



“A CRITICAL REVIEW ON *MADHU*”

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ABSTRACT

A naturally occurring sweet substance beautifully described as nectar, *Madhu* is one of the most auspicious and widely used *Dravyas*. Being a ‘*Nitya Sevaniya Dravya*’, i.e., advised for daily consumption, *Madhu* is a widely prescribed *Anupana*. Our classics, ranging from the oldest literary works up to the more recent era, have classified and described honey in detailed descriptions. This article attempts to bring all the available details in our classics together and present them in a well-structured manner for understanding the utility and importance of *Madhu*.

Keywords: *Madhu*, Honey, *Makshika*, *Kshaudra*

INTRODUCTION

Madhu is a naturally occurring sweet fluid produced by the honeybees. The wide applications of honey in food and medicine have been known to mankind since ancient times. The nutritional and medicinal qualities of *Madhu* have been documented by the ancient scholars in Vedic, Greek, Roman, Christian, Islamic and other important texts.

The Indian species of honeybees belong to the genus *Apis*, belonging to the family Apidae. According to Codex Alimentarius, Honey is the natural sweet substance produced by *Apis mellifera* bees from the nectar of plants, secretions of living parts of plants, or excretions of plant-sucking insects on the living parts of plants, which the bees collect, transform by comb-

ing with specific substances of their own, deposit, dehydrate, store and leave in the honeycomb to ripen and mature¹.

• **HISTORIC REVIEW**

a) Vedic Period: In Rigveda, *Madhu* has been used to describe the sweetness of night, energy of the day, fragrance of the earth’s dust, luster and brightness of the Sun. The sweetness of honey is compared to the blowing wind and the flowing river and prayers are offered to the *Aushadhis* (Medicinal herbs) to yield results as sweet as Honey.

b) Purana and Itihasa Period: The Dhanvantari Samhita of Garuda Purana mentions it as a digestant.

c) Samhita Period: Acharya Charaka describes *Madhu* as a unique *Dravya* which due to its immense properties is said to be incorporated by both *Swastha* and *Atura*. Honey is one of the food articles that is exempted from the *Achara* of *Sadvritta* which states “*Na Ashesha Bhuk*” which means don’t eat the whole

food served on plate². When describing the *Hita Dravya*, its main action is mentioned “*Madhu Sandadhati*”, meaning, it has the action of synthesizing. *Purana Madhu* is one among the *Madhura Rasa Dravya* which is not *Shleshmala*³. In Sushruta Samhita, the use of *Madhu* in the rituals of *Shishyopayanana Samskara* is mentioned. It is one among the *Shastra Upakarana* and *Dahana Upakarana*. *Madhu* is one among the *Dravyas* which should be consumed in *Purana Avastha*, meaning it should be consumed after 1 year of collection. In Ashtanga Hridaya, the very first mention of *Madhu* is in the context of *Paramaushadha* of *Tridoshas*, where it is mentioned as the *Paramaushadha* for *Kapha*. In Bhela Samhita, *Madhu* is described in *Annapanavidhi Adhyaya* as “*Madhu Sandhatte*” i.e., its innate action is to cause the binding of tissues⁴. In Vangasena Samhita, the *Abhava Pratinidhi Dravya* for *Madhu* is mentioned as *Jeerna Guda*⁵.

Table 1 Classification of *Madhu*:

Sl.No	Text	Vargeekarana
1.	Charaka Samhita	<i>Ikshuvarga, Shonita Sthapana Gana, Vamanopaga Gana.</i>
2.	Sushruta Samhita	<i>Madhuvarga</i>
3.	Ashtanga Sangraha	<i>Ikshuvarga, Vamanopayogi, Niruhopayogi, Shirovirechanopayogi, Sandhana and Rudhira Sthapana Gana</i>
4.	Ashtanga Hridaya	<i>Ikshuvarga, Niruhana Gana, Madhuraskanda, Kashaya Skanda</i>
5.	Hareeta Samhita	<i>Madhuvarga</i>
6.	Abhidanamanjari	<i>Madanakutaja Varga</i>
7.	Abhidhana Ratnamala	<i>Svaduskanda</i>
8.	Bhavaprakasha	<i>Madhuvarga</i>
9.	Dhanvantari Nighantu	<i>Suvarnadi Varga</i>
10.	Madanapala Nighantu	<i>Ikshukadi Varga</i>
11.	Madanadi Nighantu	<i>Niruhana Gana (Tritiya Gana)</i>
12.	Madhavadravyaguna	<i>Madhuvarga</i>
13.	Kaiyadeva Nighantu	<i>Oshadhi Varga</i>
14.	Rajani ghantu	<i>Paneeyadi Varga, Dharanyadi Varga</i>
15.	Rajavallabhanighantu	<i>Madhuvarga</i>
16.	Dravyaguna Sangraha	<i>Ikshuvikriti Varga</i>
17.	Saraswati Nighantu	<i>Chandanadi Varga</i>
18.	Shodala Nighantu	<i>Parishishta Varga</i>
19.	Priyanighantu	<i>Dravavarga</i>

