

We have dispensed with the juice. We have now to discuss its container, the plant. The only work on Soma academically recognized has been the thesis for doctorate by Kapadia (1959) who worked under Professor Velankar, of the Bombay University, a renowned authority of his times. Kapadia (p.4) came to the conclusion that "whether Soma was a bush, a plant, or a tree, we do not know. From RV.10.89.5 it appears that it was a creeper between Atasa and Vana." Strange enough Kapadia does not refer to Griffith's comments upon RV.5.85.2 which states: "In the tree tops the air he hath extended, set intellect in hearts, fire in the waters, Surya in heaven and Soma on the mountain". With regard to "Soma on the mountain", Griffith writes that, "the Soma creeper; Mahidhara observes grows in the clefts of the stones of mountains", as noted before by Wilson. Thus Kapadia, interpreting verse 10.89.5, comes to the same conclusion as Mahidhara did with the verse 5.85.2 I take it that here a creeper meant to Mahidhara a plant with a thin stem nowhere approaching a tree trunk. Ephedra is trunkless and thus allied to a creeper. Moreover the stalks of Ephedra are thin as is the main part of the creeper plant. Briefly, Creeper= Trunkless tree. Let us now reconsider the verse 10.89.5 which Kapadia has selected while interpreting the Soma plant as creeper. In the first instance, the main vegetative feature of the plant was that it was full of stalks. Thus RV.9.107.12 says Soma with the stalks juice exhilarating into the vat that drops with meath." 10.89.5 states "Rousing with draughts the shaker rushing onward. impetuous, very strong armed as with arrows is Soma: Forest trees and all the bushes deceive not Indra with their offered likeness." Indra was bent on selecting the Soma plant which alone could offer him a drink that was energizercum-euporiant. This strength-giving plant itself looked "strong and armed with arrows." Here the appearance revealed the content. To appreciate this we must remember the theory developed later on as the Doctrine of Signatures. According to this doctrine, the plant itself reveals, in some way, what it is good for. Here the plant stalks looked like arrows, indicating that the plant was strong and capable of conferring strength. That the plant stalks are thin, in fact arrowlike, led to its description as a creeper which likewise is thin. Moreover the mention of arrows in the above verse recalls- Aitchinson's finding that ephedra has "this erect stalks." The Aryans being hunters could look upon such stalks of ephedra as arrows. Moreover there is the verse 9.50.1 which states: "Loud as a river's roaring waves thy powers have lifted up themselves: urge on thine arrow's sharpened point." Fortunately this verse has been explained by Griffith (Vol.2, p.301) as follows: "Urge on thine arrow's sharpened point: Vanasya Chodya Pavin: Lift up the music of thy flute. According to V. M. Hillebrandt the reeds or arrows mean the sharp pointed stalk of the Soma plant." Thus both verses 10.89.5 and 9.50.1 present Soma stalks as resembling arrows, or as thin, rodlike, and erect. Rigveda verse 9.5.10 states: "O Pavamana anoint Vanaspati, the ever-green, the golden hued, refulgent, with a thousand boughs". I feel that nowhere in Rigveda is ephedra spoken of better than in this verse. In the order of the words given above, Vanaspati=Soma and Vandspati means a herb, a medicinal plant. Then ephedra is ever-green. This is clearly stated in the verse. It is a perennial plant, unlike a typical mushroom. The plant or Vanaspati is golden hued. This harmonizes with Aitchison's observation previously mentioned that the "flowers are yellow and the stalks are more or less so." The Chinese species of ephedra was clearly yellow. Above all, RV.8.9.19 also states "When yellow stalks give forth the juice as cows from udders pour forth their milk." Thus

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some species of ephedra are yellow. This positively explains RV. 9.92.1 which states: "The gold-hued juice (was) poured upon the filter." Further, ephedra, as a plant, was a bush, with numerous stalks. This feature of the plant has been referred to in the above verse as possessing a "thousand boughs". The plant with erect, arrow like stalks, is ephedra, which is an evergreen plant. These characteristics are eloquently expressed in verse 10.94.12., "untouched by time never lacking green plants and green trees, they with their voice have caused the heavens and earth to hear." 10.94.13 "This, this the stones proclaim." The stones only knew the Soma plant, hence whatever was spoken of by them as, (ever) green plants, can only be ephedra. We can now summarize what has been discussed above. Soma is a regular medicinal plant. It has numerous thin and erect stalks, which resemble arrows, and in one species at least are coloured yellow. Soma is an ever-green or a perennial plant. Many species of ephedra have green stalks but their pith has an ochre red pigment. Then when crushed the juice can appear greenish, reddish and yellowish according to the species and the condition of the plant. In contrast, no mushroom is green much less "ever-green" which verse 9.5.10. specifies.

