3. Soma and Haoma

A. Soma in Vedas

Soma is the juice of milky climbing plant, extracted and fermented, forming a beverage offered in libations to the deities and drunk by the Brāhmaṇas. Its exhilarating qualities were grateful to the priests, and the gods were represented as being equally fond of it\(^1\). Soma according to the Vedic hymns is the god who “represents and animates the juice of the Soma plant.”\(^2\)

Soma in the Vedic literature has a great significance. All the one hundred and fourteen hymns of the ninth Manḍala of \(\text{R} \text{gveda}\) besides six hymns in other Manḍalas are dedicated to his praise. He is also celebrated in portions of four or five other hymns, and as a dual divinity with Indra, Agni, Pūsan, or Rudra in about six more. The name of Soma, in its simple form and in compounds, occurs hundreds of times in the \(\text{R} \text{gveda}\); Judged by the standard of frequency, Soma therefore comes third in order of importance among the Vedic gods. Soma is much less anthropomorphic than Indra or Varunā, the constant presence of the plant and its juice setting limits to the imagination of the poets who describe its personification. Consequently little is said of his human form or action.\(^3\)

According to \(\text{R} \text{gveda}\) Soma is the universal lord, the showerer of blessing, the rejoice, uttering a loud sound\(^4\). (\(\text{R } \text{V.9.5.1}\). Soma is the soul of the sacrifice

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\(^1\) Rengarajan. T, Dictionary of Indian Epics, P 468.
\(^2\) Wilkins, W.J, Hindu Mythology, P 69.
\(^3\) MacDonell. A, History of Vedic Mythology, P 150
and maintains his ancient seer-hood\(^5\) (R\(\square\) V. 9.6.8). The preeminent Soma is the showerer of benefits, the truthful, the indestructible \(^6\) (R\(\square\) V.9.7.3). He bestows great renown, great durable riches to those who are profuse in their libations \(^7\) (R\(\square\) V. 9.20. 4). The pure dropping Soma grant the wealth with excelled male offspring \(^8\) . (R\(\square\) V. 9.11.9). Soma is the bounteous of the food and one who welcomes the gods at the rite, overcomes the demons and makes happy the worshippers \(^9\) (R\(\square\) V. 9.4.1).

Soma is the cognizant of the mind, lord of the mind \(^10\) (R\(\square\) V. 9 11, 8) Soma is the seeking of the gods \(^11\) (9. 2.1) who comes to the sacrifice of mighty gods, and brings strength and sustenance to worshippers \(^12\) (R\(\square\) V. 9.1. 4). Soma destroys the vigor, the energy, the subsistence of the enemy \(^13\) (R\(\square\) V. 9. 19, 7).

He is the purified one, doer of good deeds, and one who enter to praise of worshippers like a king \(^14\) (R\(\square\) V. 9. 20. 5). Heaven and earth for acquisition of the exhilarating Soma, win wealth, food and treasures. \(^15\) (R\(\square\) V. 9. 7. 9). The seven associated ministers like so many kinsmen filling the receptacle of the single (Soma), sit down at the sacrifice \(^16\) (R\(\square\) V. 9. 10. 7).

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\(^5\) Wilson, H.H. R\(\square\) gvedaSam\(\square\) hitā , Vol 4, p 9.
\(^7\) Ibid , Vol 4, p 27.
\(^8\) Ibid , Vol 4, p17.
\(^12\) Ibid , Vol 4, p 4.
\(^14\) Ibid , Vol 4, p 27.
\(^15\) Ibid , Vol 4, p11.
\(^16\) Ibid , Vol 4, p15.
Like other gods, he is, under the name of Indra as well as Soma, invoked to come to the sacrifice and receive the offerings on the strewn grass. The ninth book mainly consists of incantations sung over the tangible. Soma while it is pressed by the stones, flows through the woolen strainer into the wooden vats, in which it is finally offered on a litter of grass to the gods as a beverage, sometimes in fire or drunk by the priests. The processes to which it is subjected are overlaid with the most varied and chaotic imagery and with mystical fancies often incapable to certain interpretation.17

1. **Soma as a plant and god**

Soma is one of the main characters in Vedic rituals which is considered as “plant” as well as “God”18. In some hymn of Rûgveda he is extolled as the creator or father of the gods19.

This plant is found in the mountains but it is a heavenly being that has been purified in the heaven and tops on the all world. The obtained extract out of its smashed plant is filtered through wool and poured into the jars. Containing Milk and water and consumed in during the religious ceremonies. Yellowness of this liquid is likened to the ray of sun and it’s flowing to down flow of the rain. There by Soma is called the lord and the king of the rivers and one who grants fruitfulness.20

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17 MacDonell A., History of Vedic Mythology, P 150
18 Hinnells, J, Persian Mythology. P50
19 Wilkins, W.J, Hindu Mythology, P 69.
According to Rāgveda sweetest and most intoxicating wine is obtained from extract of Soma plant and the daughter of sun (śraddha) filters its pure and clear extract as follows:

- The daughter of the sun namely Śraddhā purifies your gushing streams though the eternal outstretched hair\(^ {21}\) (Rāgveda V. 9.1.6).

Soma is described as purified with the hands, by the ten fingers or, figuratively, by the ten maidens who are sisters or by the daughters (\(naptī\)) of Vivasvat. Similarly, the maidens of Trita are said to urge on the tawny one with stones as a drop for Indra to drink. Soma is also spoken of as purified or brought by the daughter of the sun. Sometimes it is said to be purified by prayer. The priests who press Soma are called Adhvaryus.\(^ {22}\) Soma is described in the Rāgveda, as pressed three times in the day. Indra to the midday pressing which is his alone, while the morning libation is his first drink.\(^ {23}\)

So we read in the Rāgveda as follows:

- The heroic Soma expressed (squeeze) by the fingers proceeds by the sacrifice, hastening with swift chariots to Indra’s abode\(^ {24}\) (Rāgveda V. 9.15.1).

