

The plant grew on the mountains,¹⁴ that of Mūjavant being specially renowned.

These notices are inadequate to identify the plant. It has been held¹⁵ to be the *Sarcostemma viminalis* or the *Asclepias acida* (= *Sarcostemma brevistigma*). Roth¹⁶ held that the *Sarcostemma acidum* more nearly met the requirements of the case. Watt¹⁷ suggested the Afghan grape as the real Soma, and Rice¹⁸ thought a sugar-cane might be meant, while Max Müller and Rājendralāla Mitra suggested that the juice was used as an ingredient in a kind of beer—i.e., that the Soma plant was a species of hop. Hillebrandt¹⁹ considers that neither hops nor the grape can explain the references to Soma. It is very probable that the plant cannot now be identified.²⁰

In the Yajurveda²¹ the plant is purchased ere it is pressed. Hillebrandt²² considers that the sale must be assumed for the Rigveda. It grew on a mountain, and could not be obtained by ordinary people: perhaps some special tribe or prince owned it, like the Kikaṭas.²³ As it stands, the ritual performance is clearly an acquisition of the Soma from the Gandharvas (represented by a Śūdra), a ritual imitation of the action which may have been one of the sources of the drama. Owing to the difficulty of obtaining the real plant from a great

¹⁴ Rv. i. 93, 6; iii. 48, 2; v. 36, 2; 43, 4; 85, 2; ix. 18, 1; 46, 1; 71, 4; 82, 3; Av. iii. 21, 10. So in the Avesta, Yasna, x. 4, etc

¹⁵ Lassen, *Indische Alterthumskunde*, i², 931; Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, 5, 261 *et seq.* Cf. Haug, *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, 2, 489; Max Müller, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 9, liv.

¹⁶ *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 35, 680 *et seq.* Cf. also 38, 134 *et seq.*

¹⁷ See Hillebrandt, i, 7 *et seq.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12. The dispute between Max Müller, Roth, J. G. Baker, W. T. Thiselton Dyer, Charles G. Leland, and A. Houtum-Schindler, as to the identity of the plant, is reprinted in

Max Müller's *Biographies of Words*, 222 *et seq.*, and reviewed by Hillebrandt. See also Eggeling, *Sacred Books of the East*, 26, xxiv *et seq.*, who thinks that the traditional identification is not far wrong. Caland, *Altindisches Zauberritual*, 188, gives it as *Sarcostemma acidum*.

²⁰ The original Soma plant was, doubtless, identical with the Haoma of the Avesta. On the plant from which the present Parsis of Kermān and Yazd obtain their Hūm juice, and which they regard as identical with the Avestic Haoma, see Eggeling, *Sacred Books of the East*, 26, xxiv *et seq.*

²¹ Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, iii. 3, 1, i *et seq.*; Hillebrandt, i, 89 *et seq.*

²² *Ibid.*, 70.

²³ Rv. iii. 53, 14.