



Review Article

THE CONCEPT OF *MADYA* (ALCOHOL) IN AYURVEDA: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF CLASSICAL AYURVEDA LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT


The consumption of *Madya* (alcohol) is an integral part of daily life and relevant description of Ayurveda *Madya* can be found since Vedic literature. According to Ayurveda Medicine, it is considered as a food as well as a drug. The term *Madya* refers to all alcoholic beverages in general. When it is used in a proper manner, it acts like nectar to the body while the improper use can even cause death to the individual. Many authentic texts in Ayurveda has mentioned about the usage of *Madya* and this research was conducted with the aim of identifying the types, properties, therapeutic uses and pharmacological actions of *Madya* by using the Ayurveda texts such as *Vridhdha Thraya*, *Laghu Thraya*, *Nighantus* and published articles in Web. *Madya* possess sour taste in prominent with sweet, pungent, bitter tastes as well. It is non-unctuous, penetrates deep, light, enter into minute pores, acts and spreads quickly in its qualities while hot in potency. Basically, there were five varieties of *Madya* and *Arishta* is the superior among them. The properties of *Madya* are similar to poison and opposite to *Ojas* (essence of vitality) and therefore it should be used by concerning about its useful effects as well as harmful effects too. *Madya* has the therapeutic actions such as, it improves the taste, helps digestion, laxative, cardiac tonic, cleanses the bladder, stimulates the sense organs and eliminates faeces and urine while relieving many diseases such as piles, hiccup, dyspnea, cough, anorexia, constipation etc. Mainly it gives *Kapha* and *Vata dosha shamaka* actions while aggravating the *Pitta dosha*. The important fact is, Ayurveda has described about the proper way of taking *Madya*, its beneficial effects and also it has been mentioned that improper usage of *Madya* gives rise to a disease condition called "*Madathya*", and remedies to get rid from it has also been mentioned in Ayurveda texts. Therefore, it can be concluded that, *Madya* has numerous beneficial effects on human health and it should be used accordingly otherwise it will create unexpected harmful effects.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a medical science which deals with the curing as well as prevention of the diseases. It has a vast history since Vedic period and the use of *Madya* (alcohol) was also abundantly seen from ancient times which goes far back as the times of *Rigveda* (2000 B.C.). The term *Madya* refers to all types of alcoholic beverages in general [1] and alcohol generally refers to ethyl alcohol (ethanol) which is a colorless,

transparent, volatile liquid with a sweetish burning taste and a fruity spirituous odor. It is categorized under the inebriant category of neurotoxic poisons[2]. Types of alcoholic beverages in commercial use are wines, beer, whiskey, brandy, vodka, rum etc and generally the ethanol content varies in different alcoholic beverages accordingly[3]. The pharmacological actions such as antiseptic, antibacterial, irritant are possessed by alcohol and it is considered as a Central Nervous System (CNS) depressant.

It has been mentioned in Ayurveda texts that, when *Madya* is used in the proper manner it is beneficial to the health and act as nectar (*Amrita*), and if it is used in the improper manner, it will give rise for

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multiple unwanted effects. *Madya* by nature, is similar to food which sustains the life of people and therefore it should be used wisely because if it is used improperly, food can even kills an individual [4]. Ayurveda not only describes about the proper way of taking *Madya*, but also its uses in attaining the beneficial health effects [5]. Therefore, it has been used in Ayurveda Medicine for centuries with the aim of attaining a healthy life style. *Madya* has been used to get rid of diseases such as piles, hiccup, dyspnea, cough, anorexia, constipation etc [6].

At present with the stressful life styles of majority of people in the modern society, the diseases get worsen than ever before. Because the proper usage of *Madya* can be used as a remedy for many ailments, it would be beneficial for the people in the society to get a clear view about the therapeutic properties of *Madya* and the disease conditions which it can be used for, in order to get rid of them. Therefore, this research was conducted with the aim of gathering the knowledge regarding the above-mentioned facts by using both Ayurveda and Western Medicinal approaches.