- The ten fingers, the seven priests, express the Soma juice, well weaponed, and yielding great exhilaration\(^ {25}\) (Rāgveda V. 9.15.8).

\(^{22}\) Mac Donell A, History of Vedic Mythology, P 151
\(^{23}\) Ibid, P 153
\(^{25}\) Ibid.
• The ten sister finger seize you in the sacrifice, on the final day of oblation\textsuperscript{26} (R\textsuperscript{\text{-}} V. 9. 1. 7).

• The fingers combine expressing the lord of food, and they grasp the back of the vigor Soma\textsuperscript{27} (R\textsuperscript{\text{-}} V.9. 14 .7).

Soma is swift and, in illustration of the speed with which the pressed juice flows, is very often compared with or designated a steed. Thus the ten maidens are said to cleanse him like a swift steed. The drop which intoxicates Indra is a tawny steed. Soma flowing into the vats is sometimes also compared with a bird flying to the wood.\textsuperscript{28}.

Its mysteriously exhilarating and invigorating action, surpassing that of ordinary food or drink and prompting to deeds beyond the natural powers, led to Soma being regarded as a divine drink which bestows immortal life. Hence it is myth logically called \textit{amṛṭa}, the draught of immortality. It is an immortal stimulant, which the gods love and of which, when pressed by men and mixed with milk, all the gods drink; for they hasten to exhilaration and become exhilarated. Soma is immortal; and the gods drank him for immorality. He confers immortality on the gods and on men. He places his worshipper in the everlasting and imperishable world where there is eternal light and glory, and makes him immortal where king Vaivaśvata lives. Thus Soma naturally has medicinal power also. It is medicine for a sick man. Hence the god Soma heals whosoever is sick,

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid, p 2.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid, p 21.
\textsuperscript{28} MacDonell. A, History of Vedic Mythology, p 155
making the blind to see and the lame to walk. He is the guardian of men’s bodies and occupies their every limb, bestowing length of life in this world. The Soma draught is even said to dispel sin from the heart, to destroy falsehood and to promote truth.²⁹

Soma awakens eager thought. So his worshippers exclaim: ‘We have drunk Soma, we have become immortal, we have entered into light, and we have known the gods’. Thus he is also spoken of as a lord of thought and as a father, leader, or generator of hymns. He is a leader of poets, a seer among priests. He has the mind of seers, is a maker of seers and a protector of prayer. He is the ‘soul of sacrifice’ a priest (Brahmā) among the gods and apportions to them their share of sacrifice. Soma’s wisdom thus comes to be predominantly dwelt upon. He is a wise seer. He knows the races of the gods. He is a wise man—seeing wave. Soma with intelligence surveys creatures. Hence he is many-eyed and thousand-eyed.³⁰

Soma as god holds all the treasure of heaven and earth³¹ (Ṛ>V. 9. 14. 8) and gives to the worshippers brightness, heaven, all good things, strength, wisdom and drives away the enemies³² (Ṛ>V. 9.4.2&3). Soma is wise, a seer, bestows the sweet (beverage) produced from the Soma plant, and he is giver of all things to those who praise him³³ (Ṛ>V. 9. 18. 2). He milks the great heaven and earth like

²⁹ MacDonell .A, History of Vedic Mythology. pp 155,156
³⁰ Ibid. p 156
two mothers\textsuperscript{34} (R\textsuperscript{\tiny \#} V. 9.18.4) He at once supplies both heaven and earth with viands\textsuperscript{35}(R\textsuperscript{\tiny \#} V. 9. 18. 5).

In a series of verses, the mountain appears to be the home of Soma. It is said of the world ruler Varuna\textsuperscript{36} In the tree tops the air he has extended, milk in cows and vigorous speed in horses, set intellect in hearts, fire in the waters, sun in the sky and Soma on the rock\textsuperscript{36}.

The Soma plant is once in the R\textsuperscript{\tiny \#} gveda (X, 35, 1) described as maujavata, which according to later statements should mean ‘produced on Mount Mūjavit\textsuperscript{37}'. Soma is also several times described as dwelling in the mountains (giris\textsuperscript{\tiny \#}t\textsuperscript{\tiny \#}hā) or growing in the mountains (parvatāvrdh). Mountains are called ‘Soma-backed’, a term which perhaps by sacrificial symbolism, is applied to the pressing stones (adrayah\textsuperscript{\tiny \#}) in R\textsuperscript{\tiny \#}gveda. All these terms point to the abode of the Soma plant being on terrestrial mountains. This is confirmed by the statement of the Avesta that Haoma grows on the mountains. Since the Soma plant actually grew on mountains, it is probable that this fact is present in the mind of the poet even when he says that ‘on the vault of heaven sweet-tongued friends milk the mountain-dwelling bull’. Terrestrial hills may also be intended when it is said that ‘Varuna\textsuperscript{\tiny \#}a has placed Agni in the waters, the sun in heaven, and Soma on the rock’ or that ‘Matariśvan brought the one (Agni) from heaven, while the eagle carried

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Oldenberg, H, The Religion of the Veda, P 92.
\textsuperscript{37} Hymn of R\textsuperscript{\tiny \#}gveda, by Griffith, P 554.
off the other (Soma) from the rock; but here there is more doubt, as ‘mountain’ and ‘rock’ mythologically often mean ‘cloud’.