Table 2 *Madhu Bheda*:

Sl.No	Name	C.S	S.S	A.S	A.H	H.S	Ab.M	D.S	D.N	M.D	M.N	Ma.N	R.N	K.N	B.P	R.V
1.	<i>Makshika</i>	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
2.	<i>Bhramara</i>	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
3.	<i>Kshaudra</i>	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
4.	<i>Pauttika</i>	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
5.	<i>Chaatra</i>	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+
6.	<i>Arghya</i>	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+
7.	<i>Auddalaka</i>	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+
8.	<i>Daala</i>	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+
9.	<i>Saragha</i>	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

(+) Mentioned; (-) Not mentioned.

Among 8 types, *Makshika* and *Kashaudra* is advised to be used.

• **Nirukti of Madhu⁶:**

Madhu is a substance which is widely known and admired by the world.

• **Table 3 Synonyms of Madhu:**

Name	Meaning
<i>Bhringavanta</i>	Vomitus of the Bees.
<i>Kausuma</i>	Produced by the juice/ nectar of flowers.
<i>Kshaudra</i>	Produced by smaller, brown-colored bees.
<i>Kusumarasa</i>	Nectar or secretions of the flower.
<i>Kusumasavam</i>	Produced by the juice/ nectar of flowers.
<i>Kusumotham</i>	Produced by the juice/ nectar of flowers.
<i>Madhu</i>	That which is widely known and admired by the world.
<i>Madhvika</i>	The one who collects honey.
<i>Makaranda</i>	Nectar.
<i>Makshika/ Makshikam</i>	Produced by <i>Makshika</i> (Brown colored Bees).
<i>Makshikavanta</i>	Vomitus of the Bees.
<i>Makshikavit</i>	Vomitus/ excreta of Honeybees.
<i>Pavitram</i>	Sacred.
<i>Pitryam</i>	Admired by ancestors.
<i>Pushparasam</i>	Nectar or secretions of the flower.
<i>Pushparasodbhava</i>	Prepared out of nectar of flowers.
<i>Pushpasavam</i>	Produced by the juice/ nectar of flowers.
<i>Saragha</i>	Produced by <i>Saragha</i> / Bees.
<i>Sidhu</i>	A variety of Alcoholic preparation.
<i>Vanta</i>	The vomitus of the honeybee.
<i>Varati</i>	Produced by a kind of wasp.

It can be inferred that it is the essence or nectar of flowers collected by different kinds of bees. It is sacred and auspicious and is widely admired all over the world.

Table 4 *Rasapanchaka of Madhu*:

Reference Texts	<i>Rasa</i>	<i>Anurasa</i>	<i>Guna</i>	<i>Veerya</i>	<i>Vipaka</i>
API	<i>Madhura</i> , <i>Kashaya</i>	-	<i>Laghu</i> (S.S), <i>Guru</i> (C.S), <i>Ruksha</i> , <i>Picchila</i> , <i>Yoga-</i>	<i>Sheeta</i>	<i>Katu</i>

			vahi		
C.S	Kashaya, Madhura	-	Guru, Ruksha	Sheetha	-
S. S	Madhura	Kashaya	Ruksha, Laghu, Sukumara	Sheeha	-
A. S	Kashaya, Madhura	-	Ruksha	-	-
A.H	Kashaya, Madhura	-	Ruskha	-	-
H. S	Kashaya, Madhura	-	Laghu	Sheetha	-
B. P	Madhura	Kashaya	Laghu, Ruksha, Sukshma, Vishada	Sheetha	-
D.N	Madhura	Kashaya	Ruksha, Laghu	Sheetha	-
M.N	Madhura	-	Laghu, Ruksha, Vishada	Sheetha	-
M.D	Madhura	Kashaya	Ruksha, Laghu	Sheetha	
K. N	Madhura	Kashaya	Ruksha, Vishada, Laghu, Sukshma	Sheetha	
P.N	Madhura, Kashaya	-	Ruksha, Laghu, Sukshma, Vishada	Sheetha	-
D.S	Madhura	Kashaya	Ruksha, Laghu	Sheetha	-
R. V	Madhura	Kashaya	Mridu, Ruksha	Sheetha	-

(-) Not mentioned.

The Rasa of Madhu is opined to be Madhura Pradhana with Kashaya Anurasa by most of the authors.

