Information in English

Bidrag fra Administrator
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Ã…satrufellesskapet Bifrost, The asatru fellowship Bifrost, is a religious organization for modern asatru in Norway. Our religion is based on the religious tradition in Scandinavia and Iceland before the Christian era. The organization was approved by Norwegian authorities in 1996 and connects blotslag (local or regional groups of practitioners) and individual members. The blotslag are largely self-governed and have different points of focus within the faith. Members may be connected to a blotslag or directly to Bifrost. No kind of discrimination based on origin, sexual orientation or other personal trait is acceptable within Bifrost â€“or anywhere else, if you ask us. Unfortunately and sadly, Norse symbols have been heavily abused in the past and even today by far right-wingers and outright nazis. One of our missions is reclaiming the expressions of the old customs so that they shall no longer be associated with hateful ideologies. Though different, all human beings possess indispensable intrinsic value, as do all living things.

Bifrost brings together people who wish to worship the old Norse gods and keep the old traditions alive and strong, as a living community for anyone interested in asatru. We strive to be a forum for practice and discussion of the heathen understanding of history, myths and the divine forces. We aim to increase the awareness and understanding of arts, culture and traditions with roots in pre-Christian times. We want to keep the heathen cultural and religious heritage alive as an updated faith for people of today, through study of historical sources and adaptions to the modern way of life. Â Asatru, the way it is practiced in Bifrost, is based on an individual understanding and interpretation of what it means to follow heathen customs. Opinions people have, how they understand the historical sources and their personal relationship to the forces of nature, is none of Bifrostâ€™s business. This tolerance and freedom to think for oneself is in our opinion a central part of asatru. There are no religious dogmas in Bifrost. Â The religious practice is mainly maintained locally in the different blot groups. Every group is led by a Hovgode/gydje (priest/priestess) chosen by their group. Their responsibility is to arrange and lead the blots. Most goder/gydjer are members of the RÃ¥d (council). Â The main activities of the Bifrost umbrella is keeping membership lists updated, distributing economical support from the government and arranging the annual meeting, the Thing. The Thing is the supreme organ of the organisation and all matters of importance are discussed and decided here. All members are encouraged to take part, forward their causes and give their votes. The Thing is led by the hÃ¸vding (chieftain) who is also the person responsible to the federal government. There is also an adminstration of currently three people, responsible for the daily administration of Bifrost between the Things. Â Anyone agreeing to follow the laws of Bifrost is welcome as a member. You can not be a member of any other Norwegian religious organization due to federal regulations. The most common way to become a member is contacting a blotslag to show your interest and you will be contacted and most likely invited to a blot or other meeting. You may also contact the main organisation and become a singular member. Singular members are members of Bifrost, but not of any blot group. If you are under 15 years of age, you need consent from a guardian to become a member. As the federal support covers religious practice only, there is an annual hovtoll (administration fee) of 100,- Norwegian kroner. This payment includes the magazine Bifrost Tidende (Norwegian only), published about four times a year. Â Ethics and Mankind

The society of the Viking age was very different from that of today. Without any police force, each person or kin was required to take justice in own hands â€“acts of revenge were even largely expected at the time. The fact that a person believes in the Asatru does not mean they support or endorse such behavior in our time, or can be taken to account of actions done by others a thousand years ago. Though we let ourselves get inspired by thoughts and traditions of the Norse society, we are of course children of our time, based in the ideas that shape modern society. Our goal is not to recreate the morale of the old sagas. Â Heathen morale and ethics are built on the relationships between people, and is not directed by any supreme entity. Nothing is considered good or evil in its own right, but actions may lead to good or bad consequences. Significantly, there was no word for â€œevilâ€• in old Norse. The Christians had to invent one! There are no absolute commandments, no concept of guilt or sin, no salvation, and every individual is responsible for their own actions and have to bear the consequences themselves. This is the basic principle of the part of the law that is considered the ethics. Â If anything could be considered the basic idea in the heathen tradition it must be the concept of balance; the way creative and destructive forces in the world balance and equalize each other. This principle is seen in the interpersonal moral as expressed in HÃ¡vamÃ¡l, with its emphasis on moderation and following a middle course. The principle of balance applies also to the interpretation of HÃ¡vamÃ¡l: The rules are not to be followed so strictly that they turn into commandments; on the other hand, do not interpret them so loosely they lose their content and intention. Â Honour is another central concept in the Norse way of thinking. All people start out having a dignity and the right of receiving respect. However, they may lose this right if their actions limit the dignity and freedom of others. In our tradition, humans are not separated from the rest of nature, but a part of it. This view educates us that nobody can exist independently of nature, and we all need to find a way to live in and with it. This does not necessarily make all asatruers nature preservers, but most of us will be conscious that the ruthless exploitation on nature is an unbalanced and therefore destructive act. Asatruers reap from nature but strive to give back sufficiently for the cycle to continue. Â Traditions and religious practice Â One of the most important goals of Bifrost is to carry on old customs and traditions, and establish new ones when there is a need. Traditions performed in a group gives a sense of community. This is as much a task for each single member, as a task for the organisation. Not least because most of the activity in Bifrost takes place in the blot groups and private gatherings. It is important that we manage to adjust the customs to our own modern everyday life, so that they continue to be meaningful actions, also to people of today. We want to live the wisdom and knowledge of the old ones through following their customs, but we do not necessarily want to live like Vikings. Â Like languages evolve with changing needs, any viable community needs to adapt new customs to fit new needs. Minor

