

Magical Exercises

Hamr

The hamr, meaning hide, is what Western occultism calls the etheric body. This underlies, and has the same shape as the physical body (lich). To be eigi einhamr (not of one hide) is to have the ability to connect with one's fetch or totem animals so that they can enter into your body space and change the shape of your hamr. To be hamrammr (shape-strong) is to be able to change your own hide at will. To travel or journey from your body is done by means of moving your hide and awareness separately from your lich; the fetch may help in this, but it is not necessary.

The simplest exercise to help you get control of your hide or body in this endeavour is to lie down, closing your eyes and breathing deeply. As you breathe, visualise bringing life down your blood vessels to your skin and hair; see your whole shape as glimmering slightly. When you are completely relaxed, let your lich stay just as it is, but see and feel your strongest hand rising from the earthly shape, with your arm bending at the elbow. Bring your hand down to touch your face, keeping yourself fully aware of the brush of your fingertips across your cheek. When it seems to you that you actually physically feel the touch of your skin, you are ready to try further workings.

Once you have learned to part your hide from your lich, you can try traveling. This is more difficult, as you have to move the center of your awareness. Lying as before, begin to move your physical arm and leg outwards. While your lich lies still, slowly and carefully roll yourself over and out of it, keeping your eyes shut and concentrating on the feeling of the movement. At the same time, Breathe deeply, feeling the lungs of your physical body expanding and contracting, pulling in more and more power from the air about you. The air (ether) is full of energy - the power you draw in is both from the air itself, and the energies which permeate all. Stand up, opening your eyes and looking closely at whatever is around you. Turn around, seeing the room in every detail, including your physical body lying before you. Try to focus on a couple of specific things to remember. Now step back into your lich, lying down and feeling yourself merging with it again. Breathe deeply until you are sure that hide and body are one again. Open your eyes, looking at the things you focused on while you were out.

Once you have mastered this skill, it is possible to travel forth where ever you want to. The most difficult part of hide-working, however, is parting the hide from the lich. If you find that the physical feeling of your body is making it impossible for you to get out, the best thing is for you to start learning shape-shifting first.

Among the Northern peoples, shape-shifting was done in two ways. One was the change, or apparent change, of the lich under the influence of strong soul-might or will (notice there is a differentiation between mental and soul will or might); the other was faring forth in a beast-hide while the body lay as if sleeping or dead. The former was the gift of the berserker; the latter the craft of the magician.

To begin practicing shape-shifting, sit in front of a mirror in the darkness with a candle before you. Breathe deeply, seeing the might of your body flowing towards your head, until you can feel, or see in the mirror a tingling aura about your skull. Now see, and feel, your features melting and shifting, taking the form of the head of the beast you have chosen. Stare at the mirror without blinking, pouring all your might into the change you are making, until you can see it happening. Practise this exercise first with your eyes open, then try keeping your eyes closed and opening them only when you are sure that your head has fully shifted. When you are able to do this strongly enough, other people should be able to see, or at the very least sense, the beast-face superimposed on your own.

When you are able to do this, lie down as described above. Now concentrate on changing, not only your head, but your whole body. Make your face change - jut out as a snout or beak, your hands change

to paws or wings, fur or feathers or scales sprout from your skin, until your beast-hide feels stronger and more real than the lich about you. Now move out of the lich in whatever shape you have chosen. The shape need not be your fetch, or even a power animal; just whatever seems best to you. Birds are often the easiest for getting out-of-body, as the action of flying up calls for the most direct movements to be those unfamiliar to the lich. Continue the exercise as described before.

Aside from the obvious uses of being able to journey forth from ones body, the skill of shape shifting or partial shape shifting is a good one to have in magical craft-work. The custom of masking for magical or religious purposes was well-known to our ancestors: by changing the head of your hide, you take on the mask you have chosen and can call on all its might as well as your own. A man wanting to do a working of bravery or battle, for instance, might take on the head of a boar; anyone doing a working of protection might take on a moose-helm (elhaz/algiz); while a wolf could be called for fierceness, a raven to make the sounds of your galdor mightier, a cat for love-spells, and so forth.

