

VOLUME 38

**JOURNAL**  
OF THE  
**ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BOMBAY**  
(New Series)

1963

**DR. BHAU DAJI**  
SPECIAL VOLUME

IND 75/38

*Editor:*

P. V. KANE

*Managing Editor:*

GEORGE MARK MORAES



**VOLUME 38**  
**1963**

*Published by the Society*

1964



*London Agents*

**ARTHUR PROBSTHAIN**

41, Great Russell Street, London, W.C. 1

## SOMA IN THE BRĀHMAṆAS OF THE ṚGVEDA

By N. J. Shende

SOMA is one of the major deities in the RV. One entire Maṇḍala (ix) is devoted in the RV for its glorification. Soma is the material of offering in the sacrifice and Soma is a deity. Soma is not identified with the moon in the RV; but in the YV and AV Saṁhitās the identification is certain. In the Brāhmaṇas of the RV, Soma occurs in both the capacities as the haviḥ and devatā, and is identified with the moon. It is evident that Soma is firstly the material of offering in the sacrifice and is then elevated to the status of a deity. Its formal features are not clear in the RV Saṁhitā and also in the Brāhmaṇas. The authors of the Brāhmaṇas speak reverentially of Soma as a deity. Soma was the drink of the gods, who were made immortal by it. The sacrificing priests were the next privileged persons to drink it. No other person including the sacrificer or his wife even were entitled for its drink. The sacrifice as a means of pacification of the gods was much concerned with the Soma. A series of sacrifices in which Soma was offered is called Somayajñas, the other groups of sacrifices, being paśu and havir yajñas. In the order of priority, paśuyajñas seem to be the earliest, then the Soma yajña and finally the haviryajñas.

### *Soma and the Devas*

(1) There are thirty-three Devas, who depend on Soma libations. They are: eight Vasus, eleven Rudras, twelve Ādityas, Indra and Prajāpati (KB 12.6). In the AB (2.18), in the above list, there is Vaṣaṭ-kāra in the place of Indra. These are Somapās (the drinkers of Soma). There are other thirty three deities who do not drink Soma (asomapās), viz. ; eleven prayājas, eleven anuyājas and eleven upayājas (AB 2.18).

(2) Soma is in the power of Varuṇa as long as he is tied up and kept covered before being pressed. Here the connection between Soma and Varuṇa is due to the root meaning of the word, Varuṇa, one who covers from the root vṛ. Thus the bundle of Soma shoots kept covered is controlled by Varuṇa. Varuṇa is his deity as long as he is tied up (AB 1.13). Soma is kept covered with skin of black goat in the sadas chamber of the sacrificial enclosure (AB 1.30).

(3) According to Paingya, the deity of Soma is Indra, as with the Bahvr̥cas (KB 16.9).

(4) Soma is the moon (KB 4.4).

(5) Soma is the king of the Devas. The Devas thought that since they had no king, the Asuras defeated them. Therefore they decided to have a king. They elected Soma as their king. With him as their king, they became victorious in all quarters (AB 1.14). The KB (7.10)

informs us that the Asuras obstructed the Devas in the quarter of the universe. The Devas were in the North-eastern direction. Therefore they anointed Soma for kingship. They then pushed away all Asuras from these worlds.

- (6) Soma is Viṣṇu (KB 8.2).
- (7) Soma is Brahman and Kṣatra, and Gāyatrī is Brahman (KB 7.10).
- (8) Kauṣītaki says that Soma is year (KB 7.10).
- (9) Soma is the embryo of the Dyāvāpṛthivī (AB 1.26).
- (10) Agni, Soma and Viṣṇu are the deities of the three worlds respectively. Thus Soma is the deity of the mid-air or antarikṣa (KB 8.8).
- (11) Soma is Āpaḥ. The waters belong to Soma. The rivers flow towards the west to fall into the sea and the Āpaḥ the waters as a whole are of Soma (AB 1.7).
- (12) Yajamāna is Soma himself (AB 1.17).
- (13) King Soma is the comrade, strong in the assembly of the Brāhmaṇas (AB 1.13).
- (14) Soma is the winner of food (pituṣaniḥ). Ṛtus (seasons) are the royal brothers of king Soma as of men (AB 1.13).
- (15) Soma comes to the house of the sacrificer as a guest. He is requested not to kill the heroes of the sacrificer. The houses of the sacrificer are afraid of Soma when he comes there. He removes sin (AB 1.13).

It will be seen that Soma is called the king of the gods, the Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas. He stays in the mid air or the heaven. He is the child of Dyāvāpṛthivī and is the waters. His stay in the mid-air obviously identifies him with the waters. He is ruled by Varuṇa, the lord of the waters. He is Indra and Viṣṇu. This naturally connects him with the sun, as such with the year (saṁvatsara). It is also obvious that he is described as having Ṛtus (seasons) as brothers. The year is made up of the Ṛtus. He is the moon. Thus there are following phases of Soma :

- (i) Soma is the sun, year, Indra and Viṣṇu.
- (ii) Soma is in the mid-air, therefore connected with the waters and Gandharvas.
- (iii) Soma is the moon.
- (iv) Soma is the king.

The residence of Soma in the mid-air and his associations with the waters and the Gandharvas are the sources of the myths about bringing Soma from the mid-air, also from the heaven and releasing him from the custody of Kṛśāna Gandharva. His identification with the sun (Viṣṇu) the Saṁvatsara (year) and Indra makes him connected with the sacrifice as the divine offering from the heaven and the immortal drink of the gods. The productive activity in this world approximately requires one year for completion. Sacrifice is the symbol of such productive activity. Therefore Soma is connected with the year and sacrifice. The immortal plant is crushed here for securing immortality by offering

it in the sacrifice. His crushing in the form of juice is represented as the waning moon. Hence he is identified with the moon.

### *Soma and Gandharvas*

Soma resides in the waters of the mid-air. It is guarded by the Gandharvas. In a rite in the Soma sacrifice water is brought from the river and is kept in the sacrificial enclosure. For bringing the water, the priests go with their wives. While explaining the necessity of the company of wives here KB (12.3) points out that the Gandharvas love women. Therefore they turn their minds towards them and neglect their duty of guarding Soma residing in the waters. Thus the priests can take water in which Soma is supposed to be residing. The Brāhmaṇa remarks that this is like one taking away the yajña of a careless person. In this myth we are told that the Gandharvas are the commissioners to guard Soma in the celestial waters.

### *Vāc brings Soma*

Soma, the king, was among the Gandharvas. The Devas and Ṛṣis meditated on him, "How shall Soma, the king, come to us?" Vāc said, "The Gandharvas love women. With me as woman you barter it". The Devas declined; for they thought that they could not do without her. Vāc said, "Still you buy. I shall return when you will require". With her as a great naked woman (mahānagnī), they brought Soma. It will be noticed that in the rite of purchasing Soma, originally there is the idea of guilt or sin, since the Gandharvas were distracted from their commission of guarding Indra's Soma by tempting them with the help of Vāc, who acted as a great naked woman. Thus by immoral means, particularly by resorting to seductive charms of a wanton and beautiful woman and thus taking advantage of the weakness in the character of the Gandharvas, Soma is taken away from the custody of Gandharvas. The act involves double guilt or sin, firstly it is robbed from the Gandharvas and the means used for it is highly objectionable, as it refers to their weakness towards women. To get a certain thing by using feminine charms of a woman is the vilest of the tricks played by the Devas. This shows how a human mind can think of resorting to such mean trick to gain one's object. Thus this act of purchasing Soma is tainted with objectionable and immoral act of robbing and seduction.

Thus Soma is to be brought from the Gandharvas by seducing them. In the Soma sacrifice this part of the procedure is symbolised by bringing up a young immaculate cow to buy Soma. Vāc after inducing the Gandharvas to part with Soma, went back to the Devas. Thus the sacrificer repurchases the cow. The price of Soma is given and the same is brought back. As Vāc is among the Devas when Soma is being bought the sacrificer should speak inaudibly. Vāc (speech) herself is among the Gandharvas and not present there. When the fire is

again brought forward, Vāc returns from the Devas (AB 1.27). Thus the purchase of Soma, repurchase of the cow offered as price, and speaking inaudibly at the time of purchase are the symbolical rites in the Soma sacrifice, which are explained by the myths.

Vāc, who went to the Gandharvas to induce them assuming the form of mahānagnī is no other than Chandas (metres). The Devas reflecting on the means of bringing Soma, decided to depute metres. They asked them, "Do you fetch this Soma the king for us?" They agreed. Having become birds they flew up. In that Chandas flew up having become birds, those who know the stories (ākhyānavids), call this tale Sauparna. The Chandas were of four syllables each only. Jagatī being of four syllables flew up first; but felt weary as she went half the distance. Then she cast off three of its syllables and becoming of one syllable, she flew back again, bearing consecration and penance (dikṣā and tapas). Jagatī metre represents cattle. Therefore he who has cattle obtains dikṣā and penance. Jagatī came back with these two important features of sacrifice. Dikṣā is the vow of proper conduct throughout the period of sacrifice and tapas stands for austerity and physical restraint by sitting near the fire and heating oneself. These two rules governing the movement and behaviour of the sacrificer enable him to elevate himself to the status of the Devas.

Among the Chandas, Jagatī having failed to bring Soma, another Chandas, Triṣṭubh flew up. Having gone more than half the way, she felt weary. She left away one of her syllables and becoming of three syllables she flew; but could not secure Soma. She came back with dakṣiṇā. Therefore in the sacrificial rite, dakṣiṇā is taken in the place of Triṣṭubh at the mid-day pressing (AB 3.25; KB 16.4.5; TS 6.1.6.2; PB 8.4.1; SB 4.3.2.7).<sup>1</sup> Thus Triṣṭubh failed to bring Soma. Next Chandas to try this feat was Gāyatrī. She is favourite with Soma. She, then, assumed the form of a bird (Suparna, one of good wings) and attempted to fly up (AB 1.13). Then the Devas said to Gāyatrī, "Do you fetch Soma, the king for us?" She agreed to do the work, provided they accompanied her with the whole formula for safe passage. They consented to the proposal. She flew up. The Devas accompanied her with the recitation of the whole hymn for safe journey containing the words "forward" and "hither". The sacrificer who offers Soma in the offering in Agni similarly goes to the heaven safely. Now Gāyatrī went to the place where Soma was kept under strict guard. She terrified the guardian of Soma. She then grasped with foot and mouth the king Soma and also collected the syllables, which other Chandas had dropped. In this act of taking possession of Soma, she came in conflict with Kṛśāna, the Gandharva, who guarded the Soma. Kṛśāna pierced her with an arrow, which cut off the nails of her left foot. That nail became a porcupine, which is like a nail. The fat which flowed from the wound became

<sup>1</sup> Bloomfield M., *The Legend of Soma and the Eagle*, JAOS, XVI, pp. 1-24.

a barren cow. It is therefore an oblation as it were. The socket and the point of the nail become serpent, which does not bite. From swiftness came the viper. The feathers became the flying foxes, sinews the earth-worms and shaft the blind snake. Thus the nail became an arrow. An arrow has socket, point, feathers and shaft.

