



The process involves several stages: 1) The Soma plant is pressed, often with stones by human hands ('pressers'). 2) The extracted juice ('Indu') flows through a purifying filter, typically a 'woollen sieve' or 'straining-cloth'. 3) The purified Soma is then often mixed with milk or curds ('clothed... with a robe of milk') before being offered.

Describe the main stages of the Soma purification process as depicted in the hymns.

Difficulty:
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Hint:

Consider the actions described: pressing, flowing through a sieve, and being mixed with other liquids.

Worshippers request: 1) Wealth (riches, kine/cattle, steeds, gold). 2) Strength and Victory (heroic might, slaying foes like Vr̥tra and Dasyus). 3) Light and Wisdom (heavenly light, mental power, looking upon the Sun).

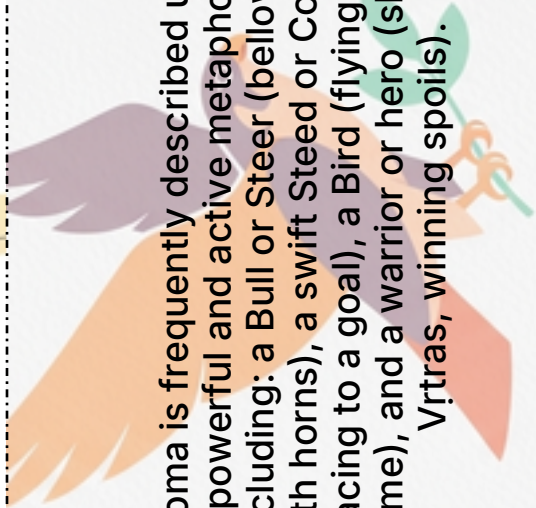
What are the three main benefits or boons requested from Soma by the worshippers?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

Scan through the hymns, particularly Hymn IV, for the refrain 'And make us better than we are' and identify the specific requests.

Soma is frequently described using powerful and active metaphors, including: a Bull or Steer (bellowing, with horns), a swift Steed or Courser (racing to a goal), a Bird (flying to its home), and a warrior or hero (slaying Vr̥tras, winning spoils).



What metaphors are commonly used to describe Soma in these hymns?

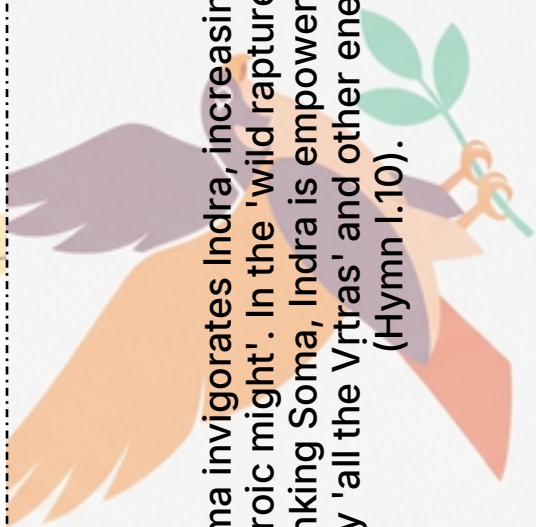


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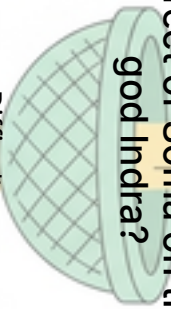
Hint:

Look for comparisons using 'like a...' or direct identifications, such as 'The tawny Bull hath bellowed' (Hymn 11.6).

Soma invigorates Indra, increasing his 'heroic might'. In the 'wild raptures' of drinking Soma, Indra is empowered to slay 'all the Vr̥tras' and other enemies (Hymn 1.10).



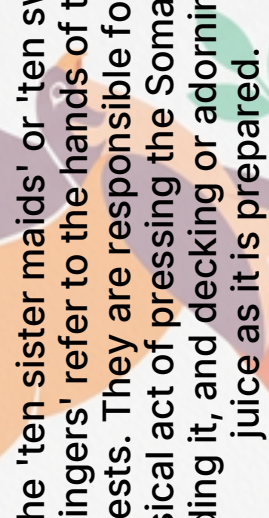
According to the hymns, what is the effect of Soma on the god Indra?



Difficulty:
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Hint:

Think about why the Soma is prepared specifically for Indra. What does it help him accomplish?