tweaks and more comprehensive adaptions are introduced frequently in Bifrost, in and around blots and other communal activities. The value of customs is not necessarily their age or origin, but the cultural values they express. Â The Blot is the most important celebration of the changing of seasons and nature. It is a Feast to the forces of nature and is a good way to communicate with these forces and get to know them better. Many asatruers experience complex relationships with gods, valuable personal relations that develop over time. Through ceremonies, giving gifts, and partying, the friendship with the gods and nature is strengthened. The Blot can take many shapes, from small ones with a simple ceremony to big gatherings with complex rituals and demanding involvement. Both single members and groups arrange blots, usually about 3-4 times a year. The Thing is usually opened with a blot to Thor and closed with one dedicated to Odin. Â A blot commonly starts by inviting the gods to the place where the ceremony is to be performed-â€œlyse stedet i veâ€ Then a text, for instance a passage from the Edda, is read, sung or otherwise performed. â€œEinkjelsâ€•, a joint toast witha horn or bowl of mead or other good drink, is shared and passed around to all participants, each person saluting someone or something they wish to honour. Last but not least comes the sacrifice. The gift can be mostly anything that carries a symbolic or personal meaning. Flowers, seeds, eggs, incense, tobacco and beer are a few possible gifts. It is not common to sacrifice blood or animals, but there are no laws against it. The sacrifice has a symbolic meaning of showing sacrificial will towards the gods; the will to give and to gain. The last, important part of all blots is a Gilde, a party in the honour of oneself, the gods and the forces of nature. As in all things relating to blot groups and Bifrost, the groups can freely choose which elements to include and how to compose their blots. As such, there can be great differences in arrangements and performances between the groups and also between blots in the same group. Â The worship of ancestors may be part of the blots held by the groups, but would perhaps more naturally be part of the family cult. The main idea is to not forget your dead family members but remember them, honour them and keep in contact with their knowledge and culture through rituals. It is a part of the code of honour that as long as a person is remembered for their deeds in life with honour and respect, they can never really die. It is therefore important to remember those who deserve to be remembered. Ancestral worship can also be an expression of gratitude over own existence and creation. The private cult may have many forms and expressions, usually simpler than the bigger official blots, and are solely the responsibility and initiative of the single person or family. Â Myths and Cosmology Â The myths in the Norse mythology do not give reason for dogma or doctrines. Their prime function is as a source for understanding knowledge and moral. They also give an understanding of the macro-micro cosmos. The Norse myths are a tool to understanding the complex system of the forces of nature and the dimensions that surround us. The purpose of the gods is arranging and maintaining the world. The world has to be kept in balance. Everything and everybody has their mission. There needs to be equilibrium between constructive and destructive forces. Â One way of understanding the world is to see it as divided in nine â€œheimerâ€• - homes or spheres where the different appearances have their residence, as described in the Edda. These worlds are connected by the ash of Yggdrasil, the world tree. The forces of fate stand outside the heimer and decide the destiny of the world. Â Bifrost has no dogmas as to how the gods should be understood, or how the world order is. Whether the descriptions in the Edda is a poetical and abstract account of forces trying to maintain the world order, whether the depicted creatures are concrete entities living on other planes of existence, or something else, is something every member needs to decide for themselves. Although members of Bifrost well may have relationships with entities other than the Norse, we choose to stick to the gods and forces of the pre-Christian period when arranging something through Bifrost. Â Sources of our Religion Â The sources to our cosmology and god lore are found in the many poems of The Elder Edda. For instance, you can read about the world order and the destiny of the worlds in VoluspÃ¡, the predictions of the Volve (crone). In â€œAllvismÃ¡lâ€• and in â€œGrimnesmÃ¡lâ€• we find one of the most importar to our images of the gods. Â Our sources of knowledge of the historical heathen religion are few and mainly written down in Christian times. These are the most important: -The Elder Edda, also known as The Poetic Edda-The Edda of Snorri Sturlasson (Gylfaginning and SkaldskaparmÃ¡l) -Saxo Grammaticus, the chronicle of Danish kings -Islendingasagaen â€“Icelandic prose poetry -Poetry of the skalds from Viking and medieval periods Â Â Another source is the Arabian Ibn Fadlans describing religious practice of the Viking merchants in the east. Tacitusâ€™ historical description of Germania from roman times and Adam of Bremenâ€™s description of the practice at the great temple in Uppsala are other historical sources. Â There are also traces of heathen roots in folklore material. Quite a lot of documentation on Norwegian and Nordic folklore exists, and a look at the old tales from the collections of AsbjÃ¸rnsen and Moe illustrates how important nature spirits have been in peopleâ€™s lives. Â For more information: Â Although there is not as much material on modern asatru in book stores as one could wish, several interest groups do have information available, or should at least be able to point you in the right direction. Asking is never rude, and a request for material is generally considered a complement! Also, a quick search online with keywords like modern asatru, heathen traditions or norse mythology returns massive amounts of information. It is always a good precaution to be critical to information on a random webpage, and we recommend comparing multiple sources using your judgement as your guide. Everyone needs to find their own truth. These sites can be valuable starting points for your studies: Forn Sidr, Denmark - www.fornsidr.dk /dk/17 Sveriges asatrosamfund, Sweden asatrosamfundet.se/ -click In English on the left Eldaring, Germany -http://eldaring.de/news.php -german only Het Rad, Netherlands - http://hetrad.nl/heathen.html For entertaining tongue-in-the-cheek info, try Godchecker - http://www.godchecker.com/pantheon/norse-mythology.php.