Gāyatrī was addressed by other two metres, "Soma with our property, the syllables, has come with you, give it back to us". Gāyatrī replied, "No. These syllables are mine, since they were found by us". They, then disputed the matter before the Devas. The Devas decided, "The syllables are the property of Gāyatrī, as they were found by her, and we gave them to you". Therefore they belonged to Gāyatrī, as she possessed them. Even now they say that one who possesses the object has claim over it. The possession is the definite claim for the title. Thus Gāyatrī with eight syllables supported the morning pressing. Triṣṭubh of three syllables could not do so. She requested Gāyatrī to join her in support. Gāyatrī agreed to do so provided that she was given a share. Therefore the last two verses of the Marutvatiya Śāstra belong to mid-day pressing. Jagatī with one syllable could not manage the evening pressing alone. Therefore she requested her to include herself in the prayer. Thus Gāyatrī accompanies the third pressing in the last two verses of the Vaiśvadeva Śāstra. In this way the metre which was one became three. All metres become of equal strength and of similar quality (AB.3.27).

### *The pressings of Soma*

Since Gāyatrī grasped Soma in his celestial abode with her right foot, that became the symbol of morning pressing. That became the abode of Gāyatrī. Hotṛ regards it as the most perfect of all pressings. What she grasped with her left foot became the mid-day pressing. The grasp was not firm. It slipped. It did not become equal with the morning pressing. The Devas sought to remedy it. They placed Triṣṭubh and Indra in it. Thus the two pressings became of equal strength. That she grasped Soma with her mouth became the third pressing. Flying she sipped the sap of Soma. It was the third pressing of the evening. It was not equal to the two pressings. The Devas remedied it with cattle. They added milk to Soma and proceeded with the offering of butter and animal offering. Thus Soma with milk, butter and animal formed the offering of the evening. This was the third pressing.

Thus the pressing of Soma is due to the grasping of Soma by Gāyatrī. Soma was brought by Vāc, who is in the form of Chandas. Of all Chandas, Gāyatrī became foremost and her holding the Soma became the symbol of the pressings of Soma.

Gāyatrī assumed the form of a bird, suparna, which is eagle. On her way to the heaven Tārksa showed the way to her. Tārksa is the wind. Thus the wind led Gāyatrī to the heaven. Here we are told that the

place of Soma is the heaven. It was also mentioned to be the mid-air, the region of the Gandharvas. It is therefore not decided which is the fixed place of Soma, antarikṣa or svarga. A ṛc addressed to Tārḱṣa (RV 10-178-1) is recited on this occasion (AB 4.20).

### *The first pressing of Soma*

Ādityas and Āngirasas disputed as to the world of heaven thinking, "We shall go first to heaven". The Āngirasas first saw the pressing of Soma on the next day for reaching the heaven. They deputed Agni, one of themselves to go to Ādityas and announce their intention to press Soma for the next day. Ādityas having seen Agni saw the pressing of Soma on the same day. They said to him, "We announce the pressing of Soma to-day only for reaching the heaven. With you as Hotṛ we shall go to Svargaloka." Agni agreed and came to Āngirasas. He told them what had happened. They asked him, "Did you announce?" He replied in the affirmative. He said, "I announced. They gave me reply". Āngirasas said, "No. You did not respond". Agni said, "I did." "With fame he approached when he came to Ādityas with the priestly functions." "If one were to refuse him, he would refuse fame. Therefore I did not refuse". Thus Agni said. In the end Agni first officiated at the first pressing of Soma by Ādityas. They went to svarga and then the next day, Āngirasas offered Soma sacrifice and reached the svarga. Soma is brought from the heaven; by offering the pressed Soma juice one reaches the place of Soma, i.e. Svarga (AB 6.34).

A point in the priestly traditions may be noted here. When a priest knowing his duties in the sacrifice is asked to officiate in a performance of sacrifice he cannot refuse the invitation. If he refuses it, it is as if he were refusing fame. Therefore even when Agni had gone to Ādityas to announce the Soma sacrifice of Āngirasas, he could not refuse to officiate in the Soma sacrifice of the Ādityas on the same day (AB 6.34). Another point to be noted in this connection is the late appointment of the priest called Achhāvāka. Nābhānediṣṭha Mānava sought an invitation from the Āngirasas as the priest called Achhāvāka. He came there when the sacrificial food had been invoked. Therefore he was not selected earlier. In the Soma sacrifice he was selected later on. He came from the eastern intermediate direction. Therefore seated in this direction he awaits invitation. A fragment of puroḍāśa is kept for Achhāvāka. Alkiyu Vācaspatya was the Brahmā priest at the consecration of Upasads of the Naimiṣīyas. This Brahmā priest performed the function of Achhāvāka, when the pressing of Soma had been done. They said, "We have kept for him the portion of Brahmā which was not given to him up to this time. We have kept the portion for him only" (KB 28.4). Achhāvāka priest is selected after the food offerings are invoked in Soma sacrifice. He gets the portion, which is kept away for Brahmā. Thus Brahmā is the extension of the office of Achhāvāka. He is

selected just at the time of the pressing of Soma. He is offered a portion of puroḍāśa.

In the pressing of Soma there is an elaborate procedure. Soma is kept soaked in water. It is then pounded with the pressing stones, strained and offered in wooden cups (grahas). All these implements are deified. Devas praised the pressing stones with the Arbuda hymn (RV 10.94) and verses for Soma-pavamāna. They obtained the immortality, truth and resolve (KB 15.1).

Soma is mixed with ghee (ghṛta). In this respect a myth is told: Devas went to svarga by prāyaniya rite; but they could not see the directions. Soma said to them, "Offer me ghṛta; so that I shall see one direction". They offered ghee to him. He saw the South. The priests, therefore, carry round Soma purchased in the South. Standing in the South they press Soma (KB 7.6).

#### *The pressing of Soma is killing a victim*

Soma being pressed is a victim. The shoots of Soma are ten, viz., (1) The old shoots which they press in the sacrifice, (2) delightful shoots, which are waters, (3) sapshoots, which are rice, (4) male shoots, which are barley, (5) bright shoots, which are milk, (6) living shoots, which are victim, (7) immortal shoots, which are gold, (8-10) Ṛc, Yajus and Sāman shoots. When all these shoots unite together, there is Soma, the pressed Soma. It will thus be noted that the pressing of Soma is symbolical of offering rice, barley, milk oblations and of a victim. The pressing of Soma is like offering the cake of rice and barley, the puroḍāśa and a victim. In the evolution of the system of sacrifice the offering of the juice of Soma is earlier than the offerings of puroḍāśa. That is why the comparison is made between the two types of offerings (KB 13.4).

#### *Soma is bought*

Soma used as offering is procured by purchasing. It is bought in the East; for the Devas bought the king Soma in the Eastern direction. They bought from the thirteenth month, the intercalary month of the year. Therefore this month is not known. The person, who sells Soma is not a known person. From him he is bought. The Soma-seller is an evil. The strength of Soma, when was bought and was led to men went away to quarters. The priests sought to win it with eight ṛcs (aṣṭa, aś to pervade). In this rite of bringing Soma, eight ṛcs are recited to secure strength (AB 1.12).

It is to be noted that (1) Soma is purchased, (2) He is purchased in the nameless intercalary month, (3) Soma-seller is a sinful person and that (4) Soma loses his power when he is bought, and it is recovered by reciting eight ṛcs. It may be observed here that from the very beginning when Soma is purchased he is looked upon as an object which is very harmful and requiring special care. He is purchased from some nameless

person, who is definitely not fit to be associated with in the society, a sinner. Even when Soma is bought, his strength decreases and is to be regained by reciting eight ṛcs. All this means that there is something very harmful, sinful and risky in the purchase and use of Soma.

When Soma is being brought a ṛc (RV 10.71.10) is recited. This ṛc is composed by Bṛhaspati the son of Aṅgiras (AB 1.13). The KB (7.10) points out that ṛcs recited while Soma is being brought are nine. The first ṛc is recited three times and the second ṛc three times. Thus the total number of ṛcs recited are thirteen. The number thirteen is peculiar with Soma, as it connects him with the thirteenth month of the leap year. It also indicates that the origin of Soma is peculiar and distinct. The KB insists with great emphasis on the thirteenth month, which is the harmful residue of the twelve months of a year (KB 7.10).

Soma is purchased with four things, viz., a cow, gold, garment and a female goat. These objects are intended to secure pairing, union or propagation upto four degrees. They serve for generation or procreation (KB 7.10). The cow with which Soma is purchased is called Subrahmanyā. She is the speech, for Vāc is female. Soma becomes a calf to the cow. With Soma as calf, the sacrificer milks all desires. This cow is a good holy power (subrahmanyā). The sacrificer calls this cow from the heap of rubbish outside the altar. On this occasion a bull is given as the priestly fee. The bull and cow form a perfect pairing (AB 6.3; TA 1.12.3-4; SB 3.3.4.17).

The idea of sin and harm resulting in the loss of sensual powers is involved in the purchasing and bringing Soma in the sacrificial chamber. This decrease in the sensual powers is identical with the moon, which wanes and waxes and which thus symbolises the disease of consumption. It is the quality of sin and loss of physical power which result in the identification of Soma with moon. The KB (7.10) points out that the king Soma is the yonder moon. It enters in the sacrificer when he purchases Soma; he thinks, "The yonder moon is Soma, the king. Let him be pressed out." The idea involved in purchasing a sinful and harmful thing called Soma and then trying to press it out of the body appears to be some sort of sympathetic magic. By the evil, harmful and consumptive thing, evil, danger and consumption of the sacrificer are taken out and removed (KB 7.10).

This idea of sin and harm which is associated with Soma is also found in the description of the house of the sacrificer when Soma is brought home. The house of the sacrificer is afraid of the king Soma when he arrives. He is then pacified and therefore he does not harm the children and cattle of the sacrificer (AB 1.13).

