BHRAMAROTPITĀDHARAḤ – BEES IN CLASSICAL INDIA

Klaus Karttunen

Un’ ape esser vorrei,
donna bella e crudele,
che sussurrando in voi suggesse il miele
e, non potendo il cor, potesse almeno
pungervi ’l bianco seno
e ’n si dolce fertia
vendicata lasciar la propria vita.

Torquato Tasso

1. INTRODUCTION

Why have I decided to study bees in classical India?\(^1\) The theme seems rather trivial. Everyone knows bees, both as the heralds of spring in poetry and as the makers of honey. However, there is much more to be said about them. I came to ponder more about bees when noting a couple of errors with names. Because of their large size and dark colour, some translators call the black bees of India humblebees (or bumblebees). This is completely wrong; the humblebees belong to a different genus, they form only small communities, produce very little honey and are quite rare in India. Another case concerns modern usage. In a seminar at the University of Helsinki, a student presented her interpretation of Premchand’s short story ‘Satī’\(^2\). Examining it, my attention was drawn to a passage with the Hindi word bhaunirā. The young Rājput heroine was attracting soldiers around her like a flower attracts these insects. Although there are a number of species of beetles visiting flowers, I could not accept ‘beetles’ as translation, not even when I found bhaunirā explained as a ‘large black beetle’ in McGregor’s dictionary. A check with Śyāmsundar Dāś’s Hindī sabdasāgar brought the more acceptable sense of a ‘bee’

---

\(^1\) Revised and much extended version of the paper read at the 13th World Sanskrit Conference, Edinburgh, 13 July 2006. Margot Stout Whiting has kindly corrected my English.

\(^2\) Mānsarovar 5, 73-85.
and Turner confirmed that the word is derived from OIA bhramara (Pāli, Pkt. and Ap. bhamara). Of course, a Hindi speaker has no difficulty with the passage.

2. NAMES OF BEES

2.1 Indo-Aryan

In Sanskrit, bees have numerous names. They include bhṛgha, bhramara and ali(n). Several names are formed with madhu ‘honey’: madhukara (P) and madhukeri (TS) both signifying the ‘maker of honey’, madhuda ‘giver of honey’, madhupa ‘drinker of honey’, madhuvrata ‘devoted to honey’, madhulīh ‘licker of honey’, also puspalih and puspandhaya ‘licker of flowers’. Occasionally, just madhu seems to serve as short hand for a ‘bee’. Furthermore, we find dvirepha ‘containing two r’s (as bhramara),’ṣaṭpada ‘six-footed’ (also ṣaṭcarana and ṣaḍaṇghria [in BṛhP 4, 29, 53]), saragh(ā), indindirā, bambahra, bhasala, milinda, rolamba (lolasma), śīlmukha, the Rgvedic hapax āraṅgara, etc. A number of these have parallels in Pāli and Prākrits. At times, many words for bees can also be used in the sense of ‘insects’ in general (see below).

Some names need a closer discussion here. Sarāgh (fem.) appears in ŚP 3, 4, 3, 14 (bees make honey, Kashi ed. 3, 3, 4, 14 māḍhu sāraghām iti ... sarāgho madhukrito) and other Brāhmaṇa texts, vocalised saraghā in classical texts, but the derivation sāraghā as early as Rgveda (8, 4, 2 as honey, 10, 106, 10 perhaps as bee, see below). The etymology of the word was discussed by Charpentier (1919) who also equated it with sarāj of RV 1, 112, 21 (dat.pl. ‘to bees’ according to Mayrhofer, then TS, etc.) and with the lexicographers’ word sarata ‘lizard’. The latter word is also found in MIA and even Maṛāṭhi, but according to Mayrhofer, it is not related.

---

3 Turner s.v. bhramara. Other dictionaries (e.g. Satyaprakāśa and Misra) confirm that Hindi bhauvrā as well as the tattasams bhṛing and bhramar can also have the sense of ‘beetle’, but ‘bee’ is certainly primary and McGregor should have given it. Note that Malayālī also have a tendency to mix beetles and bees (see 2.2 below).

4 Bhṛinga is met as early as the AV (9, 2, 22 Kāma is superior to them), bhramara from the epics onward. Mayrhofer (KEWA and EWA) connects both with the humming, adding some Indo-Iranian and Indo-European parallels, but does not completely exclude the alternative explanation of a connection with bhram- ‘to wander’.

5 On this, see Lüders 1916, who construes an original meaning of ‘sting’. Note that in lexicography the word also has the meaning ‘scorpion’.

6 Varāhamihira’s Yogāyātra 3, 6 quoted below, where madhu is mentioned along with pigeons and owls. This use is not mentioned in the ps.

7 Explained in Alankāra texts, e.g. Vāmana 5, 1, 15+. dvirepharathacaranasabdau bhrama-racakravākau.

8 Pāli bhamara, madhukara and late ali (13th century, see Warder 2004: 807); Prākrit ali/āli, bhamara, bhasala, bhriṅga, madhuara, etc.
Like the possibly related bhramara, the word bambhara is, in Mayrhofer’s opinion, connected with the idea of humming, but his Nuristani parallels show that the word must be quite early. The word bhasala occurs in classical texts, in lexicography also as bhasalana. The word milinda ‘bee’ is quoted from the Bhāminīvilāsa, cf. Marāṭhi milinda, Kannada mēlamba and Telugu milindamu ‘the black humble bee’ (thus Mayrhofer and DEDR 5097, but see my note on humble-bees below). Both indindira and rolamba (in lexicography also lolamba) as a ‘bee’ are found in classical texts, the first perhaps corresponds to Pkt. idduṇḍa. Mayrhofer (EWA) mentions for rolamba a not very similar Tamil parallel suggested by Burrow, but deems the etymology uncertain. The black bee is specified as nilāli by Bāmaha (2, 6, quoted below). According to the Vedic Index, madhukri is found in the TS (1, 5, 6 and 4, 2, 9), but seems here to denote cattle. As a ‘bee’, it is attested in the ŚP B 1, 6, 2, 1f. (1, 5, 1, 1f. Kashi ed. yathā madhu madhuṣṭro nirdhayeyur).

2.2 Dravidian

Checking DEDR for Dravidian languages, I found i.al. no. 3328 Tamil, etc., tumpi ‘bee, male bee, dragon-fly’; in other languages related words are also used for beetles. In TL, tumpi as ‘bee’ is explained as uyarnta cāti vaṭū ‘a high-caste insect’. In Malayālam, however, it is explained by Gundert as ‘a black bee flying at night’. For cognates, DEDR also notes the sense of ‘beetle’ in Kota, Koḍagu and Parji, while ‘bee’ is attested in Kannada, Tulu and Telugu. One can hardly confuse a beetle with a bee when it is still, but with a flying insect there is a certain similarity (e.g. the cockchafer). The more common confusion between bees and flies is contained in DEDR no. 533 Tamil ṭ ‘bee’ with compounds ṭeṭi ‘honey-bee’ and iccai ‘fly’ and with cognates in Malayālam, Irula, Kota and Toda all signifying a ‘fly’ (but Telugu tēṇṭi ‘large black bee’).

2.3 Bees or flies?

Even OIA mákša/mákšikā can refer to bees, in addition to flies. In the Rigveda, there are four passages where they are mentioned in connection with the Aśvins as carriers of honey. In RV 1, 119, 9 and 10, 40, 6 they bring honey to the Aśvins. In RV 7, 32, 2 the Aśvins are said to come to the honey-pressing like bees (or

---

9 The dictionaries, PW & prw, know only nilālikulasaṅkula as a species of rose in lexicography (Dhanvantari).
10 RV 1, 119, 9 atā syā vāṁ madhman mákṣikāraṇan māde; 10, 40, 6 yavōr ha mákša pāry aśvinā madhvāśā ‘bharata.
flies?). There have been attempts (Macdonell & Keith 1912 s.v. makṣa; Geldner’s translation, Thieme 1965) to explain some of these passages as ‘flies’, but I would rather think that we have here bees and it was only later that makṣa/makṣikā became understood as a ‘fly’. Much later, it was considered an ill omen, if flies made honey. But even then, a madhumakṣikā seems to be a bee. When I started this study, I was of the opinion that makṣa/makṣikā generally denoted a ‘fly’ and indeed, a number of references can be shown to support this. However, classical Indian literature often shows a confusion between different kinds of animals (cf. my discussion of śalabha and pataṅga in Karttunen 2003). Medical authors list māksika among the different kinds of honey and in the commentary of Dalhana, the repeated word makṣikā can only be translated as a ‘bee’ (see 7.3 below).

The same ambiguity is also found in Pāli. In the Dipavaṇṇa (6, 11 makkhi-kā madhukān karun), flies are impossible. When the Dhammapada Commentary (1, 5, p. 59 and 2, 1, p. 166) speaks of good honey as nimmakkhi-kamadhu, this is translated by Burlingame and the PTS Dictionary as ‘free from flies’. Of course, good honey should be so, but it also should be ‘free from (dead) bees’. In the first passage, the honeycomb was actually found in such a condition and this gives the further idea of being ‘free from bees’ to defend it. This is supported with Jātaka 51 (J 1, p. 262), where the rich, but undefended country is described as being like nimmakkhi-tamadhu-pañāla ‘honeycomb without bees’. Nevertheless, there is no shortage of passages where Sanskrit makṣikā or Pāli makkhi-kā clearly refers to flies. In fact, they are so numerous that I intend to deal with them in a separate study in future.

