

A Blaze of Fire in the Dark

A BLAZE OF FIRE IN THE DARK

Homa rituals for the fulfilment of vows
and the performance of deeds of great benefit

Vajrakīla Texts of the Northern Treasures Tradition
Volume Three

by
Rig-'dzin rdo-rje



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साध्यस्योपरि वज्राग्निवृष्टिं निपात्य साध्यं भस्मीकुर्वन्तम् ॥

Causing a rainfall of vajra fire to descend upon the head of his victim,
the one upon whom he meditates is reduced to ashes

Dear Reader,

Please be aware that this volume forms part of a series of translations of sacred texts intended for dedicated practitioners of the esoteric Buddhist path of Guhyamantra. Those who are unfamiliar with the mystic conventions of speech employed in the tantric literature of this tradition may easily find themselves confused by the seemingly strange and bizarre techniques of some of the older rituals described herein, especially in the introductory section. The profound purpose of these rites, however, is to eliminate the final subtle traces of ignorance and ego-clinging (personified as an enemy or demon) so that one may truly work without hindrance for the benefit of all living beings.

Only those who understand the vajra fire to be the clear light of wisdom, within which all false conceptions of selfhood are burned away, will be able to proceed without error ...

ITI SAMAYA

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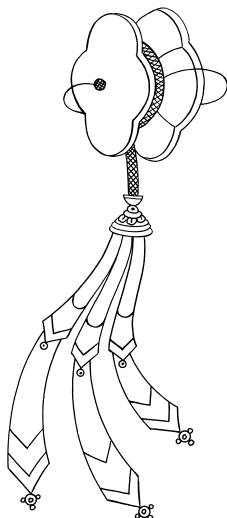
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INTRODUCTION

Ancient Indian religious tradition looks upon the sacred fire as the mouth of a deity, into which oblations are cast, and it is believed that when the deity is satisfied with the oblation, the boon of the fulfilment of one's desires will be granted. Such fire rituals (*agnikriyā*), then, widely performed for the attainment of particular desired ends (*kāmya*), are briefly categorised according to the nature of those ends as either gentle (*mañju*) or fierce (*raudra*). They may also be performed as incidental observances (*naimittika*) of an auspicious nature on special days, such as the eclipse of the sun or moon or the building of a temple or stūpa, in order to maintain harmony or celebrate success. These rituals, in which oblations are poured into the fire as a burned sacrifice (*agnihotra*), are usually referred to as *homa* for short and it is generally stated that no sacred action is considered to be complete, nor will it yield the desired result, unless a concluding *homa* rite is performed.

विना होमेन संसिद्धिर्नैव कर्मसु जायते ।
शान्तिपुष्ट्यादिसिद्धयर्थं होमकर्म समारभेत् ॥

Without the performance of a fire sacrifice
no success will arise from any of your actions.
In order to be successful in pacifying and enriching and the rest,
one should undertake to perform a *homa* rite.

Buddhist tantric texts speak mainly of these rites as expiatory (*prāyaś-citta*), being performed for the fulfilment of vows or to make good any deficiencies in one's practice. As such, a fire ritual may be undertaken at the conclusion of a period of meditative retreat or by a vajra master who wishes to purify a disciple undergoing advanced training. A Buddhist cremation ceremony, in which the body is purified of all sins and burned as an offering to the gods, is a special case of *homa* rite.

The Northern Treasures cycle of Vajrakīla, unearthed by the *ger ston* Rig-'dzin rgod-ldem in 1366, describes a violent threefold method of final destruction known as "pressing down, burning and hurling" (*mnan bsreg 'phang gsum*). In the special *homa* ritual that forms a part of this tripartite system, the main object to be burned is the effigy slaughtered during a rite