Soma is brought to the sacrificial chamber in a cart, yoked by two bullocks. He is taken down from the cart when one of the two bullocks is yoked and other unyoked. If both are yoked to the cart, Piṛs become the deity of Soma. It seems that when Soma is brought in cart yoked

by two bullocks his deity is the Pitṛs. From the Pitṛs he is brought to the gods. If both bullocks are unyoked when Soma is taken down from the cart, lack of peace and rest would come on the offsprings, who would be scattered away. The ox which is unyoked is the symbol of the progeny, which sits in the house, and that which is yoked is that of those who are on journey. Thus by this practice of keeping one ox yoked and the other unyoked, the sacrificer secures both yoga and kṣema (preservation and maintenance) of his property (AB 1.12).

The Devas said that they did not succeed because they had no king. They made Soma as their king. With Soma as their king they conquered all directions.

The Devas then kept Soma in the cart and turned into the East. They conquered the East. Thus turning the cart to the West, South and North they took down Soma. They conquered all directions. Thus a sacrificer conquers all directions (AB 1.14).

Soma comes as guest to the house of the sacrificer. An offering on nine potsherds is offered to him. The potsherds are nine because there are nine vital breaths in a body. The sacrificer secures the vital breaths. Soma is offered the oblation as a guest. It is intended for Viṣṇu, who is Yajña. Thus Soma is equated with Viṣṇu, the Yajña (AB 1.15). Agni is kindled on this occasion of reception of Soma. This kindling of Agni is like killing a victim; for Agni is the victim of the Devas. This practice is similar to the killing of a bull or barren cow when any respectable person or king comes to the house as a guest. It may be noted here that there was a custom of killing a goat or bull or barren cow when any respectable person visited the house as a guest. In his honour these animals were killed and the guest was entertained with the meat of the victim. This custom is followed when Agni is kindled when Soma comes home as a guest. There is no fear now from the guest as we are told that the houses of the sacrificer are afraid of Soma when he comes. Now he is a respectable guest in the house (AB 1.15).

Soma is kept covered. Hence Varuṇa (root *vṛ* to cover) is his deity. The shoots of Soma become dry. A vessel containing ghee is placed on Soma who is kept near the Vedī (altar). This vessel (tānūnaptra) is touched by the sacrificer and all priests. It is considered to be a very cruel act when they perform the ceremony of touching the vessel called tānūnaptra. Soma is kept under the weight of the vessel. It is indeed very cruel that the respectable guest should be tortured like this.

In this ritual we notice the gradual change in the attitude of the theologians towards Soma. Soma is brought with great ceremony as a deity. Now he becomes an object of offering in the sacrifice. He is subjected to procedure of the offering of oblations. He is to be crushed to take out juice out of him. He is dry. Therefore water is sprinkled over him. This sprinkling of water enriches him (āpyāyana, AB 1.26).

The water used in sprinkling Soma is not a foreign object. It was with Soma in the mid-region, where both were residing. The Āpaḥ (water) and Soma belonged to the mid-region. The water is brought on the previous day. There are two types of waters : vasatīvarī and ekadh-ānā. Soma is sprinkled with them. Adhvaryu asks Hotṛ to press Soma, who is like the king giving rain and making fruitful all productions. It thus appears that Soma belonging to mid-region is offered to Indra for securing rain and making the whole earth full of food and growth. Soma is squeezed for Indra who is helped by Vasus, Ādityas, Rudras and Ṛbhus in killing Vṛtra. Soma has power and food with him and is associated with Bṛhaspati and all gods. Soma sacrifice is a symbolical sacrifice for securing rain, food and energy. His connection with Indra is due to their common residence in the mid-region. It is to be noted that the deities connected with Indra are group deities, such as Vasus, Rudras and Ādityas (AB 2.20). Soma is associated with Āpaḥ because of their common place of residence i.e. mid-region. These waters form the sacrifice. They come down to be joined with Soma. Thus Soma of the mid-region is brought down and sprinkled with waters and is offered to Indra for giving him energy. The sacrificer and priests drink it as the most nourishing drink, making them immortal (AB 2.20).

In the Vedic mythology, Soma is one of those deities which are first material for offering in Agni and then deified. The stage of his deification is found in the RV. One entire Maṇḍala is devoted to sing his glory. His is a unique place among the Vedic gods. A creeper of Soma is the basis of the deification. Although it grows on the earth, it is supposed to be residing in the mid-air in the divine waters guarded by the Gandharvas. By the divine Vāc, he is brought down. He is sprinkled with water and is ready for crushing. His main quality is to invigorate and then to appease and to inspire Indra to kill Vṛtra. Soma therefore became a very important means of offering sacrifice. Along with Soma, milk, ghee and water were also used for offering. Victims were also killed, in addition. But Soma sacrifices became the privilege of the Kṣatriya elite to secure fame, glory, prosperity and heaven.

By the offering of cups of Soma (graha) the Devas grasped the Yajña who had gone away from them. They sought to search him with the directives (praiṣa). They made him more radiant with fore taste of the offering (pururuca). They found him on the Vedī. Then they made him known by reciting the prose formulas (nivid). This legend attempts to explain the meaning of the basic procedure of a Yajña. The terms such as praiṣa (to direct), pururuca (to illumine beforehand), Vedī (to obtain), graha (to grasp), and nivid (to declare) are sought to be explained with reference to the sacrificial procedure. The main point to be noted here is the importance of the grahas, the cups filled with Soma to grasp the elusive Yajña. It is intended to point out how the sacrifice was made available by means of Soma. Otherwise Yajña had escaped from

the hold of the Devas. It seems that the very institution of Yajña was in danger of neglect ; but Soma refound it and gave wide currency to it (AB 3.9). The lost sacrifice was searched by the Devas very meticulously and they leaned and bent forward in the act of searching, even as a man who has lost some object leans and bends forward in the act of searching. Yāska (Nirukta 8.22) explains this bending forward while offering Soma, as the relic of the ancient act of searching for Yajña. Sāyaṇa explains this bending forward as (1) mark of respect for elders or teachers, (2) a mode of concealment in finding a lost article, or (3) stooping to see what is lost (AB 3.9). Thus the lost Yajña was held by the cups of Soma and was made available to the Devas. The moral seems to be that the importance of Yajña which was fast failing was regained by Soma.

After offering the Darsapūrṇamāsa sacrifice, a sacrificer should perform the consecration for the Soma sacrifice. When one has grasped the sacrifice, one grasps the deities. The sacrifice brings forth the deities. These deities secure desires for the sacrificer. If a person feels that he is unsupported he should offer a caru (cooked rice) with gṛta, in the consecration rite in the Soma sacrifice. The rice grains are the milk of a man and gṛta is the milk of woman. This is the pairing of man and woman. This enables the sacrificer to get offsprings and cattle (AB 1.1). The dikṣā rite in the Soma sacrifice is performed with the offering of caru and gṛta which makes the sacrificer important and possessed of offsprings and cattle.

In the sacrifice when cooked offerings are made, the sacrifice is called haviryajña. This sacrifice is incomplete while the Soma sacrifice is complete in itself (KB 10.6).

In the sacrifice Agni is the chief and the most important deity. The Hotṛ recites ṛcs called śastra when gṛta is offered in him. When Soma is offered the Sāma-singers chant stotra. The śastra and stotra are of the same purpose. Soma and Agni are the same. It means that the Sāmaveda prominently concerns itself with the Soma as the Ṛgveda with Agni. As the Sāmaveda is the later development in the mode of recitation of the ṛcs, Soma sacrifice is also later in the process of sacrificial ritual (AB 2.37).

The Yajña is carried on by the offerings of gṛta and Soma. The ṛcs, recited while offering gṛta, are said inaudibly, because offering of gṛta is like the pouring of seed, which is done inaudibly. The offering ṛcs to Soma are recited loudly. It is because Soma is the moon. The gṛta belongs to the world of the Devas, while Soma belongs to the Pitṛs. The sacrificers thus arise from the world of the Pitṛs to the world of the Devas. Soma is connected with the Pitṛs and the moon. It is different from the world of the Devas (KB 16.5).

Along with Soma, ājya or ghee is offered in the sacrifice. By the ājya, the Devas obtained all desires and immortality. Also they obtained

the year of six seasons (KB 14.4). The ṛcs recited at the offering of ājya are called ājyaśāstra. It is the RV 3.13 of seven ṛcs. It is six fold, viz., silent muttering, silent praise, puroruca, the hymn, the strength of the hymn and the offering ṛcs. It is to be noted that the silent muttering and silent praise form the features of the offering of an oblation of ājya. The silent praise and muttering of the names of the deity or of prayer formed later on one of the important symbolical sacrifices such as japayajña. Even when the offerings were made to a deity, the hymn of praise was silently uttered and muttered silently. This fact should be noted in connection with the development of the idea of praise and prayer. In the course of time the actual ritual of offering in Agni became a mental or symbolical process, and what remained was merely the silent praise and muttering of the prayer.

When the Hotṛ recites the ājyaśāstra (RV 3.13), he separates the two lines of the ṛc. This is a symbol of procreation. Man takes apart the limbs of his wife, before he indulges in the act of coitus. Moreover there is the face of Mṛtyu between the two lines (padas). Therefore without drawing breath (prāṇa) he passes over. Prāṇa is immortality, and by immortality he passes over death. At the end of the line he utters omkāra (praṇava). Thereby he hurls praṇava against his rivals. It is to be observed here that in the recitation of the śāstra padas are to be separated; he has to hold his breath between the two padas and at the end of each pada he utters praṇava. In the recitation of the ājyaśāstra, the Hotṛ brings forth the symbol of procreation, attains immortality and destroys the rivals (KB 14.2).

After reciting the ājyaśāstra (RV 3.13), the Hotṛ recites in the Soma sacrifice the praugaśāstra. This śāstra consists of the seven triplets of 21 ṛcs, viz., RV 1.2. 1-3, 4-6, 7-9; RV 3.1-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12. The ājya (ghee) forms the very body of the sacrificer, while prauga is prāṇa, the vital breath. When the Hotṛ recites prauga śāstra, he deposits prāṇa in the body of the sacrificer, to secure fullness of life in this world and the immortality and imperishableness in the world of the heaven.

It is clear from the above description of the recitation of the ājya and prauga śāstras, that the purpose of the offering and recitation of the praise and prayer on this occasion is to secure the full life of hundred years with prosperity in this world and to be immortal and imperishable after death in the heaven. The death is just a passing phase for the sacrificer of Soma, which transforms his worldly body into the shining and immortal one in the heaven. These are two-fold objectives of the Soma sacrifice, in fact of every sacrifice (KB 14.4).

In the Soma sacrifice, the Adhvaryu offers ājya and puroḍāśa first and then proceeds with the offering of grahas (cups) of Soma in Agni. The puroḍāśa (cake) is the body of the sacrificer and the two cups of Soma are his prāṇa. With the puroḍāśa preceding the cups, he deposits

prāṇa in the sacrificer. Thereby he obtains full life in this world and the immortality and imperishableness in the yonder world (KB 13.5).