3. BEES IN NATURE AND HISTORY

3.1 Species of bees

There are different kinds of social bees preparing honey. The bee traditionally kept in Europe is known as Apis mellifera L. In South Asia, there are three species: the large Apis dorsata Fabr., variously called the hill bee, the rock bee, or the giant

11 RV 7, 32, 2 mādhuvo nā mākṣaḥ sāvanāni gacchatthāt. Thieme (1965: 224) explains the word here as ‘flies’. On the connection of the Āsins (Nāsatyas) with madhu and surā, see Parpola 2005: 21–22.
12 RV 10, 106, 10 āranyagāvāva mādhu-vrāvayate sūraghēva; cf. RV 1, 112, 21 mādhu priyām bharatiḥ yāt sarādhīyas.
13 AP 263, 29 mādhu vā makṣikā kuryāt. The AITMS translation claims that this means ‘sweet sound made by bees’ which can hardly be considered a sinister omen. But it could also refer to ‘bees making honey (in the house)’, cf. 9.2 below.
honey bee. It lives wild in hilly areas all over South Asia and is said to produce excellent honey (but see 7.3 below). *Apis cerana* Fabr., (or *Apis indica* Fabr.), the tree bee or eastern honey bee, is the usual domesticated bee in South Asia. This is found even in the mountains. The third species is the small *Apis florea* Fabr., the flower bee or the little honey bee. It is found only on plains. They build their nests on trees and bushes, but also on and in houses. *Apis cerana* and *Apis florea* have just one single comb, but what *Apis dorsata* does is not clear (Watt 1889: 436).

The large black bees are properly speaking *Apis dorsata*, but often it is not possible to differentiate them from *Apis cerana* in literature. According to texts, wild bees build their nests in trees and on precipices, and their honey is collected, often by wild tribes. They produce excellent honey (but see later Chapter 7), but they are also aggressive and therefore dreaded and dangerous.

### 3.2 Bee-Keeping in history

Bee-keeping or at least the collecting of the honey of wild bees started early both in India and elsewhere. The very existence of a common Indo-European word for ‘honey’ shows its great antiquity. There are prehistoric traces of bee-keeping in South Russia. Herodotus (5, 10) gave an account of bees in the country beyond Thrace. The ideas of Greek and Roman zoologists about bees can be found in Aristotle (*H. An.* 8 [9], 40, 623b–627b), Pliny (*N. H.* 11, 11–70) and Aelianus (*N. An.* 5, 10–13), and in addition, agricultural texts discuss the honey industry (e.g. Vergil and Columella). In the western world where sugar was practically unknown, honey was much appreciated as a sweetener.

In India, honey was already consumed and appreciated in the early Vedic period (see the RV passages quoted above), but there is little evidence of actual bee-keeping.

---

14 I have long wondered what is *Bombinatrix glabra*, given in the *DEDR* as a name of black bee. The question remains somewhat open, but perhaps it is just a synonym for *Apis dorsata*. The source for *DEDR* seems to be Kittel’s *Kannada Dictionary* of 1894 and thus it is probably an old, now antiquated name. Unfortunately, the ITIS (*Integrated Taxonomical Information System*) does not recognise it at all.

15 Names according to *An Annotated Catalogue of the Bee Species of the Indian Region*. See also Hooper 1910: 511.

16 OIA *madhu*, Greek μέλι, Latin *mel*, OHG *mito*, also early Finno-Ugric loan, e.g. Finnish *mesi* ‘honey, nectar of flowers’ (FU *mete*). Another Finnish word, *meiläinen* ‘bee’ is, through FU *mekle*, perhaps related with OIA *maškij*ī. See Koivulehto 1994: 136 (meiläinen) & 138 (mete) and Parpola 2005: 21. In spite of this, the IE words for the ‘bee’ widely differ, e.g. Latin *apis*, Greek μέλισσα, OHG *bita* (OE *bēo*). An interesting, though antiquated source is Pott 1861.
3.3 Ideas of bees as animals

The literary motifs in India connected with bees are numerous. Their popularity can be seen from the fact that several anthologies contain a special division for the theme ‘bee’ (e.g. in the Śāṅgadharapaddhati and Vallābhadeva’s Subhāṣīlavañī, see Chapter 9 below).

It is not easy to observe the senses and abilities of insects. A classification of animals in the Bhāgavatapurāṇa (3, 29, 28 ff.) rightly ascribes the olfactory sense to bees, but here a much higher category are those animals that perceive colours (as bees in reality do).

In many lists, bees are mentioned together with birds.

4. BEES IN LITERATURE

4.1 Bees and forest

In general, bees belong to the forest. The numerous poetic descriptions of forests, parks and gardens in Sanskrit poetry hardly ever omit to mention bees and their humming as staple characteristics. A bee is glad, when it sees a forest with various flowering trees and fragrant breezes (Bhīṣṇu 15, 30 N = 16, 22 Oh kusumītam abhipāyantvāvividhatarugaṇapīśchannam/vanamanilātīśayagandhāryambhramati madhukariḥ āryaḥ). According to an unknown poet, the trees develop their scent for winds, shoots for the deer, bark for ascetics, flowers for bees, fruits for birds, their shade for those afflicted by heat and their trunks for the scent-elephants (*Jalhaṇa, Śūktimuktavāṇi, according to Warder 2004: 959).

When the distinction between the terrible and the friendly forest (arāṇya and vana) is made – as often happens in epics and narrative literature – bees belong to vana. Usually, the sight of bees is exhilarating, but for hungry people looking for honey, the bees may become a real torment (Bhāgavatapurāṇa 5, 13, 10 karhi sma cicit kṣudrarasaṇān vicīnvaṇān tan māśikābhīr vyathito vimanāḥ). Their buzzing is

---

17 e.g. Mbh 1, 64, 5 satpadāgūrīrgatolatam (scil. vanam); 3, 98, 13 satprodāgūrīrinadāvar vighuṣaṇā; 3, 146, 20; 3, 155, 52; 3, 296, 41 mahāvanam ... bhramarair upāgaṇaḥ, etc.; Viśnū HC 8, 127 (234) madhupaprāṁsāhīśhāhījanaḥ & Kd 41 below; Kṛṣṇa 4, 274; Sankara ST Bh 27; Jayadeva Gitag 1, 27; Somadeva KSS 4, 2 (22), 103 bhṛṅgūṣaṅgītiṣvanāram; BhāgP 1, 6, 13 bhramarāsūryāḥ (mountains); 3, 33, 18 gṛṇmaṇmaṇmadhavaratam (garden); 4, 6, 12 madāmāhālimcīrīcītī (Mt. Kailāsa) & 4, 6, 29 (Kubera’s garden); 4, 9, 63 gṛṇmaṇmaṇmadhavaraṇāḥ (royal garden); 4, 24, 22 (trees around a lake); 4, 25, 17 (garden); examples in Bhīṣṇu 32, 300 N (32, 354 Gh; vanaḥ pagūdachappadān uve esa kākāla); Varāhamihira BS 19, 5 vanaṁ alinādhītāṁ & 24, 1 on the summit of Meru & 48, 7; Āryasūtra Jn 9, p. 156 & 24, p. 219; Vedēha’s Samantakāvyaśānānam 515. An exception is the Mahāvastu that (being not bound by poetic conventions of classical Sanskrit) in its descriptions of gardens elaborates on various flowers, but often omits to mention the usual birds, bees and other animals.
generally described as pleasant (for examples, see 4.6 below), but in a Jaina work, the noise of bees, disturbed when clusters of flowers were being cut from trees, sounded as if cries of pain came from the trees (*Vādirāja, Pārśvanāthacarita 4, 6 in Warden 1992: 320).

In the artificial gardens of Dhārāṇī, the skilled engineers of King Bhoja had not only created bird and monkey robots, but even mechanical bees (*Śrīgāramanjarī quoted by Warden 1992: 156).

4.2 Bees and flowers

4.2.1 General

The most natural among the bee motifs of poetry, easily observed in nature by everyone, is the idea of flowers attracting bees. A flower without a bee is like a young woman in love without a lover (Śaṅkara ŚṬBh 134). The subjects are drinking up the substance of a smiling king like quivering bees the flower, hardly touching it at all.18 But sometimes bees are so numerous that flowers break and collapse under their weight.19 In many cases, we note particular flowers attracting bees: The real favourites are various jasmines, mango, and lotus and waterlily, but a number of other flowers are also mentioned as visited by bees. My material provides the following instances:

4.2.2 Individual flowers

4.2.2.1 Jasmine. The various jasmines (mālatī, navamālikā, kunda, etc.) of India are often mentioned as particular bee flowers. They include bushes and creepers with large, fragrant white flowers. They are said to flower in the rainy season and open their flowers in the evening (Syed 1990: 498 ff.).

