Fire And Early Man Essay, Research Paper

The definition of fire is the active principle of burning, characterized by the heat and light of combustion; And cultivating it was perhaps one of the biggest technological leaps humans ever surpassed. Fire affected the ancient man in many ways through cause and effect, and every effect created a cause, which resulted in another effect. It allowed the food to be germ-free because it was cooked and since it was cooked it was more digestible and that resulted in more nutrients for the body allowing brain and brain capacity to increase. The fact that food was cooked, the jaw and teeth experienced a decrease in size since meat wasn t so hard to eat through. Fire also allowed the creation of better and stronger tools thus resulting in hunters having more success with the big game and the food supply to increase. It was also used as a defence against the big carnivorous animals that preyed on humans for food. Fire in all was a great discovery made by a hominid species Homo erectus that was first to create fire and control it. In the following paragraphs I will try to prove that cultivation of fire had in fact a great affect on the ancient man.

At first fire was rarely seen or used because humans could not develop it and the only source of fire would have been from lightning, volcanoes, and piles of dry leaves suddenly igniting. Although fires were rare phenomena at the time, Paleolithic peoples still found use to it. They used the fire to keep their shelters warm and cook their food, and scare away wild animals. This was of course before Homo erectus cultivated fire. Homo erectus learned how to make and control fire as early as 1.4 million years ago. They made fire by rubbing one stick back and forth against another, or by turning a stick rapidly in a hole in a dry log. When Homo erectus discovered fire they had adapted many uses to it, one of them was to cook food. As they began to cook their food-a much faster process than eating it raw-they had more time to pursue other activities. (Walker 21) The consequence was the reduction of jaw and tooth size for the descendants of those who first cooked their food simply in order to make it ingestible. 1. Not only did the jaw and teeth experience a change but also the brain and the brain capacity. The brain overtime grew larger since more and more nutrients were available to it through the digestion of cooked food rather than raw. And when the jaw decreased, brain capacity increased at the same time. This led to humans being smarter thus resulting in humans more capable to create and invent new tools and ways of hunting; more capable to adapt to the current environment they lived in and the environment that food led them to.

One other way that fire changed the way that humans lived was that it allowed the creation of better and more efficient tools for hunting. Fire was used to harden the points of wooden spears so that the weapons could pierce the skin of a rhinoceros. Thus hunters had greater success and the food supply increased. (Walker 21) Because fire allowed the creation of a spear the body had to adapt to the newly developed hunting style.

The spear led to the modification of the body from the neck down. For the first time, the hunter did not literally have to come to grips with his prey and could impale it from a distance. The consequence was the relaxation of selective forces maintaining Middle Pleistocene levels of muscularity and robustness in the body below the neck. Reduction in postcranial robustness then appeared for the first time among Africans towards the end of the Middle Pleistocene 1

So fire in fact affected our body structure making us more upright due to the newly developed weapon the spear , according to the Professor of Anthropology C. Loring Brace.

Another way that fire was used was in defence from the animals such as tigers or lions that could have preyed on humans for food. They threw burning sticks, at animals to drive them away from people s shelters. (Walker 21) Just the fact that humans used fire in defence that resulted in the increase of the human population. Although only Stone Age humans used fire in defence it impacted the population growth by having more humans survive the food hunts. Fire also allowed the hominid Species Homo Erectus to populate other continents other than Africa. Specimens have been found in Africa, Europe, China, Georgia, India, and Java 2