III. The gods connected with natural elements, and deified abstract concepts

1. The gods connected with natural elements --with a special focus on some less known aspects of Agni

(i) General remarks

It has been observed that almost all the world-mythologies have their origin in nature, in its elements and phenomena. The first deified objects came out from a sense of wonder of the measureless sky, and of the productive earth, then, of the mystic dawn, of the shining sun, of the blazing fire, of the falling rain, of the fierce wind, of the fathomless water, of the meandering rivers....

It may be that "there has been steady advance from the physical to the personal, and from the personal to the divine". In many of the world-mythologies, led by the Greek, the sky and the earth were the first divine objects, and they became the parents of the universe. In Indian mythology too, the sky Dyaus and the earth Prthivi were father and mother of world. They gave life to all creatures and granted them the means of subsistence. Then their offspring, the Sun, the Dawn, the Fire, the Rain, the Winds, the Waters and the Rivers were born.

1 Radhakrishnan, Indian philosophy, Vol. I. p. 76.
Some of these divinities are perhaps basically from the agricultural background. Besides war, cultivation of herbs and crops, and breeding of cattle are said to be the most important jobs for the Vedic people. Many myths have originated from these as base, and the features associated with them are developed into deities. Nature essentially causes things to grow and to be destroyed\(^1\). If a human being depends much on a specific element of nature, then that element is usually turned into a divinity. Thus, sky and earth, sun and moon, rain and wind, the waters and the rivers...are formed into deities. Little away from these base, the goddess Uṣas ‘dawn’ was originated. She might have come into existence due to pure poetic spur of the singers\(^2\). This poetic urge makes Uṣas the most eminent female deity in the Vedas. The natural aspect of dawn is beautifully depicted in the hymns. The Vedic singers imagine her as a dancer who creates light for all the world of life (ṚV. I. 92. 4). The singers believed her to be a goddess who opens the path for Sūrya (ṚV. I. 113. 16).

These elements of nature are however, generally, not fully personified, even if they have acquired divinity. Therefore, it is very intricate to sift the divinities from the divine nature. Also some of these divinities soon disappear or fade away from their earlier important places. This happens, perhaps, due to their half-

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\(^1\) Or, every element of nature has its own cause to grow and to destroy in itself.

\(^2\) Dandekar remarks (cf, Uṣas, Joshi,Dandekar Felicitation Vol. p. 157) that the sūktas relating to Uṣas are to be regarded as being more in the service of art and poetry than of religion and mythology.
ripened deification, or perhaps, because of overshadowing by the greater gods, or perhaps, and more likely, owing to progress or change of human thoughts.

Let us now take look at some brief sketch of the nature-gods from the point of view of their original aspects. Only such deities have chosen for elaboration here, who are commonly referred to at least in two literatures out of the three, viz., in the Rgveda, in the Pāli literature, and in the Mahābhārata. And special attention is given to Agni and his less known aspects.

(ii) Dyaus

As it is mentioned above, the vast sky, which encloses various natural phenomena, is perhaps the first object of deification. However, it does not seem to obtain sufficient grandeur as a deity, though Keith states, "Dyaus has been claimed for that time as a real sovereign of the gods, much as Zeus among the Greeks"\(^1\). The word *dyaus*, in the Vedas, stands both for the personified sky god Dyaus and for the physical sky. When personified, he is generally coupled with the earth Prthivi (*dyāvāprthivī*) in the RV\(^2\). No single entire hymn is dedicated to the sky god Dyaus alone. Dyaus, together with Prthivi, is the parents of men and gods\(^3\), due to their undecaying, beneficence and righteousness\(^4\). They are together, ‘devaputre’, ‘those who have the gods as their sons’, at the same time, “they are

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2 RV. I. 159. 2; 160. 2; IV. 56, etc.

3 RV. I. 185.4; 159.1–2; 106.3; III. 3.11; IV. 56. 2.

4 RV. I. 159. 1; 160. 1; IV. 56. 2; 70. 6.
spoken of as having been themselves created by individual gods". When Dyaus alone, almost always is characterized as a father, in the RV., he is father of mankind, father of Uśas, of Agni (X. 45. 8), of Parjanya (VII. 101. 3), of the Ādityas (X. 63. 3), of Mitra (X. 133. 4), of Indra (I. 155. 3; VI. 17. 4), and of snakes (I. 191. 6) etc.

In the Mbh., the deity Dyaus is reduced to a mere shadow of his Vedic personality. The word dyaus, in the Mbh., is used many times in its original sense ‘shining’. Dyaus is the name of one member of eight Vasus. The expression, ‘like the unclouded sky with its stars’, is often seen. Dyaus, as in the Vedas, is usually mentioned along with various names of the earth, such as, vasundharā (II.

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1 Joshi, ‘Some minor deities’, p. 112; Indra is said to have generated or fashioned the heaven and the earth (RV. VI. 30. 5; VIII. 36. 4; X. 29. 6; 54. 3), Viśvakarman produced them (RV. X. 81. 2). The heaven and the earth received their forms from Tvaṣṭṛ (RV. X. 110. 9), and they sprang from the head and feet of Puruṣa (RV. X. 90. 14).

2 RV. I. 89. 4; 90. 7; 164. 33 etc.

3 RV. I. 46. 1; 48. 8-9; VI. 51. 11; V. 47. 1.

4 The word vasu also means ‘light’ or ‘radiance’. The story is given in the Mbh. I. 93 is as follows: A member of Vasus named Dyaus (or Dyu) was accused of stealing a cow of Vasiṣṭha, and due to this act all the eight Vasus were cursed by that sage to be born on earth. According to Mbh. this Vasu, i.e., Dyaus had to stay on earth for a longer time than the other members since he was the main culprit in dragging the cow. This Dyaus is Bhīṣma, the grandfather of Pāṇḍavas and Dhāravaṇas. However, it is very difficult to say whether this Dyaus indicates a mere name of a deity or the Vedic sky deity Dyaus.

5 e.g., Mbh. II. 33. 8: naksatrairdyaurīvāmalā.
42. 25), *medinī* (V. 80. 48), *bhūmi* (III. 143. 11) etc., and also is mentioned along with āpa, *prthivī*, vāyu, *antarikṣa*¹. Dyaus is also a half personified divine entity. When meritorious or unworthy deeds are done and when great beings are born on earth he showers rain, ambrosia and flowers, and he (or, it) also sends a divine voice through the medium of *antarikṣa*,². Such expressions as, ‘sky may fall with its stars’, ‘earth may split’ are also used to describe events which are improbable³. Thus, the word *dyaus*, though often personified, is used more often in the sense of ‘concrete sky’ in the Mbh., in Pāli literature as well as even in the Vedas. Thus, the sky god Dyaus who is supposed to be the first deified object from nature is perhaps the first nature-god to disappear.

In the Pāli mythology, the sky god Dyaus has completely disappeared. Nowhere is his trace found. There, sky is often expressed by the word *ākāśa*, which is many times combined with *āyatana*⁴ and *dhātu*.⁵ Then, their meanings are far different from the Vedic sky deity Dyaus. They mean ‘the sphere of unbounded space’ and ‘the element of space’ respectively.

¹ Mbh. I. 1. 34: āpo dyauḥ prthivī vāyurantarikṣan diśastathā.
² Mbh. II. 42. 25: anabhre pravavarsa dyauḥ papāta jvalitāśanāḥ; VI. 114. 87; antarikṣe ca śuṣrāva divyāṃ vācaṃ samantataḥ; XII. 221. 89; amṛtan dyauḥ pravavarsa.
³ Mbh. III. 262. 36: VII. 12. 10, propateddyauḥ sanaksatrā prthivi śakalibhavet.
⁴ Brahmajāla sutta (Dīg. I., 1); Mahāniddāna sutta (Dīg. II. 2), Mahāparinibbāana sutta (Dīg. II. 3); Saṅgūti sutta (Dīg. III. 10); and also Sallekha sutta (Maj. I. 1. 8); Nivāpa sutta (Maj. II. 3. 5) etc.
⁵ Saṅgūti sutta (Dīg. III. 10); and Mahārāhulovāda sutta (Maj. II. 2. 2) etc.
(iii) Prthivī

The divine earth is another early example of nature personified. One complete hymn each of the RV. (V. 84) and the AV. are devoted exclusively to her as a goddess. As the sky Dyaus is considered to be the Father of all, the earth Prthivī is the Mother of the universe¹, and of Agni². Just like the mother the nature of Prthivī is kind and patient. She is said to preserve the dead body from Destruction, i.e., from Niṛṛti (RV. X. 18. 10). Dyaus and Prthivī are said to have common dwelling (samokasā, RV. X. 65. 8). In the RV, Prthivī sustains the fracture of the mountains (RV. V. 84. 1), and along with Dyaus she streams forth the water which is mixed with butter, to Varuṇa (RV. X. 65. 8). Being considered to be a father and a mother, both Dyaus and Prthivī possess the nature of fertility as they are often compared to the prolific bull and the variegated cow³. The word prthivī in the RV., however, is used much more in the sense of physical earth.

In the Mbh., the personified earth occurs not infrequently. The earth is called Prthivī devī⁴, or Prthivī mātara (XI. 333. 24). Therefore Prthivī gives birth to all creatures, and women partake of her nature⁵, and hence the earth is pleased with

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¹ RV. V. 42. 16; 43. 2; 15.
² RV. III. 3. 11; 26. 1.
³ RV. I. 160. 3, comparison of the deities and the nature to the bull and the cow from the point of view of the fertility basis is discussed in the first sub-chapter, the Viṣṇu part.
⁴ Mbh. I. 45. 8; VIII. 24. 68; XII. 14. 38; XIII. 100. 3; V. 50. 38; V. 85. 6; X. 18. 9; XIII. 84. 74.
⁵ Mbh. XII. 183. 15: prthivī sarvabhūtānām janītrī tadvidhāh striyāb.
those acts which please motherhood. As mother of all creatures, the earth is like a wish-fulfilling cow, kāmadhenu (VI. 10. 69), and if the earth is properly treated she becomes the father, the mother, the children, the sky, and the heaven of all creatures (XIII. 10. 74). The earth is generally symbolized as one who possesses immense tolerance and compassion (V. 161. 2). But she is unbearable and fierce when she is overburdened by wicked men and asuras, though she is said to be impartial both to the good and the bad (XII. 74. 24). Earth trembles and Dyaus showers, when extraordinary things happen. However, though the earth is considered very important, the personification and deification of it is not much different than that of the other nature-gods, in some places she is personified as is seen above, but in many other cases personification is very slight, generally the attributes of the goddess being chiefly those of the physical earth.

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1 Mbh. XIII. 7. 25, prīṇāti mātaraṁ yena prthīvī tena pūjitā.

2 Mbh. I. 94. 12; II. 1. 14; III. 30. 25; III. 30. 31; V. 88. 30; V. 154. 2; XIV. 4. 20, etc.

3 Mbh. XII. 249f: She requested Brahmā to destroy the creatures when her burden has become excessive, and Brahmā created death to relieve her.

4 Mbh. XII. 49. 63: The earth sank down to the lowest depth (rasātāla) when she was assailed by wicked men, she wished to give up earth-god-hood (or, earthhood, bhūmitvam) and went up to heaven where she was calmed down by Kaśyapa.

5 Mbh. I. 58: When human world was filled with joy due to virtuous people, asuras also were born on earth in various forms. They harassed people and even the sages. Then the goddess Earth who could not bear all the bad deeds of asuras, went to Brahmā and begged him to reduce her burden.

6 e.g., Mbh. II. 42. 25; kṛṣṇeṇa nihate caidȳe cacāla vasundhara.
In Pāli literature, Prthivī, though not considered as a significant deity, is mentioned as a goddess. In Mahāsamaya sutta, Dig, a group of earth goddesses Paṭhavī came, along with three other deified natural elements, viz., the water gods Āpā devā, fire gods Tejo devā, and the air gods Vāyo devā, to listen to the Buddha’s preaching.

(iv) The wind gods

The wind is also personified by the Vedas by the name of Vāyu and Vāta, and also Maruts, the storms. But many descriptions, especially in the case of Vāta, are mere sketches of physical phenomenon of the wind. Vāyu, being frequently connected with Indra, is more personified than Vāta. It may be stated, in this connection, that Vāyu is chiefly the god and Vāta is element. Vāyu is invoked in a couple of hymns, alone, and some with Indra in the RV. Vāyu is invited to drink Soma along with Indra (RV I. 2. 1-6). Vāyu is said to beget Maruts from the wombs of heaven (vakṣaṇābhyaḥ diva, I. 134. 4).

Vāta is also celebrated in two short hymns of the RV (X. 168. 186). The nature of wind is lively as described in the hymns to Vāta. He has a voice of thunder (stanayan ghoṣa, X. 168. 1) but his shape is ever formless (na rupa, X. 168. 4). Vāta is said to be the earliest born (prathamaja, X. 168. 3), and friend of the waters (apāṃ sakha, X. 168. 3). He is the germ of the world (bhuvanasya garbha, X. 168. 4), and the soul of the gods (ātmā devānām, X. 168. 4).

1 Joshi, J. R, Vāta-Vāyu, Unpublished.
2 RV. I. 2; 134; IV. 47 (Vāyu, Indra-Vāyu), 48; VII. 90-92.
3 RV. I. 135; IV. 46-47; VII. 90.
In the Mbh., the wind god is called by still more names such as, Vāyu, Vāta, Anila, Pavana, Gandhavāha, etc., and also by the name Maruts groups are referred to. All these names indicate a certain aspect of wind. They designate sometimes one and the same being (Mbh. I. 65. 41-2), but at other times, a separate entity (Mbh. I. 28, 8). As a personified deity, Vāyu is mentioned often with Indra\(^1\) and Agni\(^2\). Vāyu, with his blowing, helps a nymph called Menaka when she seduces the sage Viśvāmitra\(^3\). It is said that Nārayaṇa was, in one previous life, Vāyu (Mbh. III. 13. 20). Vāyu gives testimony for Sīta’s chastity from the sky along with Agni, Varuṇa and Brahmā (Mbh. III. 275. 26), and also for Damayantī along with the sun and the moon (Mbh. III. 75. 11). Vāyu is said to be the soul of all beings (*sarvabhūtātmā*, Mbh. II. 17. 18). Vāyu is said to be the strongest being in the universe, no human being, no deity is equal to him in strength not even Indra and Yama\(^4\). As a non-personified element, Vāyu is speedy and powerful wind.

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\(^1\) Mbh. I. 21. 8; 159. 7; I. 189. 27; III. 41. 14.

\(^2\) Mbh. I. 21. 9; 28. 23.

\(^3\) The story given in the Mbh. I. 65. is as follows: Menaka was ordered by Indra to seduce the sage Viśvāmitra so that the sage should not achieve the final goal. She requests Indra as: “the wind had better blow open my skirt when I am playing before him, and Manmatha must be my helpmate in this enterprise, O, God, by your grace. And let a fragrant breeze blow from the woods at the hour that I shall be seducing that seer!” (Buitenen’s translation).

\(^4\) Mbh. XII. 150. 27-36.
The word vāyuvega denotes powerful and speedy persons\(^1\), and vāyubhakṣa is often used for the sages who practice severe penance for fasting\(^2\).

The Maruts, in a group, are also considered to be another form of the wind, i.e., usually the storm in the RV. They are constantly associated with other nature-gods, such as, lightening, thunder, wind and rain. But it is also pointed out by many scholars that they hardly represent the wind pure and simple, as some of their attributes are borrowed from cloud and lightening as well\(^3\). Maruts, though they are considered to be important deities who are allied with Indra in the RV., are not mentioned in Pāli literature as divinities. In the Mbh. generally they are treated on par with the other wind gods.

The deity of the wind or the air is mentioned in a group in Pāli literature. The Vāyo devās came to listen to the Buddha’s preaching along with Prthivī (Pāṭhavī)\(^4\).

**(v) The rain god**

The rain is one of the most important natural aspects especially in India where all prosperity depends on mere gamble of rain. The primitive rain god Parjanya is not

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\(^1\) Mbh. I. 2. 124; 22. 20; 61. 58; 94. 12; 22. 20.

\(^2\) Mbh. I. 32. 2; 41. 3; 8. 14; 79. 12; 201. 7; II. 4. 11; 7. 13; III. 3. 14; 13. 12; 39. 23; 78. 18.

\(^3\) e.g., Macdonell, Vedic Mythology, A. Kuhn and Benfey, Orient und Occident on RV. (quoted from Vedic Mythology, p. 81).

\(^4\) Mahāsamaya sutta, Dīg. II. 7.
greatly praised in the RV. Parjanya is celebrated in three hymns of the RV\(^1\). He, in whom all beings and all worlds abide, is the augmenter of plants and waters\(^2\). The word *parjanya* is used in the appellative sense of rain cloud. With his roar Parjanya also smites sinners down (V. 83). Sometimes, Parjanya is another name for the sky\(^3\), and he is also the son of heaven (VII. 102. 1) in the Vedas.

In the Mbh., the word *parjanya* appears sometimes as fully personified rain god, and sometimes it is merely physical rain or monsoon\(^4\). Parjanya is the divine Nature who rains in time\(^5\), and who protects creatures\(^6\), with his rain. The cattle have the rain god as their patron\(^7\). As a divinity who is very much important for agriculture, he is to be offered the oblation of the first crops along with Vaiśvānara Agni (Mbh. III. 121. 18). But sometimes, the myths which are connected with the god Parjanya, such as, his appearing for helping Uttanka in the guise of a man (Mbh. I. 3. 173), and his coming for glorifying Arjuna’s birth (Mbh. I. 114. 45; 56) etc, are hardly relevant to his attributes.

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\(^1\) RV. V. 83 and VII. 101-102.

\(^2\) RV. VII. 101. 4 and 1.

\(^3\) It is said, in the A.V. XII. 1.12, the earth is mother, I am the son of the earth, Parjanya is the father, and in the A.V. XII. 1.42, The earth is the wife of Parjanya’.

\(^4\) Mbh. II. 22 26; III. 13. 28; 33. 44; 188. 69; 88; 297. 51; IV . 2. 13; 58. 11; V. 22. 11; VI. 43. 6; VIII. 15. 30.

\(^5\) Mbh. I. 62. 10; 102. 2; II. 30. 2; IV. 27. 15; V. 60. 17; VI. 1. 21; XII. 29. 48.; 92. 1.

\(^6\)Mbh. II. 42. 58; XIII. 32. 6.

\(^7\) Mbh. V. 34. 36; *parjanyāṁ thāḥ paśavāḥ*. 

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In the Pāli canon, Parjanya (Pajjunna) means mainly rain cloud. He is also the deity of rain cloud who came to listen to The Buddha’s preaching\(^1\). In Maccha Jātaka, Pajjunna appears as a king of storm-cloud. He was summoned by Sakka who understood The Buddha’s wish to get rain, and wore cloud as his under and outer garments, and rained for Kosala kingdom. Devatāsāmyutta, Saṃ., mentions the daughters of Pajjunna, Kokanadā and Culla Kokanadā. They sang in praise of the Buddha. They are said to have stunning beauty as the gleam of lightning (vijjutabhāsavāṇṇā).

(vi) The deities of the sun and the moon

It is said that the sun is praised in various names and forms in the Vedas. But it is also said that the essential and original character of many of the so-called solar divinities, in the Vedas, were by no means solar. The original and basic characters of these gods were quite different and that solar character has been superimposed on them in the course of the evolution of Vedic mythology\(^2\). Dandekar states that Sūrya is perhaps the only god in the Veda who can be regarded as a genuine solar divinity\(^3\). Therefore, this chapter will briefly sketch Sūrya, who may be said to be the most concrete sun god, and his attributes which are connected with nature. Ten entire hymns of the \(RV\)\(^4\) are dedicated to Sūrya alone. Sūrya is lauded both as a deity and also as a natural phenomenon. The most prominent feature of Sūrya as

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1 Mahāsamāya sutta Dīg. II. 7.


4 \(RV\) I. 50; 115; X. 158; 170.
a deity, in the RV, is far-sighted\(^1\), therefore he is the one who sees all beings, and beholds their good and bad deeds\(^2\). Sūrya is son of Aditi\(^3\), and is also generally identified with Agni.

Candra and Candramas, are the names of the moon, the latter occurring from the RV onwards, but the former being first used in this sense by the AV. Apart from his connection with Soma, the moon, who is greatly important from the point of view of agriculture and the growth of the plants, is not prominent in Vedic literature, unless, with some scholars, one recognizes him under different names\(^4\).

In the Pāli texts, quite a few myths are told with regard to Sūrya and Candra. Sūrya (Suriya) and Candra (Candimā or Candimasā) are not only the sun and the moon that glow above the sky but are also considered as the sun god and the moon god who are the faithful followers of The Buddha. They appear a number of times together in successive suttas. In Pāli literature, the deity Suriya is quite closely connected with the Buddha and Sakyans clan since Suriya is also called Ādicca\(^5\), a son of Āditi or Adityā putto according to Bhuddaghosa\(^6\), and it is said that Ādicca is gotra (gotta in Pāli term) name of the Buddha’s clan, the Sākyans\(^7\),

\(^{1}\) RV. VII. 35. 8; X. 37. 1.

\(^{2}\) RV. I. 50. 7; VI. I. 17; 51. 2; VII. 60. 2; VII. 63. 1.

\(^{3}\) RV. I. 50. 12; 191. 9; VIII. 90. 11.


\(^{5}\) Āṭānāṭiya sutta, Dig. III. 9.

\(^{6}\) Mahāvagga ṭikā. II. p. 227, Com. on Sakkapaṇha sutta, Dig. II. 8.

\(^{7}\) Pabbajjā sutta, SN. III. No. 423.
and the Buddha is called Ādiccabandhu. The story of Rāhu and the Sun and the Moon, which is known as a story of eclipses in the Mbh, is interestingly told in the Pāli literature. According to Saṃyutta Nikāya the young deva Candimā and Suriya had been seized by Rāhu. Then they remembered the Buddha, and recited a song in his praise. The Buddha, in response, requested Rāhu not to swallow the radiant sun and the moon, and to release them. The Buddha specially mentioned the sun as his child, mama pajā. Then Rāhu hurriedly released the young devas Suriya and Candimā, and went to Vepacitti, the lord of the asuras. Suriya and Candimā were present at the preaching of Mahāsamyasutta, Dīg. In Jātaka, Suriya was born as a sun deity, as a result of giving away his wealth in his previous life. Candramas (Candimasā) is mentioned again in Sam. He is said to be a young deva of stunning beauty, illuminating the entire Jetavana.

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1 Pārāyaṇa sutta, SN. V. No. 1128.

2 Devaputta saṃyutta, Saṅh. I. 2. 9 and 10.

3 Scholars differ in their interpretations of the phrase 'mama pajā'. Buddhaghosa explains in Saṃ.A that it means ‘disciple and spiritual son’, and also Bhikkhu Bodhi (Trans. of Saṅh, p. 388, n. 159) says that the two young devas Candimā and Suriya attained ‘the fruit of stream entry (sotāpannaphala) after the Buddha’s preaching (Mahāsamyasutta, Dīg. II. 7), hence the Blessed one says ‘my child’. While Malalaseker (Dict. of Pāli proper names, Vol. I. p. 245) says that the Buddha speaks thus with reference to his own (legendary) solar descendent.

4 Bilāri kosiya Jātaka, Book. X. No. 450.

5 Devaputta saṃ, Saṅh. II. 1.
In the Mbh., the father of the tragic hero Karṇa, Sūrya has various faces. On the one hand he appears as a radiant natural element\(^1\), the sun, and on the other hand he is the sun god. Sūrya shines upon the good and the wicked\(^2\). Sūrya appeared in front of Kunti in honey-yellow complexion, with large arms, and conch-like neck, and he was, as it were, laughing. He wore upper arm bracelets, and he appeared to set fire to space\(^3\). It seems that in the Epic period sun worship was quite popular. References of sun worship are scattered throughout Mbh., though sometimes Sun god is considered as not equal to the great sages\(^4\), to the other deities and also to some other nature objects\(^5\). It is said that Sūrya should always be worshipped, and

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\(^1\) Mbh. I. 1. 13; I. 9. 6; I. 49. 27.

\(^2\) Mbh. XII. 74. 24; equality of nature is seen in this verse as: sādhvasādhūndhārayatiḥ bhūmit, sādhvasādhūṁstāpayatiḥa sūryaḥ, sādhvasādhūn vātayatiḥa vāyuḥ, āpastathā sādhvasādhūn vahanti.

\(^3\) Mbh. III. 290. 8: madhupiṅgo mahābāhuḥ, kambugrīvo hasanniva arigadi baddhamukuto disaḥ prajvālayannīva.

\(^4\) The story given in the Mbh. XIII. 98. 99 is as follows: Once Jamadagni threatened Sūrya to pierce Sūrya with arrows for scorching his wife Reṇukā. Sūrya then begged his forgiveness, and offered an umbrella and a pair of sandals to the sage, hence offering of an umbrella and a pair of sandals to Brāhmaṇas became a tradition.

The story given in the Mbh. V. 107. 11 and 13, also tells that Sūrya’s power is lesser than that of the sages: Sūrya does not pass beyond the southern limit which was fixed by Manu Sāvarṇī and the son of Yavakrīta

\(^5\) The story in the Mbh. III. 101-102 is as follows: Once Vindhya Mountain was angry with Sūrya since he circumambulated only Mt. Meru, then it grew fast and obstructed the path of the Sun.
one should not sleep after sunrise (Mbh. II. 186. 5). Sūrya has a beautiful daughter Tapaśī who married the human king Saṃvaraṇa, the devotee of Sūrya (Mbh. I. 160). Sūrya, naturally, is the lord of the Grahas while the moon is the lord of stars\(^1\). Sūryaloka is also mentioned. It is said that if one bathes with restrained mind in the ford of the Sun and some other holy places, or one who gives an ox in charity, goes to the Sūryaloka\(^2\). Sūrya is a faithful father. He appeared in a dream of his son Karna and asked him not to grant the request of Indra (Mbh. III. 284). A Naga who used to drag the car of Sūrya described innumerable merits of the Sun (Mbh. XII. 350). Besides these myths, there are some other references mentioned which are difficult to understand\(^3\).

Candra and Candramas in the Mbh., are generally referred to as delighter of eyes and hearts, and it is the gleaming physical moon rather than a deity which is mostly sung about. Candramas is believed to remove sin\(^4\), and it is said to move through all creatures as a witness\(^5\). The moon is said to be reborn. The moon-connected myths are scattered throughout the Mbh. The swallowing of the sun and the moon by an asura Rāhu is mentioned in Mbh. I. 17. 5. Candra is mentioned as a protective deity along with Maruts, Agni and Sūrya (Mbh. I. 24. 8). Candra was consecrated as the king of the Brāhmaṇas in the holy

\(^1\) Mbh. XIV. 43. 6; sūryo grahāṇāmadhipo nakṣatrāṇāṃ ca candramāḥ.