METHODS

This review was conducted by using the data mentioned in Ayurveda authentic texts such as *Vridhha Thraya (Charaka Samhita, Susruta Samhita and Ashtanga Hridaya), Laghu Thraya (Sharangadhara Samhita, Bhava Prakasha and Madhava Nidana), Ashtanga Sangraha and Nighantus* such as *Dhanvanthari Nighantu, Madanapala Nighantu, Bhavaprakasha Nighantu* and published articles in Web and open journals of few search engines.

RESULTS

The preparation of different kinds of *Madya* and drinking them individually or combining with other types of wines was very common in the ancient Indian society. At present also the same fact is observed. *Madya* gives an exhilaration when taking it

and a sort of mental exuberance too. Furthermore, it is considered as a tonic for health.

The regular and the continuous use of *Madya* make the people addicted towards it which occurs over the time. As a result, the quantity required to produce the above-mentioned exhilaration effects also get increased. But large quantities of these drinks produce many abnormalities in the various organs and their functions causing diseases and even death. Therefore, ancient scholars have prescribed certain rules and regimen when taking alcoholic preparations in order to protect and preserve the health of an individual. It is very much essential to follow the judicious use of alcoholic drinks as it is favourable for both body and mind but the injudicious use is injurious and harmful to health just like poison [7].

Madya comes under the topic of *Madatya* in Ayurveda and it affects to the intellect of the person causing inebriation and enhancing *Tamoguna* of the mind [8]. The definition of *Madya* has been described in Ayurveda as;

*“Peyan yan maadakan
lokaisthanmadyamabhidheeyathe
Yathaarishtan suraa seedhuraasavaadyamanekadhaa”*

Any drink or beverage which produces intoxication is called “*Madya*”, such as *Arishta, Suraa, Seedhu, Aasava* and many other kinds [9].

*“Buddhin lumpathi yathdravyan madakaari
thaduchyathe*

*Thamoguna pradhanan cha yathaa madyan
suraadikam”.*

Drugs possessing *Tamoguna* predominantly and cause derangement of mind are called *Madakaari* (intoxicants), for examples *Suraa* and other alcoholic beverages [10].

Ayurveda perspective of *Madya* (Alcohol)

The authentic texts of Ayurveda medicine has described about the properties of *Madya* in general which includes the taste, qualities, potency etc.

Table 1: properties of *Madya* in general

	<i>Charaka Samhita</i> [11]	<i>Susruta Samhita</i> [12]	<i>Ashtanga Hridaya</i> [13]	<i>Ashtanga Sangraha</i> [14]	<i>Bhava Prakash a</i> [15]	<i>Bhava Prakasha Nighantu</i> [16]	<i>Dhanvantari Nighantu</i> [17]	<i>Madanapala Nighantu</i> [18]
Rasa (Taste)	Sour	Sour	Sweet, bitter, pungent, slightly astringent	Sweet, bitter, pungent, slightly astringent	Sour	Sour	Sour, bitter, pungent, sweet, astringent	-
Guna (Quality)	Hot	Laxative (<i>Bhedan a</i>)	Penetrate deep, non-unctuous,	Penetrate deep, non-unctuous,	Non-unctuous, quick in	Non-unctuous, quick in	Sharp, light, enter into minute pores,	Sharp, laxative

			enter into minute pores, laxative (<i>Sara</i>)	enter into minute pores, laxative (<i>Sara</i>)	actions, penetrate deep, enter into minute pores, viscid, spread quickly, spread all over the body	actions, penetrate deep, enter into minute pores, viscid, spread quickly, spread all over the body	non-unctuous	
Veerya (Potency)	-	Hot	Hot	Hot	Hot	Hot	Hot	-
Vipaka (Post digestion effect)	Sour	Pungent	Sour	Sour	-	-	Sour	-
Dosha Karma (Action)	-	Increase <i>Pitta</i> , mitigate <i>Kapha</i> and <i>Vata</i>	Mitigate <i>Vata</i> and <i>Kapha</i>	Mitigate <i>Vata</i> and <i>Kapha</i>	Aggravate <i>Pitta</i> , mitigate <i>Vata</i> and <i>Kapha</i>	Aggravate <i>Pitta</i> , mitigate <i>Vata</i> and <i>Kapha</i>	Aggravate <i>Pitta</i> and <i>Rakta</i> , pacify <i>Kapha</i> and <i>Vata</i>	Vitiate <i>Pitta</i> , alleviate <i>Vata</i> and <i>Kapha</i>

