

A COMPREHENSIVE LITERARY ANALYSIS OF *MADHU* (HONEY) IN CLASSICAL AYURVEDIC LITERATURE

Dr. Vivek Kumar Saini^{*1}, Dr. Reena Sajwan²

¹Associate Professor Department of Dravyaguna, Dronacharya Ayurvedic Educational Institute and Hospital.

²Assistant Professor Department of Agad Tantra Evam Vidhi Vidhayak, Dronacharya Ayurvedic Educational Institute and Hospital.

Article Received on 15 May 2026,
Article Revised on 05 June 2026,
Article Published on 16 June 2026

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20731295>

*Corresponding Author

Dr. Vivek Kumar Saini

Associate Professor Department of
Dravyaguna, Dronacharya
Ayurvedic Educational Institute and
Hospital.



How to cite this Article: Dr. Vivek Kumar Saini^{*1}, Dr. Reena Sajwan² (2026). A Comprehensive Literary Analysis Of *Madhu* (Honey) In Classical Ayurvedic Literature. World Journal of Pharmaceutical Research, 15(12), 1855-1863.

This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.

ABSTRACT

Madhu (Honey) is regarded as a unique *Dravya* in *Ayurveda* due to its *Yogavahi*, *Lekhana* and *Sandhana* properties. It is extensively described in *Brihatrayi* and *Laghutrayi* for both dietary and therapeutic purposes. **Aim:** To compile and critically review the references of *Madhu* in classical *Ayurvedic* texts with respect to its types, properties, indications, contraindications and pharmaceutical uses. **Methods:** Literary search was done in *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*, *Ashtanga Sangraha*, *Bhavaprakasha Nighantu*, and *Raja Nighantu*. References were compiled, categorized, and analyzed. **Conclusion:** Classical texts unanimously accept *Madhu* as the best *Anupana* and *Yogavahi Dravya*. Its therapeutic spectrum ranges from *Prameha* and *Sthoulya* to *Vrana* and *Netra Roga*. Contraindications like heating and equal ratio with *Ghrita* are strictly emphasized.

KEYWORDS: *Madhu*, Honey, *Brihatrayi*, *Yogavahi*, *Lekhana*.

1. INTRODUCTION - *Madhu* is one of the few substances described as both *Ahara* and *Aushadha* in *Ayurveda*. *Acharya Charaka* states “*Madhu chaiva varam*”^[1] *Madhu* is best among all *Yogavahi Dravyas* i.e. without changing its properties it carries and enhances the properties of the drug added to it. *Acharya Sushruta* describes Honey as *Tridosh shamak*^[2] but *Acharya Charaka* and *Acharya Vagbhata* describe it as increasing *Vata* and

decreasing *Kapha Pitta*^[3]. *Madhu* holds a prime place in *Bhaishajya Kalpana*. Honey is a sweet, thick liquid varying in colour from dark brown to light yellow. The sweetness and thickness also vary depending upon the region, type of flowers bees feed on, season and the variety of the bees. Honey is a mixture of nectar and pollen of flowers.^[4] Honey is an important natural helpful substance for a healthy and diseased person. The present review compiles from different classical references, *Ayurvedic Samhita* commentaries and textbooks, articles published in various journals to understand *Madhu* complete profile.

Nirukti^[5]

“*Madayati iti Madhu*” – that which sweet, delicious, pleasant and causes exhilaration.

Synonyms

1. Hindi - *Shahada, Madhu*
2. English - Honey
3. Sanskrit - *Kshaudra saragh, Pushparasodbhava, Makshika, Varativant, Bhringavant*.

1. Types of *Madhu* in Classics Text.

<i>Charak Samhita</i>^[6] (4 types)	1-Makshika 2-Bhramara 3-Kshaudra 4-Pauttika.	<i>Makshika- (shreshta) madhu</i>
2-<i>Sushruta Samhita</i>^[7] (8 types)	1-Makshika 2-Bhramara 3-Kshaudra 4-Pauttika 5-Chhatra 6-Arghya, 7-Auddalaka 8-Dala	<i>Makshika- Laghu, Ruksha, best for all purposes (shreshta)</i>
3-<i>Ashtanga Sangrah</i>^[8] (4 types)	1-Makshika 2-Bhramara 3-Kshaudra 4-Pauttika	
4-<i>Ashtanga Hridaya</i>^[9] (4 types)	1-Makshika 2-Bhramara 3-Kshaudra 4-Pauttika	<i>Makshika- Grahi, Ruksha (shreshta)</i>
5-<i>Bhavaprakasha</i>^[10] (8 types)	1-Makshika 2-Bhramara 3-Kshaudra 4-Pauttika 5-Chhatra 6-Arghya 7-Auddalaka	<i>Makshika- (shreshta) Tridoshaghna</i>