In texts, jasmine is one of the favourites of bees. Thus we find bees visiting jasmines, e.g. in Harṣa Pri 2, 1+ (mālatī, quoted above) and 3, 0 (mālatī, below); Rājaśekhara KM 3, 2 bhāmarakavalliṁtā mālatāmāliṇī & VBh 1, 30; Kālidāsa Rv 16, 47 sayahtanamalikā; Bhartṛhari Śṛṅgāra 98 vikasatkumādyadvirepe; Daṇḍin DKC 5, 148 madhukara iva navamālikām and Kā 1, 43f. mālatāmāla lollālikalī as an example of śleṣa; Bāṇa Kd 29 & 175; Subandhu 48f. & 136 vikilakalikāvivare maṇju guṇjan madhukaro & 137f. vikacavicikilārijir alikulaśabala; Bilhana 40 antarimagnamadhupākukunda; *Maṃkha Śrīk 6, 70 (in

19 Harṣa Pri 2, 1+ mahuvarhharhabhagabhūṭumālāladalā; Daṇḍin DKC 7, 167–177. lālasālī- latāghanagālāgāhanakesare; Bāṇa Kd 278 bhurmarabhharhabhagakesarajarjarakusumopahāraramyo ayaṁ lakāmanḍapaṁ.
Warder 2004: 85); Somadeva KSS 13, 1 (104), 42 ff. malatīlātā ... (44) āpatītāṁs tasyāṁ kusumēṣu śilīmukhāṁ; Śāṅgadhararapaddhati 45, 15 (829 = Vallabhadeva 18, 740); Vallabhadeva 18, 742 & 743 navamālīkā. Furthermore, there is a verse quoted by Syed 1990: 499 ex Sternbach, MSS 8438f. & Hála (Weber) 442 on bees in jasmine.

There are several members of the genus Jasminum indigenous to South Asia and they do not all flower at the same time. What was said above (rainy season) applies to the common shrub Jasminum sambac, but Jasminum arborescens has flowers from winter to summer, Jasminum calophyllum in winter and spring, while Jasminum cordifolium blooms in January. Thus, we need not wonder when we meet in texts blooming jasmine in other seasons. In one case, it is explained that bees like the jasmine (kunda) as it flowers early in the spring, when other trees have not yet opened their flowers (Vidyākara 8, 8 (159)). In the Śāṅgadhararapaddhati 137, 13 (3931), they visit jasmine in wintertime (kundāṇanditamattāśatpadakule). In Vallabhadeva 18, 742, the bee leaves bakula, kunda and raktāsoka and goes to the navamālīkā jasmine. If mālātī and navamālīkā primarily denote Jasminum sambac (as is often stated), it is possible that kunda refers to another kind of jasmine.

In lexicography (PW) from the Rājanighaṇṭu, the jasmine is also called bhrīṅgānanda.

4.2.2.2 Mango. There is no need to present the mango (āmra, cīta, etc.). When flowering, it is often mentioned as another favourite of bees. Although spring has numerous flowers (anantapuspasya madhī or), bees cling to mango (Kālidāsa KS 1, 27 cīte dvirephamaḷā saviseṣaṣaṅgā). Further: Mbh 3, 155, 60 sahaḵārān ... bhrīṅgarāvān; Kālidāsa Māl 1, 13+ & 3, 13 & 4, 2 (cīta), Śāk 1, 21+ (below) & 5, 8 paricumbha čīmanjiṁvarin; Śūdraka Mūk 2, 0 (mahaṅarpādavah, see below); Bhavabhūti Mm 3, 3+; Rājasēkhara VBh 1, 4f.; Amaru 83 (78) cītadvama maṅjarin ... bhrīṅgāngānasobhinin; Bhartṛhari Śrṅgāra 86 sahaḵāra; Kālidāsa KS 3, 27 and RV 6, 69 na hi praphullaṁ sahaṅkāraṁ eya vṛksāṁśataṁ kāṅkasati śatpadāli; Dāṇḍa DK Pārvat. 5, 42 and again 43 rasālataruṇu ... madhukarāṁnā ṛḻāṅpāṅ; Subandhu 131 & 136; Śanṭara ŚTBh 52 saṅpādo ‘pi madhuṣaṁraḥbalobhāṅ utsaṅsā ca raṅī cītanjāyāṁ; Jayadeva Gītag 1, 36 & 2, 20 (cīta in both); Somadeva KSS 9, 5 (55), 108 (below) & 13, 1 (104), 6 (T p. 411) āpatadvhiḥ śilīmkhāḥiḥ ... cīta-maṅjarī; Śāṅgadhararapaddhati 45, 11 (825 = Vallabhadeva 18, 733 cīta) and 45, 15 (829 = Vallabhadeva 18, 740); Vidyākara 1103; *Jalhaṇa p. 73 & 209 (according to Warder 2004: 966, 987); BhNŚ 32, 298 N (352 Bh, below). Moreover, in the Buddhist Mahāvastu, mango and other trees are crowded with the humming and honey-making bees (3, p. 80g madhukarībhramareṣu pariṇīṭī).

---

20 See the discussion of jasmine (both wild and cultivated) in India in Bhattacharjee 2004: 234 ff.
In lexicography (PW from the Rājanighanta), mango is also called bhringābhiṣṭa.

4.2.2.3 Lotus and waterlily. The various kinds of lotus and waterlily (see Syed 1990: 607 ff.) are also often visited by bees: Mbh 5, 14, 8 padmāni ... śatpadair upaṭiṇa; Kālidāsa Śāk 3, 37 (below) & 4, 7+ mahuari pokhrarmahunuj jeva ahaḷasadi, Vi 4, 40 padmam antaṅkvanitaṇasatpadam; Śūdraka Mk 8, 32 na hi kamalam madhupāḥ parītyajanti; Harṣa Pri 2, 2 padma, 3, 0 kamalinī & 4, 8 rasam ... pātuḥ gataḥ ... kamalasya bhringaḥ; Rājaśekhara KM 2, 13 panka & 19 kavala & VBh 1, 39+ parikeruhasanākamatiṇāni bhramaraśśīĪna; Kālidāsa KS 5, 9 śatpadairṣeṇibhir eva pānajam & 7, 16 lagadvireṭhaṃ ... padmam & 7, 62 & 8, 33 & 39, Rs 6, 14 dvidepahi api ayan ambujasthāḥ, cf. 2, 14, RV 5, 68 pracalitaḥbramaraṇaḥ ca padmam & 6, 13 ...dvireṇam ... līlārvīṇam & 9, 27 abhiyauḥ sarasā madhurābhṛtiṇān kamaliniṃ alaṅkaraṇaṃrahaṇāḥ; Daṇḍin DKC 5, 138 quoted below; Śrīharṣa Naiṣ 19, 29 dhayati madhupāḥ ... madhūni savoravāṃ; Bhāṛṭṛhari Śrīgāra 47 nalinī; Subandhu 45 kumuda, 118 kumudapunḍarikā, 172 below, 215 & 250 both kumuda; Bilhana 3 kamala; Kṣemendra Kālāv 1, 17 abhi-madhukarī; Kṣemīśvara 5, 10 madhupaliṅgiṭamugdhasaroruhā; Bhāṭṭajayanta Āgāḥ 1, p. 54 quoted below; Bhagavadajukīya 27 icchāṃ ... madhupavrataḥ bhJPīnam ... ivam komaṇīṃ kamaṇaṃ; Śāṅkara STBh 4+ pānajavanā; *Amaracandra Bālabharata 9, 37 & 29, 5 (in Warder 2004: 586); Somadeva KSS 12, 3 (70), 98 puṣkaraṇīṃ hṛdayam apaṣyāni bhringamārādīṭaiḥ & 12, 6 (73), 345 kumudāvai & 12, 17 (84), 24 kamala & 18, 5 (124), 134 (T p. 619) śatpadair abjesu; Śukasaptati 44; Śrīnagadharapaddhati 45, 1 (815) and 45, 11 (825 = Vallabhadeva 18, 733); Vallabhadeva 18, 729 & 730; Vidyākara 12, 3 (295) below; Bhrarāṣṭaṭaka 7; in examples in the BhNS 16, 55 N (17, 59 Gh, maitta dvireṇha śra saroṇiṇī ... aśrīṇāni sadā kriyante); 32, 85 N (84 Gh, kamala aresuṃ bharamoṇaṃvasesum); 32, 211 (Gh, not in N); 32, 213 N (248 Gh, naļiṇiśaṇe chappadamuhule); 32, 276 N (325 Gh, kamalagabhagehake ... chappadi); Vāmana 5, 2, 66+ (Cappeller = 65+ Jha; an example); Varāhamihira BS 12, 10f. (4.8 below). They are also found in Buddhist literature, e.g. in Āryasūra Jm 19, p. 156 & 22, p. 184 and Divyāvadāna 30, 161.

In lexicography (PW from the Trikāṇḍāśeṣa), alipiṛya is given among the numerous lotus names.

4.2.2.4 Mādhavī. The mādhavī (also atimukta) creeper or Gaertnera racemosa is also called Hiptage madablotra, but now apparently Hiptage benghalensis has superseded both as the valid botanical name. It is often mentioned in poetry as an erotic symbol, since it opens its flowers in spring (Syed 1990: 34 ff.). With bees, it is found, e.g. in Kālidāsa Vi 2, 7+ adimutaladāmāṇḍavo bhamarasāraṅghaṭṭapaḍidehiṇi kusumehiṇi, Ṛṣi 6, 17, and Harṣa Rātṛn 3, 8+ nīvadantamattamaṃhura-
4.2.2.5 Aśoka. The aśoka tree or Saraca indica (the often quoted name Jonesia asoca is not valid)\textsuperscript{21} is another erotic springtime plant with large red flowers (and with a special dohada). According to Syed (1990: 77 ff.), it flowers from February to April. It said to attract bees in *Amaracandra’s Bālabhāratā 7, 25 & Padmānanda 11, 5 (Warder 2004: 587, 594), Śāṅgadharapaddhati 45, 15 (829 = Vallabhadeva 18, 740) and Vallabhadeva 18, 742 (in both raktāsoka), and in Áśvaghoṣa BC 4, 45 aśoka ... bhramarā yatra. In Subandhu 137 (madhukaranīkakārmīrā), it remains uncertain whether kirmīra really is the ‘ushoka’ of Gray’s translation.\textsuperscript{22}

4.2.2.6 Bakula. The bakula (also called kesara) or Minusops elengi, sometimes called Spanish cherry, is an evergreen tree with strongly fragrant, cream-coloured flowers appearing in April–May. It is mentioned as frequented by bees at least by Kālidāsa Rv 9, 30 madhukarair akarón madhulohapair bakulam ākulam āyatapakāktīhi; Harṣa Pri 2, 1 (baila, see above); Daṇḍin DKC 7, 176f. above; Śāṅgadharapaddhati 45, 2 (816) and 5 (819); Vallabhadeva 18, 742; and Jayadeva Gitāg 1, 28 alikulasānkalakasuminasadāhanirākulaṃ. 