In general *Madya* seems to possess sour taste in prominent and some texts have mentioned about the sweet, pungent, bitter tastes as well. Some authorities have mentioned that it has all tastes except salt [19]. According to *Ashtanga Hridaya* and *Ashtanga Sangraha* there is slight astringent taste too. It is non-unctuous, penetrates deep, enter into minute pores, acts and spreads quickly and light in its qualities while hot in potency. Mainly it gives *Kapha* and *Vata dosha shamaka* actions while aggravating the *Pitta dosha*.

Table 2: Properties of *Madya* as mentioned in *Vridhdha Thraya*

Property	<i>Charaka Samhita</i> [20]	<i>Susruta Samhita</i> [21]	<i>Ashtanga Hridaya</i> [22]
<i>Laghu</i> (light and easily digest)	+	-	+
<i>Ushna</i> (hot)	+	+	+
<i>Teekshna</i> (penetrating)	+	+	+
<i>Sukshma</i> (minute)	+	+	+
<i>Vishada</i> (non-slimy)	+	+	+
<i>Amla</i> (sour)	+	-	+
<i>Vyavaai</i> (quick spreading)	+	+	+
<i>Aashu</i> (quick acting)	+	+	+
<i>Vikaashi</i> (loosening of joints)	+	+	+
<i>Ruksha</i> (non-unctuous)	+	+	+

Because *Madya* is prepared from different ingredients, its properties get vary due to that. The action of *Madya* depends on the properties or *Gunas* of it. In *Charaka Samhita* and *Ashtanga Hridaya* ten *Gunas* have been mentioned while *Susruta Samhita* has mentioned about only eight *Gunas* except *Laghu* and *Amla*.

A comparison between *Madya*, *Ojas* and *Visha* in Ayurveda

The *Gunas* of *Madya* are opposite to *Ojas* (essence of vitality). Therefore, it can act oppose to the effects of *Ojas* leading for unnecessary outcomes. When *Madya* reaches *Hridaya* it affects to these ten *Gunas* of *Ojas* which is located in *Hridaya* [23].

On the other hand, *Madya* has ten *Gunas* which is similar to the properties of *Visha* (poison). As it resembles poison, it is very much essential to follow the recommended ways of using *Madya* in Ayurveda, otherwise it can affect badly to the individual as a poison.

Table 3: Comparison of *Madya*, *Ojas* and *Visha*

<i>Madya</i> [19]	<i>Ojas</i> [24]	<i>Visha</i> [25]
<i>Laghu</i>	<i>Guru</i>	<i>Laghu</i>
<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Sheeta</i>	<i>Ushna</i>
<i>Teekshna</i>	<i>Laghu</i>	<i>Teekshna</i>
<i>Suukshma</i>	<i>Ushna</i>	<i>Suukshma</i>
<i>Amla</i>	<i>Teekshna</i>	<i>Anirdeshya rasa</i>
<i>Vyavaai</i>	<i>Suukshma</i>	<i>Vyavaai</i>
<i>Aashu</i>	<i>Sthira</i>	<i>Aashu</i>
<i>Ruksha</i>	<i>Prasanna</i>	<i>Ruksha</i>
<i>Vikaashi</i>	<i>Pichchila</i>	<i>Vikaashi</i>
<i>Vishada</i>	<i>Snigdha</i>	<i>Vishada</i>

Madya possesses similar properties as of *Visha* except that it has *Amla rasa* (sour taste) where there is *Anirdeshya rasa* (uncertain hidden taste) in *Visha*. According to the opinion of *Acharyas*, the use of *Madya* has to be conducted wisely because *Madya* and *Visha* resembles the same properties and their actions are also similar in nature.

Synonyms of *Madya*

Various synonyms have been used to name *Madya* and different *Acharyas* who compiled the Ayurveda texts regarding this fact have given several synonyms for *Madya* as follows.

