

June

From a series of monthly meditational essays by Eugene Halliday

Our sixth month is generally believed to have received its name from the goddess Juno, who in ancient Rome was worshipped by women in every crisis of life. Her name may also be connected with "iuvenis", and refer to a young, marriageable woman.

Juno represents the female life-principle. Just as every man was said to have a "genius" within him, an inner generative power, so every woman was said to have her "Juno".

The great goddess may be viewed as the source power from which all individual women derive their female nature, or she may be viewed as the sum total of all female characteristics, especially those of a sexual nature. Certainly Juno's declared connection with the moon, seen in her name Juno Covella, must have arisen in the mind of the ancient Romans from the fact of the periodic nature of woman's sexuality. Juno was the goddess of the day of the new moon.

Like the Virgin Mary, Juno was called the "Queen of Heaven" and the "Queen of all Women". In one ceremony she is shown receiving an offering of a lamb, symbolic to us of the infant Jesus.

Under various names Juno appears in connection with marriage and childbirth, and thus has some connection with Janus, the god of the portal, who, we have seen, gave his name to January. He also presided over childbirth, as over the birth of the New Year. As causing the new born child to see the light of day, Juno was called Lucina.

As Juno Regina she was the Queen Goddess associated with the Great God Jupiter, the pre-Christian intuition of God the Father. (We cannot too often remind ourselves that the revelation which appeared fully incarnate in Christ was in part dimly foreseen by the ancient philosophers and prophets. "God has never at any time left Himself without witness. ")

In the ancient world Juno was identified with the Goddess Hera, wife of Zeus (the Greek equivalent of Jupiter). Hera also was a goddess worshipped especially by women, and like Juno developed into a goddess of sufficient importance to protect the city-state. Both presided over marriage and all functions of women, and thus as mother-protectors guaranteed the production of the children who would grow up to become citizens and defenders of the State.

Hera was a goddess worshipped in Samos and Argos before the Greeks appeared in written history. When the Greeks arrived with their own God, Zeus, "Lord of the Glistening Sky" (a reference to God as light) they were unable to persuade Hera's worshippers to abandon their goddess. Thus they were forced to allow her to become their god's wife.

There are many stories of quarrels between Zeus and Hera which may well represent the clash of the beliefs of their worshippers. This is the probable explanation

of some of the strange behaviour of the gods and goddesses of the ancient religions. But often in the figures and relations and activities of the ancient divinities are hidden philosophical theories of the nature of the universe.

Hera was said to be a child of Kronos and Rhea, that is, Time and its Running Motion. Ancient myths are full of such personifications of philosophical ideas. Personification of nature's laws was considered to be a very good way of committing them to memory.

As the child of Kronos and Rhea, Hera represented the change of behaviour of power in the movements of the time process. Thus it is not surprising that she was considered to be hostile to Troy, a walled city with no desire to change its ways nor to open itself to new ideas. But Hera was the helper and friend of Jason and his Argonauts in all their adventures. Argos was probably her most ancient place of worship, from which she took the name Argeia.

Several of Hera's titles refer to her function as a goddess of marriage, amongst them Gamelia and Zygia, both implying a joining together. When we remember her identification with Juno, we can see why June weddings were considered very fortunate. Both goddesses were helpful in the birth and nourishing of children.

Often Heira was paired with Aphrodite, the goddess of Love, and at Sparta a statue was set up to the honour of Hera-Aphrodite. The association was based on the idea that the distribution of power is intimately related to the presence of Love. Without Love there can be no real power.

Love is an essential of life's embodiment. To live is to embody Love, to incarnate Love, to see whatever is worthy of embodiment in action, and to praise it, and in praising it bring forth more life. "I am come that you might have life, and have it more abundantly", says Christ.

What is this more abundant life of which Christ speaks? Life itself is an interrelation of activities, an inter-functional play of energies on all levels of being.

We tend to forget that our living is a process of the interrelating of the various activities of our being with those of other beings. "No man is an island", however much individual private purposes may protest that he is. Human beings are unavoidably involved in each other's lives. Each man's actions, whether he admits it or not, impinge on the lives of other men. There is no possibility of avoiding this. Only by conscious acceptance of this will men become able to reach their highest level of being and their greatest happiness in life.

On June the twenty-first, the summer solstice, the longest day of the year, the sun stands at its highest in the sky. In the few days that follow, up to the feast of the Nativity of John the Baptist, we see the most beautiful time of the year, the time that makes us understand what we mean by the "prime of life", our best life-period. This is the period which, when we see it in a young woman, gives us the best picture of the meaning of the word "Juno-esque", the image of a young woman entering into her new life in marriage, with all the blossoming promise of June roses.

Not surprising is it that young women should hope that their life and beauty could, like the sun at the June solstice, stand still, that they could remain forever in this state of warm breathing beauty, the centre of their world, .radiant like the summer sun.

But "beauty vanishes, beauty passes", and the same sun that shines so splendidly at the summer solstice, must at the winter solstice shine but palely and with a colder light.

In our brightest days, in the times of our greatest power, we should try to remember the darker, colder days to come. And while we joy in our present strength, we should not become too proud of ourselves, too arrogant to keep open our mind and heart to those younger than ourselves, who have not yet reached our glorious summer; and to those whose advancing years have carried them ahead of us into life's colder, darker days.

John the Baptist, whose nativity falls on June the twenty-fourth, said that as Christ's life would increase, so would John's decrease. Here the cycle of the year is indicated. In the summer months, our life tends to expand into outward joy and activity. But later in the winter it must contract and enter into deep meditation. Let us remember that our summer's fruits may be all that we shall have to contemplate and eat in the dark days of our winter.