

Lughnasadh

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1 August 1983

“Lughnasadh (pronounced loo-nus-uh) means ‘the commemoration of Lugh’. Who was Lugh? He was a fire- and light-god of the Baal/Hercules type (see the Beltane issue); his name may be from the same root as the Latin lux, meaning light (which also gives us Lucifer, ‘the light-bringer). He is really the same god as Baal/Beli/Balor, but a later and more sophisticated version of him. In mythology, the historical replacing of one god by a later form (following invasion, for example, or a revolutionary advance in technology) is often remembered as the killing, blinding or emasculation of the older by the younger, while the essential continuity is acknowledged by making the younger into the son or grandson of the elder. (If the superseded deity is a goddess, she often reappears as the wife of the newcomer.) Thus Lugh, in Irish legend, was a leader of the Tuatha De Danann (‘the peoples of the Goddess Dana’), the last-but-one conquerors of Ireland in the mythological cycle, while Balor was king of the Fomors, whom the Tuatha De defeated; and in the battle Lugh blinded Balor.” (Quoted from Janet and Stewart Farrar, *Eight Sabbats for Witches*.)

This Lughnasadh article completes the cycle of nature-based holidays and some of the mythology on which they are based. A new year begins with Samhain (Halloween). Have you noticed that every holiday marks some aspect in the development of the Sun God/Hero archetype, an archetype essentially male in character? Although females can be heroes, too, more likely women are too busy creating and nurturing life (the Earth Mother archetype) to go around fighting battles. And apparently our ancestors liked the same kind of violence-and-death stories that keep the TV stations operating today. Feeding the young is not very exciting.

You know, in old Ireland the ladies had a no-nonsense way of expressing their appreciation to the heroes who fought to protect them. The Queen of Ulster and the ladies of the court-about 600 of them-came to meet the great Irish hero. Cuchulainn naked above the waist and raising their skirts to expose what they didn’t have on underneath This was their way of showing how greatly they honored him. In those days, to be called a bastard was a mark of distinction because it implied that one’s mother had been clever and beautiful enough to attract an especially valorous knight who contributed his superior genes to her progeny. Can you imagine poor Cuchulainn being importuned by 600 ladies, all wanting to make a child by him?

Many of those ladies were “virgins”, meaning merely that they did not belong to any one man (until the word was later redefined by the patriarchs). This descriptor had nothing whatsoever to do with the state of a woman’s hymen, but rather to a state of commitment to a relationship. Motherhood was worshipped as the creative and nurturing source of life, and women selected warrior heroes (and still do) as the stock to breed. This, selection process originated on love of the protector, may have been a major factor leading to the downfall of women. Goddess-worship and the Earth itself.

Back when the Great Mother was worshipped as the power of life and death, females generally held more of the power over material things. In most such cultures, children and property were held through the maternal line. Males could be summarily divorced

with no property settlement. Now one might speculate that these men were jealous of women's economic power and resentful of the fact that they couldn't give birth to the progeny on which that power, through inheritance, rested. Ah, but even if they didn't have the power to give life, they had the power to deal death. Enough such resentful men together could and did rape and kill over the centuries until they subjugated women into possessions. A woman who belonged to her husband and had never been exposed to any other man – a virgin, as the word came to mean - could be depended upon to have only the husband's children. That is, if he kept her carefully under his control Then it was safe to pass property through the male, or patriarchal line from father to son instead of from mother to daughter. Thus, leaving superior physical power, angry male warriors grabbed economic power - much as they do today - and obtained control over society,.

But the men who wanted the power and took it were not the happy, loving, considerate, fair-minded men. They were more likely .the aggressive, violent men who were too difficult to keep around the house, and were sent "outside to play". Such men would likely form "gangs", steal women and develop tribes based on a hierarchy where the man at the top was the fiercest competitor. These warriors were not fighting for the queen; they were fighting against the queen. The queens were probably not very well-organized for fighting. Females, even today and even as young as three years old, tend to get together in groups, discuss what each person wants to do or what each does best, assign leadership on the basis of competence and willingness to work hard and cooperate on a task until it's done. Some Indian tribes still organize in this fashion. It's generally well-known, however, that warriors then and now fought one another until they achieved a pecking order or hierarchy, where the strongest and meanest became king. Then everyone else had to do what the king said or get beaten up by him. Thus, the king's word became law and was obeyed by all the rest. Loyalty and obedience to the king's order resulted in protection and promotion. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God". Much of this development is speculation, but it's one way to account for the "sex-change" that happened to God.

As the warrior kings gained control over the land and societies, they organized everybody into the same hierarchical system that had won them their power. That system is excellent for conducting warfare or any kind of competition. Peaceful people usually are busy making a living or doing whatever they like (or trying to recover from the mistakes they made doing what they liked), and it's very difficult to get them together and trained for a fight. So a system developed for warfare created a warlike society/world. Now everything is based on competition - business, our legal system, the political system, etc. Our governmental leaders gain power by defeating opponents; then they take their places in the hierarchy where the Word comes down to the people, but any information opposing the official Word is heretical and either ignored or punished. The fact that a large majority of Americans consider a clean and protected environment of utmost importance and have said so in overwhelming numbers at hearings, demonstrations and in law courts is, in a way, irrelevant. Any

king, any strong warrior, who lets himself be swayed by the protests of the common soldiers is sure to wind up with his army in chaos and lose the battle.

These two systems - the one based on competition managed by hierarchy and obedience and the other based on cooperation managed by communication and individual responsibility - have very different implications for the future development of society. At U.C.L.A. several years ago, several researchers endeavored to investigate what happens when people cooperate or compete with each other. The game that experimental subjects played, the "prisoner's dilemma", is analogous to the situation that exists between the world powers holding nuclear war capacity. If one party cooperates (disarms) while the other competes (attacks), then the cooperator loses. If both parties compete, both lose. Only if both parties cooperate can they both win. When the researchers talked with the players after the game, the cooperators would say in frustration something like, "Well, I was trying to arrange things so we could both win, but he just wouldn't cooperate." But when the competitors were interviewed they were very proud at having won the game, cared nothing for the feelings of the other player, were totally unaware that the other player had been trying to cooperate or that the game could have been won by them both that way. When asked what they thought the other player was doing, the competitors replied that the other was weak, dumb, didn't know how to play the game and deserved no respect. Oh yes, the researchers found that women were significantly more often cooperators than were men. Does this give you any ideas about why women are often thought weak, dumb, or ignorant of how to play the game? Or why environmentalists keep losing out in the game for control of natural resources? Notice that it is the cooperators who have the higher level of awareness, but the competitors who keep winning the game. And the competitors are likely to see all other life forms, as well as Nature Herself, as enemies to be defeated.

Can we be both? Can we who love Mother Earth and want to see the balance of nature restored successfully compete with the hierarchical power-grabbers? We must reach an even higher level of awareness if we are to maintain our sense of balance at the same time we compete ferociously to protect the Earth from those old men who look forward to "the second coming". These competitive old warriors seem to see even future generations as competitors for their power and thus as enemies. With that view, they may be capable of stripping the world so that no one has the resources for future power, or of exchanging bombs with another country's old men thus making sure that no one will take their power by outliving them. The mythical cycle of nature continues: "The King Must Die!" or better yet, let us blind the old king(s) with the brilliant light of a new and better philosophy.

The Ted K Archive

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1 August 1983

Earth First! Journal, vol. 3, no. 6. <www.environmentandsociety.org/node/6847>

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