Table 3: Synonyms of *Madya* according to different *Acharyas*

	<i>Bhava Prakasha</i>	<i>Bhava Prakasha Nighantu</i>	<i>Madanapala Nighantu</i>	<i>Materia Medica of Ayurveda</i> [26]
<i>Madya</i>	+	+	+	+
<i>Haalaa</i>	+	+	+	-
<i>Suraa</i>	+	+	+	+
<i>Shundaa</i>	-	-	+	-
<i>Madiraa</i>	+	+	+	+
<i>Varunaathmajaa</i>	-	-	+	+
<i>Gandhottamaa</i>	-	-	+	+
<i>Kalyaa</i>	-	-	+	-
<i>Devasrishtaa</i>	-	-	+	+
<i>Vaaruni</i>	+	+	+	+
<i>Maireya</i>	+	+	-	-
<i>Iraa</i>	+	+	-	-
<i>Kaadambari</i>	+	+	-	-
<i>Balavallabhaa</i>	+	+	-	-
<i>Siidhu</i>	+	+	-	-
<i>Haaraa</i>	-	-	-	+
<i>Mandaa</i>	-	-	-	+
<i>Sudhaa</i>	-	-	-	+
<i>Kalpaa</i>	-	-	-	+

In the major Ayurveda texts such as *Charaka Samhita*, *Susruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridaya* and *Ashtanga Sangraha* synonyms for *Madya* have not been mentioned and very specifically *Nighantus* such as *Bhava Prakasha Nighantu* and *Madanapala Nighantu* as well as the authentic text, *Bhava Prakasha* have mentioned many synonyms.

The different types of *Madya* mentioned in Ayurveda

In Ayurveda, certain varieties of *Madya* have been described by almost all *Acharyas*. Among them *Arishta* is the superior one. Both authentic texts as well as *Nighantus* have described about the varieties of *Madya*. It can be classified based on their use, as a medicine and as a drinking beverage.

***Arishta* (Fermented decoction)**

Prepared by using many drugs and subjected to processing techniques such as boiling, filtration and fermentation etc. Therefore, this is a variety of alcohol prepared from boiling drugs in water and then fermenting. *Arishta* is superior in its properties than other varieties of *Madya*. It is astringent and pungent, mitigates *Kapha* and *Vata doshas*, kindles digestion, laxative, not against *Pitta*, beneficial in diseases such as fever, piles, indigestion, splenic disorders, abdominal pain, flatulence and enlargement of the abdomen, phthisis, anemia, anorexia, leprosy and other skin diseases, dropsy, intestinal parasitic infestations.

***Aasava* (Fermented infusion)**

Madya prepared with drugs without boiling them is known as *Aasava*. There is no process of heating or boiling involved in this preparation. The properties of this depends on the substances used for preparation. The *Aasava* prepared by using tubers, roots, fruits etc is similar to *Shukta* in its properties while *Aasava* prepared by using balls of fried paddy mixed with spices, dried in sun and then deep fried in oil and by other materials such as oil cakes etc which have turned sour by lapse of time are appetizers and easily digestible. Eighty-four types of *Aasava* have been described in *Charaka Samhita* based on the sources from which *Madya* is prepared.

***Suraa* (Red beer)**

This is prepared by using the flour of "*Shaali*" and "*Shashtika*" (rice). It cures abdominal tumors, enlargement of abdomen, piles, duodenal diseases, edema, consumption and dysuria and it is lubricating, stoutening, hard to digest, increases perspiration, mitigates *Vata*, causes increase of fat, blood, breast milk, urine and *Kapha*. Therefore, this is beneficial for those who are emaciated.

Vaaruni

Madya prepared by using "*Punarnava*" and "*Shaalipishti*" (dough of rice flour) together mixed with *Suraa* preparation or *Suraa* prepared from the mixture of juice of "*Taala*" and "*Kharjura*" is known as *Vaaruni*. It is easily digestible as *Suraa* and good for heart. It mitigates rhinitis, flatulence, constipation, cough, vomiting and pain.