4.2.2.7 Campaka. The campaka or Michelia champaka is an evergreen tree with fragrant yellow flowers appearing from May to October (Syed 1990: 277 ff.). In connection with bees, it is found in Bhavabhūti Mm 3, 3+, Bāṇa Kd 304 alinivaha-

nīpāyamānaparamitālair api patañbhīś campakakudmalais, further *Maṅkha Śrīk 6, 51 (Warder 2004: 85), *Amaracandra Padmānanda 11, 4 (Warder 2004: 594) and Bhramaraśṭaka 2. In *Jinapāla’s Saṇatkumāraśāstra 9, 27, a necklace of bees is sitting on the garland of fresh campakas (vibhāṭi navacampakasrag upaviṣṭabhṛṅgāvalīḥ, quoted in Warder 2004: 690).

In lexicography (PW from the Rājanighantu), it is also called bhramarātīthi.

4.2.2.8 Black Plum. The black plum (jambu, for the confusion with the English name – usually, but erroneously given as rose-apple – see Wujastyk 2003 & 2004)\textsuperscript{23} as a bee flower is mentioned by Somadeva KSS 12, 2 (69), 95 jambumahātārurum

---

\textsuperscript{21} Jonesia asoca was named, in honour of Sir William Jones, by Roxburgh, but the tree had earlier received the name Saraca indica from Linnaeus, and in botany, the earlier name is generally the preferred one.

\textsuperscript{22} In some web sources, kirmīra is identified as Casearia championii (family Flacourtiacae).

\textsuperscript{23} The confusion started in the 18th century and was finally cleared up by Wujastyk (2003). According to him, the rose-apple (Eugenia jambos of Linnaeus, now called Syzygium jambos) is of South-East Asian origin and was introduced into India probably in the 16th century, while the black plum (Eugenia jambolana of Lamarc, now Syzygium cumini) is native.
āśvāsayantam ... bhramarāravaiḥ. The ‘plums’ of this tree look, according to poets, like the bees flying among them and having their drinking bouts in jambu flowers.\(^{24}\)
This tree is said to be an important honey source for the *Apis dorsata* (Syed 1990: 293).

4.2.2.9 Pandanus. The pandanus or screw-pine, Sanskrit *ketaka/-kī*, Latin *Pandanus tectorius* (invalid name *Pandanus odoratissimus*) is a palm-like dioecious coastal plant flowering in the rainy season (Syed 1990: 230 ff.). With bees, it is mentioned by Rājaśekhara in KM 1, 29 *bhingādatiḥkaiēa* and VBh 2, 11 *bhringagratrakahākṣṭakatakadāla*; also Śāṅgadharapaddhati 45, 8 (822 = Vallabhadeva 18, 724) and 45, 17 (831); Vallabhadeva 18, 732. A nice account is found in the Bhāmarāṣṭaka 1: The fragrant yellow flowers attract the bee, but soon he becomes blinded by pollen and the thorns pierce his wings (*andhiḥkūṭaḥ kusumaraṇajāsā kantakaiś chimapakṣaḥ*). However, we must here cast on poetic license; in a website on gardening, it is stated that the pandanus is actually pollinated by bats and birds.

4.2.2.10 Amaranth. The amaranth *Barleria cristata* (*kurabaka*) opens its red flowers in early spring (and like asoka, also has a *dohada*, see Syed 1990: 220 ff.). It is visited by bees in Rājaśekhara KM 2, 44 *ṇavakuravaacacho* and Kālindīsa Rv 9, 29 *madyulīhaṃ madhūdānaviśaradāḥ kurabakā ravaūkāraṇatāṃ yayub*. In lexicography (*PW* from the Rājanighanta), amaranth is also called *bhrmarāṇaṇaṃ*.

4.2.2.11 Tilaka. The word *tilaka* (or *lodhra/rodhra*) seems to refer to two different trees or shrubs, *Clerodendrum phlomoides* and *Symplocos racemosa*. In any case, it is another erotic *dohada* plant. It is visited by bees at least in Kālindīsa Mīl 3, 5 *tilakairagradvirephāṇajanaīḥ* and Rv 9, 41 *ālibhir ... kusumapaṇkiniṇīpīṭhibhir ... anākitaḥ ... tilakaḥ* and again 9, 44.

4.2.2.12 Acacia. The acacia *Albizia lebbek* (old name *Acacia sirissa*, Sanskrit *śirīṣa*) flowers in April–May (Syed 1990: 579 ff.). As a bee flower, it is found in Kālindīsa Šāk 1, 4 *śirīṣa* and KS 5, 4 *padaṁ saheta bhramarasya pelavān śirīṣapustpaṁ na punah patriṇaḥ* – the tender *śirīṣa* flower can bear the foot of a bee, but not of a bird.

4.2.2.13 Sandaltree. I have found the sandaltree (*candana, Santalum album*) attracting bees mentioned in the Hitopadesa 2, verse 161, p. 59 *kusumāṇi bhṛṅgālaḥ*.

\(^{24}\) Vidyākara 8, 6 (157) *jambūṁāṁ kusumodaresv atirasādāddhapaṁotsavāḥ ... madhukarīś*, Syed (1990: 289) quotes this and also *Hāla* 532 (Weber). On both, see 5:3 below.
... candanapāda-pasya and in Śāṅkaradharpaddhati 45, 16 (830 = Vallabhadeva 18, 748), also in Vallabhadeva 18, 753.

4.2.2.14 Basil. The holy basil or tulasī (Ocimum sanctum) used as a garland and attracting bees we find in the BhāgP 3, 16; 20; 5, 25, 7 and 10, 35, 10.

4.2.2.15 Pārijāta. The Indian coral tree or pārijāta (mandāra) or Erythrina indica, a tree with red flowers appearing in the spring, is found with bees at least in Bāna Kd p. 320 pārijātakussumamānjarīparimalākṛṣṭena ... madhukarajālena; also Vidyākara 200 and BhāgP 10, 32, 11. When a pārijāta is available, the bee does not go elsewhere (BhāgP 4, 30, 32 pārijāte ṇjasā labdhe sāraṅgo ṇyatra sevate). It is also one of the heavenly trees (see 4.2.3 below). On the tree, see Syed 1990: 432 ff.

4.2.2.16 Karṇīkāra. The karṇīkāra or Pterospermum acerifolium, sometimes called the dinner plate tree, opens its large white or golden flowers in spring. Though it has hardly any fragrance, it is also mentioned as a bee flower in Somadeva KSS 9, 4 (54), 55 karṇīkāram visaurabhhaṁ vimeṅcante alayo (they leave it in spring when the flowers are over) and in a stanza quoted by Syed (1990: 189) from the Mahāsūbhāṣītasaṅgraha (8828).

4.2.2.17 Saptachada or saptaparṇa, the evergreen tree Alstonia scholaris, was also occasionally mentioned as a bee plant, although apparently opening its autumnal white flowers in the night (Bhāmaha 2, 82 quoted below). More often, the tree is noted for its repulsive odour and for its medicinal uses. On the tree, see Syed 1990: 591 ff.

4.2.2.18 Flame of the Forest, or flame tree, is Sanskrit kiṃśuka, Latin Butea monosperma (earlier also Butea frondosa). It is a large tree that drops its leaves in winter and when leafless, opens its large, orange-red flowers in early spring, making an impressive sight (Syed 1990: 204 ff.). These flowers are mentioned as visited by bees in a stanza by Nīla (Vidyākara 8, 5 (156) kośāṁ bhṛtṛi kiṃśukā madhukarāśreṇiṣvusalat). In the very next verse (Vidyākara 8, 6 (157) quoted below), bees mistake the red beaks of parrots for kiṃśuka flowers amidst green foliage – although the tree flowers before the leaves appear.

4.2.2.19 Kovidāra or Bauhinia variegata is another tree flowering in early spring, with fragrant, pink or purple flowers (Syed 1990: 245 ff.). Curiously, Kālidāsa has bees visit it in autumn (Rs 3, 6 mättadvirepaharipariṣṭamadhyuṣaṣaḥ ... kovidāralah) and even more curiously, Syed quotes this as an example of the tree flowering in spring.
4.2.2.20 Silk-Cotton tree or kapok tree (*Bombax ceiba*, the name *Salmalia malabarica* is invalid) is Sanskrit śālmaṭī. Its red flowers are visited by bees in Śāṅgadharapaddhati 45, 2 (816).

4.2.2.21 Kadamba or the kadam tree (*Anatocephalus chinensis*, earlier *Anatocephalus cadamba* and *Nauclea cadamba*) has orange-yellow flowers, visited by bees in Śāṅgadharapaddhati 45, 15 (829 = Vallabhadeva 18, 740) and in *Jhalana, Sūktimukṭāvalī* p. 224 (Warder 1988: 62, by Yogeśvara).