	8-Dala	
6- Harita Samhita	1-Bhramara. 2-Saaragha. 3- Kshaudra	
7- Madanpa Nighantu^[11] (4 types)	1-Makshika 2-Bhramara 3-Kshaudra 4-Pauttika	
8- <u>Nighantu</u> Kaidev Nighantu^[12] Raja Nighantu^[13] Dhanvantari Nighantu^[14] (8 types)	1-Makshika 2-Bhramara 3-Kshaudra 4-Pauttika 5-Chhatra 6-Arghya 7-Auddalaka 8-Dala	

4- Rasa Panchaka of Madhu

	<i>charak samhita</i> 27/205	<i>SushrutaSamhita</i> (Sutra Sthanam – 45/132)	<i>Ashtanga Sangrah Sutra Sthanam – (6/92, 95)</i>	<i>Ashtanga Hridya (Sutra Sthanam 5/52)</i>	<i>Bhavaprakash¹⁵ Nighantu (Madhu Varga 2/5)</i>
1 Rasa	<i>Madhur kashaya</i>	<i>Madhur</i>	<i>Madhur kashaya</i>	<i>Madhur kashaya</i>	<i>Madhur</i>
2 Guna	<i>Guru Ruksha</i>	<i>Laghu, Ruksha, Picchila</i>	<i>Laghu, Ruksha</i>	<i>Ruksha</i>	<i>Laghu, Ruksha, Sukshma</i>
3 Veerya	-	<i>Sheeta</i>	<i>Sheeta</i>	-	<i>Sheeta</i>
5 Anurasa	-	<i>Kashaya</i>		-	<i>Kashaya</i>
6 Doshghanta	<i>Tridosha Nashak</i>	<i>Tridosha Nashak</i>	<i>Vata Karak, Kapha, Pitta Nashak</i>	<i>Vata Karak, Kapha Pitta Nashak</i>	<i>Alpa Vatakar, Kapha Pitta Nashak</i>
7 Karma	<i>Tridosha-shamaka, Lekhana, Sandhana, Chedana, Yogavahi</i>	<i>Tridosha-shamaka, Lekhana, Sandhana, Chedana, Yogavahi</i>			

Properties and therapeutic uses of different types of honey

(1) Pauttika honey^[16]

- ❖ collected by- small black bee resembling a gnat called Pauttika bees build their home inside the hollows of trees.
- ❖ Colour of honey- ghee like colour.
- ❖ Properties - Ruksha, Ushna also *Chhedi* in nature.

- ❖ *Pauttika Madhu* is rough and hot due to the association of poisons, aggravates *Vata* and *Rakta*, *pitta* and breaks fat, cyst, etc. producing burning and intoxication.

(2) Bhramara honey^[17]

- ❖ Bhramara bees are common black in color and of medium size bees.
- ❖ Colour of honey- white in colour.
- ❖ Properties – guru, Picchhila and Atiswadu (excessively sweet) properties.
- ❖ It is Rakta pitta shamaka.

(3) Kshaudra honey^[18]

- ❖ Kshaudra bees are small and brown colour bee.
- ❖ Colour- It is brownish in colour.
- ❖ Properties- Sheetha, Laghu and Lekhana.
- ❖ It is especially beneficial in diseases like Prameha (diabetes).

(4) Makshika honey^[19]

- ❖ Makshika bees are brown in colour and big in size, honey produced by them is called Makshika honey.
- ❖ Makshika honey has oil-like colour.
- ❖ It is Laghu (lighter than Kshaudra), Ruksha (dry), best in qualities and especially beneficial in diseases like asthma.
- ❖ It is also useful in Kamla (jaundice), Arsha (piles), Kshata (phthisis), and Kasa (cough).

