. In the end he is deemed worthy of admission, not only because he is the multi-talented ‘samildánach’ – but also because of his courage and determination. Like Lugh of the ancient story, all of us are beings of light on this earth – and especially when we acknowledge and practice our Dán – the particular skills and talents each of us have. Our courage and authenticity brings healing and strength, not only to ourselves, but to all those we encounter in our lives.

It may even be that your journey will also reveal **a new name** expressing deeper aspects of your Dán Identity?

In her life changing book, *The Artist’s Way*, Julia Cameron says – *Creativity is the natural order of life.* *Life is energy, pure creative energy..…it is spiritual chiropractic… [through which] we achieve alignment with the creative power of the universe.’*

This is the sacred energy of Neart – the energy that flows through all life. And when we practice our Dán, we unblock obstacles to the free-flow of that life energy in body, mind and spirit.

In whatever way your creativity expresses itself, it is the path to your authentic self and to a more vibrant approach to living life. You don’t need to be an ‘expert’ or have a Master’s Degree or a Doctorate. Dán is an ancient word that holds deep meaning – it’s a path to the riches of your own giftedness – we only need to connect with what is already within us. You bring a unique gift to the world!

**How to practice Dán**

1. Recollect your childhood. What were the things you enjoyed doing as a child? The stuff that made you feel really excited? Perhaps there were things you would love to have done but for some reason weren’t able to? Yet it’s a sign of something deep inside you that you truly wished for! Re-explore your childhood passions…
2. Find an evening class or an on-line class – some way of practising your creativity. See where it leads you.
3. Listen to your dreams. They will connect you with what your heart is trying to tell you…
4. Find an outward symbol of your Dan. It could be something you wear or make or a visual image or a totem ornament or piece of art or jewellery. Wear it or place it in a prominent place to remind yourself every day about the power of your authentic and beautiful self.
5. Choose a word/words that represent your creative power. For example, my words are ARTIST-WEAVER. Fill in the blank with whatever comes to mind/heart easily…..

I AM \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Look at yourself in the mirror, and say those words of power….

1. From the film about her life, *Praying With Images,* available on her website [www.meinradcraighead.com](http://www.meinradcraighead.com) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)