Table 5 *Doshaghnata of Madhu:*

Sl.No	Text	Vata	Pitta	Kapha
1.	API	-	-	-
2.	C.S	+	x	-
3.	S. S	-	-	-
4.	A. S	+	-	-
5.	A.H	+	x	x
6.	H. S	-	-	-
7.	V.S	-	-	-
8.	B. P	+	-	-
9.	D.N	-	-	-
10.	M.N	+	-	-
11.	M.D	-	-	-
12.	K. N	+	-	-
13.	P.N	-	-	-
14.	D.S	-	-	-
15.	R.V	-	-	-

(-) hara, (+) kara, (x) not mentioned.

The Tridosha Hara property of Madhu is widely accepted. Yet, in Charaka Samhitha an emphasis is made on its Pitta-Shelshma Hara action in the context of Agrya Sangraha.

Table 6 *Karma of Madhu:*

Karma	C.S	S.S	A.S	A.H	H.S	V.S	B.P	D.N	M.N	M.D	K.N	R.N	P.N	D.S	R.V	API
Agnidipana	-	+	-	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+
Balya	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	-	-
Chakshushya	-	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+
Chedana	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Grahi	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Hladi	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Hridya	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	+	-	+	+	-	-	+	-	-
Lekhana	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	-
Medhakara	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-
Prasadana	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	+
Pushtikara	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rochana	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Ropana	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+
Sandhana	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+
Sangrahi	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shodhana	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+
Srotovishodhana	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	-	-
Sukshma Marganusari	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sukumarakara	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Swarya	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	-
Vajikarana	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Varnya	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Vilepana	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Vishaghna	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+
Vranashodhana	-	-	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
Vrishya	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Yogavahi	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-

(+) Mentioned; (-) Not mentioned.

Madhu is mostly accepted to have Agnideepana, Chakshushya, Ropana and Vranashodhana Karma. Its Yogavahi, Sandhana and Chakshushya Karma are accepted in the Brihatrayi.

Table 7 Rogagnata of Madhu:

Sl.No	Rogagnata	C.S	S.S	A.S	A.H	H.S	V.S	B.P	D.N	M.N	M.D	K.N	P.N	D.S	R.V	API
1.	Arsha	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	+
2.	Asra	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	+
3.	Atisara	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+
4.	Bhrama	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5.	Chardi	-	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	+
6.	Daha	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	+
7.	Hidhma	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
8.	Hikka	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	+
9.	Hridgraha	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
10.	Hritparshwa	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

	Gada																
11.	Kasa	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	
12.	Klama	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	
13.	Krimi	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	
14.	Kshata	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	
15.	Kshaya	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	+	
16.	Kushtha	-	-	+	+	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	+	
17.	Mada	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	
18.	Meda	-	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	+	+	-	-	+	
19.	Meha	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	+	
20.	Moha	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	
21.	Pinasa	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
22.	Raktapitta	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	
23.	Shosha	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	
24.	Shwasa	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	
25.	Sthaulya	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	

(+) Mentioned; (-) Not mentioned.

By the virtue of its *Yogavahi Karma*, *Madhu* is used in various ailments as an *Anupana*. Yet individually, it is indicated in various *Vyadhis*. The most indicated among them as per *Brihatrayi* are *Atisara*, *Chardi*, *Kasa*, *Krimi*, *Trishna*, *Visha*, *Shwasa*, *Raktapitta*, *Meha* and *Sthaulya*.

• **Tridosaharatva of Madhu:**

The reason for *Tridosahartva* of *Madhu* is explained by Acharya Sushruta as:

- Due to *Laghutva – Kapha Hara*
- Due to *Paicchilya, Madhurya, Kashayabhava – Vatapittaghna*.

Acharya Kaiyadeva gives more specificity and states:

1. *Laghu, Tikta, Kashaya – Shleshmaghna*
2. *Kashaya, Madhura, Picchila – Pittaghna*
3. *Snigdha, Ushna – Vataghn*

• **Therapeutic Uses:**

1. *Ghritha* prepared using *Kharjura* and *Draksha* consumed along with *Madhu*, *Sharkara* and *Pippali* is used in *Vaisvarya*, *Kasa*, *Shwasa* and *Jwara*⁷.
2. *Dashamula Ksheera Shrita Ghritha* consumed along with *Madhu*, *Pippali* cures *Vaisvarya*⁸.
3. *Dadhisara Prayoga*: *Dadhisara* mixed with *Sharkara*, *Madhu*, *Maricha*, *Tugaksheeri* and *Sukshma Ela* should be filtered with a clean cloth and poured into a clean earthen pot. This if con-

sumed with *Shashtika Shali* added with a generous quantity of *Ghritha* is a *Vajeekara* and promotes *Varna*, *Swara* and *Bala*⁹.