(5) Chhatra honey^[20]

- ❖ Chhatra bees are yellowish brown bees which makes umbrella shaped hives in forests. Honey produced by them is called Chhatra honey.
- ❖ Chhatra honey is brown yellow in color.
- ❖ It is Madhura vipaka (sweet after digestion), guru (heavy to digest), Sheetha (cold), and Picchhila (slimy).
- ❖ It cures bleeding disorders, leucoderma, diabetes and worm-infestations.

(6) Aarghya honey^[21]

- ❖ Aarghya bees make honey from Madhuka (*Madhuka indica*) trees, have sharp mouth, and are yellow in colour.
- ❖ Aarghya honey is white in color.

- ❖ It is Kashaya (astringent in taste), Katu vipaka (pungent after digestion) and eliminates vitiated Kapha and Pitta dosha.
- ❖ It is Balya (strengthening) and beneficial for eyes.

(7) Auddalaka honey^[22]

- ❖ Auddalaka are small brown insects which store honey inside ant hills.
- ❖ The color of Auddalaka honey is yellowish brown.
- ❖ Auddalaka honey is Kashaya (astringent) and amla rasa (sour), Katu vipaka (pungent after digestion) and aggravates Pitta.
- ❖ It is useful in skin diseases and helps in modulation of voice.

(8) Dala honey^[23]

- ❖ Unprepared honey, found in flowers.
- ❖ The color of Dala honey is pink.
- ❖ Dala honey is Ruksha (dry), sweet, sour and astringent in taste.
- ❖ It mitigates vomiting and diabetes mellitus.

Therapeutic uses of Honey (Madhu)

It is used for cold, cough, fever, sore eye and throat, tongue and duodenal ulcers, liver disorders, constipation, diarrhea, kidney and other urinary disorders, pulmonary tuberculosis, marasmus, rickets, scurvy and insomnia.

- ❖ It is applied as a remedy on open wounds after surgery.
- ❖ It prevents infection and promotes healing.
- ❖ It has been proved that honey promotes rapid healing as it stimulates tissue regeneration, angiogenesis, and fibroblast growth. Epithelial cell growth is stimulated as these cells grow with the skin level so that no scab is formed and so no excessive scarring and hypertrophication.
- ❖ Anti-inflammatory action of honey soothes and promotes healing by reducing pain and swelling.
- ❖ Recent researches have shown that Pratisarana of Laksha Churna with Madhu on scaling wound can have better line of treatment in the successful management of tartar without any systemic use of drugs.
- ❖ Honey works quicker than many antibiotics because it is easily absorbed into the blood stream.

- ❖ It is also useful in healing of carbuncles, chaps, scalds, whitlows and skin inflammation; as vermicide; locally as an excipient, in the treatment of aphthae and other infection of the oral mucous membrane.
- ❖ It is recommended in the treatment of pre operative cancer.
- ❖ Honey, mixed with onion juice, is a good remedy for arteriosclerosis.

Therapeutic Indications in Classical Texts

- ❖ It is applied as a remedy on open wounds after surgery.^[24]
- ❖ Honey works quicker than many antibiotics because it is easily absorbed into the blood stream.^[23]
- ❖ Recent researches have proved that *Madhu Ashchyotana* (RM eye drops) are very effective in the management of *Netra Abhishyanda* viz. Infective conjunctivitis.^[25]
- ❖ It is very useful in urinary tract disorders, worm infestation, bronchial asthma, cough, and diarrhea and vomiting.^[26]

1- Contraindications

- ❖ *Viruddha* of *Madhu* Heated *Madhu*: “*Ushnam madhu marayati*”^[27] – Becomes toxic on heating.
- ❖ Equal quantity with *Ghrita*: “*Sama ghrita madhu visham*”^[28]
- ❖ In *Ajirna*, *Nava Jwara*, *Ushna Kala*: Aggravates *Pitta*.
- ❖ *Pauttika Madhu*: Internal use contraindicated.

2- Pharmaceutical Importance

- ❖ **Anupana**: Used with *Sitopaladi Churna*, *Chyavanprasha*, *Vasavaleha*.
- ❖ **Samyoga**: *Madhu* + *Ghrita* in unequal quantity for *Vrana Ropana*.^[29]
- ❖ **As Preservative**: In *Asava-Arishta* due to *Sandhana property*.^[30]
- ❖ **External Use**: *Madhu* + *Ghrita* + *Saindhava* for *Dushta Vrana*.

