

**FROM NECTAR TO TOXIN: UNDERSTANDING MADYA IN
AYURVEDA*****Dr. Vandana Sharma**

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ABSTRACT

Madya (alcoholic preparations) has been described in Ayurveda as both Amrita (nectar) and Visha (poison), depending upon the method and quantity of its consumption. Classical Ayurvedic texts explain that Madya possesses unique properties such as Ushna, Tikshna, Vyavayi, and Vikasi, due to which it acts rapidly on both body and mind. When consumed appropriately according to Prakriti, Kala, and Matra, it improves digestion, stimulates appetite, relieves stress, and acts as a therapeutic adjuvant. However, excessive or improper consumption leads to Dosha aggravation, Ojas depletion, liver disorders, neurological disturbances, and psychological imbalance. This review critically analyzes the dual role of Madya as described in Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya. The study emphasizes the Ayurvedic principle of Yuktiyukta

Sevana, which advocates rational and controlled use of substances to maintain health and prevent disease.

KEYWORDS: Madya, Amrita, Visha, Madatyaya, Ayurveda, Alcohol.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a holistic science that emphasizes maintenance of health through proper Ahara (diet), Vihara (lifestyle), and Aushadhi (medicines). Among various dietary substances, Madya occupies a unique position because of its dual action on the human body. It has been extensively described in Brihatrayi with detailed explanations regarding its preparation, properties, indications, contraindications, and complications.

Madya is defined as:

“मद्यं मद्यं मद्यं मद्यं मद्यं मद्यं मद्यं मद्यं मद्यं मद्यं”

Meaning: The substance that produces exhilaration or intoxication is known as Madya. Ayurvedic Acharyas neither completely prohibit nor completely encourage the use of Madya. Instead, they advocate proper and rational consumption. This demonstrates the scientific and practical approach of Ayurveda toward substances having both therapeutic and toxic potential.

In modern times, alcohol consumption has become socially prevalent. While moderate intake is sometimes associated with relaxation and social enjoyment, excessive intake has emerged as a major public health concern. Hence, understanding the Ayurvedic concept of Madya becomes highly relevant in present times.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To study classical references related to Madya in Ayurveda.
- To understand the pharmacological properties and actions of Madya.
- To analyze the beneficial role of Madya as Amrita.
- To evaluate the harmful effects of Madya as Visha.
- To correlate Ayurvedic concepts with modern understanding.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is a literary review based on Ayurvedic classical texts and commentaries. References regarding Madya were collected from:

1. Charaka Samhita
2. Sushruta Samhita
3. Ashtanga Hridaya
4. Ayurvedic commentaries
5. Modern Ayurvedic literature

The collected material was critically reviewed and analyzed to understand the dual role of Madya.

CONCEPT OF MADYA IN AYURVEDA

Madya is primarily prepared by the process of fermentation (Sandhana). Various forms of Madya such as Sura, Sidhu, Asava, Arishta, and Madhu are described in Ayurvedic texts. Charaka has explained the properties of Madya as:

“लघु तिक्श्ना उष्ण सूक्ष्मा व्यावयि विकसी च ।
एते मद्यस्य गुणानि ।”

Meaning and Explanation:

- Laghu – Light in digestion
- Tikshna – Sharp and penetrating
- Ushna – Hot in potency
- Sukshma – Able to enter subtle channels
- Vyavayi – Quickly spreads throughout the body
- Vikasi – Loosens tissue integrity

These properties explain why Madya acts rapidly and produces immediate effects on the nervous system and metabolism.

MADYA AS AMRITA (BENEFICIAL ROLE)

Ayurveda considers Madya as Amrita when consumed in a proper manner.

Classical Reference

“युक्तियुक्तं मद्यं नृणां अमृतं ।”

Meaning: Properly consumed Madya acts like nectar.

