

Fire, Gods and the Mind – a distinctive Buddhist twist in the use of the Fire metaphor

Concepts

Aggi / Agni = Fire

upādāna = Fuel

karma = Action

vipāka = Consequence

Vimokṣa - Release

Vedic notions

God Agni, central deity of Vedic pantheon; conveys offerings to the other gods. On Earth he is found as fire, in the atmosphere as lightning, in the sky as the sun.

Sacrificial practice of fuelling the fires in worship of Agni (*agnihotra / homa*)

wholesome ritual action in maintaining fires worshipping divinity is propitious

‘at the whim of the gods, hopefully to be swayed by prayer and sacrifice’ (Reat, 1977)

After death: Soul leaves the body and enters heaven, hell or eternity (*Ṛg-Veda*)

Early Buddhist notions

The Fires of Passion, Hatred and Delusion
‘Everything, O monks, is on fire.’
‘Everything’ is all our faculties - the five senses plus the mind - and their objects and operations and the feelings they give rise to: the totality of our experience is ‘on fire’.

‘Fuelling’ these fires by grasping at and attaching to sense-objects and identification with any aspect of experience (5 *khandha*)

Such unwholesome action maintains the fires of passion, hatred and delusion – re-creating renewed becoming and further suffering.

Either: Renewed becoming (*punabbhava*) through karma or: liberation from karma by following the 8-fold Path

nirvāṇa „blown out, extinguished, having cooled“
– ethically: the quenching of the above fires;
– a fire going out for lack of fuel, but in the vedic sense of “becoming ineffable / unspeakable”;
anupādāya – „unbinding“