In the Soma sacrifice, Agni is piled upon the altar. This Agni is Rudra, the god who cannot be easily appeased (KB 19.4).

Soma is in the North. He who desires to drink Soma should turn to the North (AB 1.8). Also through Soma the West was known by the gods (AB 1.7).

A victim is offered to Soma. It is dedicated to the sun. The animal should be all white without any speck of any other colour. When this animal belonging to Soma is killed a chant called *divākīrtyasāman* is sung. This *sāman* is nothing but the five ropes with which the sun was tied and pulled up by the Devas, when the sun was feared to be falling from the sky. Thus the animal for Soma is dedicated to *Āditya* (the sun) and is expected to be all white like him. By offering an object which is like the sun in appearance the sacrificer desires to secure his favour (AB 4.19). In the offering of a victim to Agni and Soma the victim should be of black and white colours; black for Agni and white for Soma. They stand for night and day. Thus the colour of the victim for Soma is white and stands for the day, i.e. *Āditya*. Soma is thus *Āditya* (KB 10.3). A *caru* (cooked rice) is offered to Soma and ghee to Agni in the Soma sacrifice. The first offering *ṛc* (*yājyā*, RV 8.48.13), contains the word *pitarah* (ASS 5.19). The *caru* is white and thus represents the white colour of *Āditya*. Thereby the sacrificer pacifies Soma. Moreover in the prayer (RV 8.48.13), the word *pitarah* occurs. This shows the inherent relation between Soma and *Pitṛs*. It appears that Soma offering is connected first with the *Pitṛs*. Then it is related to the *Āditya* and the moon. According to the belief of the Brāhmaṇa theologians, there is first the *antarikṣa* (mid-air) above the earth, then there is the world of *Āditya* (*svarga*) and beyond that there is the world of the moon. Soma belonging to the mid-air is elevated to the position of the sun and then to the moon. Soma is identified with the sun and white animal and white *caru* are offered in Agni to secure the favour of Soma and the sun (AB 3.32).

When Soma is crushed for extracting juice, he is killed. It is his death. Ordinarily when a sacrificer dies, a cow is killed. When Soma is killed this offering is made of cow, which symbolises the cow killed at the time of the death. The offering of cow secures renewed life in the heaven for the sacrificer. In the same manner, the offering of cow is intended to revive and reproduce Soma who is killed, while juice is extracted from him. The offering of *caru* thus brings back life in the Soma and makes him alive again (AB 3.32).

In the Soma sacrifice, Soma is led forward from *Sadas* to the oblation-holder. At this moment *Asuras* and *Rākṣas* try to kill Soma, the king. Therefore Agni is carried ahead of Soma. Soma being brought from the *antarikṣa* was subjected to the attacks of the demonical beings. Agni

guards him and saves him for the sacrificer. Agni assumes illusory form (māyā) and walks in front of Soma in illusory form (AB 1.30).

Soma sacrifice is of various types. In twenty-four days' Soma sacrifice, the priests kill a victim for Prajāpati thinking to attain the year in safety. The consecration for the sacrifice falls on one day after new moon day of Taiṣya or Māgha (KB 19.2). On the new-moon day in Māgha, while performing this Soma sacrifice, he rests being about to sacrifice with introductory Atirātra. From the new moon day of Māgha, the sun goes to the North for six months. This course of six months is symbolised by a period of six days. They follow the sun for the period of six months. Going to the North the sun stands still, for being about to turn to the South. The sacrificer following the course of the sun in the sky offers sacrifice on Viṣuvat day. Then the sun goes to the South for the period of six months. The priests follow the course of the sun for the period of six days in reverse order. When the sun is about to turn to the North he sacrifices with Mahāvratā rite. From the new moon day of Taiṣya or Māgha month the sun moves for six months to the North and South. Thus as mentioned above the consecration rite will have to take place on this day. But it is an expert opinion that one should not consecrate himself on this day, because the new corn has not arrived in the home and the days are short. Moreover at the time of the final bath they come out shivering. Thus the proper course would be to perform the consecration rite one day after the new moon in Caitra. At this time the corn has come; the days are long and the sacrificer does not shiver when he comes out of the final bath.

It may be noted here that in this Soma-sacrifice for twenty four days, there is the symbolical representation of the course of the sun in the sky during the whole year between two equinoxes. The year began with the new moon day. The equinoxes fell on the new moon day of Taiṣya or Māgha, and Śrāvana. The Soma sacrifice representing the yearly course of the sun would begin on the new moon day of Taiṣya or Māgha. The movement of the sun towards the North and South would take three months each and the reverse of the same course of equal number of months. Thus the twelve months of the year are made up. But in the sacrificial ritual the movement in each direction is counted for six days and reverse of the same with equal number of the days. Thus twenty four days take place. Normally the equinoxes take place on 21st of March and 21st of September; while the extreme movement to the North or South is completed on 21st June and 21st December each year.

Now there seems to be difference of opinion regarding the beginning of sacrifice and for the sake of convenience, the consecration in the sacrifice would commence on the new moon day of Caitra, two months later. Then the equinoxes would be in Caitra and Āsvin and extreme movement of the sun would be in Āṣādhā and Pauṣa. The reasons given here are

much of convenience, such as ripening of corn, longer days and hot weather in Caitra. It thus appears that there is difference of opinion whether the equinox occurs in the month of Māgha or Caitra. Accordingly the time of the performance of sacrifices was adjusted (KB 19.3).

On the previous day or the same day of the Soma sacrifice the sacrificer offers a victim to Agni and Soma. The reason is that when he consecrates he offers himself in the jaws of Agni and Soma. It is a belief of the Brāhmaṇas that the sacrificer is Agni himself. But that he is a victim to both Agni and Soma is a new thought. Accordingly the sacrificer himself becomes a victim and offers himself in the jaws of these two deities. When he offers a victim he buys himself. Thus he redeems himself from the debt and then sacrifices. The principle involved in this rite is that sacrifice is an act of self surrender. He sacrifices to offer himself in the fire and to Soma. He offers a substitute for himself in the form of the victim, and as if he buys himself to redeem himself. He does not partake of the oblation; because the oblation is the symbol of himself. It is the man in counterfeit. Every oblation that he offers is buying of himself. Therefore he does not eat the oblation. It is as if it were his own body offered (KB 10.3). Another view is that the sacrificer does not eat the offering because the victim to Agni and Soma is connected with the killing of Vṛtra. By means of Agni and Soma, Indra killed Vṛtra (AB 2.3).

In the offering of a cup of Soma called Aindravāyaviya graha to Indra and Vāyu, one fourth part of the drink in the cup belongs to Indra and the remaining to Vāyu. In this connection a myth is narrated to explain the proportion of Soma: The Devas did not agree as to who of them should taste Soma first. They both wished to drink him first saying, "May I drink first? Let me taste first". They did not come to an agreement. They then decided, "Let us run a race; he who of us wins shall drink Soma first". They agreed. They then ran a race. Vāyu took a lead. Then Indra, then Mitra and Varuṇa and finally Aśvins. Indra saw that Vāyu was fast running ahead and was winning. He then ran up to Vāyu and said, "Let us share the first cup of Soma together. Let us both win". Vāyu replied, "No. It is not possible. I alone shall win". Indra pleaded, "Let me have one-third of the share". Vāyu refused that also. Then he said, "One fourth of the cup for me, please". Vāyu agreed to this proposal. Therefore Indra has a quarter share in the cup. Seeing this a Ṛṣi said, "niyutvān indrasārathih". Vāyu has Indra as his charioteer. Indra acting as the charioteer of Vāyu claims one fourth of the Soma drink. This is the basis of the tradition in the land of the clan of the Bharatas; since even now (in the days of the AB) when the Bharatas attack the property of the Sātvatas the charioteers claim one-fourth of the looted property. They claim this share on the strength of the divine parallel, that Indra claimed one-fourth of Soma becoming the charioteer of Vāyu. From the legend

we learn that (1) there were constant wars between the two Kṣatriya clans of the Bharatas and Sātvats in the days of the AB; (2) that the Bharatas were superior in strength to the Sātvats, (3) that the charioteer of the war-chariot was a respectable man who was allowed to claim a share in the looted property in the attack and (4) that there was growing importance of the charioteers as a community which we see in the war in the Mahābhārata (AB 2.25).

In the offering of another cup of Soma called 'Ṣoḍaśī,' on the sixteenth day of the Soma sacrifice, it is pointed out that 'Ṣoḍaśī' is the thunderbolt of Anuṣṭubh. With this thunderbolt the priests smite away the evils of the sacrificer. Ṣoḍaśī is Indra himself and also the sun. This offering of Soma is Indra and the sun (KB 17.1). The Sāman in Anuṣṭubh metre is the thunderbolt and accompanies the offering of the Ṣoḍaśī cup. It is called Ṣoḍaśī because it is the sixteenth of the śāstra. With sixteen syllables it commences. With the next sixteen syllables he says Om, the priest then inserts nivid of sixteen sentences. Two syllables are left over after this adjustment in the Sāman (SV 2.302) in the Anuṣṭubh metre. These two syllables are the two breasts of the speech. They are truth and falsehood. Truth helps and falsehood does not harm him (AB 4.1). The Sāman sung on this occasion is called Ṣoḍaśī to which mahānāmnī verses are added. This Ṣoḍaśī is fashioned out of the three worlds. He who is at the height of prosperity and complete in himself should have the Ṣoḍaśī Sāman recited. His evils are removed (AB 4.4). This Sāman is concluded with the last three ṛcs of the mahānāmnī (RV 8.69. 1-3).

The Agniṣtoma sacrifice contains the following rites: dīkṣṇīya rite, dīkṣā, pākayajñas, agnihotra, prāyaṇīya, Somakrayaṇa, pravargya, dākṣāyaṇa, paśubandha and iladadha. Thus in this sacrifice the purchase and offering of Soma form its part (AB 3.40). Through the purchase of Soma all medicines with plants and herbs are resolved in Agniṣtoma (AB 3.40). By means of the three pressings of Soma in this sacrifice, the villages in the east are densely populated (AB 3.44).

Abhiplavaśaḍāha is the revolving wheel of the Devas. Two Agnihotra sacrifices form its circumference. Four Ukthiyas in the middle are the nave. By means of this revolving wheel of the Devas, one can go to any place one may choose. In the Agnihotra there is the Soma sacrifice (AB 4.15).