The main feature of ephedra is that its stalks are thin, erect, arrow-like and, above all, numerous to be termed as "thousand boughs." An Aryan hunter would easily use the complementary term, arrow, for such a stalk. RV. 9.50.1 says, "Loud as a river's roaring wave thy powers have lifted up themselves: Urge on thine arrow's sharpened point." Here Arrow.Ephedra stalk. This has been discussed before. Now this stalk is reeded which specifies ephedra. Kapadia could not identify Soma as ephedra. Yet he unwittingly confirms it by interpreting a few verses as indicating the reeded nature of Soma stalk. It must be sufficient for us to admit that a reeded stalk is none else than an ephedra stalk. Kapadia writes (on p.7) that, "in Rigveda 9.79.4 the word Kship, is characteristically used for a stalk that has several joints, as on the finger. The word Prishtha, 4.20.5 also suggests the same idea, Vana is another word connected with the Soma plant, 9.50.1; 97.8; 4.24.9 By Vashis the stalk was cut at these joints so that the portion between the two joints is like the udder (teat) of a cow in length. On p.11, he adds that, "the Soma stalk was having joints and was cut into convenient pieces as long as the udder (teat) of cow by press stones, RV. 10.101.10. Grassmann thinks that Vashis were press stones. It also occurs in RV.8.12.12 in connection with Soma." Then, on p.5, he writes that "the Soma stalk appears to be long and covered with several knots or joints. Parvan, R.V. 10.68.9 means such portion of the Soma stalk which was cut for pressing.

For pressing, the stalk was cut exactly at these joints and the portion between two joints was of the length of the cow's udder (teat)." He cites eight verses from Rigveda and refers to five terms associated with the reeded nature of Soma stalk, and the words are Kship, Prishtha, Vana, Vashis and Parvan. Kapadia also refers, on p.5 to "Crushing the joints of stalk in Atharvaveda 8.9.1.9. And in Taittiriya Brahmana 3.7.13 to the breaking of the dear limbs of the stalk as well as the joints." I however fear that he sometimes mistakes the joints of the human body with the joints of the Soma stalk. A clear mention of, joints on the plant is in Atharvaveda 12.3.31: "Present the sickle; quickly bring it hither. Let them cut plants and joints with hands that harm

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not." Benefit of doubt would be assigned to the view that here joints pertain to the stalks which are collectively expressed as plants. When the jointed stalks were crushed between stones to extract the juice, these joints now as knobs, being relatively harder would resist being pulverized. As a result they would remain partly as such even when the main stalk had been crushed. Then as the juice was being filtered the filter would show the presence of these knobs as residue. Wasson identifies Soma as a mushroom, yet he finds Rigveda speaking of knobs for which the Sanskrit word is Bhrishti. For nodule or knob the Vedic word is Parusha in the plural. Then even though his conclusion is different he confirms that in Rigveda Soma, whatever the plant may be, was characterized by the presence of "joints", or "knobs". Wasson, on p.59. It is to be understood that the knobs were parts of a jointed stalk. We may note that AV. verse 12.3.31 speaks of sickle to cut the Soma plant. No mushroom requires a sickle.

Now the Iranians also used Soma called Haoma. Hence Avesta literature deals with the plant and Darmesteter has translated the text concerned. He mentions three terms connected with the plant: Varesajis, Frasperege, and Fravakshe, translated by him as Trunk, Branch, and Stem respectively. Darmesteter translated Varesaji as Trunk and Bailey confirms it. The word Varesaji is compounded, of Varesa=Tree and of Gay = To live. Since these concepts could not be reasonably compounded the resultant word Varesaji was translated as Trunk. It is to be noticed that there is no word for plant among the three words mentioned above. Then how can there be one for trunk in the absence of a word for tree. Etymology then suggests a solution of the problem. Varesa= Tree and Gay=To live, and together that means, to live for ever. This means a perennial plant, as opposed to an annual. And ephedra is an evergreen plant, or a perennial plant. In Rigveda we found the corresponding terms: plant (Vanaspati), stalks (Amsu) and twig. In Avesta the words are Varesaji (plant), Frasperege (stalks unseparated) and Fravakshe (single stalk). Thus all the three Avesta words get intimately connected signifying the whole plant with connected stalks, and single stalks. Moreover Darmesteter also illustrates a stalk of Haoma as reeded which specifies ephedra. I am responsible for the above interpretations while the data has been found in Wasson: (1968)