2. Soma as Celestial Plant

Though Soma is a terrestrial plant, it is also celestial; in fact its true origin and abode are regarded as in heaven. Thus it is said that the birth of the plant is on high; being in heaven it has been received by earth. Soma as the mighty golden – hued showerer of blessing utters a sound as it drops, beautiful as a friend, it shines (in the heavens) with the sun\(^{39}\) (R\(\text{V.} \ 9.2.6\)). He engages in many holy rites for the great sacrifice where the immortals sit\(^{40}\) (R\(\text{V.} \ 9.15.2\)).

The ‘intoxicating juice’ is the ‘child of heaven’, an epithet frequently applied to Soma. In one passage, however, he is called the offspring (jāh) of the sun and in another Parjanya is spoken of as the father of the mighty bird. In the Atharvaveda the origin of amṛṭa is also traced to the seed of Parjanya. When Soma is called a child (Śiśu) simply or a youth (yuvan), this is doubtless is allusion to the fact that, like Agni, he is continually produced anew. Soma is the milk (pīyūs\(\text{a}\)) of heaven, is purified in heaven. He flows with his stream to the dear places of heaven. He runs through heaven across the spaces with his steam. He occupies heaven, is in heaven, or is the lord of heaven. As bird of heaven he looks down on earth and

\(^{38}\) MacDonell .A, History of Vedic Mythology, P 158
\(^{39}\) Wilson H.H, R\(\text{gveda Samhitā} \), Vol 4, p3.
\(^{40}\) Ibid , p 22.
regards all beings, He stands above all worlds like god Sūrya. The drops being purified have been poured from heaven, from the air, on the surface of the earth; for he is a traverser of space (*rajastur*). Fingers rub him surrounded with milk ‘on the third ridge, in the bright realm of heaven’. His place is in the highest heaven or in the third heaven. ‘Heaven’, however also seems to be frequently a mystical name of the strainer of sheep’s wool. This seems to be the case when Soma is spoken of as being ‘on the navel of heaven, on the sheep-filter’, as traversing the lights of heaven, the sheep-filter as running with Sūrya in heaven, on the filter; or when it is said that ‘the bull has occupied heaven, the king goes soaring over the strainer.\(^{41}\)

Soma has been brought from heaven. The myth most commonly expressive of this belief is that of Soma and the eagle. It was brought by the eagle. The bird brought Soma from the highest heaven. The eagle brought the Soma or mead (*madhu*) to Indra. The swift eagle flew to the Soma plant; the eagle tore off the sweet stalk for Indra. The eagle brought it for Indra through the air with his foot. Flying swift as thought, the bird broke through the iron castle; going to heaven he brought the Soma for the wielder of the bolt. The eagle bore the plant from afar, from heaven. The eagle is constantly distinguished from Indra as bringing the Soma to him. There is only one passage (unconnected with this myth) in which Indra seated at the Soma offering is called an eagle. ‘Eagle of heaven’ is an epithet applied to Agni (otherwise twice said of the Maruts), the term eagle is connected

\(^{41}\) MacDonell. A, History of Vedic Mythology ,158
with *Agni Vaidyuta* or lightning, and Agni is often called a bird in the *Rgveda*.\(^{42}\)

Some times Soma him self, the divine immortal is considered as bird who hastens to settle on sacrificial vessels \(^{43}\) (*RgV. 9. 3 .1*).

### 3. Soma as strong and great fighter god

Soma is considered as god with global domain and among gods it has the role of priest and grants them strength. It is the great warlike and the priests who drink the ‘Soma’ are able to kill the enemies immediately.\(^{44}\)

Soma as the all – beholding destroyer of Rāks\(\text{-}\)asas has stepped upon his golden– smitten birthplace united with wooden cask\(^{45}\) (*RgV. 9.1.2*). The juice of Soma is enemy – averting\(^{46}\) (*RgV. 9.1.8*). When the priests excite the Soma, the flowing Soma like king destroys opposing demons and man\(^{47}\) (*RgV. 9.7.5*). Soma is the slayer of the enemies, the wise one, the fuller of the desire of the gods who sheds prosperity on the cattle \(^{48}\) (*RgV. 9.11.7*).

Being so intimately connected with the Indra in the conflict with Vṛ\(\text{-}\)tra, Soma comes to be spoken of independently as a great fighter. He is a victor, unconquered as fighter. He is a victor, unconquered in fight, born for battle. He is the most heroic of heroes, the fiercest of the terrible, ever victorious. He conquers for his worshippers, cows, chariots, horses, golden, heaven, water, a thousand

\(^{42}\) Ibid 159.
\(^{46}\) Ibid, p 2.
\(^{47}\) Ibid, p 11.
\(^{48}\) Ibid, p 15.
boons and everything. Without reference to ‘his warlike character, he is constantly said to bestow upon all the wealth of heaven and earth, food, cattle, horses, and so forth. Soma himself is, occasionally called a treasure (rayi) or the wealth of the gods. Soma can also afford protection from foes. He drives away goblins and, like some other deities but more frequently, receives the epithet of global slayer (raks\̣ohan). Soma is the only god who is called a slayer of the wicked. In the later Vedic literature the statement occurs that Brāhman\̣ as who drink Soma are able to slay at a glance. 49

Being a warrior, Soma is said to have weapons which like a hero he grasps in his hand and which are terrible and sharp. In one passage he is said to have obtained his weapons by robbing his malignant father of them. Soma is the bright - weaponed one who showers upon to the worshippers wealth abundant for both world 50(R\̣ V.9. 4.7).