\(^2\) Mbh. 3. 81. 38; 48; 82. 97; 99; 3. 184. 8

\(^3\) Mbh. V. 108. 13: the daughter of Harimedha named Dhvajavati remained fixed to the sky by the command of the Sun.

\(^4\) Mbh. III. 34. 76; 198. 52; mucyate sarvapāpebhīyas tamobhya iva candramāḥ.

\(^5\) III. 75. 9; candramāḥ sarvabhūtānām antaś caraṇi sākṣīvat.
place Badarī (Mbh. V. 109. 9). Once Candra was born on earth as a sage Rṣika. He is said to be the best of Diti’s sons (Mbh. I. 61. 30). His wife Rohniṇī is often mentioned as one who is dearest to him¹.

Thus we have briefly seen the deities from the concept of nature and their connected myths. But, many of these deities in the Vedas, in fact, nearly all the divinities except Agni, have almost faded away in later literature, even if they do exist, they are found in scattered pieces of myths, and they have become meager in their power compared to the deities of a later origin. The entire world of the gods including the entire Vedic pantheon are ruled over by the Trinity, i.e., Viṣṇu, Śiva and Brahmadeva.

(vii) The deity of fire, Agni

Among the many divinities connected with natural elements, Agni is selected here for research. Again, out of his diverse characteristics ‘the less known aspects’ are specially focused on. For, among many deities whose names are directly borrowed from nature Agni is, perhaps, the only deity who is fully personified as well as satisfactorily prominent throughout the ages. Through the wide-ranging characteristics of Agni one may see various, or perhaps, almost all aspects of Epic and Vedic mythology. It makes one wonder how Agni remained in his important position and how he did not become extinct while most of the nature-based divinities faded away while some others even sank into oblivion.

¹Mbh. V. 115. 9; IX. 34. 54.
Now, fire was considered one of the most important and sacred objects throughout the ancient world. In many countries it was used in rituals when oblations were offered, or it was used as a sign of sacrifices and rituals. Many ancient people believed that fire threw diseases and evils away from them and from their houses. However, it appears that the fire god himself was seldom worshipped in countries other than India. In the mythologies of Greece, Egypt, and China and also many other mythologies, the sun god was highly worshipped but the fire god was not separately adored. But it was in India alone that the fire-god was treated as the most important deity, particularly in the Vedic period. The fire god Agni was not only a deity to be worshipped but also a ritual itself without which a rite could not be performed. It is not only sacrificial fire that is admired but also many other forms of Agni are adulated with beautiful songs. The praises for Agni are, perhaps, together with those of Uṣas, the most beautiful ones amongst the entire Vedic hymns. They are sophisticated with poetic imagination, comparison, and beautiful descriptions.

It is noticed that the first hymn of each Mañḍala, except the 8th and the 9th, begins with a prayer to Agni. In fact, the RV. itself starts with the song of Agni. He is the only god who is invoked every day ‘divedive’ along with sūrya who is the other form of Agni. And he is the only god who is born every day ‘aharahrjāyate (AV. X. 52. 3.).’ This itself shows the important role of Agni during the sacrifice. Among all the personalities, in the RV. and also in Pāli literature, the most prominent nature of Agni is undoubtedly the sacrificial fire. He is characterized as a ruler of sacrifice ‘rājantam adhvārānām (RV. I. 1. 8); a
god of sacrifice ‘yajñasya deva (RV I. 1. 1)’; the best sacrificer ‘yajīṣṭha’; a priest ‘ṛtvik, hotṛ, purohita, adhvaryu’ a butter faced ‘ghṛta pratīka’ etc. For this sacrifice, he is also a messenger or an envoy ‘dūta’, and a purifier ‘pāvaka’. He is also commonly called the most youthful and youngest god ‘yaviṣṭha’, since sacrifice is every day’s work and he is born every day…

It may be said that Agni is the most human-like god as well as the god who surpasses even the mightiest gods. He knows well the gods and the men. He is called one who has faces on all sides ‘viśvatomukha,’ and also a far strider ‘prthupragāmā’. He is also called one who dwells in all mankind ‘viśvacarṣani (RV. I. 27. 9)’, since he goes anywhere ‘viśvāyu (RV. I. 27. 3)’ with his wide stride. On the one hand he is easily approachable like a father to the son ‘piteva sūnave’, on the other hand, he strikes terror even in the heart of the gods. Agni is more closely connected with human life than any other god, therefore many times he is called a lord of the house ‘grhapati’, at other times he is called the head of the heaven ‘mūrdhā divah (RV. I. 59. 2)’. He is the most friendly and sweet natured deity as he is called brother ‘bhrāta (RV. VIII. 48. 16)’. He is an

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1 RV. III. 10. 7; IV. 1. 4; VI. 6. 1.
2 RV. III. 1. 18 etc.
3 RV. IV. 4. 3; 5.2; 6.2;10.4; VII. 9. 1; 15. 10.
4 RV. IV. 2.10; 4. 11; 12. 3-4; V. 1. 10; 3. 11; 8.6; 27. 3; VI. 5. 1; 4; 6. 2; 15. 14; VIII. 33. 27; 44. 26; 49. 4; 91. 20; 64. 3 etc.
5 RV. I. 70. 6, devānām janma maratāśca vidvān.
6 RV. I. 97. 6-7.
7 Cf. Medonell, ‘Vedic Mythology’, p. 95
industrious god who wakes at Dawn ‘uṣarbudhaḥ (RV. I. 14. 9)’, therefore a lover of Dawn ‘uṣo na jāra (RV. I. 69. 1)’. He is a deity with a benevolent nature who leads people to success, and an increaser of welfare ‘puṣṭivardhana (RV. I. 31. 5)’. He is the one who gives heroic sons and fame ‘yaśasam viravattamam (RV. I. 1. 3)’. He is a mighty and fierce natured god since he is the son of strength ‘sahasasīnu or sahasaputra’ and lord of the energy ‘ūrjām pati’. He is a well-formed ‘suṣūtam’ infant ‘garbha’ (RV. II. 10. 3)’. Agni knows how to save a person who is at the point of death point ‘upārana (AV. V. 30. 1)’, and he understands immortality ‘amṛta (AV. V. 30. 14)’. Poets beg him to burn every kind of voracious devil ‘viśvasamatinam’.

Thus, the personality of Vedic Agni has spread widely, and is manifest not only in one place but everywhere. This wide spread Agni is well expressed in the hymn, RV. I. 70. 3-4 as,

garbho yo apāṇi garbho vanānāṁ garbhaṁca sthātāṁ garbhaṁcarathāṁ /
adrau cidasmā antarduroṇe viśān na viśvō amṛtāḥ svādhīḥ //

The all pervading immortal (god) of pious thoughts, who is in the interior of the waters, of the trees, of the immovables, and of the moving creatures, as he is of the people, feels as happy in the inside of a rock as in a home. (Velankar's translation).

However, although Agni keeps his personality and its importance fairly firm, he is turned into, more or less, a minor god in the later period. Especially, in Buddhist literature his function appears to be almost nil.
Agni (Aggi), in older Tipiṭakas, does not seem to mean Agni-deva. Most of the times the word aggi simply means ‘fire’, ‘sparks’ or ‘flames’. The term Agnihotra (aggihuttam) occurs especially when certain rigid brāhmaṇas are referred to. Agghuttam is considered to be the best among sacrifices¹. It seems that there were certain brāhmaṇas who were called Aggikas, ‘the votary of fire’, and it may be that these brāhmaṇas continuously tended the sacred fire. Sānyuttanikāya² and Suttanipāta³ mention the name of a brāhmaṇa ‘Aggika-Bhāradvāja’⁴ who persistently offers oblation to the fire.

Aggi is, many times, used in a mixed sense, i.e., it implies both the deity Agni and the sacrifice. The sentence, ‘tena kho pana samayena aggikabhāradvājassa brāhmaṇassā sappiṇā pāyaso sannihiho hoti—aggīṁ jhuissāmi, aggihuttam paricarissāmi’,⁵ tells us that tending the fire was an every day affair for some brāhmaṇas, and also suggests itself that there was worshipping of Agni-deva (Aggi-deva) is also suggested.

¹ The phrase ‘aggihutamukkha yaṭṭha’ occurs quite often in the Pāli canon, such as, Brāhmaṇo vaggio. Maj. II. 5; Sela sutta, SN. III. 7 (No. 568); Bhesajjakkhadhaka, Mahāvaggapāli (VI. 182), Vin. etc.
³ Vasala sutta. SN. I. 7.
⁴ However, the name of this brāhmaṇa in two texts seems to be a different person. Perhaps, Bhāradvājas were especially the worshippers of the sacred fire.
⁵ The sentence occurs in Aggikasutta, Saṃh. VII. I. 8, and similar expression is also there in Sundarikabhāradvāja sutta, SN. III. 4.
As a deity, he is mentioned a few times mainly in the Jātakas in the name of Jātaveda or Aggi-deva\(^1\) or Aggi-Bhagavā\(^2\). In the Jātakas too, the god Aggi is generally mentioned in a negative sense. Bodhisatta used to show the futileness of serving the fire god who cannot give any benefit to human beings\(^3\). A very different style of renunciation (or fire worship throughout one’s life without marriage) is introduced in Asātamanta Jātaka\(^4\). This Jātaka tells us a story that in some authentic brāhmaṇa family fire is kindled at the time of birth of a son, and it is not allowed to extinguish till the son can make a decision for himself. The son can decide either to serve the fire god (Jātaveda) forever, i.e., to renounce worldly

\(^1\) This name occurs only once in Jātaka (No. 454. Ghata Jāt.), not as a name of fire god but of a person.

\(^2\) Vaṭṭa Jāt. no. 35; Asātamanta Jāt. no. 61; Naṅguṭṭha Jāt. no. 144, etc.

\(^3\) The story given in Naṅguṭṭha Jātaka (No. 144) is as follows: The Bodhisatta who wanted to offer the flesh of ox to Aggi-Bhagavā with proper seasoning went in search of salt, leaving the flesh there. But when he returned the flesh has been eaten by hunters. Thinking that if Aggi-Bhagavā could not look after his own property he cannot protect others, Bodhisatta quenched that fire and became an ascetic. However, this kind of reference also indirectly shows that fire worship was quite popular among the commoners.

\(^4\) The story in Asātamanta Jātaka (Jat. A. I. 61). is as follows: A mother of young brāhmaṇa who wanted her son to renunciate the world, made him learn about the wickedness of a woman. Bodhisatva, the teacher of the young boy, understood the wish of boy’s mother and introduced his own old mother to the boy. Then, he showed him accordingly how a woman turns out to be wicked when she is enchanted by a man. The old mother of Bodhisatva tried to kill her son, i.e., Bodhisatva, being overpowered by passion for the boy. When the boy saw it, he, without any hesitation, went to the forest.
life, or to study. This Jātaka shows how highly ascetic life was recommended in society. It seems that some parents sincerely wished their son to go to the forest and to dedicate himself to worshipping the fire god for life. It also shows that ascetic life itself meant to worship the fire or the fire god. However, this kind of renunciation seems to be very different from the general retirement of the Hidus. This type of renunciation seems to be neither of the type of the Epic society nor of the Buddhist society. For, in the Epic society retreat to the forest generally after completing their worldly duty, and in the Buddhists society take renunciation without either getting married or serving the fire. However, this man was asked to renounce the world without marriage and continue serving the fire throughout his life.

Thus, in the Pāli texts, where the rituals are condemned, references to the god Agni are few and far between, though we understand through a study reflection of the negative examples that the fire and the fire god were popularly adored.

In the Mahābhārata, Agni still preserves his Vedic qualities in the praises\(^1\). Agni is praised by different names, such as, purifier ‘pāvaka’, ‘pāvana’, smoke-

\(^1\) Mbh. XIII. 84. 17 reads:

\begin{verbatim}
   jagatpatir anirdeśyāh sarvagah sarvabhāvanah /
   hṛcchayaḥ sarvabhūtānāṁ jyeṣṭho rudrādapi prabhub //
\end{verbatim}

"Agni is the lord of the universe. He is incapable of being apprehended or described. He is capable of going everywhere, and present in all things. He is the creator of all beings. He lives in the hearts of all creatures, gifted with great power. He is older than Rudra himself."

(Dutt's translation)
bannered ‘dhūmaketu’, having flames as tufts ‘śikhi’, destroyer of sin ‘pāpaḥā’,
black-tracked ‘kṛṣṇavartman’, mouth of the gods ‘devānām mukhā’, sacrifice
itself ‘yajñā’, carrier of oblation ‘havyavāhana’, etc. Besides these functional
names he is also called, citrabhānu, vibhāvasu, jvalana, plavaga, pitgeśa, hutāśa,
bhūritejas, etc. But even though he bears all these different names, it is also said
in the Mbh., that there is only one Agni but he is seen as many according to his
nature1.

Agni’s connection with water is mentioned several times in the Mbh. Agni is born
of water2, ocean is the abode of pātāla Agni3, the fire of anger ‘vairāgni or
kopāgni’ is very difficult to be calmed just as aurvāgni in the ocean4. Due to this
connection, Agni sometimes hides himself in the water. Once Agni hid himself in
the ocean, from the fear of Niyata rite. He asked Atharvan to carry oblation to the
gods on his behalf. The fishes reported him, then Agni cursed them. Though
Atharvan coaxed him, he refused to come back. He abandoned his entire body,
and entered into the earth. At his disappearance the world was frightened. Then,
the gods and the sages worshipped him. Atharvan churned the ocean and from
there Agni came back5. But sometimes, Agni refused to enter the water because,

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1 Mbh. III. 207. 3; agniradātveka eva bahutvartho cāsyā karmasā.
2 Mbh. V. 15. 32; adbhyo agnih.
3 Mbh. I. 19. 6; pātālaajvalanāvāsa.
4 Mbh. XII. 137. 41; aurvāgniriva sāgare.
5 Another reference to Agni’s hiding occurs in the Mbh. I. 33. 8: it is said that Agni hid
himself in the cave. Similar story is found also in Mbh. XIII. 84. The story tells that once
Agni retreated first to the water, but due to frog’s treachery his place was known to the gods,
though he was born in the water his ubiquitous power would be vanishing in water\textsuperscript{1}. However, at Brhaspati’s argument ‘everything accepts that which comes from it (svayonim bhajate sarva)’ he entered the water and searched for Indra there.

His figures and names are sometimes in contradiction with each other. The stories related to Agni, in the Mbh., put him in a position where his powers are much trimmed down, and his persona too, is no longer adorable, except in plain flattery. It appears that, in some places, he even lost his confidence. When the light of some beings was exceeding his own he usually shrank away. And strikingly, several times Agni tried to withdraw himself from Fire-godhood when he faced some difficulties. Once (III. 207), effulgence of the sage Aṅgirasas exceeded that of Agni owing to the severe penance performed by him. The sage’s light illuminated the whole universe. Agni was, then, greatly aggrieved by that effulgence and, tried to give up his own Fire-godhood. The sage restrained Agni and had him keep his original post\textsuperscript{2}. When he failed to win over the love from the

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then, he moved to aśvattha tree, but again an elephant informed his presence to the celestials, Agni again moved to śami tree, and this place was reported by a parrot. The gods begged him to come out to help win over the asuras, then only he came out of the hidings.

\textsuperscript{1} Mbh. V. 15. 25 and 31; Agni’s argument is: teṣām sarvatragam tejāḥ svāsu yonīṣu śāmyati. (the ubiquitous power vanishes before their sources (Buitenen’s translation)

\textsuperscript{2} Mbh. I. 20; Some extraordinary lights could easily deceive people, and that makes Agni humble. When Garuḍa was born, his effulgence was glowing so much so that gods thought that that light was coming out from Agni. Then the gods went to Agni, and prostrated
wives of the seven great sages, again, he withdrew himself to the forest and tried even to commit suicide\(^1\).

Once Agni found himself in a perplexed situation. When he was demanded as a witness by a \textit{rākṣasa} who wanted to carry the wife of Bhrigu, claiming that she was his wife, he hesitated because he was afraid of telling untruth as well as incurring the curse of sage Bhrigu\(^2\). This resulted in Agni’s incurring the curse of the sage that he would become ‘eater of everything, \textit{sarvakhaśa}’. Enraged by this, Agni withdrew himself from sacrifice and caused havoc to the gods who survived only on the sacrificial food offered by the \textit{brāhmaṇas} and carried to them by Agni.

As Agni is designated as a priest, a number of times, he disguised himself as a \textit{brāhmaṇa}. He appeared as a hungry \textit{brāhmaṇa} in Khāṇḍava forest, and with the help of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna he could consume that forest and satiate his hunger (Mbh. I. 215-225). When he was accused of adultery, he disguised himself in a \textit{brāhmaṇa}’s attire\(^3\).

\footnotesize

\begin{itemize}
  \item themselves before him, begged him not to spread his light too fiercely. Agni humbly said that the light was not his but Garuḍa’s who is equal to him in fieriness.
  \item Read about his ludicrous attitude with regard to women and the related story from subsection ‘Kāmāgni’.
  \item Mbh. I. 5. 17-26; bhīto anṛtācca śāpācca bhrgoḥ.
  \item Read this incident from subsection Kāmāgni in detail.
\end{itemize}
Other than the various Vedic names, Fire and its names are well divided according to the function suggested by each name, e.g., the fire which is known as the internal heat (antarāgni) by which all foods are digested is called Viśvabhuk Agni\(^1\), and the fire of fear and wrath is Svāhā Agni\(^2\), Kāmāgni (or Kāma Pāvaka) is fire of desire, and Bharata Agni burns dead creature (Mbh. III. 212. 6). The Fire who appears at the end of Yuga is called Saṃvantaka Vahni (Mbh. III. 186. 60) or Kālāgni, the fire of doomsday\(^3\) etc.

As it is noticed from the above stories, Agni myths, in the Mbh., can broadly be divided into two categories, i.e., Agni as house fire and Agni as a carrier of Vedic ritual. The former used to be in connection with women. Due to his residing in houses, affairs with women naturally formed part of the myth. The latter has various faces, such as, a witness, purifier, a priest, a brāhmaṇa, a sacrificer etc. Thus, in the Mbh., Agni still retains its Vedic names and functions, additionally he has some new functional names, and he is still widely worshipped by people. But, it is also noticed that in the Epic period Agni has fallen down to the status of a deity of less important.

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\(^1\) Mbh. III. 209. 17, and III. 275. 27 ‘Agni introduces himself as: ‘I am the one who dwells within the body, ‘aham antaḥ śarirastho bhūtānām’.

\(^2\) Mbh. III. 209. 22. This Svāhā fire is presented in everything and Svāhā is known as a daughter of Brhaspati, and in many places (Mbh. I. 191. 5, V. 102. 8, etc.) she is recognized as wife of Agni.

\(^3\) Mbh. I. 49. 24; III. 218. 32; IV. 64. 14; V. 81. 15; V. 174. 23; VII. 173. 58; XII. 273. 7 etc., read also III. 207-211 about genealogy of various fires and their names.
As we have observed, though Agni is praised throughout the ages, he is eulogized the most in the Vedas. Now, apart from the characteristics mentioned above, there are some more very important aspects of Agni which are seldom dealt with, such as, (i) the ordinary fire (ii) the fire of love, i.e., kāmāgni (iii) the forest fire (iv) the agriculture fire (v) the digestive fire (vi) the funeral fire and also (vii) the non-believers of the deity Agni. Let us now observe them one by one carefully.

(1) The Ordinary Fire

Though the sacrificial fire is predominant throughout the RV, the secular fire is also not neglected. Agni is said to enter into the wood with his flames like a carpenter, ‘gāhate takṣadvan eva śceti’, and he loosens the hard food with his might, sthīrā cidannā nirīnātyojasā ni sthīrāni cidojasā (RV. I. 127. 4). This sentence may be interpreted as sacrificial fire if we consider that the whole Vedic society was under the influence of sacrifice. However, if one sets free one’s own thoughts from all such premises, and observes this sentence rationally, one can easily envision that this Agni who breaks down food into a digestible form is the ordinary cooking fire.

Again, Agni is known to be the eater of various things. He is the only god who eats both the things offered and even those not offered. In this connection, the terms ‘bhaktam’ and ‘abhaktam’ are very much significant. In the RV. I. 127. 5., Sāyāna interprets the word bhaktam as ‘sevamānam’ (being served), abhaktam as ‘asevamānam’ (not being served). The word bhaktam generally means the ‘cooked food’ which is offered in the sacrifice. In other word, it means that Agni is invoked in sacrifice so that he himself can eat the cooked food (or offered food), and can also carry that food to the other gods. Therefore, in the word bhaktam,
there is no place for the ‘will of Agni’. He is invoked, therefore he eats. In this way Agni is passive and dormant. Then, what can really be meant by the word abhaktam? Here, one can imagine that Agni eats the food that is not cooked, and also not served for the sacrifice. Then, what can be the foods for the fire which are not cooked for the sacrifice? For Agni uncooked foods can be wood or forest, or it can also be the normal everyday food. Thus, in the word abhaktam, ‘strong will of Agni’ is underscored. In this way Agni is active and practical. So in the word bhaktam and abhaktam, not only the attributes of Agni, i.e., sacrificial and secular, are implied but also the double nature of Agni, i.e., passive and active, is also understood. Another appellation of Agni the all-devouring god ‘viśvāda’ (RV. VIII. 44. 26) also implies the same thing. And these terms, i.e., bhaktam, abhaktam, and viśvāda, are very much similar to the word ‘sarvabhakṣa’ or the ‘all-eater’ which Agni obtained from Bhṛgu’s curse mentioned earlier (Mbh. I. 5).

The secular fire-deity occurs in the Mbh. in a mythological story. Agni was present at Damayanti’s svayāṁvara in order to obtain her. However, knowing that the heart of Damayanti was inclined only towards Nala, Agni blessed Nala and granted him a boon that he would be present wherever Nala wanted him¹. Nala used Agni’s blessing in cooking, and Agni himself was present in Nala’s cooking as secular fire (Mbh. III. 73. 12-14).

¹ Mbh. III. 54. 30: agnir ātmabhavam prādād yatra vāñchati naisadhah/
lokān ātmaprabhārīścaiva daradu tatvai hutāśanah //

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Thus, in the Vedas secular fire is referred to and is praised and in the Mbh. too, mythology in regard with the secular fire is mentioned, but no special reference is made to secular fire and its myth in Pāli literature.

(2) The lust-fire or Kāmāgni

Agni is also considered as a deity who fulfills the desire of beings. And many times Agni stands for passion or lust, especially in Atharva Veda Kāmāgni means ‘fire of lust’ or ‘fire-like lust’. In the AV. III. 21. 4, Agni is directly called Kāma or lust as; ‘He who is all eating god, and whom they call Kāma, Desire, whom they call giver, receiving one...yo devo viśvād yamu kāmamāhuryan dātāram pratigṛṇantamāhuḥ’, and also in the AV. VI. 36. 3, Agni is referred to as a deity who is desirous of what is and what is to be, ‘agnih paresu dhāmasu kāmo bhūtasya bhavyasya samrādeko vi rājati’. Agni and Kāma are compared with each other and, sometimes they are directly equated. Once, in the RV. III. 30. 19., Kāma is compared with forest (or sea) fire.; ‘urvaiwa paprathe kāma’. Sāyaṇa explains ūrva as ‘anavāptakāma vaḍavānala’.

Kāma is said to be born prior to the gods, and is the primeval seed of mind\(^1\), Agni too, was born first\(^2\). Thus, Kāma and Agni were born earlier to anything. It may also be said that Agni is the physical expression of mental Kāma.

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1 RV. X. 129. 4: kāmastadagre samavartādhi manaso retaḥ prathamam yadāsit.

2 RV. 4. 1. 11: saḥ (agnih) jāyate prathamah.
In the Mbh., the fire Kāma (Kāma pāvakā) has extreme beauty, no one in the heaven matches in beauty, and he was so named by the gods because of his matchlessness\(^1\). The term Kāmāgni, in the Mbh., may be interpreted in two ways, i.e., ‘the fire of desire’ and ‘the fire (deity) who has desire.’ On the one hand Agni is the giver of desired things to people, on the other hand it is not unusual to see that Agni himself is caught up in the flame of lust. In the Mbh. Agni shows somewhat ludicrous attitude towards women. Once, in the Mbh\(^2\), Agni was said to be put into the power of lust. He felt almost uncontrollable desire towards the wives of seven great seers. Thinking that he could have them with his normal form, he decided to assume the form of the household fire (gārhapatya) to look at them and to be touched by them perpetually. But when he realized that he could not obtain them his heart was sick with love. He set his mind on abandoning his life and left for the forest. This eventually resulted in uniting him with the love sick Svāhā and giving them Skanda as their son.

He was accused of adultery. In the kingdom of Māhiṣumati, the fire was not burning even though it was strongly fanned by everyone. Agni waited till the princess of Māhiṣumati fanned him gently. With lust, he disguised himself as a brāhmaṇa, made love with the daughter of king of Māhiṣumati, and was accused of adultery by the king. Getting furious at the king’s accusation Agni threatened to burn his kingdom. As a result, Agni could marry the princess, and so the kingdom was protected (Mbh. II. 28).

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\(^1\) Mbh. III. 209. 23:

\textit{tridive yasya sadrśo nāsti rūpena kaścana /}

\textit{atulyatvāt kṛto devair nāmnā kāmas tu pāvakāḥ //}

\(^2\) Mbh. III. 213. 44-50
Agni attended Damayanti’s *swayamvara* along with Indra and other gods to win over her, however it ended in blessing Damayanti’s real lover Nala.

Thus, in the Vedas and in the *Mbh.* Agni fulfils the other’s *kāma* as well as his own. Sometimes he is identified with Kāma and at other times he puts himself into Kāma. In the canonical Pāli literature, though *kāma* is one of the main subjects to be discussed philosophically, identification of *kāma* and *aggi* is strangely not found.

(3) **The Forest Fire**

In the *RV* the forest fire is described and extolled not infrequently. When Agni is being sung of as forest fire, much more lively and picturesque poetic imagination is used than is used in the case of the sacrificial fire. In this case the figure of Agni is more fierce, mighty and speedy. Vivid similes are employed here\(^1\).