When a bush, like ephedra, is seen its height is small but it is voluminous enough as a plant. A tree, would be a term for a plant with a trunk. This is absent in ephedra which then can be described as "all stalks" with no other impressive part. But on account of its voluminous size it looks like a stunted or poorly grown tree. Accordingly we find Jin RV.9.12.7. "The tree, whose praises never fail, yields heavenly milk." 9.59.2. "Flow (Juice) onward from the plant." 9.62.5. "The plant is washed in waters pressed by men; the milch kine sweeten it with milk." 1.137.3: "They milk with stones the stalk for you, with stones they milk the Soma plant." Here Soma is a plant and its only parts are stalks, no trunk, and no top, as might have qualified a mushroom. Being a plant it can be dug out as a whole. Accordingly RV.10.97.20: says "unharméd be he who digs up (Soma plant), unharméd the man for whom I dig. And let no malady attack biped or quadruped of ours." I find this verse needs being explained.. Griffith offers no comment upon it. According to ancient belief man has no right to acquire possession of an object which is Nature's property. Then to dig out a plant entails a sin, calling forth a curse upon the

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digger and upon the one who desired it. This requires taking prophylactic measures against any future harm to the digger. The verse above, 10.97.20, is a prayer and as such a charm against any harm directly to the man or to his property, such as domestic animals. The dug out plant is now an assembly of stalks. Verse 9.5.10, quoted before, describes these as "thousand boughs." This plant then, briefly stated would be all stalks. But observing single stalks on the plant the word used has been Twig. Griffith translates 9.68.2 as follows: "He bellows with a roar around the highest Twig. The tawny one is sweetened as he breaks it." In a plant like the mango the young leaves are tawny or red-ochre in colour, probably the young shoots of ephedra are coloured likewise. Then young shoots are not only tawny but also tender. Accordingly Griffith comments "the highest twigs, as being the tenderest and juiciest, are crushed first." The digger of the plant needed its juice and then juice rich in ephedrine. In this light the highest twigs were preferred not because they were the tenderest but because they were the richest in ephedrine. Hence their juice was most bitter which then had to be specially sweetened as indicated in the verse above, 9.68.2. The Emphasis should not be on tender twigs but on twigs rich in ephedrine content. When the plant is washed and placed on oxhide for being crushed, a portion is separated with a few twigs still adhering together. Such a unit is looked upon as Stern=Vaksana, found in Kapadia. The verse where this word is used is 8.1.17: "Press out the Soma with the stones and in waters wash it clean, the men shall milk it forth from out of the Stems, "or Vaksana. The word for Stalk=Amsu. Then Amsu and Vaksana are synonyms. But Amsu, generic word for stalk, really describes that ephedra is actually constituted of and is the word used by far the most frequently. Here Wasson (p.45) observes: "The dominance of the word Amsu, stalk, calls for comment." And the comment is simple enough: ephedra as plant is all stalks: no trunk, no branch, no leaves.

Even Darmesteter found only three terms in Avesta, for the plant; for few stalks adhering together, and for single stalks or twigs. Max Milner, among others, has shown that, "the ancients were very fond of using synonyms. When any one quality in an object impressed the observer he coined a word on that basis. Thus different qualities of the same object resulted in different names all as synonyms!" In our case synonyms arose for the plant appearing to be all-stalks, as several unit stalks adhering together. Thus resulted the concepts: Soma = Tree = Plant = Herb (Medicinal plant): and Stalk (Amsu) = Stem (Vaksana, as a few stalks) = Twigs (Single stalks). To compare there are the Iranian terms.

Soma = Tree = Veresaji = (Perennial plant)

Amsu = Stalk = Frasperege.

Vasana = Isolated stalks= Fraswakshe.

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