Hamingja

The word hamingja is related to hamr. It shows the underlying might which gives life to and strengthens the hide. It can be seen as somewhere between the Oriental chi and the Polynesian mana: a combination of life-force and general magickal and spiritual power; it also has much in common with the strength of the aura. Hamingja and luck are hard to separate in function, for luck is the strength of the hamingja, and a strong hamingja will bring it about that apparently random happenings turn out in your best interest. Magick in the physical frequently manifests through the occurrence of outwardly random coincidence; this randomness coming from an order which guides chaos.

The hamingja can best be perceived by breathing deeply with your eyes shut, seeing a subtle fire flare through your body with each breath and burning in a corona about you.

When working magick, the hamingja can be used both to attune or connect with an object to yourself and to fill it with power. The hamingja is the shining might that you put into runes when you blood them, for instance. In healing, hamingja can be lent to an ill or wounded person; in works of harm, hamingja can be sucked out of someone or even stolen from one and given to another - which, according to Ynglinga saga, is one of the characteristic workings of seiðr.

To begin working with hamingja, start by finding a tree of a type you feel to be fitting to yourself and performing a brief rite of asking and thanks for a branch. Gifts need to be given to the tree; this can be done by practical means, such as leaving some sort of food stuff, or taking away of irritants to it, or healing it. If you can connect with it correctly, you will know from it what it wants in exchange for the branch - do not make assumptions, lest you incur the ill will of the tree, and the branch is obtained without the trees consent. If you do this, there may be malevolent energy contained within the branch - better to have the tree on your side, and thus as a magickal ally, rather than as an enemy. When you have cut the branch, quickly trace a circle thrice around the cut end, seeing a ring of silver locking its life-force in.

When you get home, go into a darkened room. Hold the branch up against a white wall and sit looking at it until you can see the faint brightness of the trees own hamingja glowing about it. Different species of trees will have their own characteristic etheric or hamingja, this also holds for individual trees. Now hold your hand up against the wall and stare at it until you can see your own. Take the branch and, breathing deeply, let your hamingja flow into it, brightening the faint glimmer about the wood. Once you are satisfied with this, you may either pull your own hamingja back or leave it there. In the latter case, chop between yourself and the wood with your sax or the knife-edge of your hand, then trace a triple ring about the whole branch, seeing a shining sphere sealing the might into it. You now have a charged piece which will be good for making rune-tines or any other sort of magical item.

Anything which you contact physically will get at least a slight residue of your hamingja in it, as this is also carried by, for instance, the natural oils of your body. This can be used if you wish to trace a runic sign without it being seen: you simply need to touch the object in question. Obviously if it is something frequently handled or washed, the rune will not last long; a wall, door, or ceiling, on the other hand, is an ideal place to inscribe a rune.

For your own protection, should you have to send a letter or other item to someone you mistrust, you can use hamingja-craft to pull your hamingja out of the item. Once it is completely dead, chop between the two of you with your sax or another iron item, then do not let your skin or hair touch it again. Obviously you must be careful not to lick the stamp or the envelope, even before removing your hamingja; use a damp blotter or a few drops of water from the tap instead.

Hamingja is something that can be almost totally exhausted, but always renews itself after a little while. The more of it you use - as long as you rest between times- the more strongly it will return, just as muscles worked to exhaustion will strengthen themselves if they are rested and replenished. Live oysters, sushi, raw steak, and such foods are all good for restoring the hamingja quickly. From a vegetarian standpoint, freshly picked vegetables or fruit have plenty of it as well; but once they have been stored for a few hours, they lose it. Another very good source are fresh alfalfa or wheat sprouts. Stores of hamingja can also be made outside the body, to be drained and used at need: simply touch the thing and pour energy (might) in whenever you have some extra energy. Large stones for this; for easy access wherever you happen to be, items of jewelry can be used. Paintings, statues, and other such things can also store hamingja. Amber is especially good; leaving amber in the sun will cause the hamingja-might you have put into it to grow.