The Agnihotra sacrifice is connected with the Viśvedevas, who find support in the milk of cow which has sixteen parts. When the cow is milked it belongs to Soma. In fact the milk is Soma (AB 5.20).

At the end of the Jyotiṣtoma the priests pour Soma in the altar. It is offered to Yajña, who is Viṣṇu. This is the dear abode of Soma. Darbha grass is placed in the altar. Altar is the symbol of the waters and darbha grass that of plants. When the waters and plants unite, Soma becomes complete (KB 18.8).

Āditya is offered an oblation before the Soma-sacrifice. It is called Pravargya. In this connection AB (1.17) narrates a myth: Yajna went away from the Devas, saying, "I shall not be your food". The Devas replied, "You will be our food". The Devas crushed it; but to distribute it separately was not sufficient for them. So they gathered Yajña. Then they asked Aśvins, who are the physicians of the Devas to heal it. They are also the Adhvaryus. Therefore they gather together the cauldron. Then they say, "Oh Brahman, we will proceed with Pravargya; Oh Hotṛ, recite". (AB 1.17). The JB (3.120.128) narrates myth how Devas were not successful in the performance of the sacrifice at Kurukṣetra and how Dadhyac Ātharvaṇa, at the instance of Cyavana guided Aśvins, who performed the sacrifice of the Devas by offering Pravargya rite at the beginning of the sacrifice.

By the pressing of Soma the priests seek to obtain for the sacrificer the yonder sun (Sūrya), who gives heat. By the morning pressing they make him rise; by the noon rise to the middle and by the evening pressing they make him set (KB 18.9).

The act of pressing and making Soma swell is thought to be a very cruel act on the part of the sacrificers. Ghṛta is offered in the neighbourhood of Soma. Ghṛta is the thunderbolt of Indra, which killed Vṛtra. By means of it Soma swells up. The offering of ghṛta, which is a thunderbolt, on Soma, by which he swells, is a very harsh thing for Soma (AB 1.26). Now, Agni and Soma were within Vṛtra. Indra could not hurl his thunderbolt because of these gods within Vṛtra (KB 3.6). The myth of killing Vṛtra is intermixed with that of Soma. We can understand that Soma is the moon, the sun, the waters and Varuṇa; but it is difficult to explain how Agni and Soma came to be within Vṛtra. At any rate, the Brāhmaṇas believe that Soma is the moon. The absence of the moon on the new moon day, and the waxing and waning of it, perhaps, might have given rise to some basis for this fancy. The offering of ghee at the full moon sacrifice contains references to the killing of Vṛtra (RV 8.44.12), because Indra killed Vṛtra with the full-moon offering. In the new moon sacrifice, there are references to the growth (RV 6.16.34); since the moon is destroyed, and the sacrificer causes him to swell and increase (KB 3.5). Thus the Pūrṇamāsa and Darśa sacrifices are symbols of the killing of Vṛtra, which means waxing, waning and disappearance of the moon, which is Soma. Soma is swollen by the pouring of ghṛta. He had become dried up, since he was purchased. Then he is crushed. In this manner the offering and drinking Soma represents the winning over the enemy by absorbing him in one's self.

The KB (15.2) points out that Agni and Soma were within Vṛtra. Therefore Indra was unable to hurl thunderbolt at him. Agni and Soma went out of Vṛtra when they were promised a share in the full moon sacrifice (KB 15.2).

In the Soma sacrifice the Pitṛs are given offering on the previous day of the sacrifice and the Devas on the main day. Indra disappeared from the Devas thinking that he had not killed Vṛtra to the finish. The Pitṛs found him out on the previous day of the Soma sacrifice. The Devas brought Indra to the sacrifice praising him with the maruttvatī-yaśastra at the mid-day pressing (AB 3.15).

With the help of Agni and Soma, Indra killed Vṛtra. Then they said to him, "Through us two you killed Vṛtra. Let us choose a boon". Indra agreed. They chose a boon of a victim on the pressing day (AB 2.3).

In the myths we often get references to the choosing of a boon and running a race for deciding a certain thing. Out of this in choosing a boon we find the roots of the cult of devotion in which a deity confers boon on the devotees on whom it is pleased. The running of a race is the remnant of the early society when the issues of disagreement were fought on the personal strength. Then the tapas is also referred to as the cause of the spiritual power. This may be basis of the Yoga cult and subsequent development into Tantra cult. The recitation of the praśa and prayers and silent muttering of the prayer are the early forms of the cult of devotion.

The Soma sacrifice is the symbol of the killing of Vṛtra by Indra. On the first day of the sacrifice, the Devas collected the vajra. On the second day they dipped it. On the third day they presented it to Indra. On the fourth day he hurled it against him. On the fourth day the Ṣoḍaśīsāman is recited (AB 4.1).

Puroḍāśa is offered before Soma is offered. In this connection it is told that the pressings of Soma in the sacrifice offered by the Devas were falling down. They saw the Puroḍāśa. They divided it into three parts and offered them at the time of the pressing for holding them together and making them firm. The Devas made the offering of Puroḍāśa before the Soma offering (AB 2.23).

The Ṣoḍaśī Sāman is the singing of the nānada ṛcs (SV 1.352-354). It is the resounding Sāman, when Indra lifted his bolt and hurled it against Vṛtra. Being smitten he cried out. At this time nānada-sāman came into existence (AB 4.2).

Soma is mixed with ghṛta which is thunderbolt. Indra mixed Soma with ghṛta, both being of the same nature. With the bolt Indra killed Vṛtra (AB 2.23).

Soma is sprinkled with water to enrich him and compensate for the injury done to him in the Tanūnaptrā rite. Thus puroḍāśa, milk, ghee are offered along with Soma. Water is also sprinkled on him to fatten him (AB 1.26).

Soma is identified with Vṛtra. Pressing of Soma is killing him. Agni and Soma were within Vṛtra. When they were offered share in the Darśapūrnāmāsa sacrifice they went out of Vṛtra. The deities went out. What remained of Vṛtra was the physical form of Soma. It is crushed.

For Soma, the offering of a barren cow is made in the form of sap of Soma. The barren cow is for the Pitṛs. Along with the Pitṛs Soma comes. Therefore a ṛc containing a word pitṛ is used for Soma.

Having killed Soma in pressing it, the priests revive him and swell him up, when they offer the upasad sacrifices. Agni, Soma and Viṣṇu are the symbols of the upasads. The priest, who calls vaṣaṭ at the end of the prayer before offering Soma is given the first cup of Soma. Then a cup of Soma is given to Hotṛ (AB 3.32).

Priyavrata Somapa used to say, "Every one who shares in the pressings of Soma is immortal. The Pitṛs and Kṣatriyas who participate in the pressing of Soma become immortal (AB 7.34).

Soma is the immortal drink. It is the highest kind of proper food (KB 13.7).

In the Rājasūya sacrifice, the juice of the Soma, pressed in the morning, noon and evening was proclaimed to be the highest food to king Viśvantara Sauṣadana by Rāma Mārgaveya. The king then offered thousand cows as dakṣiṇā and allowed Śyāparṇas to perform the sacrifice. Thus Tura Kāvaseya proclaimed him to Janamejaya Pāriṅṣita; Parvata and Nārada to Somaka Sāhadevya, to Sahadeva Śiṅṅjaya, to Babhru Daivāvṛdha, to Bhīma and Vidarbha, Nagnajit of Gāndhāra. Agni proclaimed him to Sanaśruta Arindama, and to Kṛiḍavid Jānaki. Vasiṣṭha proclaimed him to Sudāsa Paijavana.

Thus Viśvantara Sauṣadmana, Janamejaya Pāriṅṣita, Somaka Sāhadevya, Sahadeva Śiṅṅjaya, Babhru Daivāvṛdha, Bhīma, Nagnajit, Sanaśruta Arindama, Kṛiḍavid Jānaki, Sudāsa Paijavana all were living kings, who attained greatness through the drinking of Soma. Like Āditya they were established in prosperity. Like Āditya they were bright obtaining tributes from the people of all quarters. All these were Kṣatriyas (AB 7.34). The eminent priests such as Śyāparṇas, Rāma Mārgaveya, Tura Kāvaseya, Parvata, Nārada, Agni and Vasiṣṭha were the prominent priests who performed Rājasūya sacrifices for the various Kṣatriya kings. The countries where some of these kings ruled such as Vidarbha and Gāndhāra, were very ancient Āryan lands, Gāndhāra to the North-west and Vidarbha in the very centre of India. These kings performed Soma sacrifices and thus aspired to be very eminent and prosperous sovereign kings like the brilliant sun. The priests co-operated with them and assured the superiority to the ruling classes. Thus there existed harmony among the Kṣatriyas and priestly classes. These kings who performed Rājasūya sacrifices were ancient kings held in high esteem even to the author of AB at his time (AB 7.34). The authority to drink Soma (who is claimed to be both Brahman and Kṣatra), for the Kṣatriya was acknowledged by the Brāhmaṇas. When a king is coronated he seeks the blessings of Soma with Anuṣṭubh metre (AB 8.5). When the king is consecrated for the performance of sacrifice, he becomes the Brahman. He abandons the lordly

power and his weapons and assumes the form and weapons of the holy power, Brahman. He announces his consecration with the ṛsi-descent of his Purohita. He assumes the family name and descent of his Purohita who is a Brāhmaṇa. Thus the unity of Brahman and Kṣatriya means that the Kṣatra becomes one with the Brahman. The Brahman claiming himself to be the sole custodian of the Soma drink allowed Kṣatriya to drink the immortal drink only when he was declared to be of the Brahman descent and of the name of his Purohita, when he is consecrated (AB 7.24).

This symbolical identification of Kṣatra with Brahman was interpreted by the priests as the handing over to the Brahman and denouncing his claim to share in the Soma drink. As if he no longer exists as a separate being. Thus it is argued in some priestly families that since the Kṣatriya sacrificer takes the descent of his Purohita (who is the Brahman-priest), in the ancestral invocation of Agni, he is not entitled for a share in the sacrifice. It is also contended that if he takes the share of Soma due to him as a sacrificer, he would become worse and that he would become shut up from the sacrifice. It is therefore natural that he surrenders and hands over his share to the Brahman, who is in the relation of Purohita to the Kṣatriya. The Purohita is half the self of the Kṣatriya. Thus the Kṣatriya sacrificer does not openly partake of the sacrificial Soma. He shares Soma secretly through his Purohita. For Purohita is the Brahman (m) and is the external manifestation of the Yajña. In him the whole Yajña finds support. When the sacrificer hands over the sacrificial Soma to the Brahman, the Yajña is placed in the Yajña, as water in water, or fire in fire. Therefore the share of the sacrificer (Yajamāna) should be given away to the Brahman. It is the opinion of some Brāhmaṇas that the share of the Yajamāna should be offered in Agni with the words, "Prajāpati is the world, named Vibhāt. In this I place you with Yajamāna". But this view and procedure is wrong. He should not do so. The share of the Yajamāna is Yajamāna himself. If he offered it in Agni, Agni burns him. Therefore he should not do so. (AB 7.26).

