



Honey in oral diseases: Ayurvedic and Unani perspective

We read the article titled- 'Honey and its uses in oral diseases-An overview' by Patil S and Gudipani RK with profound interest. We would like to congratulate the authors for giving an informative narrative regarding use of honey in oral diseases. The authors have reviewed the applications of honey in oral diseases namely oral ulcers (recurrent minor apthae, recurrent herpetic ulcers), oral cancer, periodontal conditions (gingivitis and periodontitis and gingivitis associated with orthodontic procedures) and oral candidiasis. Additionally, authors discuss the use of honey as an intra canal medicament and in dental caries prevention.

Bee's honey is one of the most cherished natural substances known to mankind. Honey known as *madhu* in ayurvedic scriptures is one of the most important medicines used in ayurveda. In ayurveda, honey is used for both internal and external applications. According to ayurveda, there are eight different types of honey- Pouttika, Bhramara, Kshoudra, Makshika, Chatra, Arghya, Oudalaka, Dala. Of these, Makshika is considered medicinally the best and Ouddalakam is known to increase taste.[1] According to ayurveda, Bee's honey is used in treatment of bad breath - 5 g of powdered cinnamon bark and 5ml of bee's honey mixed with water may be used as a mouth wash. [2] Manuka and acacia honey have been successfully used against halitosis (malodour). [3] Massaging gums gently with bee's honey has been found to be effective in teething in children.[4] In a recent pilot study on ayurvedic management of oral submucous fibrosis Koshthashuddhi (mild purgation) and Shodhana Nasya (errhine therapy); Pratisarana (external application) with Madhupippalyadi Yoga, Kavala (gargling) with Ksheerabala Taila and internally Rasayana Yoga were given. [5] Honey is an integral part of Madhupippalyadi Pratisarana and Rasayana Yoga. Statistically highly significant relief in almost all signs and symptoms as well in inter incisal distance improvement was noted. Topical application of honey can be used for the management of radiation-induced oral mucositis and chemotherapy induced oral stomatitis.[6,7]

The classical literature of Unani System of Medicine has a large number of formulations which have been used in various diseases of mouth (*Amrāz-i Fam*). All the important books such as *Kitāb al-Hāwī fi'l-Tibb* by Muhammad b. Zakariyya Rāzī (d. 926), *al-Mu'ālajāt al-Buqrātiyya* by Abū

Hasan Ahmad b. Muhammad Tabarī (d. 985), *Kāmil al-Sanā'a al-Tibbiyya* by 'Alī b. 'Abbās Majūsī (d. 994), have exclusive chapters on the diseases of oral cavity. The base used in Unani medicine is often honey (Shahed or Asl Musaffa). The *Qiwam* (Basic Solution of Particular consistency) is generally made by adding Aab (Water), Arq (distillate) or Aab-e-Samar (fruit juice) etc. in any of the bases of purified Asl (Honey), Sugar, Turanjabeen (Tamarix indica gum), Sheerkhisht (Fraxinus ornus 31 32 exudate) etc. boiled over low fire till it acquires a required particular consistency. [8] Important Unani formulations types that contain honey are- Anushdaru, Gulqand (Conserve), Khameera (Fermented confection), Laooq (Linctus), Majun (Confection), Murabba (Preserver), Sikanjbeen. Preparation medicines which has honey as one of its components are Khamira Gaozaban for *Qulā'* (Stomatitis) and Jawarish Bisbasa and Jawarish Jalinus for *Bakhr-ul-fam* (Bad breath).

There is an ongoing debate regarding the harmful effects of honey on teeth. A cariogenic effect of honey has been reported [9], but the effect of honey is found to be less cariogenic than sucrose. [10] Additionally, honey has been suspected to cause erosion of tooth enamel. According to electron microscopic studies ingestion of honey does not cause erosion of tooth enamel as observed after drinking of fruit juice (pH 3.5). Ten minutes after consumption of fruit juice tooth erosion was seen, while 30 minutes after honey ingestion the erosion was only very weak. [11].

Oral diseases continue to be a major health problem worldwide. The traditional knowledge of Ayurveda and Unani medicine, if integrated with the modern dentistry, will make dentistry much safer, affordable and more accessible for the lower socio-economic groups in society.

Arpita Rai

Department of Oral Medicine and Radiology, Faculty of Dentistry,
Jamia Millia Islamia.

Address for correspondence:

Arpita Rai,
Department of Oral Medicine and Radiology, Faculty of Dentistry,
Jamia Millia Islamia.
arpitadoc@gmail.com

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