DISCUSSION

The information collected based on the available literatures related *Madhu* in different *Ayurveda* classical texts. The review shows that *Madhu* is not just a sweetener but a potent medicine with multifaceted actions. *Yogavahi* property makes it unique – it adopts the *Guna* of the drug it is mixed with without losing its own. *Lekhana* explains its use in *Medoroga*, while *Sandhana* justifies use in fractures and wounds. Modern studies validate its antimicrobial, antioxidant and wound-healing actions, aligning with *Krimighna* and

Vranaropana claims. However, classical contraindications are scientifically relevant. Heating honey produces HMF (Hydroxymethylfurfural), a toxic compound. This validates “*Ushnam madhu*” prohibition.

9. CONCLUSION

Classical *Ayurvedic* literature provides a detailed, systematic account of *Madhu*. It is *Tridosahara* yet mainly *Kapha-Pitta Shamaka*, *Yogavahi*, and best *Anupana*. Understanding its types, proper use, and contraindications is essential for safe clinical application. *Madhu*, because of its *Yogavahi*, *Sookshmamarganusari* or *Ashukari* and *Rasayana* properties is utilized as *Sahapana* and *Anupana* for different *Ayurvedic* drugs. The ancients of *Vedic* civilization considered *Madhu* as one of nature’s most remarkable gifts to mankind. This study which is a comprehensive review of the *Ayurvedic* literature, highlights the therapeutic benefits of *Madhu*.

REFERENCES

1. Tripathi Brahmanand, Editor, Sutrasthana Chapter 27, Charaka Chandrika (Hindi Commentary) on Charaka Samhita, Vol.1, Edition 2007, Chaukhamba Surbharati Prakashan, Ikshu varga, Verse No. 245, P 30.
2. Shastri Ambikadatta, Editor, Sutrasthan Chapter 45, Ayurveda Tattva Sandipika (Hindi Commentary) on Sushruta Samhita, edition 2005, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan Varanasi, Madhu varga, verse. No.132, P 180.
3. Gupta Kaviraj Atridev, Editor, Sutrasthan Chapter 5, Hindi Commentary on Ashtanga Samgraha, Edition 1993, Chaukhamba Krishnadas Academy Varanasi, Madhu varga, Verse No. 92, 95, P 56.
4. Sharma Khemchand, Goyal Chinky, Prajapati Deepchand. Critical review on madhu w.s.r. Honey. International Journal of Ayurveda and Pharma. Research, 2015; 3(9): 75.
5. Apte Vaman Shivrama, Sanskrit Hindi Kosha, Edition 2006, Rachna Prakashan, Jaipur. P 767.
6. Tripathi Brahmanand, Editor, Sutrasthana Chapter 27, Charaka Chandrika (Hindi Commentary) on Charaka Samhita, Vol.1, Edition 2007, Chaukhamba Surbharati Prakashan, Ikshu varga, Verse No. 245, P 30.
7. Shastri Ambikadatta, Editor, Sutrasthan Chapter 45, Ayurveda Tattva Sandipika (Hindi Commentary) on Sushruta Samhita, edition 2005, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan Varanasi, Madhu varga, verse. No.132, P 180.