Agni is a forest eater ‘*vanada* (*RV*. II. 4. 5)’. When it is forest fire, many a time his black tracks ‘*krṣṇam ema* (*RV*. I. 58. 4; or ‘*krṣṇavyathi*, *RV*. II. 4. 6)’; black path ‘*krṣṇādḥvā* (*RV*. II. 4. 6)’; and dark-backed ‘*nīlapṛṣṭha* (*RV*. III. 7. 3)’ etc., are referred to. When he goes forth, the movable and the immovable things shake

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\(^1\) e.g., *RV*. II. 4. 4: When Agni is among the plants his tongue becomes like a harnessed horse that shakes the hair of his tail (*vi yo bhāriḥbhradosadhīṣu jihvāmatyo na rathyo dodhavīti vārān*); and also *RV*. II. 4. 6: Agni, on his black track, shines in beautiful hue as if the sky smiles with the stars (*krṣṇādḥvā tapū ranvaściketa dyauriva smayamāno nabhobhib*) etc.
in terror. He devours the forest as the king eats the rich ones\(^1\). Agni climbed the wood and with his tongue he struck the rock\(^2\). And he shears the hair of earth\(^3\). Agni burns over desert places like a rushing flood (\textit{visitaḥ dhāviyān}, RV. VI. 12. 5) and is as swift as a thief (\textit{tāyu}, RV. VI. 12. 5). Agni is like a steed neighing eagerly for the pasture\(^4\). The poets praise Agni and beseech him not to burn up the places where the cattle find refuge. Agni is urged by the wind (\textit{vātajīta} RV. I. 58. 4; or \textit{vātacodita}, RV. I. 58. 4; 141. 7). His course is difficult to check as of the steed urged to run with all speed\(^5\). To the forest he speeds like a swift bird\(^6\). Agni roars like water down the chariot ways\(^7\). His roaring terrifies the birds\(^8\). With his smoke-bannered flame he attacks the forest trees\(^9\). He eats and chews the forests with sharp teeth\(^10\). And he compasses all forests with his glowing flame, leaves them blackened with his tongue\(^11\). His sharpened flames which are like the gleams of light, devour the forests with their teeth\(^12\). Agni flickers with his fiery glow and

\(^1\) RV. I. 65. 7: \textit{ibhyānna rājā vanānyātti}.  
\(^2\) RV. VIII. 72. 4: \textit{aruhadvanan drśadaṇ jihvāvadhīt}.  
\(^3\) RV. I. 65. 8: \textit{dāti romā prthivyāḥ}.  
\(^4\) RV. VII. 3. 2: \textit{prothadaśvo na yavase 'visyan}.  
\(^5\) RV. I. 65. 6: \textit{atyo nājmantsarga pratātath}.  
\(^6\) RV. I. 66. 2: \textit{takvā na bhūrāvāna sīṣakti paya na}.  
\(^7\) RV. II. 4. 6: \textit{pathā rathyeva svānīt}.  
\(^8\) RV. I. 94. 11: \textit{svanāduta bibhyuh patatrināḥ}.  
\(^9\) RV. I. 94. 10: \textit{ād invasi vanino dhūmaketunā}.  
\(^10\) RV. I. 143. 5: \textit{jambhaistigaitairatti bhavati}.  
\(^11\) RV. VI. 60. 10: \textit{arcīsā vanā viśvā pariśvajat kṛṣṇā kṛṣṇott jihvāyā}.  
\(^12\) RV. VIII. 43. 3: \textit{ārokhā iva ghedaha tigmā agne tava tviṣaḥ dadhirvanāṇi bapsati}.  

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is splendid in the woods. In the verse RV. I. 58. 4 the poet describes the course of forest fire as:

vi vatajito atase su tiṣate vṛthā juhābhīh sṛṇyā tuviṣvaniḥ /
trsū yadagne vanino vṛṣāyase kṛṣṇan ta ema ruṣadürme ajara //

Urged by the wind he spreads through dry wood as he lists, armed with his tongues for sickles, with mighty roar. Black is your path, Agni, ageless, with glittering waves. When like a bull you rush eager to the trees. (Griffith’s translation)

Forest fire is mentioned once in the Jātaka. Once in a region of the Magadha kingdom, dāvaggi, or the forest fire broke out and tried to burn the entire forest. This forest fire rolled the flames and roared as if to devour the bhikkhus. But when the Bhikkhus came near to the Buddha it went out on its own. The story is:

Once upon a time Boddhisatta, in the form of a young quail, was left behind in a nest with other birds by his parents when a forest fire broke out. He prayed that by the act of truth the flame should go back and should save his life and that of the other. Then Jātaveda went like a torch and plunged himself in water.

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1 RV. VIII. 43. 8: arciṣā jāṭjanabhavan agnirvaneṣu rocate.

2 Vaṭṭakajātakavananā, Jāt. A. l. 35.
The etymology of Jātaveda is given in this text as; ‘so hi jātova vedayati pabbāyati, tasmā jātavedo ’ti vuccati’\(^1\). In Visuddhimagga\(^2\), dosa is compared to dāvaggi one who can burn ones own residence (attano nissayadahanaraso).

In the Mbh., a forest Agni is implied in the famous Khāṇḍava episode. Agni devoured a whole forest with the help of Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa.

(4) *The Agricultural Fire*

Through the forest fire, a very valuable piece of information can be extracted. Some verses of the forest fire show that those fires are not accidental ones but are put on intentionally in order to get land for agriculture.

Throughout the world, at the early stages of learning the skill of agriculture, setting a forest on fire for acquiring land for growing crops was a very common practice. Even now there are some people who live on this kind of land in some remote mountainous villages in Korea and in India as well. And this fire is surprisingly well praised in the Vedas, in a beautiful poetic form.

From the above mentioned verse RV. I. 58. 4, the word jukūbihiḥ sṛṇyā which is translated as *his tongue (flames) for sickles*, and from the words rājā krṣtinām mānuṣiṇām ‘the king of human, i.e., the agricultural human nation (RV. I. 59. 5)’,

\(^1\) The etymology of Jātaveda is given in Mbh. (II. 28. 29) differently as, *vedāstvadartham jātāśca jātavedāstato hyasi.*

we can infer that fire was being used for the agricultural purpose. The agricultural fire is well described in RV. I. 95.10 as:

dhanvantrots△ hṛnte gātumūrmiṁ śukrārūmibhirabhī nakṣatī kṣām /
viśvā sanānī jaddareṣu dhatteṅtarnavāsu carati prasūṣu //

*In dry spot he makes stream, and course, and torrent, and inundates the earth with floods that glisten. All ancient things within his maw he gathers, and moves among the new fresh-sprouting grasses.* (Griffith’s translation)

This verse possibly implies that the fire, after burning the forests, swallowing everything, again entering into the plants or crops, gives them energy, and helps them to sprout.

Comparing Agni often with a bull (or ox) is also not insignificant. RV. I. 94. 10 compares Agni’s roaring with a bull (*vrśabhasyeva te ravaḥ*). Also, RV. II. 4, 7 reads as follows:

sa yo vyasthādabhi dakṣadurvāṁ, paśurnaiti svayuragopāḥ /
agniḥ śociśmāṁ atasānyuṣṇan kṛṣṇavyathirasvadayanna bhūma //

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1 Also, in the RV. VI. 16. 39, Agni’s might is compared with a bull who has sharpened horn
(vā ugra iva śaryahā tiṃṣāṛīgo na varṇasagah)
Around, consuming the broad earth, he wanders, free roaming like an ox without a herdsman. Agni refulgent, burning up the bushes, with blackened lines, as though the earth he seasoned. (Griffith’s translation)

This verse quite clearly shows that Agni is used for tillage preparing the ground by burning the weeds and bushes. In the verse VI. 6. 5, again the force of Agni is compared to a bull’s tongue. This verse seems to show that Agni who darts forth to the forest to prepare a fertile land, is just like a bull who tills.

This agricultural Agni is also compared with a snake who wiggles. In RV. V. 9. 4, Agni is significantly compared with a snake and a bull both of whom are very important to make land fertile. In this verse Agni is said to be like an offspring of wriggling snake, when he consumes many woods like an ox in the mead.\(^1\)

In another verse it is said, he repeatedly spreads himself over the field, whether fertile or barren.\(^2\) His steed (flames) running quickly leaving kr̥nasītāsa ‘dark furrow (RV. I. 140. 4)’ behind them. Here again, the word kr̥nasītāsa clearly shows that the forest fire was being used for making lands for agriculture.

In another verse reads, “he removes old age from the plants, and produces for them another spirit and life.”\(^3\) “Over the desert he urges flames along the slopes

\(^1\) RV. V. 9. 4: uta sma durgbhiyase putro na hvāryānām /
     purū yo dagdhāsi vanagne paśurna yavase //

\(^2\) RV. I. 127. 6: apnasvaṭiśurvarāsviśṭaniśrtanāsviśṭanib.

\(^3\) RV. I. 140. 8: tāsām jārām pramuśkanneti nānadadasum paraśī janayatījvamāstrtam.
and he has established new customs with the help of his continuously trotting horses\textsuperscript{1}. The following verse (RV. I. 140. 9) is a good example of agriculture - fire which is described in a metaphorical way:

\begin{verbatim}
adhvāsam pari mātū riḥannaha tuvigrebhiḥ satvabhīrītī vi jrayah /
vayo dadhatpadvate reriḥatsadānu śyenī sacate vartanīrāha //
\end{verbatim}

Licking the mantle of the Mother, far and wide he wanders over fields with beasts that flee apace. Strengthening all that walk, licking up all around, a blackened path, forsooth, he leaves where'er he goes. (Griffith's translation)

(5) The Digestive Fire

The fire or natural heat of the stomach, which is a principal element in digestion, has been assimilated with Agni even from the Vedic period. This fire is praised always under the name of vaiśvānara. The word vaiśvānara is generally derived from viśva 'all' combined with nara 'a man', meaning 'a fire common to all mankind' or 'a fire dear to or a fire dwelling with all men.' RV. II. 10. 4 Agni is praised as: Agni stays in all the living beings (kṣiyantam bhuvanāṁ viśvā), wide spread with all the food that feeds him (vyaciṣṭhamannai rabhasam).

Two entire hymns, I. 59, VI. 7, VI. 8, and VII. 5 of the RV are praise for vaiśvānara Agni. Out of seven verses of the hymn I. 59, the verses from 1-3 clearly mention digestive fire, 4-7 look like a simple description of Agni. In the

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{1} RV. I. 144. 5: dhornadhi pravata ā sa ṛṇvatyabhivrājadbhirvayunā navādhita.
\end{footnotesize}
first verse of I. 59, the poet refers to vaiśvānara as ‘spoke (or centre) of the people, sustaining men like deep-founded pillar\(^1\). Here the phrase ‘nābhīr asi kṣītīnām’ and ‘sthūneva janān’ associate Agni with the digestive power which resides in all people, and helps people’s inside to digest properly, and sustains the body strongly. This vaiśvānara resides not only in the human’s body, but also in the hills, in the waters, in the herbs\(^2\), vaiśvānara dwells with all men by his might\(^3\). The verses VI. 7. 6-7, VI. 8. 7, and 2, 4, 7 of VII. 5, and VII. 6. 7 of the RV also praise vaiśvānara Agni who is manifest everywhere\(^4\). There are also many verses in which vaiśvānara Agni is depicted as having great power\(^5\), in

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\(^1\) RV. I. 59. 1:

*vavā idagne agnayaste anye tve viśve amṛtā mādayante /

*vaivānara nābhirasi kṣītīnāṁ sthūneva janāṁ upamidyayantaḥ //

\(^2\) RV. I. 59. 3:

dź sūrye na raśmayo dhruvāso vaiśvānare dadhīre’gnāvasūni /

yā parvateṣu ṣadhiṣvapsu yā mānuṣeṣvasi tasya rājā //

\(^3\) RV. I. 59. 7: vaiśvānaro mahīmnā viśvakoṣṭhirbharadvājaṣu yajato vibhāvā.

\(^4\) also in AV. III. 21; VI. 35-36: Vaiśvānara Agni is fully explained.

\(^5\) RV.I. 59. 4; VII. 5. 3; 6; 8; 9; VI. 7. 5; VI. 8. 3.

*bṛhatī iva sūnave rodasi giro hotā manusyo na daksāḥ /

svargaṁ satyaśūmāya pūrvarvaśvānarāya nrtamāya yahviḥ //

also RV. I. 59. 5; III. 2. 11:

*rājā kṛṣṭīnāmasi mānuṣīnām yudhā deśebhyo varivaścakarthā .

RV. I. 59. 6:

*pra nū mahitvāṁ vr̥ṣabhasya vocariṁ yaṁ pūravo vr̥trahaṇarāṁ sacante /

vaiśvānaro dasyumagnirjaghanvāṁ adhūnokāṣṭhā ava sambaram bhet //

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connection with keeping and strengthening the holy law (ṛta)\(^1\), of old and immortal\(^2\). Many a time Agni is called vaiśvānara when he is praised as a wise sage\(^3\), and when he bestows wealth\(^4\).

Besides the famous Vaiśvānara or the digestive fire in the Bhagavadgītā ‘aharti vaiśvānaro bhūtvā prāṇinām dehamāśritaḥ’, in the Mbh. the internal heat (antarāgni) or digestive fire which digests all foods is called Viśvabhuk Agni\(^5\).

(6) The Funeral Fire

Agni has another very important role in the Vedas, more frequently in the Atharva Veda, viz. a role as a god who presents and administers the funeral rites. As one of his chief characteristics is to purify impure things, this role of funeral administrator seems to be very much appropriate for him. Due to this function of purification and carrying of the dead body to the other world, Agni is often connected with Yama, the king of the Dead, in the Atharva Veda.

Besides this, 1. 98. 1,2,3 also describe Agni as vaiśvānara

Here, from the verse No.2, with the phrase viśvā oṣadhirā viveśa we can infer that this vaiśvānara also indicates the digestive fire.

\(^1\) RV. 3. 2. 1; 3. 1; VI. 7. 1; 8. 2.

\(^2\) RV. III. 2. 12; 2. 3; VI. 7. 4; 9. 7.

\(^3\) RV. III. 3. 10; 11; VI. 7. 1.

\(^4\) RV. V. 27. 1,2; VI. 7. 2; 3; 8. 5; 6.

\(^5\) III. 209. 17, and III. 275. 27 ‘Agni introduces himself as ‘ahamantahsārīrastho bhūtānām’.
The whole hymn X. 16 of the RV. is a prayer to funeral Agni. This funeral Agni is called a flesh-eater (kravyāt), and said to bear off the stains of the Dead (RV. X. 16. 9-10). It is also said that that Agni devours all things (viśvād), and is supposed to heal the wounds from whatsoever the dark bird (krṣṇaḥ śakuna) or the serpent (sarpa), or the jackal (śvāpada, RV. X. 16. 6). Agni knows well the number of Fathers who are present and who are also not present. He also knows the Fathers of whom the singers know and whom they don’t know, because the flames of Agni have tasted all the Fathers (RV. X. 15. 11) and he himself sends the Dead to the Fathers (RV. X. 16. 1-5). Agni bears the offerings and gives them to the Fathers (RV. X. 15. 12). Therefore he is invoked to come with the countless ancient Fathers. Due to this reason, viz., sending the Dead to the other world, he is called the envoy of Vivasvān, the well-loved friend of Yama (RV. X. 21. 5).

A very interesting aspect of Agni is seen in these funeral prayers. The epithet ‘kravyāt’ which means ‘a flesh eater’ is used twice, for Agni. This name is applied only to the funeral Agni. It is very interesting to note that on the one hand Agni himself is called kravyāt and on the other hand he is invoked to thrust away the other kravyāts, the flesh-eaters, such as, demons—more often rākṣasas—or carnivorous animals like tigers, lions, wolves etc. In the RV. X. 87. 2, the singer prays to Jātaveda Agni to seize the raw-flesh eaters and to put them in his mouth. In the same hymn, in the verses 5 and 19, again the singer asks Agni to destroy and burn up the kravyāts.

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1 RV. X. 15. 13: ye ceha pitaro ye ca neha.
2 RV. X. 15. 13: yāṁśca vidma yāṁ u ca na pravidma.
3 RV. X. 15. 10: sahasraṁ pūrvaiḥ pītrbhiḥ.
The word kravyāt occurs about seven times in the RV, six references are in book X and one is in book VII. Among them two refer to Agni and others to demons or to evil spirits or to carnivorous animals. It is noticed that when Agni is called kravyāt, he is clearly distinguished from the other Agnis such as Jáçavedas etc., and this Agni is not welcomed on other occasions, but is invited only for funeral rites. In the RV. X. 16. 9, the singer prays to send afar this flesh-eating Agni to Yama’s subjects, but welcomes the other Jáçavedas to carry oblation to the gods. Again, in X. 16. 10, the singer selects the flesh-eating Agni for ancestor worship while the other Jáçavedas look on. Thus, though kravyāt Agni is worshipped as an important deity who cleanses the sins of the dead and who carries them to the Fathers, the poets clearly wish to avoid this Agni, and therefore they invoked him only for removing the sins and evils or for ancestor worship. This tendency of avoiding the kravyāts, not only the demons or carnivorous animals but also kravyāt Agni, became clearer in the AV. In the AV. kravyāt Agni is supposed to obstruct people (AV. XII. 2. 15), and life (AV. XII. 2. 16). Therefore, he is not welcomed in the houses (AV. XII. 2. 9), and is separated from the gārhapatya Agni. The singers thrust him out (AV. XII. 2. 15). He is taken to the pítryajñā (AV. XII. 2. 7). There he is supposed to carry evil (ripравāha) to Yama (AV. XII. 2. 8). This Agni is prayed for not coming back to this world but staying in the Father’s land to watch over the Fathers (AV. XII. 2. 7). This kravyāt Agni is supposed to injure men (AV. AV. III. 21. 9, purusāresañah), therefore he is sought to be removed by a knowing brāhmaṇa (AV. XII. 2. 39), and it is said that when he is unremoved, all the gains are not for mortals (AV. XII. 2. 36). A poet prays to other deities like heaven, earth, sun and moon, to protect him from

1 RV. X. 16. 9; 10; 87. 2; 10; 162. 2 and VII. 104. 2.
kravyāt Agni\(^1\). A person who has no faith (aśraddha) is supposed to sit together with the flesh-eating Agni (AV. XII. 2. 41). Thus, though kravyāt Agni is considered a god to be avoided, he is clearly distinguished from the other kravyāt, such as, rakṣas and kravyāt piśāca. In AV. XII. 3. 43 Agni is prayed to burn the godless demon (rakṣasastapatu yad videvam)\(^2\).

In the Mbh., Agni who burns dead creatures is called Bharata Agni (III. 212. 6). The word kravyāt is used only in the sense of ‘a raw flesh eater’ but not for Agni who carries the Dead. In Pāli no equivalent term is found.

(7) The Non-believers

It is noteworthy that in the RV. there are quite a number of verses which deal with the non-believers. It is also observed that these verses are mostly in the hymns of Agni and Indra. These non-believers are referred to not only by one single word, but by various words, such as, pīyati, andha, adeva etc. Since no satisfactory work has been found on these hymns and terms as yet, it will be worthwhile to examine them carefully. The present section attempts to study such verses and terms connected with Agni.

\(^1\) AV. VIII. 1. 12:

\[ mā tvā kravyādabhī maṁstārāt saṁkasukāṣāra / rakṣatu tvā dyau rakṣatu prthivi sūryaśca \]

\[ tvā rakṣatān candramāṣca / antarikṣārī rakṣatu devahetyāḥ // \]

\(^2\) AV. V. 28. 8; 9; 10; 15; VIII. 3. 4 are the prayers to Jātavedas to remove or to slay various kravyāts.
The brāhmanic concepts astika and nāstika were discussed from the point of view of believing or non-believing in the authority of the Vedas. But, it is very striking that a discussion of believing and non-believing in god, or denying authority existed even in the Vedic period and surprisingly the poets and the rṣis used to refer to those non-believing people without hesitation. They speak openly and freely on this topic. Let us see the verses one by one.

The verse, RV. I. 147. 2. runs as:

*bodhā me asya vacaso yavisthā mamhiṣṭhasya prabhṛtasya svadhāvaḥ  */
*pīyati tvu anu tvu grṇāti vandāruste tanvaṇ vande agne//*

Oldenberg translated the second line as:

*The one abuses you, the other praises you, I your reverer revere you. O, Agni*

Sāyaṇa first explains *pīyati* as, *vadhakarmaitat hinasti*, and he further says, *yajjādinā na pūjayati*, and explains *anugṛṇāti* as *anukūlam uccārayati*.

Another verse (RV. I. 189. 7) runs:

*tvam tām agna ubhayānvi vidvānvesi prapitve manuṣo yajatra /*
*abhipitve manave śāsyo bhūrmarmṛjenya uśīghbhīrnākraḥ//*

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1 Also see; *one man reviles (you), another propitiates (you); I, your worshipper, glorify, your person. (Wilson), but Velankar translates as: Someone hates (me); someone favours (me); (but) being reverent, I bow down to your form, O, Agni.*
Wilson translated this as:

*Adorable Agni, you are sagacious, and in a short time discriminate between both those men (who do and do not worship you); approach the worshipper at the proper time, and be compliant (with his wishes); like an institutor of the rite, (who is directed) by the desires (of the priests)*.1

Sayāna interprets *tān ubhayān* as, *yāṣṭṛ* and *nayaṣṭṛ*.

In these two verses, non-worshippers are mentioned. Now the concept of *āstika* and *nāstika* can be applied here. As there were *nāstikas* who denied the authority of the Vedas, there must have been the *Anagni-cult* who did not agree with the view of the Agni-cult, though the word *Anagni* is not used. So we can infer that that cult could have been a cult which believed in gods, worshipped them, but without kindling the *Fire*.

Another verse2 reads:

1 Griffith also has the same view, worshippers and non-worshippers, while Oldenberg and Velankar have different interpretation. Cp. Oldenberg’s translation: *Thou, Agni, distinguishing both (kinds of men, the pious and the impious, or the Aryans and Dasyus), eagerly approachest (Aryan) men...* And also, Venlankar’s as; *You visit men at the advance of the day, O, Agni, as you are very well acquainted with both (gods and men). O holy god, at the evening time too, you have become fit to be persuaded (to serve) by the ancient priests for the sake of man, like horse which is fit to be bathed and groomed.*

2 RV. I. 148. 5.
The verse is translated by Velankar as:

*The blind enemies unable to see him, whom neither the enemies nor the murderers seeking to injure could do any harm while he was in (the mother's) womb, did not affect him by their evil eye (even after his birth): His faithful lovers have surely protected him.*

Velankar in his note comments on *andhā* as, ‘blind’ owing to mental darkness, as against *apaśyā* ‘who were unable to see’ owing to want of sight of any kind. Sāyaṇa explains *andhāḥ* as, *jñānaśaktirahita avidvāṃśaḥ ata eva apaśyāḥ adṛṣṭāraḥ yadvā vidvāṃsopabyāvayitaḥ anupāsakā ityarthāḥ.*

What does ‘mental blindness’ indicate? It could mean ‘intellectual blindness of proper knowledge about Agni’. From the verse, we can conjecture that the blind ones could do harmful action to Agni both in the mother’s womb and even after his birth. Then, what could be the possible harmful action to Agni? There could be no harmful action other than non-believing and non-worshipping or extinguishing him. That is why *andhāḥ* or *apaśyāḥ* here means ‘the blind who is deprived of the proper knowledge about Agni’. And that is why *andhāḥ* or *apaśyāḥ* ultimately means ‘the non-believers’.

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1 Oldenberg, however, translates the verse as: *Him whom no impostors, no harmful foes, no harm-doers may harm when he dwells in (his mother’s) womb, him the blind ones bereft of sight did not damage by looking at him. His own friends have protected him.*
Now, the word *adeva* or *adevayu* which is mostly rendered as ‘the godless’ occurs in various hymns, mainly in the hymns which refer to Agni and Indra\(^1\). This chapter will confine itself to these words, which occur in Agni hymns.

The word *adeva* or *adevayu*, in the verses, means (1) the persons who do not have faith in gods, or perhaps, the persons who believe in other gods who are different from their own gods, (2) enemies, (3) demons such as *rākṣasas, piśacas* etc.

