

## Short Communication

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### Soma in the Light of Six Minimum Essential Categories of Information

S. MAHDIHASSAN

SD-34, Block A, North Nazimabad, Karachi, Pakistan

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Riqveda speaks of the juice of a plant which confers longevity and even immortality. But immortality has been considered as the period of 100 years, or that of three generations. Due to such claim attributed to Soma it has been the subject of inquiry on the part of many authorities who wanted to identify the plant. Majority believe Soma is Ephedra but Wasson (1968) has published a monograph identifying Soma as fly-agaric or *Amonita muscaria*, as hallucogenetic mushroom. What is necessary to point out is that there are others who believe it, and among them is a well known authority a member of the board of editors of an international Journal. Besides this there are even other theories of the identity of Soma. The question now arises as to how any sceptic can be convinced as to what Soma really is. It amounts to preparing a proforma of essential information which would offer information specially pertaining to the plant Soma. It appears that ancient thinkers were faced with similar problems and they found that if information of six categories is available then nothing more need to be said. These six categories would contain all essential information regarding the object of inquiry while further knowledge would be secondary and not necessary for the identification of the object concerned. Now these six categories of information are practically represented by six words of inquiry, when answers to these six questions are available we would know enough to identify the unknown object. Strange enough these six words are found in such different languages as English, German and Hindustani. They are given in Table 1.

TABLE 1.

English	German	Hindustani
1. who	wev	kaun
2. what	was	kya
3. Where	wo	Kahan
4. why	warum	kyaun
5. How	wie	kaisa
6. when	waun	kab

Let us put these questions about Soma.

1. Who discovered Soma first and gave it a name? The answer would be it way a Chinese ascetic and he named it Hau-Ma, fire-coloured fibres of hemp. The Aryan hunters learnt it from the Chinese and in Averta it became Hao-Ma and in

Sanskrit Sau-Ma. The first name degenerated into Homa and the Sanskrit into Soma. This information specifies Soma and excludes other plants above all the mushroom fly-agaric.

2. What is Soma as plant? Riqveda informs that it contains many stalks, and each stalk contains joints like those of human finger. The stalks are about a foot long and are yellow coloured. Leaves are absent. These features suffice to identify it in nature.

3. Where is Soma to be found? It grows on dry soil, best on edges of rocks, next on tops of hills on well drained soil. Atleast mushrooms would not be seen on dry soils.

4. Why was Soma used? Which content is its active principle with pharmacological properties? Soma is an energizer, when a hunter is fatigued he drinks Soma juice and becomes active enough to continue hunting.

5. How did the user extract the juice which he was to drink. The stalks of Soma are relatively hard. They were crushed between two stones with the application of water. It suffices to indicate that a mushroom is soft enough to be eaten as such and *Amonita muscaria* is eaten, never grounded between stones.

6. When was the Soma juice used? The hunters consumed the juice thrice a day.

The answers to these six questions enables us to identify Soma as ephedra. It is ephedrine which is energizing, never hallucinogizing. Thus the six categories of information enable us to identify Soma = Ephedra, specially the Chinese species, *E. sinica*. What has to be noticed is that all the six words of inquiry in German begin with "W". In English How probably was Whow. This sounds like a dog barking. For aesthetic reasons Whow was changed into How. We can then take it that all words of inquiry in German and in English begin with W. Likewise all words of inquiry in Hindustani begin with "K". This goes to show that "W" and "K" are like generic letters revealing the family of words of inquiry.

With the information regarding Soma as given above would be essential and enough, though minimum while any other information would only expand what is given already. If nevertheless there are sceptics then it is prejudice on their part that prevents conviction. As additional notes Riqveda gives the length of stalks of Soma of the size of cow's udder. I have expressed this as one foot long. Then in Hindustani there is the word Kitna—How much. It is implicit in the question How. It means how he extracted and how much did he extract.

*Summary.* When the object of inquiry is a material entity it appears six categories of information suffice to identify it.

1. At first it can be placed in a genus of some kind by

asking the question, What is it. In the case of Soma the answer would be plant.

2. Next comes the morphological features as answer to the question How does it appear. Now according to Hegel Existence = Reality + Appearance. Category no. 1 assures its reality while no. 2 gives its appearance. They show the importance of the above two categories of information as plant Soma has short stalks, and which are leafless, and yellow coloured. This would be its brief description.

3. Thirdly, we would like to know who uses it. The answer here would be ascetics and hunters both being forced to experience fatigue during the course of their daily activity.

Fourthly, we inquire Why did the user use it. Once we know the user is subjected to fatigue the answer to this category would be because it is an anti-fatigue drug. Such

information would be available before we can know the active principle of the plant or its constituents.

5. Now space and time would belong to categories applicable to anything on earth. As regards space Soma avoids competition by growing on well drained soils on edges of rocks and on hills.

6. Since it is an anti-fatigue drink it is consumed thrice a day by Aryans as hunters. Categories 5 and 6 would give the information to questions Where and When. It is to be noted that answers to six questions give the minimum essential information about any material entity. This explains how in different languages like English, German and Hindustani. There are only six words of inquiry.

*Key words:* Plant Soma, *Ephedra sinica* Pharmacological properties.