8. Gupta Kaviraj Atridev, Editor, Sutrasthan Chapter 5, Hindi Commentary on Ashtanga Samgraha, Edition 1993, Chaukhamba Krishnadas Academy Varanasi, Madhu varga, Verse No. 92, 95, P 56.
9. Gupta Kaviraj Atridev, Editor, Sutrasthan Chapter 5, Hindi Commentary on Ashtanga Hridaya Sutrasthan 5/52, Edition 1993, Chaukhamba Krishnadas Academy Varanasi Ashtanga Hridaya Sutrasthan 5/52.
10. Misra Brahmasankara and Vaisya Rupalalji, Editor, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, on Bhavprakash, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Santhan Varanasi, Edition 2004, Bhavprakash nighantu, Madhu varga, Verse. No.1, pg.788.
11. Ram Prasad Pandit, Editor, Bhasa Tattva Prakasininam(hindi commentary) on Madanpal nighantu, Published by Ganga Vishnu Shri Krishanadas, Luxmi Vankteshvar Steem Press Kalyan Bombay, 1954, Ikshukadi varga 9, Verse No. 23, Pg. 215.
12. Sharma Priyavrata, Sharma Guru Prasad, Editor, Kaiyadeva nighantu, Chaukhambha Orientalia Varanasi, Aushadhi varga, Verse No. 173, 179. Pg. 36.
13. Tripathi I. Raj Nighantu. 1st edition vol.1. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Series Office; 1982.p. 496 41.
14. Sharma PV, Sharma GP. Dhanvantari Nighantu. 2nd edition. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Orientalia; 2008.p. 217.
15. Misra Brahmasankara and Vaisya Rupalalji, Editor, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, on Bhavprakash, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Santhan Varanasi, Edition 2004, Bhavprakash nighantu, Madhu varga, Verse No.12,13, Pg.789.
16. Misra Brahmasankara and Vaisya Rupalalji, Editor, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, on Bhavprakash, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Santhan Varanasi, Edition 2004, Bhavprakash nighantu, Madhu varga, Verse No.9-10, Pg.789.
17. Misra Brahmasankara and Vaisya Rupalalji, Editor, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, on Bhavprakash, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Santhan Varanasi, Edition 2004, Bhavprakash nighantu, Madhu varga, Verse No.9-10, Pg.789.
18. Misra Brahmasankara and Vaisya Rupalalji, Editor, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, on Bhavprakash, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Santhan Varanasi, Edition 2004, Bhavprakash nighantu, Madhu varga, Verse No.9-10, Pg.789.
19. Misra Brahmasankara and Vaisya Rupalalji, Editor, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, on Bhavprakash, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Santhan Varanasi, Edition 2004, Bhavprakash nighantu, Madhu varga, Verse No.9-10, Pg.789.

20. Misra Brahmasankara and Vaisya Rupalalji, Editor, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, on Bhavprakash, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Santhan Varanasi, Edition 2004, Bhavprakash nighantu, Madhu varga, Verse No.9-10, Pg.789.
21. Ali Mohammad, Pharmacognosy, vol-1, CBS Publishers & Distributors Pvt. Ltd. I.S.B.N: 81 239-1438-5, Edition 2008, Pg. 278-280.
22. Ali Mohammad, Pharmacognosy, vol-1, CBS Publishers & Distributors Pvt. Ltd. I.S.B.N: 81 239-1438-5, Edition 2008, Pg. 278-280.
23. Atul Bhardwaj, Manoj Tanwar, Effect of Rasanjana Madhu Ashchyotana in Netra Abhishyanda (Mucopurulent Conjunctivitis). AYU/2011/32/3,[cited 2015 August 18], Available from: <http://www.ayujournal.org>.
24. Gupta Kaviraj Atridev, Editor, Vidyotini Hindi Commentary, on Ashtang Hridya, Chaukhambha Prakashan Varanasi 2007, Sutrasthan Chapter 5, Madhu varga, Verse No.51-52, Pg.46.
25. Shastri Ambikadatta, Editor, Ayurveda-Tattva Sandipika (Hindi Commentary) on Sushruta Samhita, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan Varanasi, Edition 2005, Sutrasthan Chapter 45, Madhu varga, Verse. No.143-144, Pg.181.
26. Tripathi Brahmanand, Editor, Charak Chandrika (Hindi Commentary) on Charak Samhita, Chaukhambha Surbharti Prakashan, Sutrasthana, Chapter 26, Verse No.90, Pg.497.
27. Tripathi Brahmanand, Editor, Charak Chandrika (Hindi Commentary) on Charak Samhita, Chaukhambha Surbharti Prakashan, Sutrasthana, Chapter 26, Verse No.90, Pg.497.
28. Gupta Kaviraj Atridev, Editor, Sutrasthan Chapter 5, Hindi Commentary on Ashtanga Samgraha, Edition 1993, Chaukhamba Krishnadas Academy Varanasi, Madhu varga, Verse No. 92, 95, P 56.
29. Gupta Kaviraj Atridev, Editor, Sutrasthan Chapter 5, Hindi Commentary on Ashtanga Hridaya Sutrasthan 5/52, Edition 1993, Chaukhamba Krishnadas Academy Varanasi Ashtanga Hridaya Sutrasthan 5/52.