

## Mad Honey: The Enigmatic Nectar of Ancient Traditions and Modern Curiosity

Kishore S. M.<sup>1</sup> and Mallesh Naik H.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph. D Scholar, Department of Entomology and <sup>2</sup>Ph. D Scholar, Department of Pathology  
Keladi Shivappa Nayaka University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences,  
Shivamogga 577204, Karnataka, India

“Mad honey, a variety of honey collected from the nectar collected from blossoms of *Rhododendron* plants contain grayanotoxins that cause this form of hallucination. Traditionally used in countries such as Nepal and Turkey, things have several uses; food, traditional medicine and as a recreational drug. To that end, this article aims at providing the historical background, process of making mad honey, its phytomedical impact and possible therapeutic value as well as the dangers of consumption. Supposing the global cravings for such honey accelerate, then so does the consumption call for investigative solutions.”

### Introduction

Glucotivating mad honey which has dusky red colour and stupefying property has been creating human interest from time immemorial. Collected in the Himalayan parts of Nepal and the Black Sea region in Turkey, this honey has to come from the nectar of *Rhododendron* flowers, which contain some grayanotoxins on their own. These compounds can cause mild feelings of happiness to rather intense effects such as the inability to understand where one is or feelings of sickness.

The record and lore of mad honey goes back in history to ancient Greece. This is used for medical and leisure purposes, as well as promising qualities such as an anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial and a neuroprotective substance. But its use is not without complications the compound known as grayanotoxin if taken internally causes poisoning.

This article opens a new chapter discussing this curious product and its process of making,

history, impact on human health, possible uses and the rules to follow when consuming mad honey.

### Historical Significance

The story of mad honey is lover with human history, culture and even warfare. Going back to ancient Greece, records of the knockout effects of mad honey had been well documented by the military man Xenophon in 401 B.C. This account shows that honey can have a general effect on the physical and mental abilities causing confusion and inability to operate.

During the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, in the Third Mithridatic War, the Pontic king Mithridates used bee honey as a bio weapon against the Roman enemies. When moving along his escape route Mithridates put honeycombs along his way so that the Romans who ate honey got paralyzed-one more example of honey as a weapon.

Over the course of time this substance appeared in European markets and, to increase the strength of their beverages, people used mad honey. Still to this date, mad honey has not gained much popularity outside the aforesaid

regions, but lately, due to a revived interest, the demand has been felt all over the world.

## Production and Harvesting

Mad honey is harvested from Himalayan giant honey bees, *Apis laboriosa*, they preferably build their colonies at ecosystems where flowers of *Rhododendron* species are found, particularly in high altitudes. Picking this honey is more of a challenge; the tribe's people of Gurung have to climb cliff to collect honey from the bee hives and for this they use rope ladders and smoke torches to fend off the bees.

It has been established that honey production mostly occurs twice a year- the climax usually occurring between March and April when *Rhododendrons* bloom. The level of grayanotoxin that can be found in the honey comb is largely depended on the conditions before the collection, which floral sources are available, and how the bees chose their flowers.

As the world gets around concerning mad honey from around the globe, it becomes crucial to ask how the honey can be harvested in a sustainable fashion. It becomes important to sustainably collect this unique living resource due to overharvesting and changing environment affecting *Apis laboriosa*.

## Physiological Effects

The major toxic principle in mad honey is grayanotoxin, which affects the central nervous system by blocking operation of sodium ion channels. They cause different physiological responses which include the following; low blood pressure, slow heart rates and symptoms like dizziness, nausea and hallucinations.

The toxic effects of mad honey depend on the dose taken and each person's tolerance. It has been reported that mild consumption can make one feel happy, but high dosages can cause paralysis of muscles and unconsciousness. Fortunately, most reported incidences of mad honey poisoning are not fatal and victims are known to recover within a few hours, a few days at worst.

## Health Benefits

Nevertheless, mad honey is still traditionally appreciated for various healing properties for the human organism. Some of the notable properties include:

**Antibacterial Properties:** This flavonoid extract has been proven to have an effect on growth of any pathogenic bacteria, this has made it be looked at as an option for certain bacterial infections.

**Anti-inflammatory Effects:** Because mad honey influences the signalling of inflammatory molecules, it will be useful in treating ailments such as arthritis, inflammatory bowel disease and other disorders marked with high levels of inflammation.

**Antioxidant Properties:** The honey's antioxidant content helps lower oxidative stress, which may lower one's risk of getting chronic illnesses.

**Digestive Health:** There is scientific evidence that mad honey may help to enhance digestive function and reduce manifestations of gastrointestinal disease.

**Respiratory Relief:** Them, the anti-inflammatory properties can reduce respiratory problems and thus it can be used for coughs and sore throat.

**Sexual Health:** Sometimes known as love honey, this product has been used to improve sexual prowess and fertility.

## Risks and Precautions

It's clear the appeal of mad honey could never be in doubt, though it is not without its risks. Grayanotoxins can cause very severe health issues especially when one swallows large amounts of it. The effects of mad honey poisoning are manifested in various forms; mild effects include dizziness, nausea, severe effects include seizures and even unconsciousness. The potential users must therefore begin with the use of the substance in small quantities as they observe the effects on them.

Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding or those with specific medical conditions or

children should not take this mad honey or should do so only where advised by a doctor or other qualified professional.

## Conclusion

But more than that, it perfectly fits in the role of a historical relic and an object of contemporary science. Although it has several possible health benefits and a rather interesting experience in leisure, there are risks, which should be considered. While mad honey gains popularity across the world, its acceptance has its doubles that is why the need for a harmonious approach is crucial. Sustainable harvesting, along with the people's awareness toward this little understood liquid, means that this mysterious beverage can be stayed with the human being, make the life brighter while not harming the environment from where it has come. As a functioning cure or even as a novelty

intoxicant, mad honey stays an interesting geographical location of study of nature, history, and mankind.

## References

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