***Seedhu* (Wine of Sugarcane juice)**

Seedhu which is prepared from cooked (boiled, cooled and fermented) sugarcane juice is called "*Pakvarasa Seedhu*" and that prepared from uncooked juice or fermented without boiling is called prepared "*Sheetarasa Seedhu*". Among these two varieties *Pakvarasa Seedhu* is best because it improves voice, digestive fire, strength and color, increases and produces instant *Vata* and *Pitta*, produces instant unctuousness, helps taste, cures constipation, obesity, piles, swellings, dropsy, abdominal enlargement and diseases of *Kapha* origin. *Sheetarasa Seedhu* is slightly inferior in its properties and it is a good scarificant.

Besides these, there are numerous other preparations also which have been mentioned in authentic texts. For the abundant use, above mentioned preparations are widely used in the Ayurveda Medicine.

Therapeutic actions of *Madya* according to Ayurveda Medicine

Madya improves the sensation of taste, kindles digestion, laxative, good for heart, cleanses the bladder, causes heart burn, penetrating into tissues, stimulates the sense organs, causes loosening of the joints and eliminates faeces and urine [12].

Madya is acting quickly, creates dryness, and undergoes digestion quickly [15]. It is exhilarating, nourishing, removes fear, grief and fatigue, provides boldness, energy, imagination, corpulence and strength too [14]. Apart from that, *Madya* provides contentment and nourishment, beneficial for voice, health and improves complexion. [17]

Therapeutic uses of *Madya* according to Ayurveda Medicine

The different varieties of *Madya* cures diseases such as cough, hiccup, piles, duodenal disorders, dyspnea, nasal rhinitis, vomiting, loss of taste, constipation, distension of abdomen, dysentery, edema, leprosy, abdominal tumors, indigestion, anorexia, fever, flatulence, dropsy, dysuria, obesity, worm infestations, deficiency of breast milk, bladder disorders, phthisis, insomnia, hypersomnia, cardiac disorders, anemia, renal colic etc. *Madya* has been also used as an anesthetic agent in *Shastra Karma* (Surgical procedures) [27].

Ayurveda drug preparations such as *Ushiraasava*, *Pippalyaadyaasava*, *Kutajaarishta*, *Lauhaasava*, *Khadiraarishta*, *Draakshaarishta* and *Dashamoolaarishta* etc contain alcohol in a favorable level to the health of individuals and they can be used with the recommended doses of physicians accordingly [28].

Effects of *Madya*

In persons those who have *Saathwika* temperament, *Madya* encourages singing, laughing etc. In persons of *Raajasa* temperament it encourages adventurous activities and in persons of *Taamasa* temperament it leads to mean activities and deep sleep [29].

The Ayurveda concept of fresh and old alcohol

Nava Madya (freshly prepared wine) increases moisture in the tissues, is hard for digestion, aggravates *Vata* and other *Doshas*, possesses unpleasant taste and odor, not good for the heart and causes heart burn while *Puraana Madya* (wine old by many years) has a pleasant odor, kindles digestion, good for heart, helps taste, destroys worms, dilates the channels of tissues, easily digestible and mitigates *Vata* and *Kapha doshas* [30].

The regimen of drinking alcohol according to Ayurveda

Ayurveda Medicine has described not only about the therapeutic uses of *Madya*, but also the correct manner of taking it to the body which leads for the proper functioning and obtaining beneficial effects from *Madya*. It has been mentioned that, for those who drinks wine in a proper way, proper quantity at appropriate time along with suitable foods in accordance to one's strength and in a happy mood, *Madya* acts like nectar. But, for those who drinks wine habitually it is like only a food for them and when using it injudiciously it produces diseases while if it is used judiciously it acts like nectar [31].

It is also stated that *Madya* should be taken with unctuous food, meat or snacks. Then it would give longevity, strength, desire, happiness, growth, courage etc [32].

An appropriate alcohol drink

The alcohol drink which is preserved for a long time, which has obtained the juice of all the drugs, which is a digestive stimulant, which alleviates *Kapha* and *Vata*, which is an appetizer, which is clean, which contains good smell and which promotes intellect should be taken by a person [33].

Contraindications of taking *Madya*

Madya consumed by the person without food and in solitude (without the company of others) daily produces, many disorders of the body which are very difficult to cure and even lead to death.