It thus seems that in the Soma sacrifices, the priests were unwilling to allow the Kṣatriya sacrificer to partake of Soma. They argued that as the Yajamāna assumed the ancestral descent from his Purohita, who is the Brahman, he surrenders his own claim on the portion of Soma for himself. He is not entitled for Soma drink in the sacrifice. For the offering is the very self of the sacrificer, which no longer belongs to him; but to his Purohita. This position claimed by the Brāhmaṇa priests regarding the surrendering of his right of drinking Soma in the sacrifice to the Brahman was certainly annoying to many Kṣatriya sacrificers. It seems that Kṣatriya alone could afford to perform these sacrifices and Brāhmaṇas figure in them as their officiating priests, and not as the Yajamānas. The curious position was that in the sacrifices financed by

them they were not entitled for a drink of Soma, on account of the position taken by the priests.

A case of the priestly family of Śyāparṇas is given in AB (7.27). These priests, it seems refused to allow the king Viśvantara Sauśadmana to partake of Soma in the sacrifice. Naturally it annoyed him. He despised them. Ultimately he decided to perform the sacrifice without them. He did not invite them even though they were his family priests (Purohitas). Some scholars<sup>2</sup> see in this a case of punishment for priestly disloyalty. But it is more due to the revolt of the king against the priestly domination. Thus, in the end, the king dispensed with the Śyāparṇas. But these priests went to the sacrificial chamber and sat down within the altar in the sacrifice, which was being conducted by the king with the help of other priests. When the Śyāparṇas came there without authority he said, 'There sit the Śyāparṇas, the evil doers, speaking impure speech. Remove them. Let them not sit within my altar'. The officiating priests removed them. They felt themselves extremely offended at this insult from their former patron. They felt that it was the case of the preservation of the right and privileges of the post of the Brahman or Purohita, and that they must exercise their own right. They cried out loudly, 'When Janamejaya Pārikṣita excluded the Kāśyapas from the sacrifice, they had the heroes, Aśitamrgas among themselves, who won the drinking of Soma from the Bhūtavīras. What hero have we amongst us, who will win the Soma drinking?' Thus Śyāparṇas were not the first to be denounced by the Kṣatriyas from the Soma drinking. There were Kāśyapas who were similarly excluded from the sacrifice by their patron, Janamejaya Pārikṣita. But even in the case of these Kāśyapas there was one hero among themselves, who won back to them the right of drinking Soma. Now, out of the Śyāparṇas, one, Rāma Mārgaveya said, 'I am the hero among you'. He was a learned member of the family of Śyāparṇas. When they were getting up from the altar at the rebukes of the king, he said, 'It is possible, oh king, that you are removing from this altar, one who knows the sacrifice?' The king asked him, 'What is it that you know, oh worthless Brahman;'" Rāma Mārgaveya replied that when the Devas charged Indra with five offences and when Indra was thus deprived of Soma drinking, the whole lordly power was denied the right of drinking Soma. Indra obtained, however, a share in the Soma drink, having stolen Soma of Tvaṣṭṛ; but today even the lordly power is deprived of Soma drinking. How can you remove one from the altar, one who knows the food which properly belongs to Kṣatriyas, who were deprived of the right of drinking Soma, and by which the Brahman is made prosperous?' The king then asked Rāma, 'Do you know, oh Brahman, this food?' Rāma replied, 'The priests will bring one of the three foods, Soma, curds or water. If they bring Soma, it is the food of the Brāhmaṇas,

<sup>2</sup> Weber, Ind. Stu. 10.32.

With this food you will strengthen the Brāhmaṇas. In your offsprings, there will be born one, like a Brāhmaṇa, accepting gifts (Dakṣiṇā), drinking Soma, seeking livelihood and one who can be removed at will.<sup>3</sup> When evil comes to Kṣatriya, one who is like a Brāhmaṇa is born in his offsprings. Second or third from him may become a Brāhmaṇa. He will like to live like a Brāhmaṇa. If the priests bring curds as the food, it is the food for the Vaiśyas. The king will strengthen the Vaiśyas. In the offsprings one like a Vaiśya will be born, who is tributary to others, one to be eaten by others, one to be oppressed at will. When evil happens to the Kṣatriya, there is born in his offsprings one like a Vaiśya. Second and third from him may become a Vaiśya and he is fain to live like a Vaiśya.

'If the priests bring to the king water as a food, it is the food of Śūdra. With this food the king would strengthen Śūdra. In his family there is born one who is like a Śūdra, who is the servant of another, to be removed at will, and to be killed at will. When any ill comes to the Kṣatriya, there will be born in his offsprings one like a Śūdra. Second or third from him may become a Śūdra. He is fain to live like a Śūdra.

'These are three kinds of food, oh king, which Kṣatriya, as a sacrificer should not desire. These are not fit to be his food. The proper food for him is this: he should press together the descending growth, the fruits of nyagrodha, udumbara, aśvattha and plakṣa trees and partake of them. This is his proper food.' (AB 7.27-29). Rāma Mārgaveya further points out, 'The sap of the goblets (bowls without handle) which went downwards because of the descending growth of nyagrodha and that went up became fruits. Kṣatriya does not depart from the proper food, when he partakes of shoots and fruits of nyagrodha. Mysteriously he obtains the drinking of Soma. It is not consumed by him openly. Therefore nyagrodha is mysteriously the king Soma. Mysteriously the king assumes the form of the holy power through Purohita, through consecration, through ancestral invocation. Nyagrodha is the lordly power of the trees. Rājanya or Kṣatriya is the lordly power; for Ṛc fastened him as it were to his kingdom and supported him as it were like nyagrodha. Therefore the Kṣatriya sacrificer eats the descending growth of nyagrodha and its fruits, and thereby establishes in himself the lordly power of plants and the lordly power in himself. In his kingdom he finds support. His sway becomes deadly and unassailable. The nyagrodha is a divine tree. The priests tilted over the goblets on the place when the Devās went to the heaven by offering sacrifice. Those goblets become nyagrodha trees. Even to-day at Kurukṣetra they call them nyubjas. They were the first born fruits of the nyagrodha. From them the others were born. In that they grow

<sup>3</sup> Yathākāmaprayāpyaḥ (AB 7.28); wandering about at one's pleasure,—Haug; dwelling everywhere,—Weber.

downwards they are called nyagrodhas (growing-downwards). Though they are nyagrodhas, the Devas call them nyagrodhas mysteriously. The Devas love mystery as it were (AB 7.30). Another food fit for a Kṣatriya is the fruit of udumbara. Udumbara is born of strength and is the proper food. This is the pre-eminence of trees. The priests place pre-eminence and proper food among the lordly power. Aśvattha is born of brilliance. It is the overlordship of trees. The fruits of plakṣa tree also form the proper food for the Kṣatriya. It was born of might. It is the self-rule and control of the trees. He places them in Kṣatriya. In the Soma sacrifice, these fruits are kept ready. Then the priests and Yajamāna buy Soma, the king. Then they proceed with the rites according to the manner of Soma sacrifice up to the fast day. Adhvaryu should keep the following things ready: the skin for supporting the pressing, two pressing boards, wooden tub, filter cloth, pressing stones, vessel for holding pure Soma, stirring vessel, ordinary vessel, drawing cups and goblet. When they press Soma in the morning, he should divide these fruits into two. He should press some of them and the remaining he should keep for mid-day pressing (AB 7.32).

From the legend given above the following points may be noted :

(i) There was some sort of misunderstanding between the Kṣatriya kings, the patrons of sacrifice and their family priests, who were styled as Purohitas. These Purohitas had advanced a theory in the performance of Yajña, that their Kṣatriya patrons would attain the heaven by the performance of Soma sacrifices. In the performance of this sacrifice, when the Kṣatriya undergoes the consecration rite, he virtually becomes a Brāhmaṇa, and he assumes the name and ancestry of his Purohita. Thus as it were he passes into a new life of a Brāhmaṇa. He thus transfers his privileges to the Brāhmaṇa. In doing so he surrenders his right of participating in the Soma drink to the Brāhmaṇas. This is the theory. In theory it might have been agreed by some Kṣatriyas. But there seems to be strong opposition to it from very early times. The first Kṣatriya who opposed this theory of the Brāhmaṇa was king Janamejaya, who turned away the Kāśyapas their Purohitas from the sacrificial enclosure and thus insulted them. The matters came to crisis, when in the days of the AB, king Viśvantara Sauśadmana denounced the Syāparṇas, his Purohitas and it seems he appointed some others to officiate in his sacrifice. He also abused and insulted them. The Syāparṇas forcibly occupied the place of the sacrificial altar. The king, then, asked them to quit the sacrificial enclosure. Then one of the Syāparṇas, Rāma Mārgaveya tried to argue with the king. He pointed out that the king need not feel insulted for being devoid of the right of drinking Soma in his own sacrifice; for this right has been forfeited by the Kṣatriyas as such since Indra was denied of this privilege for his misdeeds. Even Indra, the king and Kṣatriya among the Devas was cheese-sheeted by the divine priests and thus he lost his privilege of

Soma drinking, which was the highest honour and the means of securing immortality after death and all prosperity in this world. The main charges against Indra were that he misused Viśvarūpa the son of Tvaṣṭr, he killed Vṛtra, he gave yatis to hyaenas, he killed Ayurmaghas and that he quarrelled with Bṛhaspati, the divine priest. For these offences, the divine priests excluded Indra from Soma drink. Indra however stole some and satisfied himself. Following the example of the divine priests, the human priests completely excluded their patron kings from this privilege. As a result, some powerful and influential kings did not like this explanation of the Brāhmanas and they quarrelled, denounced and insulted them. But in the society where both Kṣatriyas and Brāhmaṇas had to stay together, some sort of agreement was necessary. Thus one of the Śyāparṇas pointed out how alternative food was traditionally partaken by the kings in the place of Soma. So they argued that the king should not make much of the loss of privilege of drinking Soma. Thus Kṣatriyas were excluded from the right of drinking Soma. The Brāhmaṇas insisted on maintaining this exclusion, inspite of the threats to their very prestige.

(ii) The kings (who were Kṣatriyas) took the name and ancestral name of their Brāhmaṇa Purohitas who acted as Brahman priests in the sacrifice.