He is described as armed with a thousand-pointed shaft and his bow is swift. Soma rides in the same chariot as Indra. He is charioteer to the car-fighter Indra. He drives the car which is heavenly. He has light or a filter for his car. He is the best of charioteers. He has well-winged mares of his own and a team like Vāyu. 51

4. Soma as source of Indra’s power and other gods

49 History of Vedic Mythology, P 157
51 History of Vedic Mythology . pp 157,158
In the Vedic literature, Indra has been described as desirous of Soma who obtains his power from drinking of Soma. Soma is the most sweet and exhilarating stream, effused for Indra to drink\(^{52}\) (R\(\text{g}\) V. 9.1.1). Soma is the showerer of benefits, devoted to the gods\(^{53}\) (R\(\text{g}\) V. 9.6.1). The desire – showering liquor, effused for drink of the gods and exhilaration of the worshippers and it is mixed with milk for prowess in battle\(^{54}\) (R\(\text{g}\) V. 9.6.6). All the gods together pleased and enjoy by drinking of the Soma\(^{55}\) (R\(\text{g}\) V.9.18. 3).

Indra arranged the skies, days, months and seasons with power of Soma.\(^{56}\) He needs Soma to strengthen him to perform the slaying of V\(\text{r}\)\(\text{tra}\); hence the drink is called the bolt, and Soma even takes the title of V\(\text{r}\)\(\text{tra} – \) slayer. Again Indra makes the sun to rise when he has drunk Soma, so that Soma is credited with this fact also\(^{57}\).

In the R\(\text{g}\)veda (9, 1, 1-3) we read as follows:

- “In sweetest and most gladden[ning] stream flow pure, O Soma, on thy way Pressed out for Indra, for his drink.
- Be thou best V\(\text{r}\)\(\text{tra}– \) slayer, best granter of bliss, most liberal Promote our wealthy princes gift.
- Flow onward with thy juice unto the banquet of the Mighty God;

\(^{52}\) Wilson .H.H, R\(\text{g}\)vedaSam\(\text{hit}_4\) , Vol 4, p1
\(^{53}\) Ibid. p 9.
\(^{54}\) Wilson .H.H, R\(\text{g}\)vedaSam\(\text{hit}_4\) , Vol 4, p 9.
\(^{55}\) Ibid. p 25.
\(^{56}\) Ions, V. Indian Mythology p.18.
Flow hither for our strength and fame” 58

For, Soma was source of Indra’s power and the other gods also gradually was changed to warlike, who fight the enemies of gods. This power increased regarding to Indra. In fact, Soma was as Indra who borrows some role of this god. It is said Indra found Soma at the Himalaya Mountains and offers it to the other gods so that gods fight to the demons.59

Soma which was offered to the gods as heaven nectar later was changed to the source of quarrel between god and demons. The Power of Soma was as much as, it was embodied in god’s role which Indra doesn’t have power without it. In this manner Soma becomes initial and great god and the one who has power and treats the aches and grants the wealth. Soma acquired heavenly personality because of possessing such features. Wine-presses of Soma becomes the symbol of the sky and its extract, rain and preserved-Soma becomes the god of waters and yellowness of its extract and the voice of wine-press becomes the symbol of lightening and thunder.60

The main application of its intoxicating power is its stimulating effect on Indra in his conflict with the hostile powers is its stimulating effect on Indra in his conflict with the hostile powers of the air. That Soma strengthens Indra for the fight with Vṛṣtra is mentioned in innumerable passages of the Rgveda. In the

58 Hymn of Rgveda, by Griffith, P 472.
59 Ions, V. Indian Mythology, p.28
60 Ibid, p.29.
intoxication of Soma, Indra slays all foes and no one can resist him in battle when he has drunk it. Soma is the soul of Indra, the auspicious friend of Indra, whose vigor he stimulates and whom he aids in slaying Vṛćra. With Soma as a companion of Indra made the waters to flow for man and slew the dragon. Thus Soma is sometimes even called the bolt (Vajra) of Indra. Soma, the favorite juice of Indra, becomes a thousand-winning bolt. It is the intoxicating drink which destroys hundred forts and is a Vṛćra-slaying intoxicating stalk. Thus the god Soma is said to be ‘like Indra a slayer of Vṛćra and a fort-destroyer’ and comes to receive half a dozen times the epithet Vṛćraḥan ‘Vṛćra slaying’, which primarily belongs to Indra.

When drunk by Indra Soma caused the sun to rise in heaven. So this cosmic action comes to be attributed to Soma independently. He caused the sun to shine, caused the lights of the sky to shine and produced the sun in the waters. He caused the sun to rise, impelled it, obtained and bestowed it, and caused the dawns to shine. He makes his worshippers participate in the sun and finds light for them. He found the light and wins light and heaven. Just as it has been the sacrificial butter it is spoken of as the ‘navel of immortality’, on which rests the whole world, the conception of Soma comes to be extended to that of a begging of universal domination who is ‘lord of the quarters’, who performs the great cosmic actions of
generating the two worlds of creating or establishing heaven and earth, of supporting heaven, and of placing light in the sun.\textsuperscript{61}

5. **Connection of Soma with the waters**

Based on the mixture of water with the juice, the connection of Soma with the waters is expressed in the most varied ways. Streams flow for him. The stream of the effused creative Soma milks out the joy – giving ambrosia and the accomplisher of holy rites veils itself in the waters\textsuperscript{62} (R\textsuperscript{\textcircled{\textregistered}} V. 9.2.3). The juice-distilling Soma, the sustainer, the supporter of heaven is purified in the waters\textsuperscript{63} (R\textsuperscript{\textcircled{\textregistered}} V. 9. 2. 5). The bounteous giver, worthy of all praise, shines forth in its might with the stream of waters \textsuperscript{64}(R\textsuperscript{\textcircled{\textregistered}} V. 9.5.3) Soma is the bearer of oblations abiding in the waters of the firmament, difficult to be surpassed \textsuperscript{65}(R\textsuperscript{\textcircled{\textregistered}} V. 9. 20. 6 ).

