**EARTH-CROÍ – STEP SEVEN – TURAS-D’ANAM.**

Turas-d’Anam means **SOUL-JOURNEY.**

Life is a journey – we are on the move – continually evolving towards being fully ourselves. I love this concept of Turas d’Anam because it’s an approach to spirituality that’s less about commandments carved into stone for all time – and more about life as an ever-changing, experiential journey. I often think that this approach to soul-journey could also be called NOMADIC SPIRITUALITY – and for our ancient Irish ancestors Turas-d’Anam is represented in the wonderful mythological journey stories known as Immram.

For example, there’s a wonderful Immram story called ‘The Voyage of Bran’ which begins on the first day of the month of May. That day in the Celtic calendar is particularly powerful because it’s the beginning of Bealtaine, the summer of the year. Bran is at a Bealtaine gathering of musicians and poets (a creative party!) – and he leaves the noisy crowd to be alone for a while.

*Suddenly at his back he heard music….a music stranger and sweeter than anything he had ever heard….he realised he was listening to the music of the Sidhe..[[1]](#footnote-1)*

So here we have the beginning of a great soul journey for Bran, who is brave enough to leave the usual and the familiar to step out on his own. In the silence of aloneness he’s able to hear the Song of the Otherworld, which sort of tip-toes up to him, and in that moment he enters through a portal into a new way of being which changes him forever.

This is what I call the MAGIC of Turas d’Anam because it’s as we begin to see, with our inner eye, that we begin to experience the magic of the soul in all things – even the stuff that might seem routine, familiar or downright dull!

Our ancestors didn’t have easy lives. Let’s face it, they lived in dark, damp and cold places with few comforts and less luxuries. They had no anti-biotics or other medical treatments we now take for granted and their life expectancy was short. For that reason they knew the rhythms of Nature intimately – indeed their lives depended on that earth wisdom. They valued and respected the power of Nature and the cycles of the seasons because they knew that, although the Turas d’Anam is full of changes and uncertainties, yet life’s journey is held within a framework or foundation of unchanging certainties. They observed the cycles of the moon from new moon to full moon; the ebb and flow of the tides; the rising and setting of the sun; the gifts of each season, spring, summer, autumn and winter; the elements of life, water, air, fire and earth; the cardinal directions, East, South, North and West. All of this was a magical backdrop to the passing of the days – a regular rhythm, a drumbeat of life, the heartbeat of the Earth.

In our time many people live in noisy, light-filled cities where it’s more difficult to do what Bran did – to step outside the throng, to find space to be alone and hear the music of the Otherworld – the heartbeat of the Earth. This is so important for our physical and mental health. And it may indeed be the absolutely necessary first step on this indigenous path, because this is about actively choosing to live life in step with the music and magic of the Earth’s rhythm. Ask yourself - when did you last find a place of silence to hear the birds, to listen to the wind, to enjoy sitting under an ancient tree, to walk by a stream or a seaside shore – or even to find time for yourself and unplug the continuous messages and media?

Turas d’Anam, your soul’s journey, calls to you continually, every day of your life, but you need to find the power-place, Kairos-time and inner ear to hear that music – and for many people that only comes when they experience a life crisis. There are many stories and books about that – so I’ll not continue further on that theme. But what I do want to share with you is a brief overview of ways in which our ancestors observed and celebrated the passing of time. In other words – their approach to sacred living, in rhythm with the Earth.

The Neolithic peoples divided the annual cycle of the year into four, following the paths of the sun and the moon – Winter Solstice (21st December), Spring Equinox (21st March), Summer Solstice (21st June) and Autumn Equinox (21st September). The Celtic people added four more festivals marking the turning of the seasons called Samhain (1st November), Imbolc (1st February), Belataine (1st May) and Lughnasadh (1st August).

In addition each season was associated with a direction, an element and a God or Goddess, as below.

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| **SEASON** | **ELEMENT** | **DIRECTION** | **GOD/GODDESS** |
| Samhain (Winter) | Water/ ice | North | The Morrigan |
| Imbolc (Spring) | Air | East | Brigid |
| Bealtaine (Summer) | Fire | South | Macha |
| Lughnasadh (Autumn) | Earth | West | Lugh |

Turas d’Anam is not about striving to replicate exactly everything our ancestors did – but rather, it’s about taking the essence of their wisdom and experiencing, as they did, through myth and ceremony, the magic and sacredness of daily life. The natural world and the rhythm of the earth is full of healing soul magic, as Jimalee Burton of the Cherokee says:

*From the beginning there were drums, beating out world rhythm – the booming, never-failing tide on the beach; the four seasons; gliding smoothly, one from the other; when the birds come, when they go, the bear hibernating for his winter sleep. Unfathomable the why, yet all in perfect time. Watch the heartbeat in your wrist – a precise pulsing beat of life’s drum.[[2]](#footnote-2)*

**WAYS TO PRACTICE TURAS D’ANAM**

1. Find out more about the seasons, elements, directions and ancient nature festivals in the place where you live.
2. Align your soul’s journey with nature’s rhythms through music, art, ritual and prayer practices. For example in my garden I have created a walking prayer circle with all the elements - a chimea (fire) and bird-bath (water). I walk on the earth and breathe in the air.

I use a Caim prayer (encircling) which I use as an invocation and a prayer for well-being and peace for all life. Find your own daily ritual to celebrate the sacredness of each day of your life.

1. Draw inspiration for your soul’s journey from sources which bring you healing and hope – e.g. myths, stories, artwork, films, books, music, rituals which you find supportive and healing (Some suggestions on this web-site may be helpful). Try to cut down on things, experiences, people that depress your spirit. Make time and space for your soul’s wellbeing.

1. M. Heaney (ed.) *Over Nine Waves: A Book of Irish Legends*. London: Faber and Faber, 1994. P. 56. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *In Beauty May I Walk: Words of Wisdom by Native Americans* Exley publications Ltd., 1997. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)