Madya consumed by persons who are afflicted by anger, thirst, fear, sorrow or hunger, exhausted by physical activities, lifting heavy weights and long walk, suppression of natural urges of the body, who are filled their stomach with very sour and uncooked foods, by persons of poor strength and who are affected by heat (exposure to sun or fire for long periods) gives rise to different diseases [34]. Therefore, such facts should be avoided when taking *Madya* in order to refrain from harmful effects from it.

If alcohol is taken in a harmful way to the body which means by exceeding the recommended doses, taking alcohol for prolong period, taking it in empty stomach etc, can lead for serious diseases and even subject to death. In Ayurveda Medicine a disease condition which occurs due to excessive intake of *Madya* has been described under the topic of "*Madathya*". And the remedies which has to be followed in order to get rid of it also mentioned in the authentic texts.

Therapeutic uses of alcohol as per Western Medicine

It has been found that people who regularly consume a small amount of alcohol has a beneficial effect on health. It aids in lowering the incidence of getting cardiac diseases, stroke, diabetes and some sort of cancers when compared to those who do not drink alcohol at all or drink occasionally. Alcohol has the ability of increasing the HDL (High Density Lipoprotein) Cholesterol levels which directly influences for reducing the chances of getting cardiac diseases as well as strokes.

Drinking alcohol with food also slows down stomach emptying which gives health benefits by slowing the flux of fats and sugars into the bloodstream and their subsequent burden on the body. Alcoholic beverages such as wines, beers and ciders have the anti-oxidant properties too. It is essential to take them in minimum levels because high doses can give bad effects than favorable effects to the body. Heavy alcohol drinkers may result in hypertension, dementia, heart diseases etc. Therefore, it is ideal to use this in a friendly manner to the health in order to obtain its advantages to the body [35].

DISCUSSION

Madya is a source of food as well as drug which has been used over many centuries by people. Therefore, it possesses both nutritional as well as a medicinal value. In Ayurveda Medicine different varieties of *Madya* have been described by several *Acharyas* and *Arishta* is the superior among them. Freshly prepared alcohol aggravates *Vata dosha* and other *Doshas* while old alcohol mitigates *Vata* and *Kapha doshas*. *Madya* possess very significant

properties such as non-unctuous, penetrates deep, enter into minute pores, acts and spreads quickly and light, which causes for its actions. Therefore, it is used as a drug in Ayurveda Medicine. *Madya* is capable of relieving many diseases such as piles, hiccup, dyspnea, cough, anorexia, constipation etc due to its various types of therapeutic properties and actions. It is essential to use *Madya* with thorough concern as it will cause for certain toxic effects and leading for many diseases. Ayurveda has described about the disease conditions which occur due to improper use of *Madya* under the topic "*Madathya*" and relevant measures to get rid of them too. Therefore, ideal use of *Madya* is a prior important fact according to Ayurveda Medicine in order to attain its valuable therapeutic uses and once it is used wisely it will act as nectar to the body of individuals by giving numerous beneficial health effects.

The use of natural alcohol fermentation in making liquid medicine in Ayurveda acts as factor for enhancing market values by giving the opportunity of earning money. Apart from that, as they can be preserved for a long period without adding preservatives, it saves the shelf lives too. As per the obtained evidence it was clear that when taken in proper, small doses *Madya* is beneficial for improving the community health. Moreover, by keeping the traditional fermenting technologies alive can aid in preserving the cultural knowledge too. Social harmony can be uplifted by taking the alcohol in proper manner as Ayurveda promotes mindful consumption according to the body type.

With related to the above-mentioned facts, it can be stated that *Madya* acts beneficial when taken with thorough care and if it is misused it will become a factor for depleting the above advantages.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, it can be concluded that *Madya* is a valuable substance which can be used to obtain multiple therapeutic effects in curing and the prevention of diseases. It is an effective food article as well as a medicinal drug which has to be used wisely by the people in society which will be beneficial to humankind if used wisely.

Recommendations

Further clinical and experimental studies need to be carried out to evaluate the efficacy of therapeutic potentials of *Madya* (alcohol) in the health care system in order to obtain its maximum usage in the treatment of diseases and disorders.

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