The waters follow his ordinance. He flows at the head of streams. He is the lord and king of streams, lord of spouses, an oceanic (samudriya) king and god. The waters are his sisters. The mighty waters and floods are accompanied with him, as following verse in R\textsuperscript{\textcircled{\textregistered}} gveda (IX, 2, 4 & 5):

- “The Mighty waters, yea, the floods accompany thee mighty one.

When thou wilt clothe thee with the milk.

\textsuperscript{61} History of Vedic Mythology, P 156, 157
\textsuperscript{62} Wilson .H.H, R\textsuperscript{\textcircled{\textregistered}} gveda Sam\textsuperscript{\textcircled{\textregistered}} hitā , Vol. 4, p 3.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid, Vol 4, p 7.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid, p 27.
- The lake is brightened in the floods, Soma our friend, heaven prop and stay. Falls on the purifying cloth.”

As leader of waters, Soma rules over rain. He produces waters and causes heaven and earth to rain. He streams rains from heaven. The Soma drops themselves are several times compared with rain and Soma is said to flow clearly with a stream of honey like the rain-changed cloud. So too the Pavamāna drops are said to have streamed from heaven, from air, on the ridge of earth. There are some other passages in which the Soma that is milked appears to refer to rain. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (11, 5, and 4) identifies the amrta with the waters. This identification may have given rise to the myth of Soma brought down to man by an eagle. But the celestial Soma descending to earth was doubtless usually regarded as only mixed with rain, and not confounded with it. The waters are invoked to set in motion the exhilarating wave, the draught of Indra, the sky-born well. Soma is the drop which grows in the waters. Hence he is the embryo of the waters or their child, for seven sisters as mothers are around the child, the newly born, the Gandharva of the waters and the waters are directly called his mothers. Soma is also spoken of as a youth among the waters or cows.

6. Soma as Bull

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66 Hymn of R̄gveda, by Griffith, P 472.  
67 History of Vedic Mythology, P 154.
When Soma is said to roar he is commonly compared with or directly called a bull. ‘As a bull he bellows in the wood’; ‘the tawny bull bellows and shines with the Sun’.

In the \textit{Rgveda} (IX, 2, 1& 6) we read as follows:

- “Soma, flow on, inviting gods, speed to the purifying cloth;
  Press to Indra as bull.

- The tawny bull has bellowed, fair as mighty Mitra to behold;
  He shines together with the sun” \footnote{Hymn of \textit{Rgveda}, by Griffith, P 472.}

As the waters, added with or without milk, are figuratively called cows, the relation of Soma to them is usually that of a bull to cows. He is a bull among the cows or is lord of the cows. He bellowls like a bull traversing the cows or like a bull towards the cows, the cows also bellowing towards him. He is the bull of heaven as well as the earth and the streams. The impetuosity of Soma is also several times illustrated by comparison with a buffalo (\textit{mahis\textasciitilde}a). Thus he even comes to be called an animal (\textit{pas\textasciitilde}u). Being a bull among the cow-waters, Soma is the fertilizer of the waters. He is also an impregnator (\textit{retodh\textashir\textasciitilde}), an epithet especially applied to the moon in the Yajurveda. Hence he is a bestower of fertility. Soma being so frequently called a bull (\textit{uks\textasciitilde}an, \textit{vr\textasciitilde}s\textasciitilde}an, \textit{vr\textasciitilde}s\textasciitilde}abha) is sharp horned (\textit{tigma\textasciitilde}r\textasciitilde}nga), an epithet which in five of its six occurrences in the \textit{Rgveda} is companied by a word meaning ‘bull’. Thus the brewed drink
(mantha) of Indra is like a sharp-horned bull. Soma is also said (like Agni) to sharpen his horns. 69

7. Soma as Moon

In the post-Vedic literature Soma is a regular name of the moon, which is regarded as being drunk up by the gods and so waning, till it is filled up again by the sun 70. According to Rgveda Soma as moon (Indu) is the Mighty showerer of blessing, most glorious upholder, sends food to the worshippers 71 (R V.9.2.2). Soma as moon is asked for exhilaration and he is the highest world to his foe-crushing worshippers and his praises are great 72 (R V.9.2.8).

Soma as Indo (Moon) is the giver of kine of children, of horses and of food. He is the primeval soul of the sacrifice 73 (R V. 9.2.10). He brings varied wealth, abundant in horses and all reaching 74 (R V. 9, 4, 10). The pure – flowing Indu (Moon) is desirous of offering worship to the gods 75 (R V. 9, 11, 1). Soma is worthy of the sacrifice, it flows to Indra and to the god, and he as Indu (moon) vouchsafes food to the worshippers 76 (R V. 9. 23. 6).

In the Chândogya Upanishad (5, 101) the statement is found that the moon is king Soma, the food of the gods and is drunk up by them. Even in the Brâhman as the identification of Soma with the moon is already a common-place.