(iii) There was a strong belief in the transmigration. The food taken in the sacrifice would bring about change in qualities of the Varṇas.

(iv) There were clear cut functions of the four Varṇas and they marked difference in their social status. A Brāhmaṇa accepts gifts, drinks Soma, seeks livelihood and he can be removed at will (yathākāmaprāyaka).

A Vaiśya is contributory to others ; he is consumed by others ; others live on his work. He can be oppressed at will.

A Śūdra is a servant of others ; he can be removed and killed at will by others.

(v) The four kinds of food consumed at the sacrifice result in change in status in progeny. A king drinking Soma in sacrifice may have in the 2nd or 3rd generation one who is born like a Brāhmaṇa. One taking curds may have a son subsequently who would behave like a Vaiśya ; one drinking water as food would have Śūdra like progeny. It thus appears that the caste system even though existing in the society of the AB, the castes were marked by the occupations of a person. One could follow the life of any one of the castes though he may be born in another caste.

(vi) Soma drink was the privilege of the Brāhmaṇas. If a king would drink Soma, in the subsequent birth his progeny would show the signs of change of caste by following duties different from his.

(vii) For the history of sacrificial ritual, this legend of Rāma Mārgaveya refers to important points. The Purohita is a very important

office held by a Brāhmaṇa at the court of a Kṣatriya king. He is virtually the self of the Kṣatriya. This Purohita is the Brahman in the Soma sacrifices. The king assumes the ancestral name of the Purohita and thus becoming a Brāhmaṇa by the performance of the Soma sacrifice, he obtains the desired objects in his life. Yet he is not entitled for Soma drink. It seems that Soma plant had become very scarce and it was deemed to be the privilege of Brāhmaṇas only to drink it. Though a Kṣatriya could not be a Brāhmaṇa, Vaiśya or Śūdra because he is born as a Kṣatriya; yet the behaviour of his progeny in the society would make him behave like Brāhmaṇa, Vaiśya or Śūdra.

### *Soma and surā*

In the Soma sacrifice the priest gives to the king a bowl of Surā (wine), saying, "With your sweetest, most intoxicating, stream, be you purified, oh Soma, pressed for Indra to drink". He then recites RV 8.45.22.

Soma drink which is in Surā is drunk by Kṣatriya. It is not Surā that he drinks. Having drunk it, the king says, 'We have drunk Soma; be you propitious to us'. The author of AB (8.20) informs about the pleasing taste of Surā. He says, 'Just as in this world a dear son touches his father or dear wife her husband, pleasantly and auspiciously up to old age, even so Surā, Soma or any other food in the case of Kṣatriya anointed by the great anointing of Indra touches him up to his death'. Thus it seems that the Kṣatriya was given a drink of Surā in the Soma sacrifice and the pleasant taste of it was considered to be like that of Soma drink. This taste of Soma would make him pleasant and auspicious upto the very end of his life. Indra started the practice of drinking Surā and calling it Soma drink. Other Kṣatriyas imitated Indra. The Brāhmaṇas did not mind, it seems, the offering of Surā to king instead of Soma, and called it the drink of Soma.

### *The pressing and morning offering of Soma*

On the day when the sacrifice begins, the rite begins with the recitation of morning litany (prātarānuvāk). This is the head of the sacrifice. After this recitation, Soma is poured in the cups, called upāniśu and antaryāmin, and offered to Āhavaniya Agni. These two cups are the two vital breaths (prāṇa and apāna). Hotṛ priest keeps silence before offering these two cups. His speech is thunderbolt (Vajra). If he were to speak, he would interrupt the breath of the sacrificer. If any one were to say, "Since Vāc is vajra, he has interrupted the vāc of the sacrificer, she will leave the sacrificer: it will come to pass". When Hotṛ utters praise of prāṇa, apāna etc., he utters speech and touches the pressing stones. Thus he, placing breaths in the body of the sacrificer utters speech, with the whole of his life and for the whole of his life. The sacrificer leads full life (AB 2.21). After the offering of these two cups, Soma is kept in readiness for offering by the five priests who

holding the end of skirt of one another (samanvārambha) walk in the direction of cātvalā. They then take their seats for performing the bahiṣpavamānastotra rite. Before performing this rite caru (cooked-rice) is eaten by the Sāma singers, such as Prastotr, Udgātr and Pratihartṛ. The Hotṛ does not participate in eating caru, which is eaten by all gods and men. Brahman also does not participate in eating because then it would mean that the ṛcs are inferior to Sāmans. It is always contended that the ṛcs are superior to the Sāmans, and that the Brahman priest is also a Rġvedin, there being no difference between the RV and AV at this stage. The Hotṛ should recite while remaining seated only. His self is not excluded from Soma (AB 2.23).

In the morning pressing of Soma (prātaḥsavana) in the Soma sacrifice of the Devas, there was a contamination of Soma. An Asura woman by name Dīrghajivhī licked the morning libation of Soma to be offered to the Devas. Soma became intoxicant. He became censurable (vadya). The Devas trying to remedy Soma asked Mitra and Varuṇa to make Soma devoid of intoxication. They asked for a boon to be granted to them for doing the work. They asked for an offering of milk before the morning offering. This is their fixed offering, the offering of pāyasya (curds or milk whey). This offering of pāyasya is mixed with Soma. This removes the intoxication of Soma. 'At present', says the author of the AB, 'Soma is not mixed with any sour milk. A large quantity of water is added in its place to weaken the strength of Soma.' The pāyasya offering however, in the sacrifice of the Devas removed the intoxication (AB 2.22).

### *Intoxicant Soma*

Soma drink is intoxicant. This is due to the contamination caused by the licking of Soma by an Asura woman, who is significantly called "one having long tongue". It is surprising that the Asura woman could get access to Soma, which was being pressed for the morning sacrifice. Thus Soma became like liquor. This intoxicating effect was weakened by the addition of curds or whey to him. But this practice, later on was abandoned. In its place water was added (AB 2.22). In fact Soma becomes intoxicating like Surā (liquor). A bowl of Surā is called Soma and addressed, 'With your sweetest and most intoxicating stream be you purified, oh Soma.' In the Surā there is Soma. This non-intoxicating Surā is drunk by the sacrificer as Soma. It seems that the pressed Soma became Surā. By the addition of curds or whey or water its intoxicating quality was reduced. This non-intoxicating Surā became Soma (AB 8.20). The intoxicating quality of Soma, which is present in Surā is explained as due to the tasting of it by an Asura woman. It seems that this myth of Asura woman is an attempt of the priests to explain the intoxicating nature of Surā, which was normally found in the pressed Soma. Its effect was weakened by the addition of curds or water.

Hotṛ is the symbol of very life of the sacrificer. His voice is the voice of Yajamāna. Hotṛ utters the calls Vaṣaṭ, which is like Vajra ; but if he utters it twice, while offering Soma in two cups to the two vital breaths, he is capable of stopping the breath of the sacrificer (AB 2.28). Thus the Yajamāna secures fullness of life (AB 2.30). The nivids are the prose formulas. They are the embryos of the litanies (śastra). They are uttered before the litanies, in the morning pressing. Thereby the embryos in the women are deposited at the back and they come into being at the back. In the mid-day pressing, they are inserted in the middle of the śastras. Therefore embryos in women are held in the middle. They are placed at the end in the litanies at the evening pressing. Therefore the offsprings are born downwards for generation. Thus Yajamāna is born of the śastras from the nivids. The nivids are the ornaments of the śastras. Since they are inserted before, in the middle and at the end of the śastras, one makes as it were, upper, middle and lower part of the warp decorated. The Yajamāna shines on all sides with the decoration of the sacrifice. By means of dikṣā rite, the Yajamāna becomes Brahman. By the utterance of the nivids he is reborn of the śastras. He shines everywhere on that account (AB 3.10).

In the Soma sacrifice every day there are three pressings of Soma and their offerings to different deities. Prajāpati allotted different parts to them in the metres and sacrifice. In the morning pressing, Agni and Vasus are the deities. The metre is Gāyatrī. In the mid-day pressing, there are Indra and Rudras. The metre is Triṣṭubh. In the evening pressing, the deities are Viśvedevas and Āditya, and Jagatī is the metre. Prājapati's own metre is Anuṣṭubh. He pushed it to the end of Śastra of Acchāvāka. The metre Anuṣṭubh then said to Prajāpati, 'You are the most wretched of all gods, since you just put me at the end of the Śastra of Acchāvāka'. Prajāpati at the request of Anuṣṭubh, put it at the very beginning of the Soma sacrifice as the first metre of all śastras in three pressings. The sacrificer becomes the master of his sacrifice. Thus Anuṣṭubh metre is the first of the metres in the three Śastras (AB 3.17).

In the morning pressing, the Hotṛ recites nine small ṛcs, in the mid-day ten and in the evening nine small ṛcs. The idea behind this is that seed is poured in what is small, therefore the ṛcs are small. At mid-day pressing there are ten ṛcs. It is because the seed, poured in the small, having attained the middle part of the body of woman becomes most firm. Again in the evening pressing there are small ṛcs. From what is small, offsprings are produced. Thus the nivids in the śastras and the small, big and again small number of ṛcs in the three śastras are the symbolical representations of the pouring of seed to the actual birth of a child. The whole recitation of ṛcs in śastras and nivids represent the process of birth of a child (AB 6.9).

The offering of Soma in the sacrifice and partaking of Soma represent the bringing of the drink from the upper region of the sky where the Gandharvas and Pitṛs stay, on the earth and making the priests enjoy the immortal drink. So Soma drink makes the priests and sacrificer immortal as it did to the Devas. Further, it is the symbol of the release of cows of the Devas from the cave where they were locked by Vala. The Devas sought to win the cows with sacrifice. They obtained them on the sixth day of the Soma sacrifice. At the morning pressing with Nābhāka hymn they tore open the cave. In the third pressing, having destroyed the cave with Vālakhilyas, as thunderbolt, they drove out the cows. This legend is reproduced at each time Soma is pressed by the sacrificer. Soma sacrifice represents the release of cows of Devas from the cave of Vala (AB 6.24).