4.2.2.22 Tumbi is one of the numerous ambiguous plant names in Sanskrit. It is said to refer both to *Asteracantha longifolia* (family Acanthaceae) and the gourd *Lagenaria vulgaris*. According to Śāṅgadharapaddhati 45, 7 (821), the bee kisses the tumbi flowers when the jasmine withers.

4.2.3 Heavenly flowers

Even the heavenly flowers are visited by bees. In Kālidāsa, the wish-granting tree (*kalpataru*) is dancing to the accompaniment of the song of bees, drunk with its fragrance (Vi 4, 12 gandhummātramahāragīhehiṁ ... naccai kapparau). For Ralhaṇa, the bees of the wish-granting tree are in fact sapphires (ŚāṅgarP 988, also *Jhalana* p. 109 according to Warder 2004: 974). His idea of bees’ colour was, of course, bluish-black, not yellow. Another lost poet, Vallaṇa, gives the bee itself a heavenly origin: Born in the lotus flower of the heavenly lake and sporting with the flowers and ladies of heaven (Vidyākara 1026 jama vyomasarasarojukhāre mitrāṇi kalpadrumāh kṛiṣā śvargapurandhribhij ... bhṛṅgā).

The Vaijayantī garland given by Varuṇa to Laksṇa (BhāgP 8, 8, 15) and the lotus garlands held by the same goddess (BhāgP 8, 8, 17 & 24) attract bees as does Viṣṇu’s wreath of sylvan flowers (BhāgP 8, 20, 33).

In Harṣa’s Nāg 4, 28, Jimūtatāvana’s decision to commit self-sacrifice caused a shower of flowers of the heavenly pārijāta tree to fall on him, attracting bees with its smell (āmodānaṇḍāṇaṁ nipatati ... puspavṛṣṭir nabhaṁ). These may be earthly bees, but in Kālidāsa (Rv 12, 102) the bees leave the temples of the guardian elephants of the regions to attend the shower of flowers the gods let rain on Rāma (lokapāladvipānam anuvatam alivṛndair gandhabhitār vihāya ... suravimuktoṁ puspavaraśanān papātā).

---

25 Harṣa Nāg 4, 28; Varāhamihira BS 24, 1 (on the summit of Meru); BhāgP 8, 15, 12 & 20.
4.2.4 Bees' preferences

More flowers could be added from the lexicography, but even here we note that they are almost always from trees. In a pleasant grove, many different flowering trees attracted humming bees (Mahāvastu 3, p. 80 nāṇādrumā kusumītā madhukariḥbhraramāreṣu parigātā). Note, however, that the greatest favourite is the lotus (together with the waterlily), while the jasmine or mango comes a close second. This is nicely illustrated by poets. Harṣa made the lotus the permanent love and the jasmine a new attraction (Pri 3, 0 p. 26 Kale kamaliṇībuddhaṃ urāno vi maḥu mālaṣṭim ṃekkhiḥ ahaṇavarasāśvādālamāṇḍo). According to Saṅkara, the lotus is the permanent abode or husband of the female bee, while the mango has the role of her lover (ST Bh 157 tatra kiṁ vartase bhirīgya nīrṣe sārase madhū / nirgaccha tisṭhate ko ‘pi cūtas tvacumānanmukhaḥ). In Kālidāsa Saṅk 5, 8, the bee takes up the lotus abode only after having kissed the mango bud. In a verse of poet Chittapa quoted by Warder (1992: 334, translation only),

the bee rejects a number of its favourite trees, “remembering drinking the honey of fortune’s play lotus”. But even the poets often understood that bees had to go to the flowers available in each season (cf. 4.2.6 below).

4.2.5 Dangerous flowers

However, there is also a flower which is said to kill bees (bhṛṅga/bhramaracārī, bhramaracārī), although it is apparently not mentioned in poetry. According to the Rājanighantu (quoted in PW), it grows in Mālava. In a verse quoted by Vidyākara (1074), the stupid bee leaves the fragrant flowers of aśoka, mimosas, jasmine and mango seeking the colourful, thorny safflower (kusumbha) and gets pricked.

4.2.6 Bees visiting flowers

The bees’ attraction to flowers was commonly used in erotic symbolism. From this, poets derived the idea of kissing bees, being in love with flowers. As the (male) bee is in love with flowers (here a lotus), it follows, by poetic logic, that the female bee is jealous (*Kavivallabha, Abhirāmacitrlekha 1, 9 in Warder 2004: 893).

They are drinking the nectar of flowers and thus become stained with pollen, but occasionally they are also content with just the odour (Kālidāsa Saṅk 3, 37

---

26 It is found in *Śrīhariśadāsa, Saduktik. 1785 = *Jhulana p. 82 = *Bhoja, Śriṅgārapr. p. 342 = *Bhoja, Sarvasatikaniḥbharana p. 56, all unfortunately unavailable to me.

27 Kālidāsa Saṅk 1, 4 cumbhitāṁ bhamariḥṇīḥ ... kesaraiḥṇīḥ & 5, 8 paricumbia cāmaḥjarivin, Rs 6, 17 māttāviṃphaparicumbiaṃcārpupṣpoḥḥ ... hālātimukalatikāḥ; Sāriṇḍharapaddhatri 45, 7 (821); Vallabhadeva 18, 743 & 746.

28 Harṣa Pri 2, 2; Bāṇa HC 1, 13 (24) puspadhīlīdhasarair ... madhuṣkarakalaiḥ; Subandhu 45 (see 4.8 below); Saṅkara, ST Bh 157 (above); example in BhNS 32, 276 N (325 Gh
nānu kamalasya madhukarave sanītyati gandhamāreṇa). In Śaṅkara’s STBh 28+, the sweetly humming bees themselves open the buds with their tender feet (rumadhuḍuramadhukarateṇa caṇḍapradāvīlita). Disappointed, they turn away from a tree without flowers or with buds still unopened or with blossoms already withering or short of nectar or already visited by another bee. When the rains come, lotus ponds no longer have flowers, and the bees turn away (Kālidāsa Rś 2, 14). In poetry, this was often taken as a mark of fickle or unfaithful character. “Leaving the mango, the bee swarm is gone to the jasmine, again it is gone to the red aśoka, then to the kadamba tree, remaining there for a long time, it proceeds from the lotus to the people – human beings never always seek for something new.”

4.2.7 Flowers in the night

As some flowers (day lotuses, lilies) close their petals for the night, the bees were supposed to remain imprisoned in these flowers. For the medieval bhakti poetess, it was a cold prison (Mīrīvbēl p. 85f. rasika madhupa ke marama ko nahiṁ samujhata kamala subhāva). Often they also hurried in the evening to leave the closing flowers (*Amaracandra Bālabhārata 9, 37 in Warder 2004: 585). They also habitually spend their nights in those flowers. This is not strictly speaking true;
bees always spend the night in their nests, although some humblebees and solitary bees may also sleep outside.

Sometimes, bees are said to visit those flowers that are open only at night.34 The very existence of a flowering tree (saptacchada) can be inferred in darkness by the hum of bees around it (Bāhma 2, 82 example anvāmīyanta hṛṇgālivācā saptacchadrūmā). Sometimes they hurry to leave these flowers in the morning in order not to be imprisoned during the daytime.35 In an elaborate verse, we are told how the naughty bees, having long sported and drank honey in the cups of the white waterlilies, opened when touched by the moonlight, are going elsewhere, when the flowers are closing and their lustre is disappearing, thus showing no faithfulness in the calamity (Somadeva KSS 12, 36 (103), 214 kōseṣu vyalasamippamudhavo ye kairovānān cirañ labhābbhvyantararasthitā viyakṣatām indubhādhasaumage/te saṁhkom upāgaṭeṣu vigalacchārīkaṣu teṣv anyato hṛṇgāḥ – pāśya kumāra – vānti malanāḥ kasya sthirā hy āpi)5.

There are, however, no real nocturnal bees; the night flowers are visited by moths and other nocturnal insects. And in any case, poets also described the joyous awakening of bees welcoming the morning sun (Bāṇa Kd 54, cf. STBh 25 on bees and the morning breeze).

4.3 Bees and women (and men)

Beautiful women were said to attract bees who mistake them for flowers,36 although they were not always welcome. Sometimes women’s perfume or flower ornaments are mentioned as the reason for this attraction.37 Sometimes it is just their sweet

34 kutilaśāyini śaḍćaranaśakre & 186 (in the evening) pārśve saṁhcaravāt kumudinyā bhramamālātā, Kṣemāśvara 1, 19 prātaḥ sarvajagārīḥ bhramatāta.
35 Bāṇa HC 1, 6 (10) kṛtamad naprawdę & kumudavave & 6, 93 (168) samadhukararavami; Subhadra 45 kumuda; Somadeva KSS 12, 6 (73), 345 sā ’pi teṣā karaspārīdād indor īva kumudvatī/niyālomeraḥbhūmārā prabodhān prāpā tattvāsam & 12, 17 (74), 435 saṁāmeṣu hṛṇgīṣeṇy api aparān kumudākaraṃ.
36 Śivasaṁāi, Kapph 15, 21 kumudām aṣāya; Śāṅkara ST Bh 17 ramayendāvaramāndārād īva bhāyān nirvāṇti puspandhayāḥ.
37 Kālidāsa Māl 2, 1+ (here makkha could also be a fly), Śāk 1, 21+ nomaliyan ujjhia vaṣpaṇin me mohura ahiласi.
breath,\(^{38}\) or their lotus-feet are mistaken for real lotus flowers.\(^{39}\) The same can also happen in the case of sweet-smelling men or of men’s garlands and flower ornaments.\(^{40}\) In the Kathāsaritsāgara, it is a mixture of blood and wine poured by an asura maiden on the king’s head and the bees thus attracted also sting the unfortunate man (KSS 12, 6 (73), 164 ff. \textit{etva bhrūgaiḥ ... avesṭyaśurasūtrāpaṇa-śaktīṇaśandhah ...} (166) \textit{tair daśyamānaś ca bhrūgaiḥ}).