The term Yuktiyukta indicates:

- Proper dose (Matra)
- Suitable time (Kala)
- Proper season
- Individual suitability (Prakriti)
- Appropriate diet combination

Another reference states

“मद्यं हृदि भक्ष्यं तृणं च ।
अपि भक्ष्यं तृणं च ।”

Meaning: Madya enhances digestion, appetite, happiness, and strength.

Beneficial Effects of Madya

1. Deepana – Stimulates digestive fire.
2. Pachana – Helps digest Ama.
3. Ruchikara – Improves appetite and taste perception.

4. Harshana – Relieves stress and induces pleasure.
5. Nidrajanana – Helps in inducing sleep in mild quantity.
6. Yogavahi – Enhances absorption and action of medicines.

Therapeutic Utility

Medicinal preparations like Asava and Arishta utilize fermented principles for better absorption and preservation. Controlled administration of Madya has also been mentioned in certain Vata disorders and conditions associated with low digestive fire.

MADYA AS VISHA (HARMFUL ROLE)

The same Madya behaves like poison when consumed excessively or improperly.

Classical Reference

“अपि मद्यं विषमिव भवति”

Meaning: Improper consumption makes Madya act like poison.

Another important reference

“अपि मद्यं विषमिव भवति”

Meaning: Excessive intake aggravates Doshas.

Pathogenesis

Excessive Madya intake causes:

- Agnimandya (impaired digestion)
- Pitta aggravation
- Ojas depletion
- Srotodushti
- Mental instability

Clinical Manifestations:

- मूर्च्छा (giddiness)
- शून्यता (fainting)
- मूर्च्छा (delirium)
- अत्यधिक तृष्ण (excess thirst)
- स्मृतिभ्रंश (memory loss)
- नीद्रादुर्गम (sleep disturbance)

Diseases Associated with Excessive Madya

1. Madatyaya
2. Yakrit Vikara (liver disorders)
3. Grahani disorders
4. Neurological disturbances
5. Psychological imbalance

Individuals Contraindicated for Madya

- Pregnant women
- Children
- Elderly individuals
- Persons with Pitta Prakriti
- Patients suffering from liver disorders

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MADYA AS AMRITA AND VISHA

Aspect	Amrita Effect	Visha Effect
Dose	Controlled	Excessive
Agni	Improves	Weakens
Mind	Relaxation	Delirium
Ojas	Preserved	Depleted
Body	Strength promoting	Tissue damage
Dosha	Balanced	Aggravated

This comparative analysis clearly demonstrates that the effects of Madya depend entirely on the manner of consumption. Ayurveda emphasizes moderation and individualized administration rather than absolute restriction.

DISCUSSION

Madya is one of the best examples of the Ayurvedic principle that every substance can become beneficial or harmful according to its usage. The properties of Madya such as Ushna, Tikshna, and Vyavayi make it therapeutically useful in certain conditions. At the same time, these very properties become harmful when consumed beyond the body's tolerance. Ayurveda focuses on individualized assessment before recommending Madya. Factors such as Prakriti, Satmya, Agni, Bala, and season are considered important. This reflects the personalized approach of Ayurveda.

Modern medicine also supports the dual nature of alcohol. Moderate consumption has been linked with certain cardiovascular and psychological benefits, whereas chronic excessive

consumption causes liver cirrhosis, neurological damage, addiction, and mental health disorders.

Thus, Ayurvedic wisdom regarding rational consumption remains highly relevant even today.

CONCLUSION

Madya occupies a unique position in Ayurveda because of its dual nature as both Amrita and Visha. Properly consumed Madya enhances digestion, promotes mental relaxation, and acts as a therapeutic agent. Conversely, excessive and irrational intake leads to severe physical and psychological disorders.

Ayurveda does not advocate blind consumption or total prohibition; rather, it emphasizes Yuktiyukta Sevana – rational and disciplined use according to individual suitability. This concept highlights the scientific depth and preventive approach of Ayurveda toward health maintenance.

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