4. In *Jwara* with *Trishna*: Milk boiled with *Nagara* and *Mridvika* added with equal quantity of *Madhu*, *Ghritha* and *Sharkara*¹⁰.
5. In *Urdhwaga Raktapitta*: *Laja Saktu Tarpana* prepared by adding *Ghritha* and *Madhu*¹¹.
6. In *Raktapitta*: Decoction of *Vasa* added with *Priyangu*, *Mrittika*, *Anjana*, *Lodhra* and *Madhu*¹².
7. After *Samyak Dagdha*, *Abhyanga* with *Madhu* and *Sarpi* is advised¹³.
8. In *Atisthaulya*: Use of *Madhu* for *Virukshana* and *Chedana*¹⁴.
9. In *Karnavyadha*: After the conjugation and removal of *Varti*, for proper healing *Lepa* of *Madhuka*, *Erandamula*, *Manjishtha*, *Yava*, *Tila Kalka* mixed with *Madhu* and *Ghritha* is applied¹⁵.
10. In *Ikshumeha*: *Shatavari Mula Swarasa* with equal quantity of *Madhu* and *Ghritha*¹⁶.
11. In *Udaka Meha*: *Kiratatika Swarasa* or *Kwatha* of *Patola* or *Kwatha* of *Aruka* consumed along with *Madhu*¹⁷.
12. In *Shukla Meha*: *Tumburu* and *Kapittha Kashaya* along with *Madhu*¹⁸.
13. In *Rakta Meha*: *Madayantika Swarasa* with *Madhu*¹⁹.

14. In *Pittatisara: Rasanjana, Kutaja (Phala and Twak), Ativisha, Dhataki and Shringavera* along with *Tandulodaka* and *Madhu*²⁰.
 15. In *Pittatisara: Abashtaki, Shilodbheda, Dhataki, Amlavetasa, Ushira, Hribera, Dadima, Mahaushadha, Jambu, Kapittha* and *Bilva* consumed along with *Madhu*²¹.
 16. In *Urustambha: Churna of Vamshaka, Naktamala, Murva, Katurohini, Tarkari, Pragraha, Pilu, Nichula, Asana, Saptaparna, Triphala, and Maricha* along with *Madhu*²².
 17. In *Arsha: Churna of Lodhra, Daruharidra, Vibhitaki Majja* mixed with *Madhu* and consumed with *Tandulodaka*²³.
- **Precautions While Taking Madhu:**
 1. *Gramya, Anupa Audaka Mamsa* with *Madhu* causes *Badhirya, Andhya, Vepathu, Jadya, Kal-amukata, Mainminya* or even death²⁴.
 2. *Pushkara Shaka, Katurohini Shaka* or *Kapota Mamsa* fried in *Sarshapa Taila* should not be consumed along with *Madhu* as it will cause *Shonitabhishyanda (Siraja Granthi), Dhamani Pratichaya, Apasmara, Shankhaka, Galaganda, Rohini* diseases or even death²⁵.
 3. *Vamsha Patrika* and *Pakva Nikucha* should not be consumed along with *Madhu* and *Paya* as it can lead to death or *Bala Uparodha, Varna Uparodha, Teja Uparodha, Virya Uparodha, Guru Vyadhi* and *Shandy*²⁶.
 4. Consuming *Madhu* along with *Kusumbha Shaka, Sharkara* and *Maireya* types of wine causes *Vata Atikopana*²⁷.
 5. Meat of *Haridra* cooked on *Bhasma* and *Pamshu* by sticking it in *Haridra* stick and consumed along with *Madhu* causes instantaneous death²⁸.
 6. *Madhu* consumed along with *Kakamachi* causes death²⁹.
 7. *Madhu* consumed after heating it by a person suffering from *Pitta* disorder causes death³⁰.

CONCLUSION

Madhu (Honey) is one of the oldest forms of nutritional nectars known to mankind. The utility and val-

ue of the highly auspicious *Madhu* is described vividly in the Vedas and is highly praised. It is one among the very few *Parama Yogavahi Dravyas*. Hence its mentioning is found in almost all *Vyadhi* in the form of an *Anupana*. Its main action according to Acharya Charaka is *Shleshma Pitta Prashamana*. A *Dravya* as powerful as honey, if utilized in the right way, becomes a *Nitya Sevaniya Dravya*. But if consumed improperly can lead to serious complications. Throughout the classics a repeated emphasis is made on the precautions to be taken when utilizing honey. Its role as an elixir of life, as well as a life-threatening agent completely depends on its proper utility.

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