According to Bāṇa, the swarm of bees on a woman’s face looks like a veil,\(^{41}\) while the vashikṣa chūshis seemed to have a beard of mourning with their faces darkened by bees attracted by their perfumed breath.\(^{42}\) Bees can also be frightened because of the tinkling bracelets of women (Śaṅkara STBh 4+). In the Bhāgavatapurāṇa, Kṛṣṇa is surrounded by maidens and bees (10, 33, 25 \textit{bhrūgapsramadāgaṇāḥ ...})

There are some lively scenes of harassing bees in poetry. In erotic symbolism, the harassing bee represents an aggressive lover. Śākuntalā was afraid of them, understandably, and the king had to rescue her (act 1). Even Uṣmā is harassed by bees in the Kumārasambhava (KS 3, 56 \textit{dvīrepha}) and the goddess Sarasvatī, too. There were attempts to drive them away. In Bāṇa, the princess is pursued by a swarm of bees, who, attracted by her pārījāta perfume, covered her like a blue veil (Kd 320 \textit{madhukarajālera niḷapātaśvagunaprabhramam iva}). This was the right moment for the hero to enter as in the Śākuntalā. Agitated, the lady waved her bud-like hands, bracelets swinging, to get rid of the swarm of bees kissing her perfumed cheeks (Bilhana 34). The king was amused by the fear on the faces of his wives

---

\(^{38}\) Kālidāsa Vi 42 mādhukara... parahīṃappāyasyatanamukho-vicchārasanah; Rājasēkhara VB 1, 32 yacchvassasaurahabdalālayavo valanti; Kālidāsa KS 3, 56 sugandhitvābhīvīsavīrīvīdhūtrasanah... dvīreph; Bāṇa HC 4, 72 (129) nīhīvīsavīrīvīdhūtrasanah... dvīreph; Bāṇa HC 4, 72 (129) nīhīvīsavīrīvīdhūtrasanah... dvīreph; Kd 366 mukhacakramadāgarvavedyam & 433 nīhīvīsavīrīvīdhūtrasanah... dvīreph; Kd 366 mukhacakramadāgarvavedyam & 433 nīhīvīsavīrīvīdhūtrasanah... dvīreph; Kd 366 mukhacakramadāgarvavedyam & 433 nīhīvīsavīrīvīdhūtrasanah... dvīreph; Kd 366 mukhacakramadāgarvavedyam & 433 nīhīvīsavīrīvīdhūtrasanah... dvīreph.

\(^{39}\) Rājasēkhara VB 1, 39+; Bāṇa HC 3, 44 (83) kamalabhanitīnī nīlīvīpadābhavanā... eva mukhāṇi padābhavanā... & 4, 59 (106f.) kamalabhanitīnina alibhir; cf. BhāgP 1, 11, 26, comparing the devotees around Kṛṣṇa’s feet to bees (nīvīvo... sāraṅgānīn padāmbujam); Warder (2004: 418–419) quotes a stanza from *Kaviśrīya*s Rāghavapāṇādiya (1, 25) stating that the king is a bee to the foot-lotus of Fortune.

\(^{40}\) Flowers in Bāṇa Kd 175; garlands in Bhāmaha 2, 6 (example on Balarāma) lolamāla-nīlālitākitsukāgalpo balāh; BhāgP 3, 15, 28 muddhīvīrphavanamālīkāyā & 40 alibhir virutavyā vanamālāyā; 3, 28, 15 and 3, 28, 28 (Viṣṇu’s garland); 4, 4, 15 (Śiva’s lotus-feet); a prince’s flowery breath in Bāṇa HC 1, 9 māttamadīkaurakalakālaḥalakamukhaye mukhena.

\(^{41}\) Bāṇa HC 1, 14 (262) viκacacyavanakvalakutihalalaśāvicakulasahātyā nīlānīśukālikayeva niruddhārdhavadanā & 3, 44 (83) nīhīvīśakramadīkaurakalakālaḥ eva ramanīyaṁ mukhāvaranam & Kd 320 (below) & 410 madhukaracalā śvācchādyamanāṁ.

\(^{42}\) Bāṇa HC 2, 27 (48) uccchvassasaurahabhbhirnīvādhramarapavatālāṃdhakārititumukhau apahṛṭa-laksmaṇisokadhītalamabhumisrūbhī.
molested by bees attracted to them by the odour of perfumes (Āryaśūra Jm 28, p. 255, verse 7). The vidiśaka, anointed with unguent ungourd and wearing flowers on his head, is attacked by nasty bees (dāṭamahāraṇa) in a garden (Harṣa Nāg 3, 2†). The bites of love-making are compared to the traces of stings of harassing bees (*Maṅkha Śrīk 12, 90). In the Paṅcatantra of Pūrṇabhadra (1, 30b p. 122f. H), the silly ape tries to expel a harassing bee, and thus kills the king he is supposed to protect.43

4.4 Bees and elephants

Now it is time to examine another common literary motif: Elephants in rut attract bees that are swarming around their temples, leaving their favourite trees.44 They are so eager for the bee secretion that they forget to beware of the flapping ears (Vidyākara 1115). But in a hermitage even elephants are compassionate and do not drive the bees away with the flapping of their ears (Bāna Kd 93 ete ca na nivārayanti madāndhā api ganaṃstalīṭhānījī madajalapānapānicalāni madhukarakaṇāni saḥjātadāyaḥ kariṇālaḥ kariṇāhaḥ). They drink the musht of the face of Indra’s elephant (Vallabhadева 18, 736 aīrāvāṇoṣṇaṇananamānmbu). The same motif also applies to the god Gaṇapati who as a half-elephant also exudes of musht.45 Even a tree rubbed by elephants attracts bees as does also water where they have bathed.46

43 The story is not included in Edgerton’s reconstruction. Instead of the bee, Jātaκa 44 has a mosquito (mākṣa) and Jātaκa 45 a fly (mukkhiṇa). In the old Brāh Hitopadeśa (Paṅcaśīkhyāna) 3, 4 (Hertel 1916: 44–45) the point is spoiled by giving the monkey too much intelligence. It is only found in Hertel’s manuscript B (see Hertel 1914: 51 ff.), but not in the Sanskrit Hitopadeśa or Lāl’s later Brāh version.
44 Bāna Kārṇabhaṇa 20 maddiṣeṣiyakaṇaḥ sāṭpadaiḥ sevaṃ anusvātaḥ ... vārūṇanām anekam; Kālidāsa Vi 4, 43b & 47; Harṣa Pri 1, 12 (see below, in 4.8.); Kālidāsa Rs 2, 15, Rs 4, 57 maddogāraśrāgaṇiḥṣa keśaḥ keśiṇāṁ petiḥ putiṇāgeḥṣyāḥ sīṣṭāvāḥ (Mallīnthā: sīṣṭāvaḥ sīṣṭāvaḥ dālayāḥ) & 6, 7 maddokṣaṭhe recītaṇapavṛṣkṣa gandhahātipe vanyā va dviṃphāḥ & 10, 57 pravāyaḥ ... bhramāḥ vārūṇavayvan manṣipyandarekhaṇoḥ & 12, 102 (the world elephants, see above); Bāna HC 2, 30 (53) aṭkula and 31 (55) āṭkulaṃṣaṇaḥ maddugamāṇḍalānām and 7, 112 (205) maddapprasāyanaḥlībhir alikulākūṭiḥ & Bk 189 (around elephant-poses) gaṇamadāparimalālaḥ-svāntaranīllaḥ-madhukaraṇaḥṣaṭalīṭāsil & 198 (in the evening they leave the cheeks of wild elephants) madhukarakaṇaṇāya kapadābhissṭūṣa maddvārasuṇaḥ & also in Kd 236; Subandhu 129 (the world elephant) dīggojambudvēevāṇandālīgalanā & 177f. ghanataraṇīllaḥ-maddhukarapanṭa-mecchitapaṣeika & 279 kariṇātapatipatimadhuṣka; Kṣemendra Kālīv 3, 2; Kṛṣṇamīśa 4, 25 kumbhābhitīcyutamaṇḍavāraṇārattabhrīrgīṃ kariṇāḥ; Sāṅgadhaṇaṭapadhvāḥ ṣa na 1875.male hscg. vonr lā premi6–320-sa. ya, 8, 754 and 2 is a somewhat modified version of Vallabhadева 18, 753. is possible th45, 20 (834) and 45, 23 (837 = Vallabhadева 18, 749); Vallabhadева 18, 731 & 750; *Jaḷacandra in Śrīdhara’s’s Sadutikarpāṃṭa (quoted by Warder 2004: 416); Paṅcatantra offten, e.g. 3, 2 (p. 185 H) karaṇātrodhābhīrānāmadajalassarabhiparimalākṛṣṭabhramaraganaṅgitanāmañjanamahksamāndalam; BāṅgP 5, 5, 30 (but maṅkika) and 8, 23 feeding on musht: alikula madākṣitāḥ; Āryaśūra Jm 2, p. 10 and 9 p. 75 (intoxicated by musht) maddahbhramarappāṭaḥ.
45 Bhūvabhūti Mn 1, 1; Somadeva KSS 12, 1 (68), 1; Vidyākara 84 & 93.
46 Tree in Bāna Kd 50 vanagajakapakarakanṭhāvāṇapamadajalamānantamadhuṣkaṇaḥ, water in Kālidāsa Rv 5, 43 aṭkulaṃṣaṇaḥ bhramarair bhrahmadbheḥ prāksācitānīkṣalīṭaparveṣaḥ ...
The smell attaches to lions killing elephants (Varāhamihira BS 12, 7 karikaṭamadā
mīraraṅāvahāmāvāśāmśārīvuhānuñottamāṅaṅaiḥ ... mrugendraḥ). But
when the musth is over, the bees turn away or mourn.47 One would think that the
insects attracted to the temporal glands of elephants were rather flies, but flies in
general do not belong among the images of poetry.