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69 History of Vedic Mythology. P 155
70 Ibid, p 160.
72 Ibid.
75 Ibid, p 16.
76 Ibid, p 30.
Thus the Aitareya Brāhmana (7, 11) remarks that the moon is the Soma of the gods; the Śatapatha Brāhmana (1,6,45), that king Soma, the food of the gods, is the moon; and in the Kausāṇī Brāhmana a the sacrificial plant or juice is symbolical of the moon god. The mythology of the Brāhmana as already explains the phases of the moon as due to the gods and Fathers eating its substance, which consists of ambrosia. Soma, as the moon, in the Yajurveda also conceived as having the lunar asterisms, the daughters of Prajāpati, for his views. In the Atharvaveda, moreover, Soma several times means the moon. A large number of scholars agree that even in a few of the latest hymns of the Rgveda (In the first and tenth books) Soma is already identified with the moon. Most of them, however, hold that Soma as a god is celebrated in the Vedic hymns only as a personification of the beverage, regarding his identification with the moon as merely a secondary mythological growth.77

**B. Haoma in the Ancient Iranian literature**

1. **Haoma in the Avesta**

Soma in the Avesta book is called as “Haoma”. They are quite similar together. It is said ‘Homa’ in the Pahlavi language. Haoma in the Avesta is also the name of plant which with its obtained extract is used in the religious

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77 History of Vedic Mythology, P 160
ceremonies. Now this plant is known as ‘Efdera’.\textsuperscript{78} This plant has power under normal conditions much less is praised on it and is sanctified.\textsuperscript{79}

The god Haoma is also called by the same name. Preparation rituals of Haoma are very long and complicated and full of symbolic acts. The offering of Haoma mixed with milk is mentioned in the Avesta book repeatedly. Most of time this offering is done accompanied by holding of Baresma\textsuperscript{80} and offering of Zaor\textsuperscript{81} extract of Haoma was being prepared by seven priests and consumed during the religious ceremonies; now it is done by two priests namely “Zoot” and “Raspi” extracting of this plant is related to some celestial phenomena like ray of sun and down flow of the rain. Heavenly Haoma is the son of Ahura Mazda and he is godlike priest as well, and offers the oblation to the other Gods. He should take his portion from the sacrificed animal, so that he can take care of the soul of that animal by such action. If this portion does not allot to him, that animal will complain against sacrificer. For, when Ahura Mazda pressed the Haoma plant; the God of Haoma came near him. Therefore this God is also present when the faithful person offers the oblation; so that when the Haoma plant is offered, the God of Haoma not only is ‘the God’ but also ‘the priest’ and ‘one who is offered’ as well. In the character of Haoma one can imagine him like a warlike character that fights against badness and also like priest who himself is offered in the offering\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{78}Efdera is one of medicinal plants which grow up in mountains.
\textsuperscript{79}Hinnells, J, Persian Mythology, P.51.
\textsuperscript{80}Baresma is a few cut branches of a plant or tree which is held during the Zoroastrians ceremonies.
\textsuperscript{81}Zaor is the name of sacrifice which is offered to water or fire during the Zoroastrians ceremonies.
ceremonies, so that the people obtain the life. His Godlike attendance to the earth appears as holy plant which grows up in the mountains.82

All over Avesta book, the Haoma plant and God of Haoma have been mentioned as “driving death afar”.

One Yasht of Avesta book namely “Haoma Yasht” belongs to the Haoma, in this Yasht, Golden Haoma is praised as one who increases the world and one who drives away death.83

According to Drvaspa Yasht84, Haoma, the healing and the good lord with golden eyes offers up a sacrifice to Drvaspa upon the highest top of Haraiti Mountain and desires her which I can capture the Turanian Afrāsyāb85 and takes him near of Kai Khosra86 that king may kill him behind of Chaechasta87 to avenge the murderer of his father Siyāvash88 and brave Aghrirath89 and this god grants him.90

83 Yazhts (of Avesta). Vol.2. p.353
84 The other name of this Yasht is Gôš (Geuś) in Avesta Book, see, The Zend Avesta, Vol.II. P.110.
85 This name is Avesta is “Frangrasyan”. He is the King of Turan and the biggest enemy of Iran in ancient periods. see ‘ The Zend Avesta’ Vol. II, p.114.
86 This name in Avesta is Husravah. He is the king of Iran in ancient period. Look at The Zend Avesta Vol. II P.114.
87 Chaechasta, is the name a lake in Avesta. The water of this lake is salty and fish cannot live in it. It is the same as Lake Urumiah in Iran.
88 Siyāvash is the father of Kai Khosrav who is killed by Afrāsyāb.
89 Aghrirath is the brother of Afrāsyāb. He helps Iranian armies because of this reason, Afrāsyāb killed him.
In the Art Yasht (Ard or Ashi Yasht) Haoma also desires the same boon from the goddesses Art, (the goddess of fortune and wealth) and this goddess also grants him.\textsuperscript{91}

In the Mehr Yasht, it is said that Haoma offers up a sacrifice to God of Mehr.\textsuperscript{92}

Three HA, (HAT) of Yasnas (of Avesta book namely HA, No.9, 10, 11) belong to Haoma.

In the HA, (No.9), Zarathustra asked Haoma; “who are you” Haoma answer “I am Haoma, the holy and driving death afar: “Prepare me for the taste. Praise toward me as Saoshyants\textsuperscript{93} will praise me.”

There upon Zoroaster asked him: “first who did prepare you in the corporeal world? And what gain did he acquire?”

Haoma gives answer: “Vivanghavant was the first man who prepared me and this gain he acquired that he was born a son who was Yima”\textsuperscript{94}

Zoroaster further asked him: “who was the second man who prepared you for the corporeal world? And what gain did he acquire?”