The principle of storing hamingja also underlies the Heathen practice of idols: a god-image is the earthly receptacle for the god/ess hamingja - both that which s/he puts into it by coming forth through it and that which his/her worshippers put into it by calling her/him, pouring drink and setting food upon or directly before it, and so forth.

Mëttr ok Meginn (Might and Main)

Might is simply physical power. Those who wonder what this has to do with magic have never ridden a bicycle an hour and a half uphill with a heavy pack of ritual gear on a frosty morning before dawn, then climbed a steep crag in order to get to the ritual site in the first place, before performing an intense magical working. Even something as simple as tracing a slow runic circle with your arm fully extended for the whole course of the circle can be tiring to the person who is in bad condition. The more intense the working, the more bodily energy it will call for, especially if it lasts for a long time.

While it is important to be as strong as you can, endurance is even more important for the magician: martial arts are a more effective form of discipline than body-building in this regard, especially when they concentrate on the manipulation of energy, as they do in the higher forms of martial art. The purpose is to get your body in the best possible working order so that it will not betray you during (or, in the case of reaching working sites of difficult access, while preparing for) your magick. The better condition you are in, the better you will be able to wield and control large amounts of energy.

Main is closely related to might, and in fact stems from it. Main is the extra soul-strength that comes from strength of body. We see the principle of main, for instance, in the worldwide grading of totem beasts: almost always, in every culture from the Norse to the Siberian to the Native American, the most powerful magical beast is the bear, the most powerful magical bird is the eagle.

Main can be developed by any form of physical exercise which exerts both body and soul to their utmost capability, calling for the extra burst of strength that only comes when the full forces of both are being exerted together - when you are striving with all your might and main.

Spaedis (spae-idis)/Spaealfr (spae-alf)

The spae-idis (feminine) or spae-alf (masculine) is the Germanic equivalent of the Holy Guardian Angel or Higher Self - the link between the human consciousness and the god/esses, and the embodiment of ones own wyrd. This wight is usually spoken of in terms of a lover whom the humans goal is to wed (that is, become one with), as is the case in the Helgi poems of the Elder Edda and the tale of Sigurðr and Brynhildr. The traditional examples are all of men with spae-idises, but women have Higher Selves as well, for which we have thus taken the term spae-alf.

The spae-wight is the ideal lover of the soul: it is thus likely that gay people will experience this wight as being of their own gender. The runes of the spae-wight are gebo (for the human giving of that might or force which stems from deeds of honour to the spae-wight and the spae-wights giving of help, warding, and rede to the human), elhaz/algiz (for the protection the spae-wight gives, and also the Rainbow Bridge: the spae-wight is the link between the human and the godly), and dagaz (for the moment of full spiritual awakening which is the wedding).

The spae-wight is, in particular, concerned with the honour of the person s/he guards. The might gained by honour strengthens the spae-wight; but dishonour clouds the bond between you. This is seen most especially in the story of Sigurðr and Brynhildr: because he is tricked into acting dishonourably and breaking the oaths he had sworn to her, she then turns against him and becomes the main cause of his fall, even though his death means her own as well.

Confusion of terminology has also occasionally led to the identification of the spae-wight as fylgja or fetch. In the sources, however, we see a very strong distinction between the fetch, which usually appears as a beast closely connected in space with the human in question, and the spae-wight, which is always human, of the opposite gender, and often widely separated at first.

Spae-wights often appear as swans. The swan is the bird most tied to Wyrd: Snorri tells us in the Prose Edda that two swans swim in Wyrds Well, and the Finnish epic Kalevala.

The process of finding and wedding the spae-wight is a long and hard one: it is, effectively, the way from spiritual beginner to initiate. The spae-wight, however, is as eager for the wedding as is the human seeker, and will be able to guide and help you along the way. To make yourself open to the words and wise rede of this wight, you can do a regular (daily at best) rite such as the one given here.

Tools: gandr; cup or horn of mead, ale, or sweet German wine; recels (incense) of angelica root and juniper berries. If you have a swans feather with which to fan the recels-smoke over yourself and trace the runes in the drink, so much the better.