On occasion, we also find elephants trampling lotuses or other plants and thus
driving away bees.48 One poet (Jalacandra in Śrīharadāsa’s *Saduktikarṇāṃtra
according to Warder 2004: 416) accused the bee who without shame abandons the
crushed lotus for the temples of the rutting animal crushing it.

4.5 Further attractions for bees

In Bāna, cakravāka ducks attract bees as the smell of lotuses is attached to them (Kd
196 kamalini-parimala-paricayāgatālākālitakaṅṭhām ... cakravākanīthānām).
A similar case is also found in Subandhu (185). In the stanza of Kālidāsa mentioned
above (Rs 2, 14), the bees leave the lotus ponds, deprived of flowers at the onset of
the rainy season, and are attracted by the tail-feathers of dancing peacocks,
mistaking the colours for flowers.

In addition to lotus-feet and perfumes (see 4.3), we occasionally also hear of
aromatic incenses attracting bees. Burning aloes do the trick in Subandhu (140
dāndhākṣāṅguparimalā-modamohadhumvrat & 142.dahyamānaṁahīśāṅkṣāṁ-
sugandhravya-saurabhākṣāṅgapurapavam-satpadakulasamākulan). Even
fragrant, perfumed wind is sufficient.49 Vādībhāsinīha (*Gadyaṅkāṁṭa 4, p. 199
according to Warder 1992: 326) had two girls quarreling over the merits of their
bath powders. The case is settled by demonstrating which one was fragrant enough
to attract bees.

A late author depicts bees swarming in a tavern, attracted by the smell of wine
and forming a dark screen (perhaps to hide the drunkards from the sight of others).50
This could well be true, but certainly flies were even more interested. Bees eagerly
buzzing at wine are also found in Mankha’s *Śrīkaṅṭhacaritra (14, 27 in Warder
2004: 90). At Damayantī’s wedding, the town was decorated with garlands skilfully

---

47 Turning away in Śādraka Mk 1, 12 parivarjayanti ... sankhīitasandhram avalekham iva
bhramantaḥ kālātyaye madhukarāḥ karuṇāḥ karipalam; mourning in Bhavabhūti Mn 9, 33
dānajyānīvīkumārakamadhupasyasārṣāyadhinaṇo; Bāna HC 2, 22 (37) dinakaraśāyanāma-
dvīraśādayavādavānāvāyānāyānyāmikāḷāmākahadhulikā (in summer’s heat).
48 Somdeva KSS 6, 7 (33), 208 gajapūṭhā padmīṇā parisakti kāraṅbhramarāvalīḥ; BhNŚ 32,
336 (Gh, not in N).
49 Bāna HC 3, 55 (98) parimalākṣāṅgapadhadhukṛti; BhNŚ 32, 340 (Gh, not in N).
50 Vatsarāja: Karpurāraklitabhāna 27+ parimalākṣāṅgapadhadhukṛtamakrantilatoraskarcan-
vibhramāṃ vivesa saṇḍikāgāṇam.
made of cloth and perfumed, so that even bees were confused (Śrīharṣa Nāĩś 15, 14 madhvratāṇīṃ api dattavibhramāḥ ... srajaḥ).

4.6 Bees, spring, and Kāma

Bees belong to the spring, the season of Kāma, therefore the hum of bees was taken by poets as a romantic sound inciting love. In early Tamil, too, bees were among the symbols of love (Tolkāppiyam 3, 1038 varṇē). The notes of flutes and the song of girls are compared to their humming51 and the humming itself to the twang of Kāma’s bow and other erotic sounds.52 They sing the auspicious song of Kāma (Śaṅkara, ŚTBh 26 kurvantaṅgaṇasangitamāṅgalam madhupāṅgamāḥ). Bees are often described as being mad or intoxicated (mattā) with spring or with the supposedly intoxicating nectar of flowers.53 In Harṣa Nāṅ 3, 8, they have a drinking bout (āpōnottaram anubhavantīva) and in Pri 2, 2, the drunken bees sing indistinctly (gāvant ayyavatvācah kimapi madhulihō vārṇīpāṇamattāḥ). Vallabhadeva 18, 734 calls nectar puspāsava.

Bees and cuckoos (kokīla, the koel) and their voices are often mentioned together as symbols of spring and love.54 The voices of koel and bee are heard in the twang of Kāma’s bow (Bhagavadajukīya 18 parabhṛtamadhukaranāda-jaṅgŏhōṣah

51 Songs in Śūdraka Mk 4, 27+ mahuvaravirāṣa via mahurāṃ vajjadi vannto; Harṣa Rātn 1, 25 śrīrvā te parivravarevanāṅgītānī bhṛṅgānāṃ; flutes in Bāṇa Kd 395 madhukaramadhydrāvīyaṃ vaṅklāḥvīyāṃ.

52 Śaṅkara ŚTBh 27 taṅkāraḥ smarakārmanasakya; Somadeva KSS 16, 1 (111), 3 śāṅkava kusumāṅgadāmāṅgamadhyārāvah / kūmāṅgāryamāṅgasya kāṛnakṣyasvesa niḥsyasvāḥ; Bhāmaha 3, 22 example nevyam virāuti bhṛṅgīlī madena mukharā muḥuḥ / ayanā kṛṣṇāṃsasya kandarpadhanugṣo dhvamih; Vidyākara 186.

53 Mbh 3, 150, 23 maitasatpadā & 3, 229, 13 maitabhrāmara; Kālidāsa Rś 6, 17 maitavṛṣṭa, Vi 4, 12 gandhānāṃtadadadākara; Śūdraka Mk 4, 27+ kusumārvasamātā ṣaḥ maḥaurāḥ; Harṣa Rātn 3, 8+ maitamahāra; Bāṇa HC 1, 8 (15) maitamahāra; 2, 34 (62) madanāṇḍhamadhyākarasa and Kd 283 kusumānsamayamada iva madhukarīṁ paravāvām akaro; Subandhu 215 maditamahākarasa & 259 maitamahākara & also 264; Śūdraka Padma 10 samadamanadhārahā (kālaḥ); Śāṅgadharapaddhati 137, 13 (3931); BhNS examples in 16, 55 N (17, 59 Gh, above), 32, 140 (N & Gh) maitamahāragane and 32, 298 N (352 Gh) jātiḥpattapāṇamattac ca chappao, also 32, 287 N (339 Gh) pavītramadhumattac ca chappadāḥ; Vāmana 2, 2, 23+ mātālīsāṅgha (example, in autumn); Bhāmaha 3, 22 above & 4, 27 (example); BhāgP 3, 33, 18 gāvantaṅgmedhavētam udiṇām), also in 4, 9, 63 and 8, 15, 12, further 4, 6, 12 madanābhōli, 5, 2, 6 madānābhahākara, 3, 15, 28 & 3, 28, 15 maitavṛṣṭha, 3, 21, 41 & 4, 24, 22 maitabhrāmara, 8, 2, 15 maitasatpadānirghatam, 8, 8, 15 madhunā maitasatpadā; Varāhamihira BS 48, 7 kusumārvasamātāmadhvrāṣṭha; Aṛyasārya Jn 21, p. 175 & 28, p. 258.

54 Mbh 3, 98, 13; 3, 146, 20 puṅskokilāmādetuṣa satpadābhīruteṣu ca; Kālidāsa Māl 4, 2 parābhṛtīkā bhramarī ca, Vi 4, 12 & 4, 56; Bhavabhūti Mm 3, 3+; Harṣa Rātn 1, 16+; Rāja- sēkha Km 2, 2; Kālidāsa Rś 6, 21 & 24 & 27, Rv 9, 26 satpadākokilākājītam; Daṇḍī DKC Pūṛvār 5, 42f. & 43; Bāṇa Kd 303; Śūdraka Padma 2 & 6 & 10; Bhagavadajukīya 9+ (with peacock) mokkālirmadhyātthamarārāvīrvasantāḥ & 18, Jayadeva Gītāg 1, 27 & 11, 4, Jalānā, *Sūktāṃkūṭakāvā* p. 73 (Warder 2004: 966), Somadeva KSS 9, 4 (54), 56 kokilāmān ca kājītāḥ rutair alōnhūn & 9, 5 (55), 113 kokilābhramaradhaṇāṃ; BhNS 15, 80 N (16, 59 Gh,
kāma[ḥ]). People longing for absent or unwilling lovers cannot stand to hear bees’ buzzing. The erotic association of bees was also the reason for the bee-names of the queen’s attendants in some plays. In the Mahābhārata (3, 249, 10), Bhramara is a male name.