See verse ṚV. I. 150. 2.

```vyaninasya dhanināḥ prahoṣe cidaruruṣaḥ /
   kadā cana prajigato adevayoh//```

Oldenberg translated it as:

*Away ever from the libation of a rich man who is feeble, who is a niggard, who never comes forward and does not care for the gods*

\(^{1}\) Out of approximately 40 such verses, 9 occur in Agni hymns and 22 are in Indra’s. The rest of them are scattered in various hymns, such as, Maruts, Brahmaṇaspati, Indra-Agni, Viśvedevas, Indra-Varuṇa, Surya and Soma.

\(^{2}\) Velankar translates as; “I shall never (address) you with enthusiasm under the protection of a rich person, who is not noble, who is miserly and ungodly, who goes forth (for a sacrifice), even for the sake of pouring a full oblation”. Wilson as; “(I ask you also to withhold your favour) from (those) two godless (persons), from the rich man, who acknowledging you not as his lord, is chary of gifts at sacred rites, and from his who rarely praises (the gods)”. And
Sāyaṇa explains the word *adevayu* as *devān ātmanāh anicchataḥ* (The persons who do not want gods for themselves). In this case, it seems that *adevayu* is not connected to worshipping Agni or not, but it seems to be a matter of being theist or atheist. Through this verse and the word *adevayu* it is not very difficult to infer that in the Vedic period, already the pre-cārvākas, i.e., materialism and the materialists must have existed, though they are not referred to by a proper term. And their influence on society may not be ignored too, because, from the verse it is clearly indicated that they were rich persons but the niggardly ones.

The verse VI. 48. 10 reads,

\*parṣi tokan tanayam paraṁbhṣyamadarabdhairaprayutvabhiḥ /
agne ṝṣiṣi daiyā yuyodhi no’devāni ṭvāṃsi ca //

Sāyaṇa explains the word *adevāni* as, ‘*manuṣyasambandhīni*’ and Wilson too renders the word merely as ‘human’. However, Griffith renders it as, ‘godless men’. We follow Griffith’s rendering, for, though the word is used as one pair of *daivyā*, this word *adevā* does not seem to be a mere expression of the human beings as opposite to the celestial beings. The adjective of these two words, i.e., *daivyā* and *adevā* are *ṝṣiṣi* and *ḥvarāṃsi*, which means ‘wrath’ and ‘malevolence’. Therefore, simple rendering of the sentence as ‘*keep far from us from the celestial wrath and human malevolence*’ does not give proper sense. For, all human beings are not harmful and there is, therefore, no need to keep them

Griffith as: “Thou who never movest thee to aid the indolent, the godless man, him who though wealthy never brings an offering.”
afar. But when the word *adevāni* indicates ‘godless persons who can harm the faithful ones’ the meaning of the verse can be properly understood. Therefore, the word *adevāni* here should be ‘faithless beings who do not follow the gods’, or perhaps, ‘the persons who believe in gods other than Agni’.

The verse III. 1. 16. reads:

_upakṣetarastava supranīte' gne visvāni dhanyā dadhānāḥ /
suretasā īrvasā tuījamanā abhi syāma prtanīyūmiredevān //

Griffith translates it as:

*May we, O Agni, thou who leadest wisely, thy followers and masters of all treasures, strong in the glory of our noble offspring, subdue the godless when they seek the battle.*

Sāyaṇa explains the word *adevān* as, ‘devahyo anyān’ ‘nāṁvayuktanayāyena rākṣasā eva ghyante yajña vighnakāriṇastān’, and *prtanīyūn* as ‘sārādyupadravakāriṇah śatrūtriṣca’ ‘yadvā devānapūjayaṭaḥ śatrūniti vā yojyam’.

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1 See also RV. VII. 93. 5, in this sense of ‘faithless man’ or ‘man of Anagni-cult’, or perhaps, even in the sense of ‘enemy’ by understanding of first and second hemistich which tells about the two armies who are against each other. And the third and fourth hemistich, reads: *adevayum vidate devayubhiḥ satrā hatam somasutā janena* (do you destroy those who are not devoted to the gods in sacrifice by the devout, and by the man who is present at Soma pressing).

And also see, in the same sense, RV. VIII. 11. 3. and VIII. 71. 8.
Wilson also follows Sāyaṇa and renders the last hemistich as, ‘may we overcome the hostile hosts that are without gods’ and he further says that it also means ‘may we overcome the hosts of those who are not gods, i.e., the rākṣasas, or evil spirits, obstructing sacrifices.’

While the verse V. 2. 9 and 10, the word adevi is clearly meant for ‘demonic undivine beings’. V. 2. 9, thus reads:

\[\text{vi jyotiśā bṛhatā bhātyagnirāvirviśvāni krṇute mahītvā} / \\
\text{prādevīrmaśāḥ sahate durevāḥ śśīte śrige rākṣase vinīkṣe} //\]

Griffith translates it as:

*Agni shines far and wide with lofty splendour, and by his greatness makes all things apparent. He conquers godless and malign enchantments, and sharpens both his horns to gore the Rakṣas.*

In this verse, the word adevi doubtlessly means the demonic beings. Sāyaṇa too explains the word as, ‘adevanaśīlā āsurīḥ’. 10\textsuperscript{th} verse\(^1\) also adevi means ‘adevanāh āsuryaḥ senāḥ’\(^2\).

\(^1\) RV. V. 2. 10:

\[\text{uta svānāso divi śantvagnestigmāyudhā rākṣase hantavā u} / \\
\text{made cidasya pra rujanti bhāmā na varante paribādho adeviḥ} //\]

\(^2\) also RV. VII. 1. 10, in this sense.
Thus, we have observed ađevā or ađevī or ađevayu, and we believe that they are meant mainly for ‘the non-believers in god or the godless persons’, though sometimes the word indicates ‘the beings other than gods, i.e., the demons etc. and sometimes even the word does not show the clear meaning. However, it is very significant that, whether they are Agni cult or Anagni cult, whether they are godly or godless, the poets are not hesitant to discuss the existence of the non-believers. Through this discussion of the non-believers it can be inferred that the Vedic society was not rigid but very open even regarding the matter of god.

In the Mbh. the words ađevā or ađevī or ađevayu do not occur, but the word anāhitāgni, ayajvā and nāstika are mentioned in their place. Their literal meaning is ‘one who does not kindle the fire, ‘one who does not perform sacrifice’ and ‘one who does not believe in god’. However, in its actual sense their meaning is one and the same, viz., a faithless one or a heretic. It is said that ‘one who does not worship Agni, i.e., one who does not keep Agni at home, and one who does not perform sacrifice, though they have ample wealth, the king should think of him as thief and could snatch his wealth away.\(^1\) The term nāstika occurs several times in the Mbh\(^2\). Nāstikas cannot go to heaven just as the liars cannot\(^3\).

\(^1\) Mbh. XII. 159. 9:

\(^2\) Mbh. III. 181. 20; 188. 22; 198. 66; 247. 3; V. 34. 40; 137. 7; VII. 16. 34 etc.

\(^3\) Mbh. III. 247. 3.
The relevant words for *adeva* or *nāstika* in Pāli literature may be *micchādiṭṭhika* or *aṇṇatitthiya*, 'one who has wrong view' or 'the adherent of another sect or a non-Buddhist'\(^1\). Therefore, more than the term *micchādiṭṭhika*, the term *aṇṇatitthiya* may be nearer to the meaning of the Vedas and the Mbh.

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4 In Sampasādanīya sutta Dīg., III. 5., Sariputta worried whether he could understand Buddha properly so as not to obtain censure of the heretics (*aṇṇatitthiya*).
2. Deified abstract concept:
--- The journey of Desire and Death in Indian Mythology

(i) General remarks and various deified abstract concepts

The deities developed from the abstract concept are said to be relatively later products than the deities from natural elements. Owing to constant observations and repeated experiences, the Vedic singers might have been able to draw from the particular aspects of Nature their divine distinctiveness. Yet people must have come across things, which could not be satisfactorily explained by mere observing the aspects of nature or by personifying or deifying them. Then perhaps, they might have speculated upon these unexplained feelings and phenomena: unwanted anger, uncontrollable desire, intangible fear, and unexpected joy... They must have contemplated on the wonder of birth and death; or had queries about creation and destruction; or had doubts regarding good and evil...Then over time people might have turned these abstract notions into divine ideas and further shaped them into divinities, just as they had shaped the natural elements.

There are a number of such deities, in Indian mythology, who have emerged from abstract concepts. Macdonell\(^1\) classifies these divinities into two categories: (1) direct personifications of abstract notions such as 'desire', and, (2) the deities whose names primarily either denote an agent, in the form of a noun derived from a root with the suffix \(ty\), such as, Dhātr (Creator), or designate some attribute, such as Prajāpati (Lord of Creatures).

\(^1\) Macdonell, 'Vedic Mythology', p. 115.
Kāma 'desire', Vāk 'word', Nṛṣṭi 'destruction', Purandhī 'plenty', Manyu 'anger', Śraddhā 'faith', Aramati 'devotion' and others, may be put into the first group and, Savitṛ, Dhātr, Tvaṣṭṛ, and Viśvakarman, Prajāpati and others, in the second group. In addition to these, one may put Māra, a very complicated personified Evil (or Devil) from Pāli literature, perhaps to the first group.

Out of these divinities, the second group, such as, Tvaṣṭṛ, and Viśvakarman, Prajāpati etc., are already discussed in the first chapter, in the sub-section Brahmā. Therefore, only the first group, such as, Vāk, Manyu and Śraddhā etc., will be minimally dealt with in this chapter, and special light will be thrown on desire and death with some of their related concepts and deities. For, these two characteristics are not only frequently mentioned but also well-formed, and also are considered to be very special products of Indian mythology. Their functions too are particularly important both in the Sanskrit and in Pāli literature.

**Vāk or Vāc**

'Word' or 'speech' personified Vāk or Vāc is the celebrated goddess in the RV. One complete hymn is dedicated to her (RV. X. 125), and one hymn in the name of Jñānam (RV. X. 71), and one hymn with Indra (RV. VIII. 100). Vāk is a goddess with a very complicated personality and since the scope of this work does not permit a detailed discussion, only some general features in the RV and Mbh. are mentioned here. Her brief characteristics in the RV. are: She is "the voice of hymn regarded as the means of communication between men and gods at the sacrifice". In RV. X. 125, the goddess Vāk utters as: "I, verily, myself announce

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and utter the word that gods and men alike shall welcome. I make the man I love exceeding mighty and make him a sage, a ṛṣi, and a brāhmaṇa” (Griffith translation). The deities established Vāk in many places, and articulately speaking men and lower animals all derive their voices from her. It is said that one who abandons his friend, who knows the truth of friendship, cannot have or comprehend Vāk even if he hears her (RV. X. 71. 6). Vāk is the queen and gladdener of the gods. She is called a milch cow, and is invoked to yield food and vigour (RV. VIII. 100. 11). She speaks intelligible words. She abides in all that has a voice in nature, such as thunder (RV. I. 167. 3). In the Mbh. Vāk is not a goddess in the full sense of the word. She is the voice that is heard from the sky (Mbh. I. 1. 75). In the Pāli Vāk is never a god or a goddess.

**Nīrṛti**

The personified destruction, Nīrṛti, is celebrated quite often in the RV. The destructive powers or Nīrṛti in plural are also mentioned. She is celebrated in one hymn with other gods (RV. X. 59). She is hard to conquer (RV. I. 39. 6). She is asked to take away the sin of the singers and go far away. She is asked to consume old age of the singers; and to sustain their body with salutary food.

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1 RV. X. 125. 5: *ahameva svayamidam vadāmi juṣṭan debebhijuta mānuṣebhīth /
   yāṁ kāmaye tantam ugraṁ kṛṇomi tam brahmāṇan tamṛṣīṁ tam sumedhāṁ //

2 RV. VIII. 100. 11, cf. X. 125. 3.

3 RV. VIII. 100. 10: *yadvāgyvadantyavicetaṇāni rāṣṭrī devānāṁ niṣasāda mandrā /

4 RV. VIII. 24. 24; X. 114. 2.

5 RV. I. 24. 9; VI. 74. 2; X. 36. 2; 49. 1-4; 76. 4; 164. 1.

6 RV. V. 41. 17: *atṛā śivān tanvo dhāsimasyā jaraṁ cinme nīrṛtirjagrasita /
However, she has no power over Indra\(^1\). The singer invoked Soma to give the serpent on the lap of Nr̥ti (RV. VII. 104. 9). In the Mbh. Nr̥ti appears only in the first chapter. She is the wife of Adharma, destroyer of all beings, where the rākṣasas are known as Nair̥tas, the sons of Nr̥ti. She had three loathsome sons, Fear (Bhaya), Panic (Māhābhaya) and Death (Mṛtyu) forever bent on evil deeds.\(^2\)

The word nir̥ti is also used literally in the sense of evil (Mbh. I. 82. 9). Nr̥ti is also said to be of great fame who came to celebrate Arjuna’s birth along with many deities and semi deities (Mbh. I. 114. 57). Nr̥ti does not occur in Pāli literature.

**Aramati**

Aramati, in the RV., is the personification of religious worship, or active piety\(^3\). She is identified with the earth sometimes\(^4\). She is invoked in usual prayer only. However, nowhere in the Pāli or in the Mbh. is she mentioned as a goddess.

**Purandhi**

Plenty, Purandhi is also personified. She is celebrated in the RV. in the usual invocation\(^1\). She is bountiful (RV. VII. 36. 8). Purandhi invoked Aśvins and they

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\(^1\) RV. VII. 37. 7: abhi yan devī nir̥tiscidiśe nakṣanta indraṁ... 

\(^2\) Mbh. I. 60. 53-53: adharmas tatra saññītath sarvabhūta vināśanath /

\[\text{tasyāpi nir̥tir bhāryā nair̥tā yona rākṣasāḥ} /\]

\[\text{ghorās tasyās trayaḥ putrāḥ pāpakarmaratāḥ sadā} /\]

\[\text{bhayo mahābhayaś caiva mṛtyuta bhūtāntakas tathā} //\]

\(^3\) RV. II. 38. 4; VII. 34. 21; 36. 8; 42. 3; X. 64. 15; X. 92. 5.

\(^4\) RV. V. 43. 6 (according to Griffith) and X. 92. 5 (according to Sāyaṇa).
came to her with succour (RV. I. 117. 19). The goddess Purandhi does not occur either in the Pāli or in the Mbh.

Manyu

In the RV, Manyu who is the anger personified, is invoked in two entire hymns (RV. X. 83; 84). In those two hymns he is identified and is also compared five times with Indra\(^2\), and three times with Agni (RV. X. 83. 2; 84. 1-2). Manyu is represented chiefly by the fierce anger of Indra\(^3\). Thus Manyu is Indra himself (RV. X. 83. 2), and he is twice called Vajra (RV. X. 83. 1; 84. 6), once Vajrin (RV. X. 83. 6) and once Vṛtrahā (RV. X. 83. 3). Like Indra Manyu marches accompanied by Maruts (RV. X. 84. 1). Manyu is naturally like Agni in his personality. He works chiefly as a destroyer of the enemies. He is thus, Amitrahā, Vṛtrahā, Dasyuhā (RV. X. 83. 3). It is very peculiar that he is once associated with Tapasā and is pleased with the worshippers (RV. X. 83. 2). In the Mbh., the anger is compared to a blazing fire. Manyu is in the heart like a blazing fire\(^4\). Anger burns one’s heart\(^5\); one is burning with rage\(^6\); the fire born from the anger will burn the world\(^7\), such are references. Draupāṇi invoked Yudisṭhira’s good anger (Mbh. III. 28) while Yudisṭhira replied that anger can kill men and also can

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\(^1\) RV. II. 31. 4; V. 42. 5; VI. 21. 9; VII. 36. 8; 39. 4; X. 64. 7; 65. 14; 85. 36.

\(^2\) X. 83. 1-3, and 6; 84. 6.

\(^3\) Mcdonell, VM. P. 119.

\(^4\) Mbh. V. 80. 40: hrdaye manyum pradīptamiva pāvakam.

\(^5\) Mbh. I. 5. 21: manyur hi hrdayam me’dya pradahanniva tiṣṭhati.

\(^6\) Mbh. I. 37. 10: prajvalanniva manyunā.

\(^7\) Mbh. I. 171. 15: manyujo me agnir lokānād tum icchatī.
lead them to prosperity them according to the use they put it to (Mbh. III. 30). It is said that anger of the sage Raibya created a beautiful woman and a rakṣasa from a strand of hair and these productions of the sage killed his enemy Yavakri (Mbh. III. 137f). A fire which turns into wrath is said to be the very sap of anger, and that anger is called Maṇiyāti or Svāhā (Mbh. III. 209. 22). However, for a kṣatriya, either a man or woman, possessing manyu (manyumati or manyumān) is said to be good (Mbh. I. 151). This anger of kṣatriya is used generally in the positive sense which urges a person to work, and motivates him for doing something. In Pāli literature, there is no personified Manyu or the term ‘manyu’. Anger is, rosa or kopa, or kodha (krodha). It is a blemish and it is the feeling which is to be discarded by one who practices dhamma. Kodha is said to be one of the bad qualities, which is cut off from Brahmā’s realm.

Śraddha

Personified faith, Śraddha, is celebrated in one hymn of the RV (I. 151). It is said that Agni is kindled by Śraddha, oblation also is offered by Śraddha (RV. I. 151. 1). The singers invoke her at dawn, at midday and also at the setting of the sun (RV. I. 151). In the Mbh. Śraddha is personified, and she is one of the ten wives of Dharma. She was born of Prajāpati Dakṣa (Mbh. I. 60. 10-13). Śraddha presents herself at Indra’s hall with many other divine beings (Mbh. II. 7. 17). She is called Lakiṃī as well as Śrī in some places. At other places the word śraddhā is used with its original meaning of ‘faith’ or ‘truth’. It occurs in such phrases;

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1 Mahāgovinda sutta, Dīg. II. 6.: kohō mosavajjām nikati...nivutabrahmāloka’ti.

2 Mbh. XII. 221. 21; aham lakṣmīr aham bhūtiḥ śrīś cāham balasūdana /

aham śraddhā ca medhā ca sannatir vijītiḥ sthitih //
‘who will trust your word’ (kas te śraddhāsyate vacaḥ, Mbh. I. 68. 72), ‘the man of faith, the man of assiduousness, the man of self-restraint obtains knowledge’ (śraddhāvāṁ labhate jñānam tatparaḥ saṁyatendriyaḥ, Mbh. VI. 26. 39). Śraddhā is considered to be one of the highest qualities which human beings should possess. It is said that śraddhayajña is laid down for all castes, and śraddhā is a powerful agent for sacrifice. Śraddhā is one of seventeen limbs of sacrifice. In Pāli literature, śraddhā (saddhā) is a very important term. It is said that one whose faith (saddhā) is settled in the Buddha, his true son. Saddhā is the seed of an ascetic while penance is rain. But saddhā is never a personified deity in Buddhist mythology.

Besides the deities mentioned above, the time Kāla started to be worshipped from the AV. and continued to be worshipped up to the Epics and after. Oldenberg believed that Nivarta or Nivartana (the restorer), and Uttuda are also deities from abstract notions. But, in the ṚV, the words nivarta or nivartana occurs only once in X. 19, but it does not seem to indicate a deity but is used in a sense of

1 Mbh. XII. 256. 12: aśraddhā paramartha pāparth śraddhā pāpapramocanī.
2 Mbh. XII. 60. 43: sarvesu vaneṣu śraddhāyajña vidhiyate.
3 Mbh. XII. 60. 47: śraddhā vai kāraṇam mahat.
4 Mbh. XIII. 260. 25: other limbs are such as, oṣadhi, paśu, vrkṣa, agni, kāla etc.
5 Agganiṇa sutta, Dig. III. 4: tathāgate saddhā nivṛtthā mūlajñātāḥ...kenaci vā lokasmiṁ tassetarī kallam vacanāya, ’bhagavatomiḥ putto oraso...
6 Kāśibhāradvajja sutta, SN. I. 4: saddhā bijo tapo vuoṭhi...
‘returning’. The hymn is understood, as Griffith explained, as a prayer for the return of cows who have strayed.¹

**Desire and Death**

Now, the two notions ‘desire’ and ‘death’ are perhaps the most familiar but violent and tumultuous feelings of human beings. It is continuously said in Indian philosophy and mythology that it is due to ‘desire’ that all the living beings are born and suffer. Death has been a central problem to mankind, and has been a fundamental motif of meditation and religion. A number of rational and irrational acts of living beings, rituals, prayers, and worshipping gods... are motivated by the fear of death. These two notions, are regarded as the two most important meditative objects, and also they are considered as separate entities, and it seems that they continued their separate individual journey for a long period till they met in Buddhism under the very significant name Māra.

‘Desire and death’ are deified in Indian mythology under various names. The most commonly known personification of ‘desire’ is doubtlessly ‘Kāma’, and that of ‘death’ is ‘Mṛtyu’. But regarding death, not only Mṛtyu who is the death in person, but Yama who is most closely connected with death is also very important. A journey, with Yama, may help one to find the proper concept and the right position of death in the Indian mythology. Now, it may be said that in between, or in the heart of desire and death Māra stands. For, not only is he known to be ‘the personified evil or death’ but he is also known as ‘combined desire of all kinds’, though he is not ‘desire’ as purely as Kāma. In fact, Māra is

¹ Hymns of the Rg Veda, Vol. II, p. 441
the most interesting, and complicated character in the entire Buddhist literature. And all these characters, Kāma, Mṛtyu, Yama, and Māra are connected by the idea of death, whether directly or indirectly. Mṛtyu is death itself, whereas Yama is the ruler of death while Kāma is said to be a cause of birth and death and Māra represents both desire and death. Except Yama who always stands firm in dharma, even though sometimes very fierce, all other concepts and personifications are considered as evil, though some are more evil while the others are less, and some are somewhat positive and the others are negative. Māra and Mṛtyu are Evil itself (pāpimā) while Kāma is evil passion over many times.

This chapter is dedicated to the study of the journey of these notions ‘desire’ and ‘death’ in Indian mythology. Though Yama is obviously not a deity from the direct abstract notion, he too is researched in the chapter, for, he is considered as the direct ruler of world of the dead and he is connected with death in many ways. Therefore, through the proper knowledge of Yama one may perceive the differences between death and evil at a glance, and also see Yama’s link between the two concerned notions. The chapter comprises three parts: (i) The journey of Desire—in the Rgveda, Atharvaveda, the Mahābhārata and Pāli literature (ii) The journey of death—Yama in the Rgveda, Atharvaveda, the Mahābhārata and Pāli literature (iii) The meeting of Desire and Death, the Evil Māra in Buddhist literature.

(ii) The Journey of Desire

Kāma is one of the most exhaustive philosophical terms, and also the name of an erotic god who is personified and deified from the same term. Religion and
philosophy in different ages accept this intangible notion in their own different traditions. The progress and development of Indian mythology and philosophy, from the Vedas onwards, can be explained differently by the journey of this concept desire, or kāma (or Kāma).

In the Rgvedic period, the concept ‘kāma’ is mainly a desire for material, mental and acquisitions, and a longing for creating. Kāma as yet does not appear to be developed as a divinity from abstract concept. In the AV. we find eroticism more often. Love between man and woman is more prominently dealt with. Naturally, carnal or sexual desire emerges the surface on a large scale, and from this carnal desire, slowly the erotic deity Kāma started coming into existence. In this period, both the abstract notion and the deity are praised and invoked by lovers. The AV. contains many charms for seduction and luring magical formulas for winning over the mind of the loved ones. Desire flourished unhindered. In the Mbh. kāma is both a philosophical term as well as a mythological divinity. As a philosophical term, kāma is, on the one hand, recognized as an object from which all sins originate, therefore, it is to be avoided, on the other hand it is considered as a thing which all the householders should observe for the sake of achieving worldly success. As a deity Kāma also appears often, in this period, and creates love (or lust) in the mind of people. However, this free desire was greatly disturbed in Buddhism. The Buddhists reckon that (carnal) desire is the first to be discarded. Kāma (or kāma) is as bad as the Evil Māra, or kāma itself is considered to be Māra many times therein.
(1) Kāma in the Rgveda

The word kāma, in the Rg Veda, is prevalent in the sense of wish or hope in connection with horses and cow\(^1\); longing for material wealth\(^2\); desire for fame (VII. 16. 10); desire for heroes (VII. 97. 4); any wish or desire in general that makes people feel great and happy\(^3\); sensuous, carnal or sexual desire. It is noticeable that when kāma is used in the sense of sensuous desire, the person who longs is particularly referred to, and this desire is said to be fulfilled\(^4\). In this case 'kāma' is appropriately called 'lust'. And this kāma or the sensuous desire or lust implies, primarily, the meaning of procreation and multiplication, which is obviously the reflection of the breeding-urge, or it may be that this lust is the instinctual drive aimed at gratification of the sexual urge. The word kāminī,

\(^1\) RV. I. 16. 9; 30. 5; III. 30. 20.

\(^2\) RV. I. 15. 3; 18. 9; 143. 6; III, 49. 1; VI. 5. 7; 45. 21; VII. 20. 9; 32. 2-3; 62. 3; 97. 4; X. 25. 2; 54. 5.

\(^3\) RV. I. 22. 5; 81. 8; 178. 1; III. 54. 2; IV. 43.7; VIII. 2. 39; 19. 18; 79. 5; X. 66. 14.

\(^4\) In the hymn of the RV. I. 179 which is also called Agastya and Lopāmudrā dialogue, the carnal desire of Lopāmudrā, in the V. 74. 5. sexual longing of Cyavana, in X. 10. 7. 11. the lust of Yami, and in X. 61. 6-7, Prajāpati’s fulfillment of sexual desire on his daughter is expressed. The verse VI. 49. 8, when Sūryā, the daughter of the Sun, Puṣan impelled by kāma went to the sun both as an envoy on behalf of the other gods was to be given in marriage and as a suitor on his own account (cf. Griffith, Hymns of the Rg Veda, p. 661. n). This kāma may not be sexual desire but pure (?) love.
derived from the term ‘kāma’, is used for a woman who is in love or for one who is under the spell of kāma, or ‘lust’ (V. 53. 16). The meaning ‘desire’ or ‘urge’ or ‘drive’ is also predominant in the later Sanskrit usage for the term kāma. There is also unspecified longing or desire, which may mean either ‘lust’ or ‘general desire’ for wealth\(^1\). Kāma can also be common desire or wish\(^2\). It is the eager longing for winning at gambling\(^3\). It expresses love for a particular god like Indra\(^4\). It is also found that the specific word devakāma (whose, i.e., the devotee’s desire is union with god) is used to express the feeling of bhakti. Some poetic expressions regarding kāma, such as, ‘kāma is spread like a forest (or sea) fire\(^5\), kāma falls in many places\(^6\), kāma is like a flood that flowed floods\(^7\)... are also found in the RV.

\(^1\)RV. III. 30. 19 and also X. 40. 2.

\(^2\)RV. X. 29. 5: Indra’s longing for soma is compared to a husband’s desire for a wife, as, asya kāmam janidhā iva gman.

\(^3\)RV. X. 34. 6 which is called Aksa sākta.

\(^4\)RV. IV. 23. 5: kathā kadasya sakhyam sakhibhavo ye asmin kāmam sahyujan tatasre, and in X. 43. 2 this term is used for Indra again along with manas (na ghā tvadrigapa veti me manastve itkāmam puruhūta śiśraya). Kāma as bhakti is also shown in VII 39. 6, as desire or love for Viśvadevas.

\(^5\)RV. III. 30. 19; ārvaiva paprathe kāmaḥ.

\(^6\)RV. III. 55. 3; vi me purutrā patayanti kāmāḥ.

\(^7\)RV. VIII. 98. 7; udeva yanta udabhlḥ.
When the term ‘kāma’ is used in the sense of desire in general, it is a synonym of icchā1; and when it is used in the sense of sexual desire, the term ‘kāma’ is a synonym of ‘sprāda’2. Sometimes kāma is used as a synonym of manas3, and also it is used along with nikāma (inclination or strong desire).

Thus, ‘kāma’ in the RV covers almost all kinds of desires, either material or mental or physical or even indistinguishable vague desire4. In a very special case, kāma is a strong desire for creation of the universe, and it is the primal seed and germ of spirit or original impulse for creation5. It is said that the gods appeared later than this kāma. It means, desire in the RV works as a positive creative power, which is a very important concept for our further comparison with other literature.

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1 RV. III. 54. 2; kāmo ma icchañ carati
2 RV. I. 179; Agastyaa and Lopāmudrā hymn, vs. 3 is as follows: sprāda abhyaśnavāva ...mithunāvabhyajāva, and V. 74. 5, sexual longing of Cāvāna who became young due to Āsvins, is expressed.