Haoma answer: “Āthwyā (Abtin) was the second who prepared me and this gain he acquire that he was born a son who was Thraētaona (Feridun)”\textsuperscript{95}

\textsuperscript{91} Yashts Vol. II, p.194. and The Zend Avesta Vol. III, p.278

\textsuperscript{92} Yashts, Vol. I, p.467.

\textsuperscript{93} Saoshyants are the names of the Three promised Zoroastrians who will appear at the last third millennium of world life. They who will deliver the world from the badness, corruption and injustice.

\textsuperscript{94} The Zend of Avesta Part III. P.230 to 235 and also Yasna by Pour Davoud. P.158 to 160.

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
And again Zoroaster, asked him: “who was the Third man who prepared you for the corporeal world? And what gain did he acquire?”

Haoma answered: “Thrita was the third man who prepared me and this gain did he acquire that to him two sons were born Urvâkhshaya, the law-giver and Keresāspa”\textsuperscript{96} and again Zoroaster asked him: “Who prepared you for the corporeal world? And what gain did he acquire?”

There upon Haoma answer: “Pourushaspa was the fourth man who prepared me, and this did he acquires that, thou, O’ Zoroaster! Was born to him”.\textsuperscript{97}

Thereby we see that Haoma in the Avesta has such great significance which five persons from most important Aryan personalities were born in lieu of preparing of Haoma.

In continuation of Yasna, HA, No.9, Zoroaster praises of Haoma, the well endowed, good healing, having beautiful of form, good in deed and most successful in its working… and he asks him; “grant me the best life of the saints, the health of the body, the long vitality of life, successfulness on the earth and conquering the lie”, and he desires him which is informed from the thief and the murderer and wolf before the others.\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{96}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{97}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{98}Yasna. P.164-165 and also The Zend of Avesta, part III. P.235-237.
Haoma grants power to the brave who gallops horse in the battle, and he grants to the women, renowned sons and pious children.\textsuperscript{99}

Haoma grants to those long maiden who sit at home un-married, good husbands.\textsuperscript{100}

Zoroaster desires Haoma as follows:

“Bear off from us the torment and malice of the hateful. Divert the angry foe’s intent.”\textsuperscript{101}

He also desires Haoma for the men who are sinful in this village and this city as follows:

“Seize thou away, the fleetness from their feet, throw thou avail of darkness and make thou their intellect a wreck”\textsuperscript{102} and also desires him which he fights against Dragon, murderous, person, wicked human tyrant and the harlot who perishes the righteous saint.\textsuperscript{103}

In the Yasna( HA. 10) it is said that the cloud and the rain which make Haoma grows on the summits of the mountains, the lofty mountains where the Haoma branches spread, and the wide earth where Haoma grows up on it …have been praised.\textsuperscript{104}

Zoroaster praises all plants of Haoma; the Haoma which grows on the heights of lofty mountains and in the gorges of valleys as well. And he mentions

\textsuperscript{99} The Zend of Avesta, part III. P 237.  
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid P 237  
\textsuperscript{101} The Zend of Avesta p.III p. 238-239.  
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid  
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid  
\textsuperscript{104} The Zend of Avesta Part .III p240.
“I pour it from the silver cap to the golden chalice and I do not pour it on earth because of precious cost.\textsuperscript{105}

In the Yasna (HA 11), it is said about cure of the cow, the horse and Haoma. The persons who neglect them involved by their cure.

And Haoma also says, “Ahura Mazda, the pure father; offered to me some part of sacrifice”. And in continuation of this HA; the brave Haoma is also mentioned as one who captured Turanian Afrāsyāb.\textsuperscript{106} In the “Selections of Zād-Sparam” (one of the Pahlavi texts), Haoma helps Tishtar (the god of rain) for development of creation.\textsuperscript{107}

2. Haoma in the Firdausi’s Shāhnāme

The name of Haoma has been also mentioned as “Hoom” in the Firdausi’s Shāhnāme which is one of the most important Iranian Epics. In this book there is no mention of Hoom as “plant” or “God” but it is mentioned as worshipper (priest) belongs to Freidan’s\textsuperscript{108} family who worships in the mountain most of the time.

In the story of Kai Khosrav’s kingship, it is told that when Afrāsyāb\textsuperscript{109} is defeated by KaiKhosrou’s army, he escapes to the mountains and hides in his shelter (cave) namely; “Hange Afrāsyāb”.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid 243
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid 244, 245
\textsuperscript{107} Afifi. R., Mythology and Culture of Iran. P.644.
\textsuperscript{108} Feridun is the name of Iranian King in Shāhnāme.
\textsuperscript{109} Afrāsyāb is the King of Turan and the biggest enemy of Iran in the Firdausi’s Shah Name.
Hoom was worshipping near that place. Suddenly he hears the voice of groan who whimpers for his bad fortune and luck. Hoom understands this voice is groan of Afrāsyāb, so he leaves his place of worship and goes to search him. He finds Afrāsyāb in the cave and binds his arms by a lasso and carries him by dragging.

In this time Afrāsyāb comes to tears and requests Hoom to forgive him. Hoom feels pity for him and looses the lasso which had bound his arms by that. Afrāsyāb seizes the opportunity and escapes from his hand and jumps in Chaechasta Lake and disappeared. By chance in the same time Gudarz\textsuperscript{110} and Giv\textsuperscript{111} pass from beside of the lake and they see Hoom who has sat at the beach of the lake and is groaning. They ask him the reason of groaning and he explains to them what has happened. When Gudarz hears the adventure, he goes to the “Azargoshasp” Fire-temple\textsuperscript{112} where Kai Khosrav and Kai Kavoos\textsuperscript{113} were praying there, and says the adventure for them.