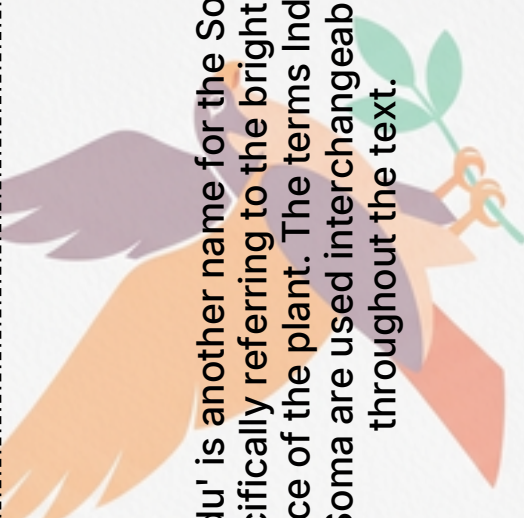
The 'ten sister maids' or 'ten swift fingers' refer to the hands of the priests. They are responsible for the physical act of pressing the Soma plant, holding it, and decking or adorning the juice as it is prepared.

What role do the 'ten sister maids' or 'ten swift fingers' play in the Soma ritual?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

This is a personification of a key part of the ritual process. See Hymn I.7, Hymn VIII.4, and Hymn XV.8.



'Indu' is another name for the Soma, specifically referring to the bright drop or juice of the plant. The terms Indu and Soma are used interchangeably throughout the text.

What is 'Indu' in the context of these hymns?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

Notice how this word is used in parallel with 'Soma', often in direct address (e.g., 'O Indu, we draw nigh to thee...'). See Hymn I.5.

Soma is invoked to 'pour down the rain' and 'a wave of waters from the sky.' This demonstrates a belief that the ritual offering of the liquid Soma can influence celestial events like rainfall.



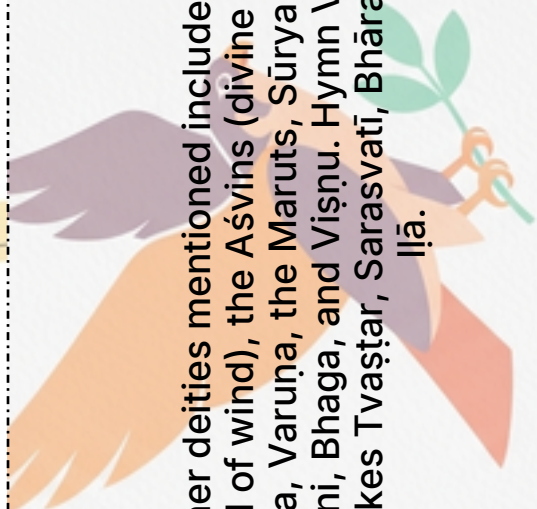
According to Hymn XLIX, what cosmic phenomena can Soma influence when it is offered?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

Review Hymn XLIX, which directly petitions Soma for a specific type of precipitation.

Other deities mentioned include Vāyu (God of wind), the Áśvins (divine twins), Mitra, Varuṇa, the Maruts, Sūrya (Sun), Agni, Bhaga, and Viṣṇu. Hymn V also invokes Tvaṣṭar, Sarasvatī, Bhārati, and Ilā.

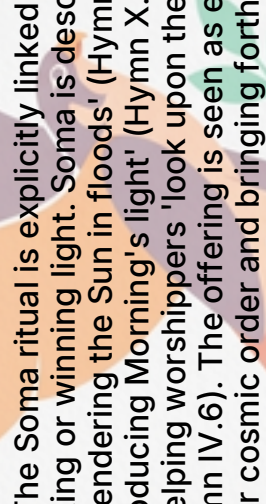


In addition to Indra, which other deities are mentioned as recipients or participants in the Soma ritual?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

Look for verses that list multiple gods, such as Hymn V.11, Hymn VII.8, and Hymn XXXIII.3.



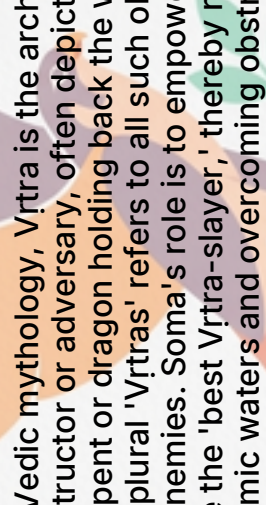
The Soma ritual is explicitly linked with creating or winning light. Soma is described as 'engendering the Sun in floods' (Hymn XLII.1), 'producing Morning's light' (Hymn X.5), and helping worshippers 'look upon the Sun' (Hymn IV.6). The offering is seen as essential for cosmic order and bringing forth light.

What is the stated relationship between the Soma ritual, the sun, and 'light' in these hymns?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

Consider verses that mention 'Sūrya' or 'light' in the context of Soma's flowing.



In Vedic mythology, Vṛtra is the archetypal obstructor or adversary, often depicted as a serpent or dragon holding back the waters. The plural 'Vṛtras' refers to all such obstacles or enemies. Soma's role is to empower Indra to be the 'best Vṛtra-slayer,' thereby releasing cosmic waters and overcoming obstruction.

What are 'Vṛtras' as mentioned in the hymns, and what is Soma's role in relation to them?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

This relates to Indra's primary myth. See Hymn I.10 and Hymn IV.3 for Soma's connection to this act.