#### *Āśvina Śastra at the morning pressing*

One thousand or more ṛcs are recited by Hotṛ in the morning before the offering of the Soma. This is called Āśvina śastra. Though it contains praise of many Devas, still it is called Āśvina, because of their prominence. Hotṛ eats ghee before reciting these thousand ṛcs. Just as in this world a cart or carriage goes well if it is smeared with oil, in the same way, his recitation goes on well if he drinks ghee. He takes the position of an eagle (suparṇa) about to fly when he begins recitation (AB 4.7). Regarding the origin of this śastra a myth is narrated in both AB (4.7) and KB (18.1). We are told in this myth that Savitṛ gave Sūryā to Soma, the king. The KB is not sure whether she was the daughter of Savitṛ or Prajāpati. All gods gathered on this occasion and formed a bridal procession (vahatu). Savitṛ gave over these thousand ṛcs to the Devas (KB 18.1). The AB (4.7) points out that Prajāpati gave away his daughter Sūryāsāvitrī (Sūryā of KB). He made these thousand ṛcs called Āśvina śastra as forming the bridal accompaniment for the wedding ceremony of his daughter, to represent such objects as turmeric powder etc.

Thus in the Soma sacrifice, Hotṛ recites Āśvinaśastra after drinking ghee and representing himself an eagle (suparṇa), which brought Soma from the heaven. Soma is the son-in-law of Prajāpati or Savitṛ. He is Kṣātra and king. Among the gods Agni and Bṛhaspati alone are Brahman, while Soma, Indra, Varuṇa, Savitṛ are Kṣatras. They are the kings. Soma is the king of the Bṛahmaṇas (KB 12.8).

#### *Mid-day pressing of Soma*

It was Vasiṣṭha, who proclaimed Soma to Indra at the mid-day pressing in the Soma sacrifices (KB 29.2). Bhāradvāja gave Soma to Indra on this occasion (KB 15.1). At mid-day and evening pressings the Devas become drunk (AB 6.11).

The Devas at Sarvacaru performed a sacrifice. Arbuda. Kādraveya came to them at the mid-day pressing and said to them, 'One of your

Hotṛ's office is not being performed. That is Grāvastut'. Then they appointed him. He praises standing, wearing a turban and with his eyes tied up. This is how Grāvastut was appointed and he performed his work in the mid-day offering of Soma (KB 29.1). Grāvastut at the mid-day pressing recites, "Eye (i.e. evil eye) has come". This eye is the serpent. Thus poison came to the priests. Grāvastut used to purify Soma by reciting the ṛcs. This is the origin of the appointment of the priest Grāvastut at the Soma sacrifice. It was believed that at mid-day pressing of Soma, there was likelihood of the Soma being poisoned, which was perhaps due to the serpent poison. Arbuda Kādraveya, the Grāvastut is of the serpent race. He considered that poisoning of Soma was a sort of black eye, an evil, coming to the pressed Soma. He averted the evil-eye by reciting the ṛcs (KB 29.1).

At the mid-day pressing the hotṛ recites a ṛc RV 2.34.11 which is called Dhāyyā. The ṛc is normally recited at the evening pressing. At the Soma sacrifices of the Bharatas this ṛc was recited at the mid-day pressing of Soma. Therefore the cattle of the Bharatas, which are at the stables in the evening for being milked repair at the noon to the cattle-shed. The ṛc (RV 2.34.11) is in the Jagatī metre, which is connected with cattle. The mid-day pressing is the very self of the sacrificer. The Hotṛ confers cattle on the sacrificer (AB 3.18). Thus there is a historical background to the use of this ṛc in the mid-day pressing. Nāgas or serpents attempt to poison the Soma at mid-day. The seer Arbuda Kādraveya himself a Nāga tried to purify the Soma and make it free from the evil-eye or witchcraft, as he knew how to dispel it. There seems to be a belief that evil-eye of men, look of an evil person poisons even Soma. There is remedy for it by means of sympathetic magic. The ṛc (RV 2.34.11) is used for dispelling this evil effect of the witchcraft. Thus even in Soma sacrifice, a ṛc is used to dispel the effects of the evil charm.

The Soma sacrifice offered by the Devas is the model of the sacrifices for others to follow. Agni was the Hotṛ of the Devas. Mṛtyu waited for him, when he was reciting bahiṣpavamāna stotra. He began ājyāśāstra with an Anuṣṭubh metre. Thus he evaded Mṛtyu. Hotṛ began with Praugaśāstra. Thus he evaded Mṛtyu. For him, Mṛtyu awaited in mādhyandina pavamāna. Hotṛ began Matutvatīya with Anuṣṭubh, on account of which he avoided Mṛtyu. He could not wait for him in Bṛhatī ṛcs, in mid-day pressing; for Bṛhatī ṛcs are the Prāṇas, which Mṛtyu could not penetrate. Therefore at the mid-day pressing, Hotṛ begins with Bṛhatī metre. At the third Pavamāna, Mṛtyu awaited him. He began with Vaiśvadeva śāstra in Anuṣṭubh metre. He avoided death. Then Mṛtyu awaited him at yājñāyājñīya. He began with agnimāruta śāstra with a triplet for Vaiśvānara. He evaded Mṛtyu; for Vaiśvānara is vajra (thunderbolt), which drives away death. Having loosened all posts and nets of death he becomes free from Mṛtyu (AB 3.14).

In the śāstras there are inserted the nivids. These nivids are the deities connected with the sun. In that they are placed before, in the middle, and at the end of the pressings, they follow the course of the sun (AB 3.11). Nivids are the decorations of the ukthas. Just as a weaver weaves decorations in the beginning, at the middle and at the end of the cloth, so are the nivids in the hymns. We get here the information about the social conditions of the time of the AB. The weavers wove the clothes with fine decorations in the cloth in the end and at the middle. The woven clothes might have been used as sarees by women and upper and lower garments by men.

At the mid-day pressing, Hotṛ recites the Gauravīti hymn (RV 10.73). The hymn propagates Yajamāna from the sacrifice, which is the birth place of the Devas. Having recited half of the hymn, after the 6th ṛc, he places nivid, in the middle, when six ṛcs are left over. Nivid is the mounting to the world of svarga. Hotṛ should recite climbing up as it were. Nivid is the ladder to svarga. He should take hold of Yajamāna who is dear to him (AB 3.19).

Hotṛ is capable of turning the recitation of the hymn into witchcraft. If he means to do wrong to others, he can do so. Hotṛ, who practises witchcraft should do the following: If he desires, 'May I smite the people with Kṣatra?' he should separate the hymn RV 10.73 into three parts by inserting the utterance of the nivids. Nivid is Kṣatra and the hymn the people. Hotṛ could use the hymn for destruction of the people at the hands of the king (Kṣatra). If he desires, 'May I smite the lordly power (Kṣatra) by the people?' he should thrice divide the nivid in the recitation of the hymn. Here nivid is Kṣatra and hymn the people. If he desires, 'On both sides let me sever him from the people', he should recite the call vaṣaṭ at the both sides of nivid. He cuts the Kṣatra from the people at both the sides. This procedure is for practising magic. In the normal recitation he attains to heaven. Thus not only does the sacrificer reach heaven by the performance of the Soma sacrifice; but the Hotṛ also gets the svarga by reciting the hymn, call and nivids. He can also turn the destinies of the king and people by his recitation (AB 3.19).

At the mid-day pressing the Hotṛ should recite the Pragāthā RV 8.89. 3-4 to Maruts for winning cattle. Both the Pragāthā and Maruts are cattle. It serves to win cattle (AB 3.19).

#### *Sūyāmsavana or evening pressing of Soma*

Kṛṣṇa Āṅgīrasa saw the third pressing of Soma in the Brāhmaṇac-hānsin's office. Therefore day by day the conclusion is by Kṛṣṇa (RV 10.42. 1-3; 43.1-3; KB 30.9). It was the sage Vāmadeva, who proclaimed Soma to Indra in the third pressing (KB 30.1).

On the sixth day of Pṛṣṭya Śadāha, the Hotṛ recites the Śilpaśāstra. The ṛcs in the śāstra are the artistic works of the Devas. In imitation

of the works of art these are the accomplished works of art such as an elephant, a goblet, a garment, a golden object, a mule or a charioteer. These are the śilpas of men as there are the śilpa śāstras. These are the perfections of self. By these the sacrificer perfects himself (AB 6.27).

#### *The Ṛbhus and the Soma drinking*

The Ṛbhus were not entitled to drink Soma, but by their tapas among the Devas they won the right of drinking Soma. They pleased Prajāpati and obtained his love. Then Indra gave them a share in Soma drinking (KB 16.1). But there was a problem as to when they were to be given a share. The Devas desired to arrange it in the morning pressing. Agni with Vāyu repelled them. At the mid-day pressing, Indra with Rudras did not allow them. In the evening pressing, Viśvedevas repelled them saying, 'They shall not drink Soma here', Prajāpati, however urged him, 'They are your pupils. You drink with them'. He agreed. Prajāpati also drinks Soma on both these sides. Therefore one who is of high rank can honour at his table any one whom he desires. The Devas had dislike of the Ṛbhus because of their human scent (manuṣya gandha AB 3.30). The hymn recited is (RV 1.4.1 ; 10.10). By means of Yajña and tapas, the Ṛbhus who were men, raised themselves to the rank equal to that of the Devas.

Thus the Ṛbhus were human beings. They elevated themselves to the rank of the Devas by means of sacrifice and penance. They secured the love of Prajāpati. He urged Savitṛ to allow them to share in Soma drink. They were the pupils of Savitṛ (AB 3.44).

#### *Long forests in the West due to pressing of Soma*

In the evening the priests proceed without hastening with the third pressing of Soma. Therefore there are long forests to the west (AB 3.44). It, therefore, appears that in the Western India there were huge and long forests in the days of the AB.

#### *Offering to Viṣṇu in the evening pressing of Soma*

The Hotṛ recites a ṛc in honour of Viṣṇu, because he guards what is ill-offered in the sacrifice and Varuṇa guards what is well-offered. As is a roller so is Viṣṇu in the sacrifice. Just as one may keep making well-ploughed and well-rolled field, what had been ploughed and rolled in shabby manner, so does Viṣṇu make what is ill-recited and ill-offered (AB 2.38).

#### *Soma, Yama and Pitṛs*

In the Soma sacrifice, a ṛc (RV 10.14.4) addressed to Yama should be recited. Yama is a ruler ; hence he has the honour of drinking Soma first. After this the ṛc (RV 10.14.3) is recited. This is addressed to Kāvya. Kāvya are the beings lower than the Devas, but higher than

the Pitṛs. There are three types of the Pitṛs : low, medium and highest. The Pitṛs have a house to stay. So the order of offering Soma is : Devas, Ṛṣis and Pitṛs. The Ṛṣis are inferior to the Devas ; but are above the Pitṛs. Among the Pitṛs, there are Kāvyaś above the ordinary Pitṛs (AB 3.37). So from the earth the Devas went to the antarikṣa, then to the yonder-world which is the longest. From the yonder-world they reached the world of the heaven (AB 6.9). These paths leading to the Devas are full of light (AB 3.37).