Kai Khosrav and Kai Kavoos ride on their horses and go near Hoom. Hoom also says the adventure for the kings and suggest them; “you must chain Garsivas\textsuperscript{114} (Afrāsyāb’s brother) and put halter on his neck, so that he groans for the torment and then take him near the lake side. For, Afrāsyāb comes out from

\textsuperscript{110} Gudarz is the of hero in Shah Name.
\textsuperscript{111} Giv is a hero in the Firdausi’s Shah Name.
\textsuperscript{112} Azargoshasp is one of the most important Fire-temples in ancient Iran. This Fire-temple belonged to the army cost.
\textsuperscript{113} Kai Khosrav and Kai Kavoos are two Iranian Kings in Shah Name.
\textsuperscript{114} Garsivas is one of the most important Turanian hero and brother of Afrāsyāb, who already has been captured by the King of Iran.
the water because of brother’s groaning. Kai Khosrav carries out this suggestion and Afrāsyāb comes out from the lake and sympathizes with him. Then one of Kai Khosrav’s friends throws the lasso and drags him to the lake side.

So Kai Khosrav draws Indian sword and beheads him for revenge of his father, Siyāvash\(^{115}\), and two heroes namely; Aghrirath\(^{116}\) and Nowzar\(^{117}\).

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As we said before Soma in the Vedas is called as Haoma in the Avesta but there are some points which are necessary to mention as follows:

1. Both of them namely Soma in the Vedic literature and Haoma in the ancient Iranian literature have very great significance in the religious rituals.
2. Both of them namely; Soma and Haoma are considered as “god” as well as “plant”.
3. Both of them are found in the mountains.
4. However Soma in the Vedas is offered for all gods, but among the gods Indra has very prominent role to drink Soma. He drinks Soma to fight with the Vṛ̘tra “demon of drought”. But in the Avesta there is no god such

\(^{115}\) Siyāvash is father of Kai Khosrav who is killed by Afrāsyāb

\(^{116}\) Aghrirath in Shah Name is the brother of Afrāsyāb who helps the Iranian army. Because of this reason, Afrāsyāb killed him.

\(^{117}\) Nowzar is one of Iranian heroes in Shah Name.
as Indra, who has especial role to drink Haoma, and it is offered to all gods equally.

5. Soma in the Vedas is immortal and divine drink which the gods drink it for immortality. Similarly All over the Avesta book, the Haoma plant and the god of Haoma have been mentioned as one who “driving death afar”.

6. In the post-Vedic literature Soma is a regular name of the moon, which is regarded as being drunk up by the gods but in the Avesta the name of moon has not been changed to the Haoma.

7. Soma it self in the Vedas is considered as a great fighter. Similarly In the character of Haoma one can imagine him like a warlike character that fights against badness and also like priest who himself is offered in the offering ceremonies so that the people obtain the life. His godlike attendance in the earth appears as holy plant which grows up in the mountains.

8. It is an undoubted fact that Soma and the Avestan Haoma, already prepared and celebrated in the Indo-Iranian period. In the Rṣigveda Soma is described as growing on the mountains or a particular mountain; in the Avesta it is said to grow on a certain mountain.

9. In the Rṣigveda Varuna aplices Soma on the rock; similarly in the Avesta Haoma is placed on the great mountain Haraiti by a skilful god.
10. In the Rāgveda Soma is brought by an eagle; in the Avesta Haoma is distributed from its native mountain by certain auspicious birds.

11. In both (Veda and Avesta) it is king of plants. In both it is a medicine which gives health, long life, and removes death. As Soma grows in the waters, so Haoma in the waters of Arđvi-Sura Anāhita.

12. The pressing and offering of Soma was already an important feature of Indo-Iranian worship. But while three daily pressings are referred to in the Rāgveda, only two are mentioned in the Avesta.

13. In both it is stated that the stalks were pressed, that the juice was yellow and was mixed with milk. In both the celestial Soma is distinguished from the terrestrial, and the beverage from the god. In both the mythical home of Soma is heaven, whence it comes down to earth. In both the Soma draught (like the sacrificial fire) had already become a mighty god and is called a king. Both are light-winning and wise. Both remove the machinations of the wicked, bestow victory over foes, and confer the celestial world. Both grant steeds and excellent children. The Rāgveda and the Avesta even agree in the names of ancient preparers of Soma, Vivasvat and Trita, Āptya on the one hand, and Vivanghavant, Āthwyya, and Thrita on the other.

14. Etymologically Soma = Haoma means ‘pressed juice’, being derived from the root su=hu, ‘to press’.
15. In Drvaspa Yasht (one Yasht of the Avesta) Haoma, the healing and the good lord with golden eyes offers up a sacrifice to Drvaspa on the highest top of Haraiti Mountain and desires her which can capture the Turanian Afrāsyāb and takes him near of Kai Khosrov that king may kill him behind Chaechasta Lake. This point has been also mentioned in the Firdausi’s Shah Nāme (one of the Iranian epics).

16. This point is very interesting about Haoma that appears in Firdausi’s Shah Nāme as worshipper who worships in the mountains; whereas Soma in Vedas and Haoma in Avesta appear as a plant which grows up in the mountains. He is shown as strong person as much as he can capture the biggest enemy of Iran, namely; Afrāsyāb and he is shown in the Vedas and Avesta as a powerful warlike character and as a strong liquid which is used in the religious ceremonies.

Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a close similarity between ‘Soma’ in the Vedic literature, ‘Haoma’ in Avesta and ‘Hoom’ in the Ferdowsi’s Shahname.