3 RV. VIII. 24. 6; ā sama kāmāi jāriturā manah prṛya, read VIII. 99, also. And VII. 39. 6, kāma and mati are used as synonyms: havyam matībhīrījīvānan nakṣat kāmaṃ martyānāmasinvan.
4 RV. X. 42. 6, kāma is desire to which Indra has resorted: śiśṛāya maghāvā kāmamasme. Also, X. 106. 11; and X. 116. 8
5 RV. X. 129. 4: kāmastadagre samavartādhi manaso retah prathamam yadāsit.

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While keeping all the Rgvedic meanings, the AV. shows a good deal of development about *kāma*. Slowly it expands its denotation more to an erotic term and also to its personified concept, which is further developed in a clear concept of divinity. The term *kāma* still means desire (XIX. 52. 8) without any special erotic connotation, but sometimes Kāma is already named among the gods and in some place he is even above the gods. As a personification of sensuous desire in general, Kāma is then raised to a position superior (*jyāyāṅs*) to all the other gods (IX. 2. 19). Some scholars opine that *kāma*, in the AV., is yet to be developed into a deity. However, some *sūktas* give us ample reason for thinking of *kāma* as a divinity. Kāma has been, in this period, quite sufficiently developed in a fully personified, or at least, to a half deified deity Kāma or Smara.

The terms ‘*kāma*’ and ‘*smara*’ are, in the AV., used in the same sense, especially in erotic hymns and verses. The contents of erotic hymns run like: controlling over the partner; winning over the lover’s mind; sending one’s love to his lover; sending away the love-enemies. In the hymns in which the above meanings are contained, *kāma* is used mostly in the sense of love between man and woman, and sometimes, more specifically, between husband and wife, i.e., *patikāma*, and *janikāma* (II. 30. 4).

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1 AV. XII, 4. 26, and all AV IX. 2.

2 e.g. AV. III. 25, *kāmabāṇa sūkta*; XI. 2 and XIX. 52, *kāma sūta*, IV. 130, *smara sūkta*, etc.
It is already noted that kāma and smara in the AV. are frequently connected with the word ‘ṣoṣah’ or ṣuc’ meaning ‘drying up’ or ‘to burn’ respectively. The herb nyastikā is used for making beauty (?), i.e., subhaga, and is called subhangakaranī. With this herb nyastikā, the singer dries up (burns up) the lover’s heart (hṛdayam ṣoṣayāmi, AV. I. 139. 1). The singer also lauds Kāma in order to let loose the evil dream upon somebody whoever is not dear to the mind of the singer. A different word ‘samvanana’ is used in the sense of pure love or mutual love between lovers, and for that mutual love a plant named samvananī is used to win over the heart of the lover (AV. IV. 139), and the lovers pray to this plant to join their divided love. In some erotic sūktas, the meaning of kāma appears to be ‘personified god of love’, though it does not clearly appear to be so. In the AV. III. 25. 1, too such an allusion is found. It tells about the terrible arrow of Kāma (kāmasya iṣuh). This arrow is said to be feathered with longing, tipped with desire (kāma), and necked with determination (satiikalpa). It dries up the spleen (pṛthānam ṣoṣayati), and pierces and makes the desired woman come crawling to the man. It might be said that this Kāma and his arrows are precedent of the personified Kāmadeva or Kusumabāṇa, in the later period, who aimed love

\[1\] AV. VI. 139. 2, 4: śusya mānī kāmena.

\[2\] AV. IX. 2. 2: duṣvapnyam prati muṇcāmi sapatne kāmaṇi stutvodayahm bhideyayam.

AV. IX. 2. 3: duṣvapnyam kāma duritaṇī ca kāmāprajastāmasvagatāmavartim.

utra iśānaḥ prati muṇca tasmin yo asmabhyanāṁhūṛanācikitsāt.

\[3\] AV. VI. 139. 5: kāmasya vicchinnam sandhehi.

\[4\] AV. III. 25, kāmabāṇa sūkta, and VI. 130. smra sūkta.

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(in the form of an arrow) at the heart of his beloved. In some sūktas both the god Kāma and the notion kāma are also praised.

In the sūkta AV. IX. 2., which is also called kāmasūkta the word kāma is quite sufficiently personified, and this sūkta may be very significant for the present work, for, the sūkta gives a preview of the glimpse idea of Māra in Pāli literature. In this hymn, Kāma is a strong and fierce natured deity. He is not a love-god, but a fierce god. He is a bull (ṛṣabha), and a killer of the enemy (sapatnāhana), he has great manly power (mahat vīrya, AV. IX. 2. 1). Kāma is set firm (sahas), mighty (vibhu), and potent (vibhāva) in battle, and Kāma gives strength to the sacrificer. The poet prays to Kāma to put his rival down. The fifth verse of this hymn mentions the daughters of Kāma. There it is said that the daughters of Kāma are one but they are called by three names, viz., Wealth - Dhenu, Goodtalk - Vāca, and Beauty (or Lustre) - Virāja. The poet prays to Kāma for driving the enemies away to a distance with the help of these daughters.

Kāma, again in the AV., is the seniormost of the gods (kāmājyeṣṭha, IX. 2. 8), he is superior to everything (IX. 2. 21). Agni is said to be equal to Kāma. He is the

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1 AV. III. 29. 7 as: ka idaiḥ kasmā adāt kāmaḥ kāmāyādāt /
   kāmo dānā kāmaḥ pratigrahitā kāmaḥ samudramā videśa /
   kāmene tvā prati grāhāmi kāmaitat te //

Whitney translate it as:

Who has given this to whom? Love has given unto love; Love is giver, Love is acceptor. Love entered into the ocean; with love I accept you; love, that for you!
sole king of all that is and is to be\(^1\), and Kāma is Agni\(^2\). Kāma has a lovely excellent body \(śivāstanaḥ kāma bhadrā\) (IX. 2. 25). As in the RV., kāma is simple desire for food, strength, life, offspring, wealth\(^3\) or love (AV. III. 8. 4). Due to kāma pleasantness (śūnṛta), reverence (sannati), comfort (kṣema, svadhā, strength (ुैर्जा), vigour (saha), and immortality (amṛtā) are said to be fulfilled (AV. IX. 7. 13). It is very significant that in one sūkta of the AV, Kāma and Yama are said to be together in Yama’s realm\(^4\). The AV. considers kāma as the personified primordial power at the same level as eka, sat, brahmā, viśvākarmā, and svayambhu\(^5\). It is said in the kāma sūkta that in the beginning, there was only kāma, which is the first seed of the mind\(^6\). Again, ākūti sūkta tells that from kāma (Kāma) devas and devatās came into being\(^7\). Thus, Desire, in the Atharva Veda as in the Rg Veda, works as a positive creative power. Now, we keep these two sūktas, namely, kāma (AV. IX. 2) and ākūti sūkta (AV. XIX. 4), in mind along with nāsadiya sūkta of the RV. X. X. 129, and also aggaṇīṇa sutta of the Dīg. III.

\(^1\) IV. 36. 3: agniḥ pareṣu dhāmasu kāmo bhūtasya bhavyasya samrādeko vi rājati.

\(^2\) III. 21. 4: yo devo viśvād yamu kāmamāhuryan dātāram pratigṛṇḥantamāhuṭ: he who is the all-eating god, and whom they call Desire whom they call giver, receiving one...

\(^3\) III. 10. 13; 29. 2; VI. 39. 3, 4, 6, 8.

\(^4\) XII. 4. 35, and 36; Cow fulfills kāma (Kāma) in Yama’s realm,

\[\text{sarvān kāmān yamarājiye vaśā pradduṣe duhe...}\]


\(^6\) XIX. 52. 1: kāmastadagre samavartata manaso retah prathamam yadāsit.

\(^7\) XIX. 4. 4: yasya devā devatāḥ sambabhūvuḥ sa supraṇītiḥ kāmo anvētvasmān.
4 in the Pāli canon, for our further comparative study. For, these four sūktas are of great importance in comparing desire with death.

Thus, a personified Kāma is used in a positive sense in the Vedas, and even the abstract notion of ‘kāma’ as ‘desire’ ‘lust’ is not something to be driven away. It is a desirable thing to be pursued. It is only at one place in the Vedas, AV. IX., it is suggested that Kāma can be a cause of a disease (IX. 13. 8).

(3) Desire in the Mahābhārata

While keeping all the Vedic features, of Desire, Kāma as its representative, is decked with luxurious names, faces and myths in the Mbh. It is called not only Kāma passion, but also Manmatha mind-churner, Madana intoxicator, Kandarpa insolent (or strong sensation of love), and also Anaṅga formless. However, strangely, the widely known name of Desire, Smara longing is not found in the Mbh. as love-god.

Kāma appears as the son of various deities. He is a son of Agni and Svāhā; Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇi; and Dharma and Śraddhā. As the son of Agni and Svāhā, deity Kāma perhaps denotes more typically ‘feverish love’, as the son of Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇi, he is known more or less as a deity (or perhaps, a man) of all-power which is very similar to the personality in AV. IX. 2 discussed before, and as the son of Dharma and Śraddhā, he is nearer to the philosophical (or religious) term kāma, as one of trivarga.

The prominent personality of Kāma, in the Mbh, is undoubtedly ‘love’ ‘desire’ and ‘longing’. When kāma (or Kāma) is used in this sense it is compounded with
various words, such as, kāma-mārgaṇa-pīḍita, kāma-ārta, kāma-mohita, kāma-abhihita etc. Kāma as fierce love is well described in Mbh. I. 160-161. The story of the daughter of the Sun, Tāpati and a human king Sarīvaraṇa shows us a good example of love affliction. The story runs as follows:

A human king, and also a devotee of the Sun, Sarīvaraṇa fell in love with an amazingly beautiful damsels Tāpati. And she was the daughter of the Sun, Vivasvat, and sister of Sāvitrī. When the king saw Tāpati, was smitten by the arrows of love (kāmamārgaṇapīḍitaḥ), his mind was burning with the fierce fire of love (dahyamāna tīvraṇa manmathāgni). But when Tāpati disappeared, the love struck king (kāmārta) whose heart was smitten with love (kāmābhihatacetas), stunned by the god of love (kāmamohita) fell down on the earth. Then, the king who was wrapped in the flames of love (asitāpāṁgim) was awakened by Tāpati, and said that love was piercing him with its horned arrows and did not cease (kāmaḥ kamalagarbhābhē pratividhyan na śāmyati), and he was stung by the great serpent of love (kāmamahāhi). Then he begged her to rescue him with her love...

The identification of this feverish Kāma, in this connection, with fire, or fire-like Kāma (kāmāgni), or Kāma as the son of Agni is not odd. Kāma is identified with anāla fire, along with sarīkalpa will, and abhiruci liking. It is said that this Kāma is the most eternal of all creatures, lord of the world, all knowing...¹. Kīcaka was

¹ Mbh. XIII. 84. 16-17: sarīkalpābhīruciḥ kāmaḥ sanātanatamo’nalaḥ /

   jagatpatir anirdeśyaḥ sarvagāt sarvabhāvanāh //
wrapped with the flaming fire of love (*manmathānala*) for Draupadī, and the incurable disease of lust (*kāmavādhī*) afflicts him.¹

The arrows of Desire are called variously, viz., Kāmañā,² Manmathaśara³, Kandarpabāṇa⁴, Puṣpaketuśara⁵. These arrows of Desire are said to have the same features as are often seen in the AV. They are sometimes symbolically the great serpents (*kāmamahāhi*, Mbh. I. 161. 9), sometimes they are used as hooks which are employed to direct the elephant⁶, and at other times if a victim is stung by them, he is soon ensnared without any remedy; and both man and woman can be stupefied by these arrows. Now one should remember these two symbols of Kāma’s arrow, i.e., the serpent and the hook for further comparison with Māra.

Kāma as the son of Kṛṣṇa and Rukmini is said to be a hero śūra. And he exists in every creature and moves in the heart of both suras and asuras⁷.

Kāma as the son of Dharma and Śraddhā⁸ is merely mentioned but not specifically related with any myths.

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² Mbh. III. 264. 3; 265. 2; IV. 13. 4.
³ Mbh. (Chit. edition) III. 46. 2.
⁴ Mbh. I. 178. 5; 12.
⁵ Mbh. III. 265. 7.
⁸ Mbh. (Chit. edition) I. 66. 33.
It is said that Kāma took a being in the North, which is an auspicious direction, along with roṣa (Wrath) and others\(^1\). The myths in connection with Kāma are generally of him as a love agent who helps to seduce the target. Menaka requests Indra that she needs Manmatha as her helper to seduce the sage Viśvāmitra (Mbh. I. 65. 41). With the help of Kāma the sage fell victim to love (kāmavaśaṅ gataḥ). He had lust to lie down with her. Urvaśī fell in love with Arjuna inflamed by Manmatha and wounded by his arrows\(^2\). Many kings and five sons of Paṇḍu are pierced by the arrows of Kandarpa (Mbh. I. 178. 5; 12). Vāsudeva was forced by Anāṅga to fall in love with Bhīmasena. Kāma ranges inside her body (Mbh. I. 141. 6).

It is said that the son of Droṇa, Aśvathama was born Mbh. (I. 61. 66-67) as a collected form of Mahādeva, Kāma, Krodha and Yama (Antaka). Vāsudeva is called Kāmadeva in the sense of the god who fulfils desire\(^3\).

It is said that kāma assumes various forms and everything is permeated by kāma (or Kāma)\(^4\). In Kāmagītā (Mbh. XIV. 13.) Kāma himself explains his own nature and illustrates how difficult it is to overcome himself. Here Kāma is a deity who

\(^1\) Mbh. V. 109. 7: atra devyā tapas tapiam makeśvararaparipsayā /  
atra kāmaś ca roṣaś ca śailaś comā ca sattabahuḥ //

\(^2\) Mbh. (Chit. edition) III. 46. 2.

\(^3\) XIII. 135. 83: kāmadevaḥ kāmapūlaḥ kāmi kāntaḥ kṛtāgamaḥ/  
anirdeśyavapur viśnur viro ‘nanto dhanaṁjayaḥ //

\(^4\) XII. 161. 32: kāmo hi vividhakāraḥ sarvaṁ kāmena santatam.
is personified philosophically. According to Kāmagītā, no creature is able to destroy Kāma without following the proper method. If someone tries to destroy Kāma by prayer, he prevails over him by ego. And of someone tries to overcome him with sacrifice, then he deceives him in the form of the most virtuous creature, and if with mastering Vedas and Vedaṅgas, then with the soul of virtue, if with patience, then he appears to him as his mind so that he can not perceive his existence, and if a man wishes to destroy him by means of asceticism, then in the dress of asceticism. Finally Kāma declares that he is the everlasting one without an equal, whom no creature can kill or destroy. Keep this Kāma in mind who very much resembles Māra, who appears in Saṃyutta Nikāya with various forms.

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1 Mbh. XIV. 13. 12: yo mām prayatate hantuḥ jñātvā praharane balam //
                       tasya tasmin praharane punah prādurbhavāmyaham //

13: yo mām prayatate hantuḥ yajñair vividhadakṣiṇaiḥ /
                       jatīgmeśviva karmātmā punah prādurbhavāmyaham //

14: yo mām prayatate hantuḥ vedair vedāntasādhanaiḥ /
                       sthāvareśviva sāntātmā tasya prādurbhavāmyaham //

15: yo mām prayatate hantum dhṛtyā satyaparākramaiḥ /
                       bhāvo bhavāmi tasyāharī sa ca mān nāvabudhyate //

16: yo mām prayatate hanturiḥ tapasā sarīśitavrataḥ /
                       tatas tapasi tasyātha punah prādurbhavāmyaham //

17: yo mām prayatate hantum mokṣam āsthāya panditaḥ /
                       tasya mokṣaratisthasya nātyāmi ca hasāmi /
                       avadhyāḥ sarvabhūtānām aham ekaḥ sanātanaḥ //

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Now, another form of Desire, Kandarpa in the Mbh. is said to be a cause of procreation\(^1\). In this case, Desire or Kāma is creative power in positive way.

Darpa (Pride) is another supposed form of Desire or Kāma. He was born as a son of Śri and Adharma, and he is said to have brought destruction upon both gods and asuras\(^2\), or perhaps, upon men. Then, the same Desire in the same literature is destructive power in negative way.

Thus, Desire has many faces. On the one hand, consistently it keeps some positive features throughout the ages from the Vedas onwards, on the other hand, slowly from the post-Vedas, different features, i.e., its negative facets, are introduced. As it is observed above, it works both as a positive creative power and also as a negative destructive power. From the discussion above it can be seen how Desire has some connection with Death.

(4) Desire in Pāli literature

Nowhere in the Pāli canon does desire occur as a deity. Only a young deity named Kāmada\(^3\) is mentioned. His name perhaps is derived from the word kāma, but his identification is unknown.

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1 Mbh. VI. 32. 28; prajanaścāsmi kandarpah.

2 Mbh. XII. 91. 24: darpo nāma śriyaḥ putro jaihe adharmād iti śrutīḥ /

\[ \text{tena devāsurā rājan nītāḥ subahuśovaśam} // \]

3 Kāmada sutta, Saṃ. II-1, 2. 6: He appears as one of devaputtas. He told the Buddha that the path of Aryan disciples was hard to follow and Buddha teaches him that if one who delight in calming the mind... they gain even what is hard to gain.
Kāma or desire or craving is exhaustively discussed in Pāli literature as a philosophical term. However, mythological reference of kāma or its equivalent word, which would mean ‘longing’ or ‘desire’ is difficult to find. In this connection Aggañña sutta in Dīg. II. 4, assumes importance for our study. It tells that ‘desire’ is the chief cause for losing transparency and for having a solid body of human beings. According to the sutta:

Originally the world was Ābhassara Brahmā world or the world made up of light, and there the beings dwelt, mind-made, sustained on love, self-luminous, moving through the air, glorious...¹ In that period, there was just one mass of water (ekodakibhūtam), all was blinding darkness (andakāratimisā). Nothing was divided, no sun, no moon, no stars, no night, day, or month, no male and female... Beings were reckoned just as beings². After a long period, the savoury earth (rasapathavi) appeared over the waters. Now, some being was captured by ‘desire (loka)’, tasted the svoury earth on its finger. From that time the world started forming distinction, the self luminance disappeared, the sun and the moon appeared instead, night and day were distinguished and also the month. The savoury earth disappeared, a fungus cropped up... creepers... rice... male-female organs... then the need for a shelter cover the houses... then the household life was started and stored the crops... then the greedy ones taking what is not given. Then they ask for some brilliant beings to protect the field. Lord of the field. Thus the

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¹ manomaya pītbhakkha sayampabhā antalikkhacarā subhaṭṭhāyino ciraṁ dīghamaddhānām tīṭhanti.

² sattā stātveva saṁkhyam gachanti.
khattiya (kṣatriya) class was originated in order to punish wrong doings. Then, the pious beings expiated the sin. This was the origin of brāhmaṇa class. Then the meaning of brāhmaṇa is ‘one who puts aside evil and unwholesome things’.

The story does not directly tell that desire is a cause for ruin. But it is understood that desire of a person was a cause of the present form of the divided world and beings. In other words, desire in Pāli literature, created this world. But that desire caused the beings fall from original happy world to this solid world in which all kind of discriminations are existed. Therefore, we may say that desire in Pāli literature is a creative power but it is in a negative way.

(iii) The Journey of Death

According to the general belief the appearance of death is the worst and most basic break in the original normality of human life. Death, for humans, is surely the most sensitive subject. It is the deep-rooted instinctive fear, and the most loathsome idea to get near to. Death makes one speculate, reflect, and meditate. It is due to the fear of death that mankind is said to have been developing mentally and physically. The fear of death is consoled by the thought of the world of the dead. It is either paradise or good rebirth. But, that fear is increased by the thought of hell or bad rebirth.

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1 pāpake akusale dhamme vāhanti.
2 The Enyclopedia of Religion, Vol. 4, p. 252.
In the Rgvedic age, death did not appear to be an abnormally dreaded thing. As desire was never admonished, so death, if it comes at a ripe age was not a curse. The world of the dead is said to be the blessed land, ruled by a compassionate king. Mostly, the people seemed to accept death as a natural phenomenon. Though they pray for the enemy’s death and long life for themselves, the fear of death is barely mentioned. Little is said about the sufferings of the after-death-world, and much is spoken of the blessings of that world. Everything, viz., eatables, comforts, pleasure... is aplenty in that world. For them, death seems to be one part of life or nature. Only premature death appeared to be unwelcome. This Rg Vedic attitude seems to have changed slowly from the Atharvanic period. It seems that the people have started to get attached to their present life, and accordingly, death has slowly become an object of fear. In the meditative and the Epic period, death, either mental or physical, is always positioned in the center of meditation. In this period, death is a subject of fear. In some text it is considered to be the product of desire.

The death and death-connected-deities are called by various names. Mṛtyu, Antaka, Kāla (in later period) and also Nīrṛti and Yama. There are messengers and agents of death, and also simple scarers or threateners of death. But, the functions of death-deities are not clearly distinguished many times, and often may overlap. Thus, Mṛtyu is Antaka, and again Antaka is Yama, and the functions of Yama in the later period are the same as the Vedic Nīrṛti who is normally avoided by man (RV. X. 59. 1-5). In one RV passage Yama is directly identified with Mṛtyu (RV. X. 165. 4), and when Yama is identified with Mṛtyu and Antaka, he too is the god to be avoided by men. In this way, all the functions of death-deities, though they have individual and original functions of their own, are mingled and expressed in one and the same deity, i.e. Yama.
The personality of Yama is thus widely linked with other death-deities, and he alone is doing several of their functions. According to the journey of death, the characteristics of Yama too have been extensively changed throughout the ages and literatures. In the Rg Veda, Yama is a kind king of the dead. In the Atharva Veda, he is not only the virtuous king of the dead but also a fierce god of death. In the Epics, Yama is a holder of dharma as well as a fierce and a compassionate god of death. In the Pāli canon, he is a fierce god of another land, who judges merit and demerit of the departed.

Thus, Yama alone shows the full scope of the characteristics of death and the personalities of death-deities. Therefore, it is quite clear that the study of Yama will suffice for our research on death and death-deities. Hence this sub-chapter will not deal with the other death-connected deities, but will be focused only on Yama throughout the ages and the literatures.

(1) Yama in the Rgveda

Before observing the Rgvedic characteristics of Yama, it might be better to survey the attitude of the Vedic people with regard to death. Now, though death is a natural fear for every living being, the Vedic people seem to be a little away from this feeling. Without special philosophical approach they accept death as one of the natural phenomena. Their fear is mainly of the unexpected, sudden and premature death, but not of the death due to natural old age. The path that leads to the world of the dead is happy, in company with Yama there the Fathers rejoice. The two dogs of Yama, Saramā’s offspring guard the pathway (RV. X. 14. 10). They think that Yama's two dogs can give auspicious life here and today
(RV. X. 14. 12). Naturally they thought that the world of the dead is a prosperous and blessed land. The world of the dead is thought to be bestowed by Yama. It is a resting place. That world is characterized by days, waters and lights. They believed that that world is located in the highest heaven (parame vyoman), and there the dead heroes congregate. There, Yama tends ancestors with love (RV. X. 135. 1). Again, it is also said that the departed soul entered the sun and there, Yama received him. Yama sits in the wheeless (acakra) and new (nava) car which is mentally formed (manasākr), and is one poled (ekeṣa, RV. X. 135. 3) but turning every way (visvataḥ, RV. X. 135. 3). Yama's seat is called the home of gods. With the thought of blessed-death and its affluent world with a compassionate king, and perhaps, they tried to overcome the fear of death, even if they had a deep-rooted fear of it. The singers pray for bliss and health for the dead person in the world of the dead, or perhaps, in the next world. The Vedic people reckoned that their own sins and evils could be left with death, and leaving behind their sins along with their dead body they would seek a new dwelling, bright with glory, wear another body by good works and also by sacrifices (istāpūrta, RV. X. 14, 8). However, the destiny of the wicked is to fall into the dark depths and disappear. The RV. tells that the evil-doers, the false and untruthful ones are punished in a deep place (gabhīram padam).

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1 RV. X. 14. 9: ahobhiradbhiraktubhivravyaktam yamo dadātyavasānam.

2 RV. I. 105. 9; X. 154. 4-5.

3 RV. X. 135. 7: yamasya sādananm devamānam.

4 RV. X. 14. 11: paridehi rājantsvasti cāsamā anamīva n ca dhehi.

5 cf; Radhakrishnan, 'Indian Philosophy', Vol. I. p. 115.

6 RV, IV. 5. 5: cf; Merh, 'Yama', p.136.
The most distinguished personality of Yama in the RV is said to be his 'blessed death for mankind', and his 'kingship of the pitṛs'. Yama is said to be blessed death because: He has paved the path for the sake of many; and has first found a place to dwell for the dead person; Yama chose death for the sake of gods. He did not select immortality for the sake of progeny. Yama surrendered his dear body. Dandekar interprets this holy event of Yama's death (RV. X. 13. 4) as, 'the gods organized this sacrifice for the sake of the creation of the universe and the procreation of the human race. On that occasion, Yama offered himself as the sacrificial offering. Out of this self-offering originated the praṇā.' It is said that even the gods are spoken of as originally 'mortal'. The gods win immortality by means of sacrifice only. And Yama is never explicitly called a god in the RV, nor ever called a man. However, Yama is clearly a 'martya' according to AV. XVIII. 3. 13. The unique character of Yama is indicated in the RV. by the poet that that Veda refers to him not as a god (because he surrenders his immortality) nor as a man (because his act of self-immolation for the sake of creation is far too 'cosmic'

1 RV. X. 14. 1: bahubhyataḥ panthām anuspaśānam.
2 RV. X. 14. 2: yamo no gāntum prathamo vīdeda. and also X. 18. 13.
3 RV. X. 13. 4: debebhhyataḥ kamavṛnīta mṛtyum.
4 RV. X. 13. 4: praṇayati kam amṛtan nāvṛnīta.
5 RV. X. 13. 4: priyam yamas tanvam prārirečit.
6 Dandekar, 'Vedic Mythological tracts', p. 12.
7 T S. VII. 4.2.1.
or ‘divine’ for an ordinary human being) but simply as *martya*. Thus the myth of Yama and the myth of Puruṣa are connected with each other. And though Yama is closely associated with the spirits of the dead, he never assumes the horrific role of the demon of death. It is very important to know that, according to Dandekar’s interpretation of the verse RV. X. 13. 4, death had arisen due to the blessed act of a holy god, and from this sacred death originated *prajā*. It means death existed *before* the birth of *prajā*. Inevitably then, death and the first dead, are conceived to be holy. Now, it is mentioned elsewhere that Kāma is said to originate this universe, and this Kāma works as a positive creative power. Yama is now said to originate *prajā* by his holy death. Therefore, Yama too is a creator. In this way, both Desire and Death are blessed, and they are connected with the creation of the universe and beings in the beginning. This, indeed, is a critical irony of Yama that he, outwardly, does not seem to have absolute power among

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1 Dandekar, ‘Vedic Mythological Tracks’, p. 130-131: Hillebrandt (‘Vedic mythology’ p. 223) has a similar opinion. He states that Yama was not called as *prathamo janānām*, but only he was *prathamo martyānām*. Therefore, in the Vedas, Yama was a *martya* but never a *jana* or *manuṣya*. For, at the beginning, the gods were also *martyas* but never *janas* (ŚB. II. 2.2.8; XI, 1.2.12: *martya ha vā agre devā āsūh*). Yama died as first mortals but not as human beings. He states that in Yama mythology there is not a single trace of his earthly origin. However, in the matter of Yama’s godhood, Griswold (‘The religion of the RV’, p. 322 suggests firmly that Yama is a god, for, everywhere in the RV Yama’s godhood is implied (RV. X.14.7; 13.4; 92.11; I.164.46; 64.3).


3 Dandekar, ‘Vedic Mythological Tracks’, p. 139.

4 Read earlier sub-section, Kāma in the RV.
the Vedic pantheon, but he is both the creator and the destructor, both the giver of
life and the ruler of the dead. As the first dead, Yama’s becoming of a king of the
world of the dead is a natural sequence. Yama needs people for his land, hence he
becomes a gatherer of men\(^1\). Then, he tends the dead people with love.

Yama has close connection with various deities who are connected with death
directly and indirectly. Yama is also in the company of the fire-bringers,
Aṅgirases and the departed souls, the Fathers on the sacrificial grass
(ṚV. X. 14. 3-5).

Generally it is recognized that Mṛtyu and Antaka are Death in person, directly
personified from the words ‘\(mr\)’ to die and ‘anta’ last or end. Therefore, it is not
unusual that Yama, the ruler of death, himself is called Mṛtyu and Antaka.

Yama, sometimes, is functionally identified with Nirṛti. The etymology of Nirṛti
is not certain, but perhaps, it is from the word ‘\(rta\)’ with prefix ‘nir’\(^2\). She is
generally known as a goddess of Destruction. She is an evil deity who takes lives
of beings, and causes a sudden death, therefore she is not welcomed even though
worshipped in a proper manner\(^3\). However, Yama is known as a righteous king of
the world of the dead, and even if he is always connected with death, in no case

\(^{1}\) ṚV. X. 14. 1: saṅgamanam janānāṁ yamāṁ rājānam.

\(^{2}\) Then, ultimately this etymology gives the meaning of Nirṛti as ‘out-of-order-ness’, and then,
Nirṛti is said to be a negative female counterpart of \(rta\), or, indirectly, of Varuṇa and not of
Yama. Cf, Joshi, ‘Some Minor Divinities’, p, 152.

\(^{3}\) ṚV. X. 18. 1-2. 4; 59. 4; 161. 2.
and in no period, is he unjust, and is never called evil though fierce he may be. Therefore, Yama and Nirṛti are similar only by function, but not by personality.

Yama and Agni are inevitably connected with each other, one as a ruler of the departed souls and, the other as a sender of the dead. Agni, therefore, is said to be a well-loved friend (kamya) of Yama (RV. X. 21. 5) and is also his priest (ṚV. X. 52. 3). Several times they are praised together especially in funeral hymns. Agni who bears off the stains of beings is invoked for going to Yamarāja (ṚV. X. 16. 9), and Agni is called for guarding a person who thinks of Yama’s name (ṚV. X. 12. 6). Agni has ten secret dwelling (daśāntarasyam, ṚV. X. 51. 3), and Yama found Agni hidden in the plants and waters (ṚV. X. 51. 3). However, some gods doubt Agni’s competence as a priest of Yama. Whether he can convey offerings to the realm of Yama is questionable (ṚV. X. 52. 3). Now, it is noteworthy that Agni is closely related not only to Yama (Death) but also to Kāma (Desire). It is mentioned earlier that Kāma is the creative power, and Kāma (especially strong sexual desire) is also characterized as Agni (Kāmāgni). Agni and Yama are dear friends, one is the sender of the dead souls and the other is the receiver of them. Consequently, it might be said that Kāma (Desire) is Agni, and Agni (or Kāmāgni) leads one to death, and Yama receives a being who is sent by Kāma or Agni. Again, it might be said that Desire (Kāma) leads one to Death (characterized as Yama).

Varuṇa and Yama are connected due to their similar attributes. Yama is called a king, rāja, Varuṇa is also called an emperor, samrāṭ. Vedic Varuṇa is the holder of rta (ṛtavān) and the post-Vedic Yama is the king of dharma (dharmarāja). As ṛtavān Varuṇa holds pāśa, so dharmarāja Yama holds danda and paḍvēśa. However, while Ṛgvedic Varuṇa enjoys sovereignty over living beings, Yama

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does over departed souls. Therefore, the nature of their ‘fetter’ or ‘snare’ seems to
be different. Varuṇa’s pāśa is used mainly for punishing human beings in the
present life, and Yama’s padvīṣa (or post-Vedic danda) is used them in the land
of the departed. It is said that the golden winged bird (hiranya pakṣa) is Varuṇa’s
envoy and he hastens to the home of Yama (RV. X. 123. 6). Yama’s intimacy
with the god Varuṇa and their enjoying food together (RV. X. 14, 7) is worth
taking note of. It is also very significant that in one verse of the RV., Varuṇa also
is considered as a king of the dead. It is said that if the dead man goes forth by the
ancient path he is supposed to see both the kings, Yama and the god (Varuṇa)
rejoice in the offering to the dead (RV. X. 14). It seems that their togetherness is a
signal of handing the Rg Vedic function of Varuṇa over to Yama of the later
period.

Now, there is one thing to be noted, that though people considered the world of
the dead as prosperous and the king of that world too as just and compassionate, it
is the nature of men to pray for long life (RV. X. 14. 14). They blow the flute for
Yama¹ for obtaining long life or for gaining the happy world of the dead. They do
not hesitate to bring the dead person from the world of the dead.² Thus, even
from the time of the RV the desire for life and wish for avoiding death slowly
begins to surface.

¹RV. X. 135, 7: iyamasya dhamyate nāīrayauī gīrbhib pariskṛtaḥ.
²RV. X. 60. 10. a person Subandhu has been brought from Yama’s place for life, not for
death.
(2) **Yama in the Atharvaveda**

The land of Yama in the AV. is prosperous. Yama, the sage of Fathers (*pitṛnāṁ kaviḥ*), welcomes the souls due to their becoming his subjects. He gives them place and wealth\(^1\). Dawn Uṣa is a milky-cow at Yama’s place (AV. III. 10. 1). One thing to be noted here is that there is a peculiar idea in the AV. that the dead people, i.e. the newcomers of the next world are to pay a tax when they reach at the world of the dead. They have to pay one-sixteenth of their hopes fulfilled, that is, “the reward of their good works on earth to the assessors of Yama, but if they choose, they call compound for this tax before they go thither”\(^2\). As in the RV., Yama’s world in the AV. is located in *parame vyoman*\(^3\), perhaps in heaven, or in the midst of the sky (RV. X. 15. 14). However, in one verse of AV\(^4\), says that the world of Yama is in the netherworld. The poet asks the dead to go down where Yama’s abode is. However, even if the world of Yama is said to be in the netherworld it is clearly mentioned that this world is different from the evil world. Because, the robber of *brāhmaṇa’s* cow prayed to go to the evil world from Yama’s seat\(^5\). The Vedic people pray for old age (AV. VI. 28. 3).

\(^1\) AV. XVIII. 2. 37: *dadāmyasmā avasānametad ya eṣa āgan mama cedabhūdiha.*


\(^3\) RV. X. 14. 8; AV. 6. 63. 3.

\(^4\) AV. XVIII. 2. 56: *yamasya sādanam samitiścāva gacchatāt.*

\(^5\) AV. XII. 11. 3: *yamasādanāt pāpalokan.*
In the AV. too, Yama is the first to die of the mortals (mamāra prathamo mṛtyāṁ, AV. XVIII. 3. 13). He is the first who traveled to the worlds before us (preyāya lokam), and is the assembler of people (saṅgamaṁ janāṁ, AV. XVIII. 3. 13). Yama is considered to be a receiver of evil-things and beings. A plant of universal power (vīruda viśvatovīryā) sends piśācas and yātudhānas to Yama (AV. VI. 32, 2). He is still the compassionate deity, both for the departed and for the alive. Due to this reason, men are afraid of men more than they are of Yama. Men ask Yama to protect them from the danger of men (pātu yamo manusyebhāḥ, AV. XVI. 4. 4). Yama’s deathless birth (yamasya jātamamṛtam) is mentioned in the AV. XX. 25. 5. However, in the AV, death has became a little darker and fiercer than in the RV. Accordingly Yama slowly changes his character more to being the fierce death god than to the kind king, though he still retains the title of ‘king of the dead’.

Now, more often he is identified with death itself, Mṛtyu and Antaka, though they appear sometimes as totally different deities. Yama is even prayed to for protecting men from Mṛtyu (AV. XIX. 20. 1).

Yama shares some features with Nirṛti. Both Yama and Nirṛti are connected with evil dreams. Both of them are invoked for dispelling evil-dreams (AV. VI. 27.29). However, while Vedic Nirṛti obtains only evil functions\(^1\) such as, death, destruction and disorder, Vedic Yama has good functions even though he represents the dark-world. Nirṛti is a malevolent goddess, Yama is a benevolent god. Yama is invoked for giving back the life of sick persons which Nirṛti binds

\(^1\) She is even called pāpa devata, or evil-goddess (Sāyaṇa on the RV. I. 38. 6).
with iron-ropes. In Nirṛti dharma is hardly found, but with Yama dharma is essentially connected throughout the ages, even in Buddhism and in the Epics where his nature is depicted as the fiercest deity.

It is interesting to note that many a time Yama and Sleep (svapna) are connected. The Vedic people considered that Sleep is a gift of Yama. Yama is said to be the father of Sleep, while Varuṇānī is the mother. Sleep comes from Yama’s world (yamasya lokāt ābhū, AV. 56. 1) and again sleep is created in the asura’s dwelling (mimāṇo asurasya yonau AV. 56. 1). It suggests that the world of Yama is asura’s dwelling place too. Sleep is an instrument of Yama (yamasya karaṇa, AV. XVI. 5. 8). Sleep is also identified with Antaka and Mṛtyu, and it is son of perdition and defeat (AV. XVI. 2. 4. 6-7). Evil dream is connected with Kāma too. The singers pray to Kāma to let the evil dream loose upon their enemy (AV. IX. 2. 2;3).

Agni is more closely connected with Yama in the AV. Agni is brought up as a messenger (agnidāta) of Yama to send the enemies to Yama’s abode (AV. II. 12. 7). Agni is also requested to release pāśa as he knows how to release one from all the bonds of debt (AV. VI. 117. 1). Yama’s Agni is mentioned, and

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1 AV. VI. 46. 1, the whole hymn is as follows:

yo na jīvo ’si na mṛto devanāmamṛtagarbhosvapna /
varuṇānī te mātā yamaḥ pitārārurnāmāśi //

According to this hymn Sleep is son of wife of Varuṇa, then, why is his father not Varuṇa but Yama?
Indra removed that fire with the help of cane īṣikā, barren sesame tilapiṭṭa, stick danda, and reed nada.

Varuṇa and Yama are also closely connected. It seems that Yama slowly takes the function of Varuṇa. In one verse (AV. VI. 46. 1), it is also suggested that Varuṇa himself is Yama. Yama is prayed to by people for relief from their guilt, which has been committed by the family (AV. VI. 1. 16). The singers wish to avoid the pādvīśa (a wooden log with which the leg of an animal is tied) of Yama as well as Varuṇa’s ṭapa (AV. VI. 96. 2). It is quite evident that Yama’s power has come down from Varuṇa. (ṛta-dharma, paśa-danda). “In the ṚV. Varuṇa is seen as the restraining God. However, he punishes a sinful person in his lifetime itself by holding him by his fetters. When in the Brāhmaṇa period the concepts of karma and karmaphala gathered roots in the minds of the Aryans, the already established death god was offered the role of the supreme judge, i.e., Dharmarāja. Naturally he became the restraining God. Thus, slowly the Samrat Varuṇa, the Vratapati ceased his position of judge, which was captured by Yama”¹.

Bṛhaspati and Yama’s relation is quite complicated. In some place he is identified with Bṛhaspati, and at another place Bṛhaspati is prayed to for release from Yama’s yonder world (AV. VII. 55. 1).

Yama and Vivasvān are said to be related as father and son, but their characters are not described to be the same. While the Vedic singers pray to Vivasvān for

¹ Nirmalā Kulkarni, ‘Vedic studies’, pp. 53-54.
bestowing immortality (amṛtatva) and, pray that their lives do not go to Yama. So sometimes, Yama is described as higher and Vivasvān is lower\(^1\).

Yamadūtas are often referred to. They are the indications of death. They take lives of men (AV. V. 30. 6), hence they are not welcomed by men. The people who wish for a long life send them away (AV. VIII. 2. 11). Yamadūtas are also called Mṛtyudūtas (AV. VIII. 8. 11). Yama has a dark brown horse (AV. V. 5. 8). The ill-omened bird ulūka and kapota are sapless (arasa) and powerless (ābhūka, AV. VI. 29. 3) in Yama’s home. The two dogs of Yama are described one as black (śyāma), the other brindled (śabala). The attitude toward the dogs is varied. In one place the Vedic poets pray to the ancestors for running ahead (atidrava) of the dogs (AV. XVIII. 2. 11) and at one place in the RV, they are said to be the protectors of the road (pathirakṣī, AV. VII. 1. 9), the singers entrust the dead to them who are watching people (nrcaṅgasā) sitting by the road (AV. XVIII. 2. 12). These dogs are insatiate, have broadened nose (urūnasau), take breath away (asutṛp), and chase people (janān anu carato, AV. XVIII. 2. 13). Mṛtyu is a messenger of Yama\(^2\). Now, these inauspicious messengers of Yama; the dogs, the owls, ulūka and the doves, kapota, were regarded as the instruments of punishment, and all these traits helped to make Yama an object of terror\(^3\).

As it is seen, Yama in the Vedas is different from his present form. Yama’s ferocious nature which has not appeared in the RV, has been introduced slowly

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\(^1\) AV. XVIII. 2. 32: yamaḥ paro varo vivasvān.

\(^2\) AV. XVIII. 2. 27: mṛtyuryaṃasyāśid dūtab.

\(^3\) Dandekar, ‘Vedic Mythological Tracks’, p. 140.
from the AV. In the RV, though he was always connected with death he was not said to take the souls away but to kindly lead the dead to his land. In the AV., his messengers were considered ferocious, hence men avoided them. In the AV., finally Yama came to be identified with death.

(3) Yama in Pāli literature

To a question ‘what is death?’, an answer is given in the Mahāsatipatthāna sutta, Dig. II. 9, as: “In whatever beings, of whatever group of beings, there is passing away, a removal, a cutting off, a disappearance, a death, a dying, an ending, a cutting-off of the aggregates, a discarding of the body, that is called death (Walshe’s translation).” Or, according to another definition ‘death is the returning of the material part of a being which is composed of four great elements (mahābhūta) to their original mass. ‘Life ends in death’, and ‘there is no means whereby those born do not die’, hence just as there is constant fear of falling for the ripe fruit, so for mortals who are born there is constant fear of death. Only an

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1 Mahāsatipatthāna sutta, Dig. II. 9: katamañca, bhikkhave, maraṇam? yam tesam tesam sattānaṃ tamhā tamhā sattaniṁśā cuti cavanatā bhedo antaradhānaṃ maccu maraṇaṃ kālakiriṇyā khandhānaṃ bhedo kaṭevarassa nikkhepo jīvitindriyassupacchedo, idam vuccati, bhikkhave, maraṇam.

2 Sāmaññaphala sutta, Dig. I. 2, and also Diṭṭhisamyutta, Saṁ. II-I. 3.

3 Dhammapada. 148: maraṇantam hi jīvitam.

4 Salla sutta, SN. III. 8, no. 575: na hi sā upakkamo atthi yena jātā na miyvara.

5 Salla sutta, SN. III. 8, no. 576: phalānamiva pakkānaṃ pāto papatanā bhayam /

   evam jātānaṃ maccānaṃ niccāṃ maraṇato bhayam //
arahant who detaches himself from the things of which death will deprive him of, and who detaches himself from the body itself, has no fear of death, he awaits his time without desire and without fear.

Death is thus dryly analyzed and technically defined in Pāli literature. As death is not ornated mythologically, so hope for the land of the dead and for the ruler of that world is much less. The characteristics of Yama in the Pāli are clearly distinguished from the other deities in general. Yama is described as the fiercest deity of the dead. He is said to be the terrible deity who sits in judgment and punishes the sinners after death. The Buddhist concept of death-god might have started from the darker part of the Atharvaveda. The brighter part of Vedic Yama, i.e., as the kindest protector of the manes, is not at all seen in the Buddhistic Yama. The number of Yamas referred to are not one but two, or perhaps, even more just as many other deities appeared in groups in Pāli literature. Mahāsāmaya sutta, mentions two Yamas (duve yamā). Yama’s rebirth is also referred to in Anguttara Nikāya (Vol. I). It is said that once Yama sat at the feet of Tathāgata and longed to be born as a human being. In this way, though Yama has his own personality apparently, in the Pāli literature, he also shows the common factors which most of the Buddhist deities possess, viz., as the other deities Yama

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2 Mahāsāmaya sutta, Dīg. II. 7.

3 In Aṅg. A. (II. 1) four Yamas are mentioned as: tamaṣsa raññoti yamarājā nāma vēmānīkapetarājā. ekasmiṃ kāle dibbavimāne dibbakappurakkha dibba-uyyāna dibbanātakādisasambattim anubhavati. ekasmiṃ kāle kammavipākaṃ, dhammiko rājā, na cēsa ekova hoti, catūsu pana dvāresu cattāro janā honti.
too is subservient to the Buddha and the monks and he come to listen to the Buddha's preaching.

The agents or the messengers of Yama are mentioned in the Pāli literature. The description of Jātaka¹ about the two dogs is very similar to the AV. In the AV., the two brindled dogs of Yama, the sons of Saramā, are viewed as 'the guardians, four-eyed watchers of the path, observers of men, broad-nosed, life-stealing and are the messengers of Yama who wander among men'. The names of dogs, in the Jātaka are Savala and Sāma. They have big-bodies, and they are strong and powerful. They, with their teeth as strong as steel devour the sinners who, having deceased from here, fall into the purgatory in the next world. The three messengers of the gods, i.e., age, disease and death, are mentioned in Aṅg². The king Yama in the nether world asks them about the evil doer, whereupon Yama hands him over to the guards of hell for punishment. Maj. also mentions the messengers of Yama: birth, old age, illness, punishment for crime and death. They are sent to the human world as a warning to abstain from ill and follow the good³. When beings die, they are led to Yama and he judges them according to their deeds. He questions them as to whether they have seen his messenger. When they give a negative answer, the nīryapālas take them and throw them into a different hell⁴.

¹ Mahānāradakassapa-Jāt, II. 22. No.545.
² Section of three III. 35.
³ cf, Haldar, 'Early Buddhist Mythology'. p. 77.
⁴ Bhūmija sutta, Maj. III, 3. 6. p. 179.
There are innumerable descriptions about the netherworld and hell in Pāli literature. Yama is the fierce king of those worlds. But he does not live either in the netherworld or in the hell to meet the sinners or the departed souls. It is said that the world of Yama stands between the Tāvatimśa and Tusita. The residents of that world are called Yāmā, and they are those who have attained divine bliss\(^1\). It is said that the petas too dwell in the kingdom of Yama.

The Buddhist equivalent of the river Styx in Greek mythology, Vetaraṇi, appears in the Indian mythology first in Pāli text. The dreadful river Vetaraṇi encircles and flows to the world of the dead, or hell. The fools, and evil-doers are said to fall into that river and they are tortured by sharp blades and razors in it\(^2\). The water of that river is boiling and covered with iron lotuses and sharp leaves, and in the stream of Vetaraṇi there is nothing to rest upon\(^3\). On either bank of that river there are silk-cotton trees with foot long thorns of iron wrought\(^4\). One can cross over this river by giving a gift or by a righteous gain. This mortal can arrive at celestial states, where there is the world of merit\(^5\). The name of ‘Vetaraṇi’ apparently first appeared in Pāli texts, but the concept of the link (or bar) between the two worlds must have been in existence even from the Vedic period. For, there is a reference in the AV. VI. 28. 3 that Yama first reached the slope (pravat)

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\(^1\) Vibh. com. 519: *dibbam sukham yātā payātā sampattā ti.*

\(^2\) Kokāliya sutta, SN. III. 10. no. 674.

\(^3\) Jāt. Vol. VI. p. 124, No, 544.

\(^4\) Jāt. Vol. V. p. 139.

\(^5\) Devata Samyutta, Saṅ. I. 1: *yo dhammaladdhassa dadāti dānaṃ, Uṭṭhānaviriyādhigatassa jantu. atikkamma so vetaranima yamassa, Dibbāni thānāni upeti macco “ti.*

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which is connected to heaven. However, the Mahābhārata too mentions the river Vaitaraṇī. There the Vaitaraṇī river is said to be auspicious. This river flow to the river Triviṣṭapā (Mbh. III. 81. 70), and to Kalinga (Mbh. III. 114. 4). It is also the name of the river Gangā when it flows through the world of the Manes (Mbh. I. 169. 22). Vaitaraṇī is covered with those who sought it (Mbh. V. 107. 14). It conveys all departed spirits to the city of the ruler of spirits \(^1\). It is a terribly awful river and is difficult to cross over\(^2\). And it is also said that the river stays in the court of Varuṇa and glorifies him (Mbh. II. 9. 20). This fact shows that in the later period Yama and Varuṇa were identified or confused with each other due to their similar function i.e., holding Dharma. Mbh III. 85. 6, says that the river called Virajatīrtha, grants remission of sins. He who bathes in this holy place would shine like the moon.

Now, Yama and the world of the dead in Pāli literature, appear stricter and has graver features than in the Vedas. Nevertheless he stands in dharma firmly, never sways from righteousness.

**4) Yama in the Mahābhārata**

The state of death, in the Mbh, seems to stand somewhere between the Vedas and Pāli texts. Though generally the world of the dead is conceived of and described as happy and blessed, there are also a number of unhappy descriptions of that world. The people in this period mostly consider that death is a mere play of time,

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\(^1\) Mbh. VI. 99. 38: *vaitarani pretaṃ pretarājapuram prati.*

\(^2\) Mbh. VII. 48. 50; *mahābhaṇya vaitaraṇī dustarā,* cf, VIII. 55. 42; XVI. 6. 10.
kāla. But still they made desperate efforts to avoid that world. They are not tired of trying to get back the life of dead persons. They are ready for sharing their own dear life with beloved ones, or request the god of death to return their loved ones to them. Death is considered as evil who creates great chaos among men. Death, along with Bhaya and Mahābhaya, is one of the Nairṛtas, the sons of Nirṛti and Adharma, (Mbh. I. 60. 53).

The Mbh. implies that it was the paring of people that resulted in death. It is said that in the olden days men lived as long as they chose to live, and had no fear of Yama, and the offsprings were begotten by will. It is said that in the treta yuga children were begotten by touch alone, and there was no necessity of sexual intercourse. It was from the Dvāpara that the practice of sexual intercourse originated among men. And in the Kali yuga men have come to marry and live in pairs. Then perhaps, death and fear of Yama came to men¹. At another place, death is said to be created due to the complaint of the gods. It is said that once in the Naimiśa forest the gods started a big sacrifice together. Yama held the office of the butcher priest in that sacrifice. Owing to this work he was busy and he

¹ XII. 200. 34; yāvadyāvad abhūc chraddhā deham dhārayitum nṛṇām /
    tāvat tāvad ajīvaṁs te nāsid yamakṛtam bhayam //

XII. 200. 35-37 : na caiṣāṁ maithuno dharmaḥ babhuva bharaṇarṣabhā /
    saṅkalpād eva caiteśām apatyam udapadyate //
    tatra tretāyuge kāle saṅkalpajāyate prajā /
    na hy abhūn maithuno dharmas teṣām api jāṇādhipa //
    dvāpara maithuno dharmaḥ prajānāṁ abhavan nṛpa /
    tathā kalyuge rājan dvandvam āpedire janāh //

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didn’t kill a single human being. Since no human beings died, the number of human beings increased day by day. Then Indra, Varuṇa, Sadya, Rudra and Vasus and Aśvins went to Brahmā, told him that the human beings had obtained immortality, and there was no distinction left between the gods and the men. Brahmā assured them that Yama would attend to his duty if the sacrifice is over. Brahmā further requested the gods to transfer all their strength to Yama. When Yama collected the strength of the gods, again death came to men.

The world of the dead, or the world of Yama described in Mbh is mostly the same as it is in the Vedas and Pāli literature. His hall (sabhā) is full. II. 8 reads as; the hall is made by Viśvakarma, and is glittering as the sun. Its width and length are stretched upto 100 yojanas. It is neither hot nor cold. There is no suffering, old age, hunger or thirst. Every desire can be fulfilled. It has fragrant flowers and delicious fruit in every season. Here there are devarṣi and brahmārṣis, and many other human kings who had performed Aśvamedha. It abounds in kuśa grass and sacred trees. Gandharvas and siddhas attend on Yama. It is also believed that sexual desire which was not fulfilled in the earthy world can be fulfilled in Yama’s abode. However, it is also said that Yama’s abode itself is awful. Going

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¹ Mbh. I. 116. 25-26; Mādrī wished to fulfil Paṇḍu’s sexual desire in the Yama’s abode, and die following him. See the verses:

25: aham evānuyāśyāmi bhartāram apalāyinam /
na hi trptāsmi kāmānān taj jyeṣṭhā anumanyatām //

26: māṁ cābhigamya kṣīno’yam kāmād bharatasattamab/
 tam ucchindyāṁ asya kāmaṁ katha nu yamasādane //

² Mbh. XIII. 112. 39; yamasya viṣayaṁ gharam.
to Yama's world frightens people and Yama is described as a fierce god\(^1\). Sometimes no distinction is made between the abode of the king of Justice and Naraka, hell. Those who were always envious and hankered after earthly objects, and always yielded to anger and joy, following the road of death, have repaired to the region of Yama. Those who have been generous are free from Yama's worlds\(^2\).

Yama's lineage is given in the Mbh. I. 70. 9-12 as: From Kašapa Mārica and Dākṣāyani Vivasvat was born. From Vivasvat, Yama; From Yama, Mārtanda, from him Manu was born, from this Manu were born the Men. Wife of Yama is Dhūmornā\(^3\).

Yama's personality, in the Epics, is largely different form his Vedic prototype and this difference can be noticed in their appearance, characteristics, function and significance. The Mbh. says that some hold a view that Yama is death, but others have another view, for, no shape is ever perceived of death\(^4\).

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1 Mbh. I. 17; I. 24; I. 37
3 Mbh. V. 115. 9; XIII. 151. 6.
4 Mbh. V. 42. 6; *yamaṁ tu eke mṛtyum ato’anyam āhur ātmavasannam amṛtaṁ brahma-caryam, pitarloke rājyam anusāsti devah śivāḥ śivānamām aśivo śivānām.*
Yama's function is varied. He performs Vedic Varuṇa's moral act since he knows law entirely\(^1\) and perfectly (Mbh. I. 50. 15). Yama knows the doings of all men also those of some other gods (Mbh. I. 68. 29). Yama is the controller of those who commit sin in secret (Mbh. V. 35. 61). He has Nīrṛti's ferociousness, and a king's leadership. He governs the southern direction\(^2\). He is generally connected with the manes and death, hence he is called Pretarāja, Pitṛpati, Kṛtānta etc. Yama alone is the king of the fathers\(^3\). Yama himself sometimes takes life of a person without helping-hands of his messengers. Thus he himself takes the life of Satyavan. But he has a soft corner for virtuous persons\(^4\). Sometimes he even returns a dead person back to life and sometimes he may permit the living spouse to give part of his/her life to the dead partner. Thus he allows Ruru to share him life with his dead wife\(^5\), or he even drives away the person who has come to his

\(^1\) Mbh. III-42-16; *yamah paramadharmaj̄a daksinān diśamāstitah*. His knowledge of law is proved due to his identification with Dharma. And Dharma in the form of Yakṣa (Mbh. III. 296-298f) asked many questions to his son Yudhiṣṭhira regarding law.

\(^2\) It is said in Mbh. III. 160. 8; Dharmātmā Yama, the master of all living beings governs the south which is the course of the dead. *yamastu rājā dharmātmā sarvaprāṇabhrēḥ prabhūḥ pretasattvagatāṁ etāṁ daksināmāśrīto diśam.*

\(^3\) Mbh. III. 134. 7; *yamah pitṛnām iśvaraścaika eva.*

\(^4\) Mbh. III. 281: Yama came for binding and taking Satyavan. But due to the desperate request of Savitri, and also due to her love and virtue, he returned Satyavan's soul back to his body after some questions.

\(^5\) Mbh. I. 9: Ruru who lost his beloved Pramadvarā was lamenting. The *devadūta* (or Yamadūta) appeared and showed the way of the gods to give life back to the dead person. *Devadūta* suggested to Ruru that if he shares half of his life with the dead then the dead
land by his own will. A dead or a dying son who is the only source of propagating his family line can be saved from Yama’s realm. It is also said that if one is not destined to die it is not possible to send him to Yama forcibly. Yama is concerned with various works of gods and human beings. Yama came to Draupadi’s svayamvara along with other gods (Mbh. I. 178. 6).

Yama’s appearance is described as a man who is like a huge sun, wearing yellow clothes with a yellow belt. His complexion is black, eyes red. He holds a snare in his hand. His features are fierce. He stands at the side of the victim and observes him (Mbh. III. 281). It is also said that Yama has a gruesome shape and, is surrounded with hundreds of diseases.

Yamadūtas are swift. Ulūka is a Yamadūta (Mbh. XIII. 4. 50). Kāla, Antaka and Mṛtyu are also the Yamadūtas.

person would be alive. When he agreed, the devadūta went to Yama, and, requested him to allow Ruru to give part share of his life to his dead wife. Yama agreed.

1 Mbh. XIII. 70-71, see the story of Nāciketa and Yama.

2 Mbh. I. 90. 32: retodhāḥ putra unnavati naradeva yamakṣayāt.

3 Mbh. V. 20. 7: śesavanto na śakītā navītaṁ yamasādananam.

4 Mbh. I. 218: Yama, with his kāladaṇḍa weapon, helped Indra to fight with Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa in Khāṇḍava forest. III. 54. 31: Yama came to Damayanti’s savayamvara, and gave Nala a taste for food and utter firmness in the Law.

5 Mbh. III. 229. 9: yamaśca mṛtyunā sārdham sarvataḥ parivāritaḥ, ghorairvyādhiṣatairyaṁti ghorāpavapustathā.

6 Mbh. V. 149. 26; See the simile ‘swift like messengers of Yama (yamadūtasamāṇ vega)’.
In the Epics, Yama is closely associated or identified with Kāla, Antaka and Mṛtyu though they are conceived as distinct personalities (Mbh. IX. 45. 17). He is also associated with Agni and Dharma.

Now, it is clearly seen that the acceptance of death by men has been changed according to the times and their cultural background. Yama’s personality too has undergone changes according to the attitude of men who faced death. Thus, in the Rgvedic period, perhaps, men were not so scared of death or they had many hopes more from the world of the dead. Yama was considered to be a ‘blessed dead’ and the ‘compassionate ruler of world of the dead’. From the Atharvanic period onwards, death appears to be frightening men more than before. Accordingly Yama started being depicted as fierce. In that period, Yama played the role of both the kind king and the punisher. In Pāli literature, death had a very grave face, and it had become the basic subject of meditation. Consciousness of one’s guilt was also on the rise, hence Yama appeared as a judge and punisher of the departed souls. In the Epic period, people considered that death is destined by time. But they thought death is also negotiable. Yama too shows more flexibility in his decisions, especially with regard to the souls of virtuous persons. Thus, along with the idea of death, at different stages, Yama too has gone through many changes related to varying attitudes of men towards him.

One may also find different approaches of men with regard to death while observing Yamadūtas. Their functions and characteristics changed depending on men’s thoughts and on Yama’s characteristics. In the Rg Vedic period, Yamadūtas were merely the signals of death or helpers of the departed souls. In the Atharvanic period, they were bad omens. In Pāli literature, they were symbols
of death. In the Epic period, souls were fetched generally by the dūtas, and in rare cases regarding those of virtuous persons, Yama himself carried out that task\(^1\).

However, it is to be noted that notwithstanding Yama’s gruesome function, he is considered as a god who never swayed from righteousness throughout the ages and the literatures.

(vi) The Meeting of Desire and Death, The Evil Māra

(1) General remarks

This chapter starts with a presupposition that ‘desire and death’, in the Indian mythology are closely connected, and they keep going together all the way on the same path. When (generally in the Vedas) the people did not hesitate to express their desire, and when they opened their mind towards it, death (deity) was accepted as ‘the blessed’ and the world of the dead also was considered to be the happy land. When mostly in Buddhist literature, and many portions of the Epics too people had to denigrate their desire and when they had to conceal it, death was considered to be despicable and the world of the dead, where the fierce death-god was said to rule, was considered to be dreadful.

In the Vedas, ‘desire and death’ are not directly related as cause and effect. There is no concept which says desire is evil or desire is a cause of death. It appears that

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\(^1\) Kusum. ‘Yama’, p. 175
there is no visible connection between the two. Desire does not meet death, though it is quite apparent that they walk the same trail. ‘Desire and death’ are therefore said to be clearly two different entities. In the Vedas, no desire including sexual lust, is denigrated; on the contrary it is propagated. Other than premature death, there is no reference of death as something unwelcome. As desire (Kāma) is said to create the world, desire is a positive creative power or Kāma is a creator. It is also said that beings are created owing to the holy death of Yama, the king of the dead. Death takes place for the sake of further creation. Therefore, death also is a positive creative power. And Yama the first dead is a creator. Thus, in the Vedas, ‘desire and death’ are not negative forces but they are generative powers.

In the Epics, however, there is a clear cause and effect relationship between ‘desire and death’. Death is the strongest evil, and this evil is said to start from the desire which may be sexual sometimes. Death also is considered as time (kāla) or destiny. Death is fated, hence it is a toy in the hands of destiny or of gods who play with the fate of men. Desire in this period, on the practical side, is considered to be one of the three worldly goals, which a man should follow throughout his life. On the philosophical and mythological side, desire is conceived of as tumult due to which death has come into existence. Again, desire is represented mythologically as a ‘god of love’, however, this deity himself is not connected with death, except death due to lovesickness. In this period, ‘desire and death’ are closely connected. Desire brings death and it is the direct cause of death. Desire is no more a creative force, but it is a negative destructive power. Kāma is a destroyer. Death is not for creation, but it means negative destruction. Yama too is a destroyer.
In Pāli literature, death is evil and destructive, and as the Buddhist dharma is essentially a method for diverting and transforming the natural phenomenon of desire, there is no scope for pursuing desire. It is said that desire is an indirect cause of death, as desire causes a man to have solid form. In Buddhism desire is evil and also desire leads one to death. Therefore, in Pāli literature, desire, being an indirect cause for death, is a negative destructive power, and death also does not work as positive. Therefore, death is a negative destructive power. However, there is no such deity in Buddhist mythology corresponding to Kāma or the god of desire, except some aspect of the Devil Māra. The death-god Yama is chiefly a judge for the dead. He is neither a destroyer nor a creator.

As it is seen, ‘desire and death’ take a long journey sometimes together but parallel, and at other times separate but facing each other, and still at another time one leads the other. Thus, ‘desire and death’ have been connected with each other directly or indirectly for a long time. But, they are never mingled with each other, and never conceived of as one and the same entity. Hence, there is no single deity in the Epics as well as in the Vedas who represent both desire and death. However, these two concepts incredibly meet in a comfortable way in Buddhism, in one interesting entity, the evil Māra. Māra, in this chapter, will be compared with the various deities of the Epics and the Vedas and also Satan in the Bible, though the proposed synopsis of the thesis does not mention such biblical comparison, the comparative study of Māra and Satan appears to be unavoidable, not only because they strikingly resemble each other in many ways, but also because such a comparison is not attempted by the scholars so far.

Then who is Māra?

To this question Rādhasaṃyutta¹ gives an answer as: "When there is a form, there might be Māra, or the killer, or the one who is killed²... in the same way when there is feeling³, when there is perception, volitional formations, consciousness⁴... there might be Māra".

Māra is apparently one of the most interesting and colourful evils in the entire Indian mythology relating to demons. Māra, in Pāli texts, is mentioned along with devas and brāhmanas, and also with eight kinds of assemblies, sometimes as plural sometimes as singular⁵.

Though it is not explicitly said, in the Buddhist concept of the universe Māra is a name of a certain post of evil beings, just as Mahābrahmās and Indras are particular posts of the deities. There are different Māras in different births. They assume their form and characteristics according to their kamma (action) in the

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¹ Saṃ. II. 1. 2.

² rūpe sati māro vā assa māretā vā yo vā pana mīyati...

³ vedanaya sati māro...

⁴ saññāya sati... sañkhāresu sati... viññāṇa sati māro...

⁵ The eight assemblies as given in Mahāsīhanāda sutta, Maj. I. 2. 2, etc, are: khattiyaparīsā, brāhmaṇaparīsā, gahapatiparīsā, samaṇaparīsā, cātumahārājikaparīsā, tāvatiśparīsā, māraparīsā, and brahmāparīsā. The phrase, such as, in the world with its devas, māras, brahmās...sadevake loke samārake sabrāhamane... also occur in several suttas (Aṅg. III. 11. 1; IV. 2. 5; VII. 5. 7; VIII. 2. 1; 5. 4; 7. 4; X. 3. 7)
previous births. Along with the qualities even their names are different, e.g., in the period of the previous Buddha Kakusanda the name of Māra was Dūsi\(^1\), and it is said that the present Māra is his nephew. The one who was a contemporary of the Buddha is called Namuci, the same name of a Vedic demon. This name is given to Māra, maybe because he does not allow either gods or men to escape from his clutches (na+muc), but puts them to harm\(^2\). Māra is also called by various names, such as, Kaṇha, Yakkha, and Pāpimā, the evil is usually added to Māra. It appears that even for Māra there is a chance for redemption in next life if he performs good actions for several lives. Thus, Māra Dūsi who fell in the mahāniraya after many lives is reborn as the Buddha’s chief disciple, Mahāmoggallāna\(^3\).

\(^1\) Māratajjanīya sutta, Maj.
\(^2\) SN.A, II, 386, Coomaraswamy and Horner identify this name of Māra with Vedic demon Namuci, saying that ‘the old Vedic Ahi-Vṛtra-Namuci, who was overcome in the past by Agni-Bṛhaspati and Indra, but was never really slain... (‘The living thoughts of Gotama the Buddha’, p, 3)
\(^3\) The story which is given in Māratajjanīya sutta, Maj. is as follows: Once Māra went into the belly of the elder and finally entered into his bowels (kuddhigato koṭṭhamanupavittho). Then the elder rebuked Māra and told him his own story. According to that story, Mahāmoggalāna was a Māra, named Dūsi in one of his previous lives, in the time of the previous Buddha Kakusanda. He possessed people to trouble the bhikkhus and at last he caused hurt to one of the chief disciples of the Buddha. As a result of that ill-behaviour, he had been roasting in hell for a thousands years. He suffered the feeling called emergence from ripening (ussada). He had the body of a human and the head of a fish. This story, though designed to rebuke the foul act, gives a great scope of hope that even those beings who committed sins either knowingly or unknowingly can be liberated in next birth.
The nature of Māra is exceptionally complicated. His character cannot be defined by one compact word. He may be a Tempter or a Seducer. He may be Death. He may be Fear. He may be Desire. He may be Doubt. He may be even Gain, Honour; Fame...He may be an incarnation of all the worldly objects. In the earlier books, the term Māra is applied to the whole of worldly existence, the five khandhas, or realm of rebirth, as opposed to nibbāna. The commonest use of the word was evidently in the sense of death. One can extend this to mean ‘the world under the sway of death’ and the beings therein. Thence, the kilesas also came to be called Māra in that they were instruments of death, the causes enabling death to hold sway over the world. All temptations brought about by the kilesas were likewise regarded as the work of death\(^1\).

Resemblance between Māra and other Epic and Vedic gods is striking. He is, perhaps, an originator or a successor of many different Epics and Vedic deities in the earlier and the later period. He can be Kāma, personified lust or passion. He can be Mṛtyu, which is death. He can also be Antaka, the ender. He, sometimes, can be compared to Yama the god of death. He can be another form of Indra and Śiva in the later period. He can be identified with Skanda the war-god. He shares some qualities even with Krṣṇa\(^2\). He is often compared to Satan, the Devil from

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\(^1\) Cf, Dic. of Pāli proper names, Malalasekera, Vol. II. p. 613. Five Māras are given in ThagA, II. 16 and II. 46 as; khandha, kilesa, abhisatikhāra, maccu, and devaputta Māra,

\(^2\) The cowherd Krṣṇa playing the flute on the banks of the Jumna can be compared with Māra who plays the flute on the bank of Nerañjarā.
the other part of the world. But still he cannot entirely be Mrtyu and Kāma, nor is he totally equated with Satan or with any other Devils.

(2) Māra and death deities

Many scholars consider Māra as a representative of Death. To support this view one can derive the word Māra from the root mṛ to die. Windisch\(^1\) tries to derive Māra (Māra Pāpimā) from Pāpimā Mrtyu of the Brāhmaṇas, Death who is evil. Thus, Māra means ‘one who kills’. The concept of maccumāra, ‘Māra as Death’ which appears in Āṭṭhakathās and tīkās also can support this view. Māra is also often called Antaka, the Ender, which is also the epithet of Mrtyu and Yama who are representatives of Death and Death-god.

However, Māra cannot be either Mrtyu or Antaka as a whole. For, these deities of the Epic and Vedic mythologies, are not only they representatives of death and threaten people with death, but also they practically deprive men of their lives and put them to death. Strikingly, however, though Māra is said to represent death, only once in the canon, he demands the physical death of a man, i.e., on the occasion of Mahāparinibbāna of the Buddha. Only on that occasion Māra tempted the Buddha to leave his life. Only in this case Māra eagerly wished for the physical death of someone because of his failure in overpowering the Buddha, and due to his limited scope to overshadow other monks and nuns if the Buddha did not leave life. And only on that occasion did the Buddha accepted the suggestion of Mara, that is, he accepted final nibbāna, which, indeed, is the most

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significant event in the entire Buddhism. It shows that physical death which is caused by natural way cannot be avoided even by the Buddha\(^1\). In other cases Māra reveals his nature as one who enjoys others’ rebirth\(^2\) as he can overpower them in the new life again.

Māra cannot be Yama either, though some of their attributes, such as, their fierce nature and their having a snare in their hands, cannot to be denied. Yama, even when he represents death itself, does not sway from righteousness. He shows his weakness for virtuous persons. These good persons are main targets for Māra, and he attacks them mercilessly in order to destroy their virtue. Māra’s fear is death, that is, complete death together with viññāna, i.e., no more return to this world or to that world\(^3\), and complete enlightenment. Therefore, he requests a sage who is

\(^1\) Iddhipāda Saṁyutta, Saṁ III-2. 7, and Mahaparinibbāna sutta Dīg. II. 3. Buddha hinted Ānanda that Tathāgata can extend his life upto century. But at that time Ānanda’s mind was blocked by Māra, he could not understand what Buddha meant, therefore he did not ask Buddha to extend life

\(^2\) Māra Saṁyutta, Saṁ. I. 1. 4: Once Māra tried to prevent an arahant Godhika from suicide. He requested the Buddha to restrain him from this act. For, he does not wish a person to be liberated. When the bhikkhu took his own life, Māra having become smoke, tried to search the consciousness (viññāna) of the bhikkhu with the help of which the bhikkhu could be reborn. Māra was frustrated when he could not find his viññāna. Māra compares himself to a crow who searches for tender fat on seeing the lack, like that he followed the Buddha to search his fault. He went away not finding. He is always in search of defect to enter into the mind of the person.

\(^3\) e.g., The story of arahat Godhika, Māra Saṁyutta, Saṁ. I-1. 4.
at the point of enlightenment to live and to stay in this world, but not to die. Māra has no problem if anybody performs meritorious deeds as long as he can disturb them from complete salvation of a sage\(^1\). If Yama, the king of death-world is the collector of dead persons (or souls) for his death-land, Māra is the assembler of people in this world for his evil kingship. Both Māra and Yama use agents and messengers in order to fetch the victims, but Yama uses them for his normal victims and he himself appears only for those who are virtuous. Māra too uses his agents and also he himself appears for his preys, for both weak and strong opponents. But, Yama as Dharmarāja, rather than deceiving people with a disguised form, appears directly in front of men and takes their souls, while Māra, being a deceiver, always changes himself into this or that form and allures and threatening men. Yama does not need to hide or disguise himself because his act of taking souls is lawful and righteous, but Māra has to hide his real nature because his threatening is not lawful. While the function of Yama and his agents are scary to people and deprive them of their life, the function of Māra is not only scaring people of death but also alluring them to the pleasures of worldly life.

Thus, Māra is called Death not because he takes away the life of persons but because he destroys all those who seek to escape this world (samsāra). Thus he may be a killer of pious acts but not a taker of breath.

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\(^1\) e.g., Padhānasutta, SN. III. 28. no. 427:

\textit{sahassabhāgo maraṇassa ekiso tava jīvitaṃ /}

\textit{jīva bho jīvitam seyyo jīvam puññāni kāhasi //}

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Māra as a seducer or a tempter is quite a common interpretation. Winternitz understands Māra as a seducer who appears to turn the Buddha himself or one of his disciples away from the doctrine of salvation\(^1\). Obviously his chief objective is to churn or to tempt the mind of mainly the Buddha and his disciples. But his temptations are not confined to the Buddha and monks and nuns but he tempts also laymen and women. He used to appear in front of sacred people so as to keeping them away from the righteous path.

(3) Māra and Kāma

Māra as a tempter or a seducer can be compared with many deities of the Indian Epics, such as, Kāma, and Indra and Śiva in the later period. Or perhaps, Māra can also be compared to Satan who seduces Eve who disobeyed by the command of God, related to taking the fruit of knowledge.

Māra can easily be compared with Kāma, personified lust, or love who is also known by the name Smara. Now, the etymology of the god Smara is ‘\textit{smṛ}’ to remember or to please. Māra and Smara may be identified on the basis of the derivation of this word ‘\textit{smṛ}’. This derivation of the word Māra from ‘\textit{smṛ}’ can be proved by the rule according to which ‘initial consonant in conjunct can be dropped when it is Prakṛtized’. By this rule, the word \textit{sthavīra} becomes \textit{thera}, and \textit{skanda} changes to \textit{khandha}, \textit{sīhāna} into \textit{ṭhāna}, \textit{steyā} into \textit{theyya}, and many other examples. In the same way ‘\textit{s}’ of the word \textit{smara} is dropped, and \textit{mara} is

\(^1\) Winternitz, ‘History of Indian literature’, Vol. II. p. 52
lengthened, and ultimately it become Māra, while it is Prakṛtizied\(^1\). Māra and Kāma (or Smara especially) are very much alike, not only in their names which have the same etymology but also by their functions. With his snare pāśa, Māra is compared to Atharvaṅc Kāma who has arrow īṣu for his weapon. Both pāśa and īṣu are used for capturing and possessing the mind of people. Pāśa, for example īṣu, is said to move in the air and in the minds of men\(^2\). With his three daughters, viz., Taṇhā ‘craving’, Arati ‘hatred’ and Rāga ‘passion’, who are mentioned as his retinue\(^3\), Māra can be compared to Kāma who also has three daughters referred to in the AV., viz., Dhenu ‘wealth’, Vācā ‘good talk’, and Virājā ‘beauty’. One of the powers of daughters of Māra is to dry up the mind of men (or more specifically sages). A powerful longing maybe expressed by the verb

\(^1\) Thus, the Vedic name Mūradeva, which will be discussed in following page, can also be a seed of Māra due to their assimilation of pronunciation. Though there is no specific rule for changing ‘ā’ for ‘ā’, the journey of the spoken language sometimes cannot be explained semantically.

\(^2\) antalikkhatcaro pāso, yvāyaḥ carati mānas. Māra Saṃ. p. 133.

\(^3\) Māradhīṣutta, Māra Saṃyutta, Saṃ. 1. 1. 4: atha kho taṇhā ca arati ca rāga ca māradhiṣtaro yena bhagavā tenupasankaminsu... Three daughters of Māra represented as Māra’s tempting Buddha on the banks of Neraṇjāra. They assume numerous forms of varying age and charm, full of blandishment. Māra’s daughters approach Buddha when their father was disappointed by Buddha’s reaction. They suggested service to Buddha, but when it is rejected their offer they manifested themselves in the form of hundred maidens (kumārivāṇṇasata), requested again, but again were rejected, they tried again, multiplied their form into hundred women who have never given birth (avijātavāṇṇasata), then sakinvijātavāṇṇasata, dūvijātavāṇṇasata...
anu+śuc 'to burn (with passion) for' or 'to dry up'. The arrows of Kāma have power to dry up the mind of a man who is in love. However, the difference is that, unlike the daughters of Māra who always are negative, the daughters of Kāma are not personalities of negative traits but they are positive forces, hence the poets pray for driving the enemies away to a distance with the help of forces of Kāma’s daughter. This negative force of Māra and the positive power of the Epic and Vedic gods with regard to the same matter may be understood by the differentiation of the two societies. Buddhist society denies what the Epic and Vedic accept as a deity, even in the case of death and desire, and accept it as a demon. Kāma (Smara) as a love god does not reveal himself but almost always uses arrows as his instrument to fulfill his purpose. His arrows are symbolized sometimes as serpents. But just as Smara who himself appears in front of a being to seduce, Māra too, not only uses his agents to fulfill his purpose but also many times he himself appears in front of the victims, sometimes as a serpent and at other times as an elephant, for stronger effects.

As a sign of a tempter Māra appears with a lute in hand which is made of yellow-bilva wood (beluvapanduvīna), changes himself into a form as beautiful as possible. Māra Sañyutta gives detailed information about Māra’s methods of tempting people. The text describes his changing forms vividly and poetically. According to the Sañ., Māra changes himself into various shapes (uccāvacā vaṇṇanībhā upadatiset), which are beautiful (subha) and hideous (asubha). Māra

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1 cf. AV. VI. 30. 1 and also Fišer, 'Indian Erotics of the oldest period', p. 75.

2 AV. IX. 2. 5: sā te kāma duhītā dhenurocayate yāmāhurvācikavayo virājam.

3 Māra Sañyutta, Sañ. I. 1. 4.
manifests himself in the form of a farmer (kassakavanṇa); He appears in the assembly of bhikkhus in the form of an ox (balivaddavanna)\(^1\); a giant king elephant (mahanta hatthirājavanṇa)\(^2\); a giant king serpent (mahanta sapparājavanṇa)\(^3\) and also in the form of a brāhmaṇa\(^4\). Especially with this form of a brāhmaṇa, Māra tempts bhikkhus not to leave the reachable fruit, i.e., worldly pleasure, for pursuing what takes time, i.e, enlightenment (mā sandiṭṭhikam hitvā kālikam anudhāvattha). Perhaps, this brāhmaṇa form of Māra represents indirectly an adherent brāhmanical idea of fulfilling the duty of worldly life, which says renunciation must be postponed until one has enjoyed a full married life.

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\(^1\) He creates sound in this form so as to make havoc among the monks. The text describes the sound as; as though the earth were splitting open (mahāntam bhayvabheravam saddamakāsi apissudam pathavi maññe undriyati).

\(^2\) His head, like a huge block of steatite (mahā ariṭṭhako mani sīṣa), tusks are like pure silver (suddha rūpiya dantā), trunk is a huge plough pole (mahati naṅgalisa sonḍa).

\(^3\) whose body was like a huge boat made from single tree trunk (mahati ekarukkhikā nāvā kāyo), hood is like a large brewer's sieve (sōndikākīṭṭṭṭja phanā), eyes are like large bronze dishes of Kosala (mahati kosalikā karisapāti akkhīni), tongue is darting out of its mouth like flashes of lightening emitted when the sky thunders (deve galaṅgaḷāyante vijullatā niccharanti evamassa mukhato jīvha niccharat). 

\(^4\) who had long matted hair (mahanta jataṇḍuva), having deer skin (ajinakkhipanivattho), old (jinṇo), carrying crooked udumbara stick (gopānasrivariko ghurughurupassā).
This feature of Māra, in Māra Saṃ, is very much comparable to Kāma discussed earlier\(^1\) in the Kāmagītā of the Mbh (XIV. 13). According to Kāmagītā, *no creature is able to destroy Kāma without following the proper methods*. If someone tries to destroy Kāma by prayer, he prevails over him by ego, and he deceives the one in the form of the most virtuous creature who tries to overcome him with sacrifice. Finally Kāma declares that he is the everlasting one without an equal, whom no creature can kill or destroy. About Māra too it is said that *no creature is able to destroy him without following the proper methods*. However, the Pāli texts provide these methods for winning Māra. Therefore, Māra has a number of equals who get the better of him and many superiors.

Thus, Māra and Kāma can be compared on various counts. Yet, Kāma is not only a *winner*, but is also admired for his winning over the beings, whereas Māra is a *loser* and his opponent is always praised for winning against him. If their characteristics are thus alike, then, what is the reason to acknowledge them so differently, one as a god to hold in high esteem and the other as a demon to keep away from? We may answer this as: it is due to the different views between the different societies. In the Brāhmanic and the Epic societies, married life and getting progeny are considered to be comparatively more important than the life of renunciation, though we do find limited periods of renunciation, such as, *vānaprastha* and *brāhma-cārin* etc. Therefore, in this kind of society *kāma* or lust, which may support harmonious married life, turns into an admired deity, i.e., Kāma the love god, and if he is accepted as a god, he is designed to win. Whereas, in the society where the Buddha’s teaching prevailed, renunciation is regarded as

\(^1\) Read above sub-chapter, ‘Desire in the Mbh’.
the most important moral. Hence, kāma or lust, which is the main trouble in the life of renunciation, becomes an evil, i.e., Māra is the Devil, and if one is fallen into being a demon, he is doomed to be defeated. Therefore, Kāma in the Vedas and in the Mbh. is said to be the winner who had no equals, whereas Māra, though he appears to be stronger even than the deity Kāma, has to be a loser finally.

It is very interesting to note that Aśvaghoṣa, the author of the Buddhacaritam, regards Māra as Kāma and he identifies the former completely with the latter. In canto XIII of the Buddhacaritam, Māra is clearly referred to as Kāmadeva who is the emperor of passion, and who is at the same time the poison in the course of emancipation, and who has equipped himself with bright weapon and flowery arrows\(^1\). It is narrated therein that Māra (Kāma) has three sons and three daughters to disturb the pious sages\(^2\). When the Buddha did not falter in his firmness, in spite of the ceaseless attempts being made to disturb him, Māra (Kāma) was dejected and said “When the god Śiva was pierced with my arrow, his mind was agitated towards Pārvatī, the same arrow does not cause any agitation in him. Has he no heart or is this not the very same arrow?”\(^3\).

\(^1\) Buddhacarita, XIII, vs, 2:

\[
yām (māraṇ) kāmadevaṁ pravadanti loke citrāyudham puspaśaramāntathaiva /
\]

\[
kāmaprācārādhipatiṁ tameva mokṣadviṣam māramudāharanti //
\]

\(^2\) XIII. 3; the names of the three sons are: Vibhrama (Caprice), Harṣa (Joy) and Darpa (Pride), and three daughters are: Arati (Hatred), Pṛti (Delight) and Trṣā (Thirst).

\(^3\) XIII. 16:

\[
śailendraputīṁ prati yena vidvo devo 'pi śambhusicalito babhūva /
\]

\[
na cintayateṣa tameva bāṇam kim syādadītto no śaṁbhaḥ sa eṣāḥ //
\]
this view of Aśvaghoṣa one may find that some of the later thinkers equate Māra directly with Kāma the god of love or the instigator of passion.

(4) Māra and Indra

Now, this feature of Māra, i.e., the use of beauty to allure the sages, seems to have shifted also to Indra of the Epic period, though Māra and Indra (Sakka) in the Pāli literature are of clearly different traits, one as the famous evil the other as the virtuous king of the devas. Due to their fear of losing power, both Māra and the Epic Indra suggest worldly fame to the meditators. As Māra’s daughters seduce monks and nuns, the agents of Indra, the celestial nymphs tempt the striving sages. However aspects of Māra’s daughters and the assistants are more diverse in their nature. While the seducing power of daughters of Māra consists not only of beauty but also of many other worldly aspects, such as, lust, hatred, greed etc, power of Indra’s agents consists mainly of lust with supermundane beauty, but not of fierce and negative personality. Māra and the Epic Indra also share one more common factor, such as, Māra is with an elephant¹ and, Indra too is with his elephant Airāvata.

¹ Padhāna sutta, SN. III. 28: saṇatā ghañāṇiṁ disvā yuttaṁ māraṁ savāhanam.
Dandekar\(^1\) tries to connect the idea of the Buddha overpowering Māra with that of Śiva burning Madana. This view, however, seems to be right only as far as the result, i.e., suffering of the attackers after their offence, is concerned. While Śiva was meditating the world suffered from the harassment of the demons. The gods needed savior who could rescue them from the havoc. The salvation could be obtained only from Śiva. The gods send Kāma to Śiva so that Kāma could disturb Śiva and then could bring his heart back to a woman who could give birth to a savior. The gods let Pārvati stand before Śiva and Kāma shot the love-arrow at him. At the beginning of the attack by Kāma, Śiva could not, or perhaps, did not withstand him, as his purpose was to rescue the world with the help of powerful being. For this purpose Śiva needed to obtain the proper offspring to save the world, and only when his (or all of the deities\(^1\)) purpose was fulfilled, he punished Kāma for the sin, i.e., the sin of breaking his meditation. However, it is also said that Śiva destroys only the body of Kāma but not the immortal essence. Therefore, it may be said that Śiva does not actually diminish the power of Kāma who is burnt; on the contrary, he releases that power, frees it from the narrow confines of a physical body\(^2\). The Buddha was meditating. He was at the point of liberation. Māra let his daughters stand before the Buddha, and ordered them to disturb him. However, the Buddha could and did withstand Māra as his purpose was salvation and liberation of himself from the world and from the worldly

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\(^1\) ‘Vedic Mythological Tracts’, p. 263n. He further suggests that the later Śaivism, as a Hindu bhakti-cult, was modelled on Buddhism.

enjoyment. The Buddha withstands, knowing that the allurement of Māra’s daughters represented no more than a mirror reflection of the inner, elementary forces of his own primitive human nature, which were clinging still to phenomenal existence, clamouring for carnal assuagement. By the act of comprehending allurement as the manner of tempter, the Buddha released himself from the cosmic enthralment of his longing and fearing ego¹, and finally discarding Māra. Therefore, from the beginning to the end Māra could not overpower the Buddha. Thus, the Buddha’s withstanding Māra, and Śiva’s yielding to Madana show the initial difference of two religions, however, the final result is the same. It is very interesting to note that as the Buddha has some similarity with Śiva, Māra too, in some way or the other, is alike Śiva. Just as Śiva, Māra has a destructive nature, and just Śiva as a phallic god is a symbol of sex and fertility, Māra also signifies lust if not fertility.

(6) Māra and Kumāra

Joshi² suggests that Māra is the Buddhist representation of Mura or Kumāra, as the ‘tempting’ and consequently, ‘killing one’. He opines that Māra can be identified with the war-god Skanda. He approaches this view on the basis of the popular belief in South India. A south Indian divinity Murugan is accepted as Skanda. This Murugan occurs in the RV, as Mūra a non-Aryan personality³.

² ‘Some Minor Divinities’, p. 77. (for details, pp. 73-77)
³ RV. VII, 104. 22. 24; Followers of Mūra are said to be the ‘misguided ones, serpent and evil birds associated with Murugan, and at some period of time Mūruga became a friend of Indra and turned into a worshipful deity.
Mūradevaḥ occurs in the RV also. Mūradevaḥ means ‘the follower or devotee of Mūra’. The base mur is used in the sense of ‘young in Tamil. Murukahn means youth, young man. Mūra-devāḥ refers to evil beings, demons. Mūras are those who mock and hate brāhmaṇas. He states that thus Mūra can be equated with god Skanda who is young and attractive as well as frightening. The god Skanda is a Tempter and a Killer. In support of this view, he has cited a custom that is prevalent in Maharashtra by which the newly married bride is not allowed to visit Skanda temple, and the idol of Skanda is always covered, for, Skanda is a tempter. In the same way, Māra whose name is probably derived from that same base mur, is the Buddhist representation of Mūra or Kumāra or Skanda the Tempter. This view can be accepted since beauty with temptation can lead to sensual pleasure and this is considered as the most dangerous evil thing in Buddhism.

The connection with desire and death, O'Flaherty suggests that the origin of evil is inextricably associated with the appearance of sexual desire and hunger, and death is also closely connected with these motifs. She further states that the Buddha conquers death and lust. Māra is the opposite of it. Therefore, she rightly

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1 RV. VII. 104. 24. Also by Patañjali Mūradevaś identified with Mūladeva, with the meaning ‘those who worshipped original gods. St. Petersburg Lexicon also defines Mūradevaḥ as mūladevaḥ, a species of demons or goblins.

2 Thus, murku means the young of an animal, murlī is young man.

3 RV. VII.104. 24; X. 87. 2,14.

4 RV. VIII. 45. 23.

5 ‘Origin of evil’, p.212.
points out that Māra is an incarnation of death and lust. But considering Māra as an incarnation of death leads to a serious problem. As it is observed in comparing Māra with Mṛtyu and Yama, Māra does not provoke physical death of a man, rather he is afraid of someone’s death. He wants that man should remain alive or have rebirth. He even offers gain and renown, honor and glory for that life\(^1\). This is surely not an act of one who is supposed to be an incarnation of death. Therefore, though it is agreed that death and desire meet in the personality of the evil Māra, it should be noted that this death does not mean ‘death as it practically means’ but it means ‘the spiritual death’ and finally ‘the death of pious act of someone who strives for liberation’.

Thus, Māra seems to possess some negative aspects of many gods of the Vedas and the Epics, viz., Mṛtyu, Antaka and Yama for his connection with death, and Smara (Kāma or Madana), Indra, Skanda and Śiva of the later period for his connection with desire, but none of those deities is totally identified with Māra.

\((7)\) Māra and Satan

Now, it will be worthwhile to turn our attention to a demon from the other part of the world. The view that ‘Māra is equivalent to Satan’ is prevalent among the Western scholars. Conze, Hopkins and Walshe opine that Māra corresponds to Satan in Christianity. Conze\(^2\) states that Māra who corresponds to Satan, is the

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\(^1\) Padhāna sutta, SN. III. 28, no. 438,

\(^2\) Buddhism--its essence and development, p.35.
Lord of this world and of this earth. Hopkins\(^1\), quite a number of times compare Māra to Satan. Walshe\(^2\) too has a view that Māra as the personified spirit of evil, the tempter, is very much like the Biblical Satan. A study of these two famous Devils will be quite worthy, since no such work has yet been undertaken by any scholar, and surprisingly, Māra is much more like Satan than any other demon from Indian mythology, though Christianity and Buddhism are clearly very different. Then, what attributes do these two mythologies share and in what respect are they different? To begin with, it is better to observe the definition of demon or devil in the West and in the East (or India).

The word ‘demon’ comes from the Greek word ‘daimon’ which means ‘intelligent’. The word ‘devil’ is from the Greek ‘diabolos’ which means ‘slanderer’. The name Satan is from the Hebrew word which means ‘one who opposes (God)’, or ‘an adversary’, or ‘an accuser’. Now the Sanskrit equivalent for demon or devil may be *asura*. The word is originally used in Vedic literature in the sense of a being who possessed the largest amount of magical potency\(^3\). In classical Sanskrit, the word *asura* is generally considered as the opposite of ‘*sura*’ with the negative affix ‘*a*’ which means ‘not a god’. Or ‘one who opposes a god’, or the word is derived from the root ‘*asu*’ ‘breath or life’\(^4\). By addition of the possessive termination ‘*ra*’ which means ‘one who has breath or life’ and its extended meaning is ‘one who has power’. The name Māra, as it has been seen, is

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\(^1\) Religion of India, p. 304.

\(^2\) Walshe, ‘Thus Have I heard’, translation of Dig. p. 570.

\(^3\) Dandekar, ‘Vedic Mythological Tracks’, p. 54.

\(^4\) Dandekar considers (ibid) that the word *asu* was originally regarded as a supernatural fluid.
derived either from 'mr' or form 'smr' whose meaning finally becomes 'killer' or 'lustful one'. It is very interesting to note that the original meaning of Satan of the Bible is rather similar to asura of the classical Sanskrit literature, a being who opposes the god, and that of Māra of the Buddhist texts is similar to the demon or the devil of the Greek origin, the slanderer. Or one may say that the demon, devil and asura, and also Māra and Satan are very much alike in their etymological derivation.

There are several passages in the Bible and in the Buddhist literature which refer to Satan and Māra respectively. Then, how are they described in the Bible and the in the Pāli Piṭakas?

The Devil Satan and the other demons were but a part of the angelic creation. Their natural powers did not differ from those of the angels who remained faithful. Like other angels, they were pure spiritual beings without any body, and in their original state they were endowed with supernatural grace, and placed in a condition of probation. It was only by their fall that they became devils. This was before the original sin of our first parents. This sin itself is ascribed to the instigation of the Devil. It is said that by the envy of the Devil, death came into the world (Wisdom 2:24), just as Kāma brought death! Or perhaps, one might consider secondarily that death came into the world due to the 'desire' of Eve who was seduced by Satan who was caught by envy of the God.

Asura is called “one who was formerly a god (pūrvadeva)". Devas and asuras were both born from Prājapati². All their functions and powers and also their fall

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¹ Amarakośa, 1. 1. 7.
is very much alike to those of the Biblical Devil and the demons. As it has been stated earlier, death of the Indian mythology, both in the Epic and in Pāli literature, came from the ‘improper desire’ of human beings. In this way, relation of ‘desire and death’ in the Bible very much resembles that in the Indian mythology. However, there is no mention of how Māra is created nor is there any mention that Māra is a creation of God, or even of the gods. He is totally away from the creation of the god(s), or even from the created beings.

In the Bible, Satan is seen as a supernatural entity who has great powers. He did played the role of an adversary prosecuting attorney in the heavenly court with God and the angels. He has been referred to as; an unclean spirit with seven others (Matthew 12:43); evil one (Matthew 13:19 & 1 John 2:13); father or master of all lies (John 8:44). He can adopt a spirit form, reside inside a person and influence his thoughts and behavior. He is a created being, a former Archangel; and thus is inferior to God. He has limits to his knowledge and power. He can be only in one place at one time. Satan cannot perform any act unless God approves (Job 1:6 to 2:10); he is a dangerous entity, a roaring lion, who roams all over the earth seeking those he may devour (Peter 5:8). Jesus saw Satan fall like lightening from heaven (Luke 10:19). Satan is the ruler of this world. Satan is the power of darkness and God may rescue man from that power (Colossians 1:13). He is a

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1 SB, I. 2. 5. 1.
2 John 13:27 describes how Satan 'put into' Judas Iscariot's mind the decision to betray Jesus;
Acts 5:3 describes how Satan filled Ananias' heart with the decision to lie to the Holy Ghost.
3 John 12:31 & 14:30 & 16:11.
great red dragon¹; and the old serpent (Revelation 20:2). Thus, descriptions of the powers, activity and personality of Satan are scattered throughout the Bible.

The information of Māra is found throughout the Pāli texts, but is mainly obtained from Māra Saṁyutta and Padhāna sutta². Māra is described in these texts as: evil one (pāpimā), he can possess (anvāviṣṭha) the human mind; he has taken the particular form of viññāṇa like smoke which is visible. Māra can look at the place where a person who has viññāṇa can be born. He expects rebirth of men. Māra has no fixed abode. He wanders and appears everywhere where he can obstruct virtue. Monks and nuns know that Māra can appear before them in any form, and ensnare them into philosophical discussions. Māra declares that if someone's mind gets chained to what is called ‘mine’, then he cannot escape from Māra. For distracting the mind of people he uses various means³. He mocks⁴; praises what is usually praised⁵; seduces one with worldly objects⁶, changes his attitude according to situation⁷. Māra is said to destroy the wisdom-eye of the people by making them ‘eye-less’ (vicakkhukamma). Māra declares to the Buddha that he is

¹ Revelation 12:3 & 12:9 & 20:2.
² SN. III. 2. no. 28.
³ All from Māra Saṁ.
⁴ Such as, asuddho maññasi suddho, or kiṁ soppasi, etc.
⁵ He praised tapas by which men purify themselves as, tapokammā apakkamma yena na sujihanti.
⁶ Such as, with acquisition (upadhi), sons, cattle...
⁷ Sometimes he acts as praiser of tapas and in other times like cārvākas, such as, dīghamāyu manussānaṁ, na nam hīfe suporiso, careyya khīramattova, natthi maccussa āgamo.
the one who can be a match for the Buddha (paṭimallo). Māra is equipped with proper knowledge to allure the mind of people, but that knowledge is said to be limited. For, monks and nuns overcome him easily\(^1\). He is inferior to the Buddha, hence he is subjected to be defeated by The Buddha and by his eminent disciples just as Satan is inferior to God and he is defeated by God and by faithful devotees.

The origin and the most famous appearance of Satan in the Bible is the serpent who tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden, to eat the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge\(^2\). In the same way, Māra’s most well known feature is his first visit to the Buddha on the banks of the Nerañjarā where the Buddha was practising austerities. For seven years Māra followed the Buddha step by step but failed to get an opportunity to win over him. He tempted the Buddha to discard his determination for enlightenment and to dedicate himself to good works which the Buddha rejected\(^3\). Māra’s tempting the Buddha is very similar to Satan’s tempting

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\(^1\) More information is found in Nivāpa sutta, Maj. In that sutta Māra is compared to a deer trapper (nevāpika). It is said that those who eat the bait (nivāpa) of Māra fail to get free from Māra’s power and control. It is also said in the Kāyagatāsati sutta (Maj.) that Māra finds an opportunity and supports him who has not developed and cultivated mindfulness of the body. It is impossible for a woman to become Māra (mārattaṃ) as it is impossible for her to become Sakka (sakkattā) and Brahmā (brahmattā); cp: asthānametāṃ anavākāso yam itthi sakkattāṃ kareyya mārattaṃ kareyya... brahmattāṃ kareyya, netam thānam vijjati ‘ti pajānāti. (Aṅg. I. 15. 2 and Bahudhātuka sutta, Maj. III. 2. 5).

\(^2\) Genesis 3:4 & Genesis 3:14.

\(^3\) Oldenberg, (‘Buddha’), compares Nachiketas legends with the Buddha-Māra legend. As Nachiketas rejected the offer of Yama, Buddha also rejected the offers of Māra in order to
Jesus in the desert. However, in the case of Jesus, God himself, in the Spirit form, led Jesus to the desert to be tempted by the Devil\(^1\). Both Māra and Satan tempted the Buddha and Jesus respectively, to leave faith, and to follow the worldly path, though their objectives were different.

It is said that Satan has a personal army of demons to assist him in attacking humans and accomplishing evil tasks. They roam in the world looking for people so that they may destroy them. Māra too has a personal army. These forces of his army are his three daughters, Taṇhā, Arati and Rāga. These forces are also referred to as tenfold\(^2\). As Satan is called evil one, Māra also is commonly called Pāpimā, the evil; one of Māra’s important qualities is to possess (anvāvīṭṭha) the mind not only of human beings but also of the devas\(^3\), and make them not respect the Buddha and his disciples. His attending the meeting of Brahmā, and obtain the *summum bonum*. However, it is difficult to compare Māra and Yama, the tempters with each other.

\(^1\) Matthew 4:1-10; Luke 4:2, The Devil took Jesus to various places, tested him in three ways, i.e, tempted him to try a miracle; to put God to the test; and suggested that he could be the owner of the world.

\(^2\) Padhāna sutta, SN. III. 28, such as: (1) lust (*kāma*), (2) aversion (*arati*), (3) hunger and thirst (*khuppipāsā*), (4) craving (*taṇhā*), (5) sloth and indolence (*thīnamiiddha*), (6) cowardice (*bhīru*), (7) doubt (*viciciccha*), (8) hypocrisy and stupidity (*makkhatambha*), (9) gains, fame, honour and glory falsely obtained (*lābha siloka sakkāra micchāladdha yasa*), (10) and lauding of oneself and condemning the others (*attānām samukkāṃse pare ca avajānati*).

\(^3\) Māra took possession of a member of the assembly of Baka Brahmā. He praised Baka and tried to create distrust in Buddha (Brahmanimantanika sutta, Maj. I. 5. 9).
possessing Baka Brahmā is similar to Satan’s playing the adversary. Māra can read the mind of a person including The Buddha. Thus, the basic qualities of a devil, such as, ill-will and possessing people are common to both. Also they are said to be the owners of this world.

Thus, Māra and Satan are strikingly similar in many aspects. However, we also find ample differences in their features. They are:

1) The western concept of Devil is a congregation of all evil, seduced by whom one may be thrown into hell. He is against the Only-God, the All-virtuous. This concept is on the basis of, what is called, ditheism which says the god is all good whereas the demon is all evil. But the concept of Māra is very different. “In Indian concept there is no ditheism even in the case of Buddhism. Māra who is considered as a vice, is not exactly as a Devil or Satan in Christianity.” Satan is a creation of God, Māra is an aspect of the world, and not created by god. The nature of Satan, as a being who is always against God, is not very complicated to understand. He represents all-vice, Devil. But Māra is not all-vice. Sometimes he represents the views of brāhmanism and represents the worldly aspects. He is of all unwanted feelings and mind-movements. Thus, Māra is a personification of all which may obstruct liberation. He can be death, desire, khandha, kilesa, form, feeling, perception, volitional formations, consciousness...etc.

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1 bhagavato cetasā cetoparivitakkamaññāya.
2 Cf, Dandekar, ’The god in Hindu concept’, P.455.
3 Rādhasamyutta, Saṁ. II-1. 2.
2) The object of temptation is also different. Satan seduces an agent or a servant of God including Jesus, but never God himself. However, in the list of Māra’s temptation, the Buddha, the highest entity in Buddhism, is included as the first target. When this temptation fails, Māra tries other victims like, monks and nuns, then the lay people or sometimes devas, i.e., the gods.

3) Sometimes Satan is led by God to tempt someone to put him to test\(^1\). However, Māra is not allowed to test people, instead, the Buddha always warns monks and nuns to protect themselves from Māra.

4) The way to get out of their clutches is different. Only by faith in God people can remove the impediments from Satan. However, in the case of Māra one cannot get free of him only by relying on the faith in God. Māra Saṃ says that there are various ways to get away from Māra\(^2\).

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\(^1\) God allows Satan to test Job with a condition that Satan should not hurt Job himself (Job 1:6 & Zechariah 3:1-2 & 1 Peter 5:8) and also to test Jesus (Matthew 4:1-10; Luke 4:2).

\(^2\) By attaining the Noble Eightfold Path one can be free from Māra. Once the real nature of Māra is revealed, and when it is understood by the monks, he disappears immediately. It is said that one who breaks away Māra’s path (cp: māradheyyasaranuga) can reach the far shore. A sage who tries hard to find the truth, conquers Māra, vanquishes death. A noble disciple who possesses seven good things can be out of Māra’s snare...Removing sensual pleasure is the way to get out of Māra as well as harm and bondage. A bhikkhu who is free from five cord of sensual pleasure does not meet Māra as a forest deer wanders freely out of the range of hunter. A bhikkhu who is secluded from sensual pleasure, unwholesome state... is said to have blindfolded Māra.
5) As regards success of their work, Satan’s first tempting of Eve worked out, and its success resulted in the origin and death of human beings, or perhaps, origin of Christians as well as the origin of Christianity. Māra’s first temptation of the Buddha did not succeed, and its failure became the beginning of Buddhism. His temptation is successful only in possessing ordinary people. However, when Māra could possess Ānanda, the Buddha’s personal attendant, led the Buddha to *mahāparinibbāna*\(^1\).

6) The purpose of temptation is different. Satan’s temptation is mainly to make people go against God, and be faithless. Māra’s purpose is mainly to see that men do not attain liberation from worldly life. The power of Māra stretches upto the *devas* but not to the outstanding human beings; that of Satan reaches the human world but not to God.

Thus, in many ways Māra has traits common with many divinities from the Vedas, the Epics, and from the Bible. At the same time in many ways he is different from them. As Ling appropriately pointed out that all the demons in

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\(^1\) The Buddha, before his *mahāparinibbāna* hinted to Ānanda that the Buddha could live for a century. However, Ānanda who was possessed by Māra failed to grasp that broad hint, and did not beg the Buddha as, ‘Lord, may the Blessed Lord stay for a century for the benefit and happiness of devas and humans’. Without being requested the Buddha took his *mahāparinibbāna*.\(^2\)
Buddhism seem to be subsumed under Māra\(^1\). Therefore, naturally he is a being whose nature combines those forces, which mitigate against the holy life especially the morally unwholesome quality of greed, hatred and delusion\(^2\). The encyclopaedia\(^3\) defines Māra as: One who “actually assumes the role of the sovereign or the world, both of men and of gods; god of death, he is also the god of living; he is the god of re-birth”.

Though by nature Māra is said to be Evil or a Devil, he shares the same characteristics with various Hindu divinities, though not exclusively of any single deity or demon. He is strikingly well-matched with Śiva in some traits of his nature, and with Kāma and Skanda in much of his personality, and with Indra at another occasion. He has one aspect of Yama but does not function like Yama. Māra is Antaka, Yama is Antaka, and also Mṛtyu is Antaka. Māra is truly a multifunctional and multi-charactered devil, therefore, his complete identification with any particular divinity, whosoever they are, either with Indra, or with Śiva or with Kāma or with Mṛtyu or with Yama is not possible. Even the Devil Satan, who is supposed to be a counterpart of Māra, is more like the asuras than Māra. Thus, Māra is, in many parts, very similar to Satan but, in his essence, he is different. As Ling\(^4\) states, Māra developed inside the Buddhist circle, and influenced many.

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\(^1\) Ling, ‘Buddhism and mythology of evil’, p. 23. He says that in Buddhism, the gods are always righteous (dhammika) and demons unrighteous: but demons do not have any significance in Buddhist cosmology, perhaps they are all subsumed under Māra.

\(^2\) Ling, ‘A dictionary of Buddhism’.


Māra is such a peculiar being who cannot be defined by one compact word or sentence. His character is found everywhere, not congregated in one particular thing. He is similar to many gods and several demons but not a single being is entirely equated with him.

Considering both Indian and the Western thought, Māra, in whom ‘desire and death’, the most disastrous notions for human beings have met, is an aggregate of all possible worldly evil.