An example in the Nātyaśāstra compares a woman’s body to the lotus-lake. Her face is the lotus, her eyes the bees (netrabhṛṅgākulā), her smiling teeth the geese, her hair the lotus leaves, and her breasts the pair of caṭravāka ducks (BhNS 15, 76 N = 16, 58 Gh, lotus-faces with eyes as bees, netrādiḥyaḥ bhramarasahitāṁ paṇkajam īva, also in 15, 103 N = 16, 80 Gh).

In mythology, bees form the string of Kāma’s bow with which he shoots his flowery arrows. They are also attracted by his flag, tainted with pollen (Kālidāsa RV 9, 45 dhvajapaṭatāṁ madanasya ... kusumakesaraśrenum alivṛjāḥ ... anavyūḥ). Furthermore, the line of hair on the belly of beautiful women (romarāṇi) is said to resemble this bowstring of bees. In the Amaruśataka, the young woman’s mouth resembled a line of bees, when she tried not to show the languor of love to her parents (96 Bailey mukhena ... śvāsāyasāsamukalāśarāṇivivājena). When Kāma was burnt by Śiva’s flame, the bees, who formed his bow-string, were mourning him (KS 4, 15 alipatiṅkī akekasās tvayā ganakṛtye dhanaśu niṣvijśā / vīrutāṁ karubgasvanair iyaḥ gurusokām anurodayaḥ āmāṁ). Bees and their hum are also listed among Kāma’s subsidiary weapons. But the cruel Kāma even torments bees

example) bhramaraparabhṛṃnāṁ kaṇṭhaṇādaśī; Varāhamihira BS 48, 7; Āryaśūra Jn 21, p. 175 & 31, p. 293.

55 Subandhu 131; Vararuci Udbh 29+ anibhratmadhukararavena (note that quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus; Ghosh translates this ‘hearing loud songs of the cuckoo’); Jayadeva Gītā 2, 1 & 2, 20 & 5, 4 dhvanati madhupasaṃtiḥ śravaṇam api padaḥtī.

56 e.g. in Bhāsa’s Daridrāçāradatā 1, 11+ Madhukarākta, in Kālidāsa’s Mālavīkāngītā: These bee-names seem to be rather exceptional (cuckoos being more common). Rākṣi (1910: 117–118) in his list of personal names derived from animals knew only the Mālavīkāngītā. The BhNS suggests flowers for servants in plays, not bees: 17, 97 N (19, 34 Gh) nānākumarānāṁbhyāḥ presyāḥ kāryāṁ tu nātate.

57 Kālidāsa KS 4, 15 alipatiṅkī akekasās tvayā ganakṛtye dhanaśu niṣvijśā & Md 71 čapam ... satappājayam, Rs 6, 1 dvirephalaivalavasaddhanurugarāḥ; Daṇḍin DKC Parvap. 1, 3 quoted below for hair & DKC 3, 114 bhraramamālāmāy īyā; Subandhu 136f. (the twang) mātā maṭhānadhukaro mukarakatas tribhuvanaviṣayapraṇavaprasanśatadhvanin iva ca kārā; Somadeva KSS 9, 5 (55), 108 laghulīlālāmāuryikāḥ puspesaḥ ... cīturavallāhurāṭūḥ & 12, 18 (83), 7 alimālāmāuryikāḥ & 13, 1 (104), 6 āputadvihīḥ sīllumāhīḥ marucaupalatesvaḥ ... cīturavāhīrayā & 16, 1 (111), 7 nispetaḥ pugpavallībhvaya saśahā bhrīparājayaḥ / mārayevrā- dhuruṃrōyaḥ iva nānācakṣāṇaṁyāḥ, i.e. arrows; Vidyākara 331; Pseudo-Śaṅkara SL 6 dhunah puspam mauryā madhukarāmayā. They are certainly bees, although Mani, in Keralan fashion, calls them beetles (Mani 1975 s.v. Kāma; cf. 2.2 above).

58 Daṇḍin DKC Parvap. 5, 44 marvīmadhukarapandāntā nilamāḷīlāyā romāvālas. Das (1991: 21–22) quotes a subhāṣīta where the romāṛājī (here romāvalī) is the stem of the breast-lotuses which have nipples as bees. Note also BhNS 15, 189 N (16, 140 Gh) where the romāṛājī is a swarm of bees around the flower of the lotus-navel, nādbhikamulavivaropatiḥbhramarāvālaṁ.

59 Kṛṣṇamīśa 1, 12 & 4, 13, cf. Śaṅkara STBh 3.
(Harṣa Pri 3, 9 abhinavarāgākṣiptā madhukarikā vāmakena kāmena). In Nepal, at least, bees are also connected with Kṛṣṇa as Mādhava (Majupuria 1977: 182).

4.7 Bees and other gods

In a pleasant and holy grove, there are neither gadflies nor mosquitoes (Mbh 3, 145, 19f. adamśamaśakte deṣe), but bees belong even to the abodes of gods (Indra’s paradise in BhāgP 8, 15, 12 & 20). According to the Bhāgavatapurāṇa, those living in Vaikuṇṭha hum the praise of Viṣṇu (BhāgP 3, 15, 18 bhṛṅgādhīpate harihāthāṁ gāyamāne) so that cuckoos and other birds stop their singing in order to listen to them. In another passage, bees sing the praise of Lākṣmī, who, sitting in a swing, is herself praising Viṣṇu’s exploits (BhāgP 2, 9, 13 śrīr ... preṇkhaiḥ śrītāḥ yā kusumākarāṅgaih vigyāmānaih priyakarmaih gāyaih). In the imagination of Bhoja, Lākṣmī’s glances are bees for Viṣṇu’s lotus-face (*Śrīdharadāsa 329 in Warder 1992: 174–175).

The bees swarm around Śiva’s and Kṛṣṇa’s lotus-feet (BhāgP 4, 4, 15 Śiva; 6, 3, 33 kṛṇāṅghṛipadmadhunī). The bees around the apsaras are compared to students chanting Sāmaveda and Upaniṣad (BhāgP 5, 2, 9 sāma sarahasyam).

God Brahmā is the bee of Viṣṇu’s navel-lotus, humming Vedic texts, from him many verses (or schools) spring forth. In the same way, Śiva is the bee of Pārvatī’s lotus-mouth. Pārvatī herself has a bee form (or a form surrounded by bees), called Bhrāmarādevī. In 4, 4, we saw that Gaṇapati with his elephant head is as likely to attract bees as the earthly musth elephants. Also in Buddhist context: Vidyākara 17 (by Buddhākaragupta) the face of Padmapīṇi and 25 (by Vallaṇa) the face of Maṭjuṣṭrī are garlanded by bees. For a poet, bees can also be the eyes of forest deities (Kālidāsa Rv 9, 52 bhrāmarasaniṇkramiteṣaḥ āryaṃ saṃvatsarāḥ ... vanadevatāh). The Agnipurāṇa (105, 6), recognises Bhrīga (or Bṛṣa) and Mrga as minor gods.

In medieval Kṛṣṇa bhakti, we encounter an interesting development of a bee motif. The starting point seems to be the BhāgP 10, 47. Kṛṣṇa, as the king of Mathurā, sent his messenger Uddhava (later Uḍha) to the longing gopīs to explain them that they would, with the help of yoga, find Kṛṣṇa in their own inner selves. However, unhappy with such nirguṇa bhakti, the gopīs wanted Kṛṣṇa in person and, seeing a black bee (thus resembling the black Kṛṣṇa), they addressed the insect with

---

60 Cf. 4.2.18.
61 Cf. BhāgP 3, 8, 31 where the Vedas in the form of bees (madhvavādī) praise Viṣṇu. Note that the word in 3, 15, 18 is bhṛṅgādhipa, explained by Dave (1985: 66) as the drongo. However, it is hard to imagine the drongo giving special praise to Viṣṇu with its poor singing voice.
62 Brahmā in Somadeva KSS 9, 4 (54), 32 brahmā te nābhikamale svādhāyāyaḥ maru: dhvanīḥ / tadbhūṭānukaracaranaḥ ‘peṣa sañcāraṇāyaḥ (see also Tawney’s transl., note on p. 526); Śiva in Kālidāsa KS 8, 23 pārvatīdaṇkapanudatapaṇaḥ.
63 Kinsley (1987: 239, note 23), suggesting an erotic function for this form and referring to the *Deviḥbhāgavatapurāṇa 10, 13 and MkP 89 (Deviḥāhādyhna 11), 49f.
their longing rather than Udha. But in later Sant poetry (Sūrdās, Nanḍās et al., see Hawley 1984: 47, 62–63, 98 ff.), Udha himself is the bee and a great number of so-called Bhramargī poems are addressed to him by gopīs.

4.8 Bees and seasons

Although mainly connected with spring in poetry, bees are also active in the rainy season and autumn, visiting seasonal flowers. However, an unexpectedly hard wind and rain force them to remain in the tree’s hollow (Kālidāsa Mīl 4, 2 madhuraraṃ parahaṃtīkā bhramarī ca vibhuddhacittasatagīnau / koṭāram aklā-vrṣtyā prabalapurovītāy gamite). Another problem is that in autumn there are few flowers available (Śāṅgadharapaddhati 45, 11 (825) = Vallabhadeva 18, 733).

Summer is too hot and dry for bees (Bāṇa HC 2, 22 (37) above), but even the summer flowers are visited by them (Kālidāsa Rv 16, 47). During a hot afternoon, bees seek the coolness of flowerbuds (Kālidāsa Vī 2, 22 nirbhidyopari karṇikāra-mukulānī āliyate satapadaḥ). They leave the elephant’s temples for the shadow under its large ear-lobes (Harṣa Pri 1, 12 tyaktvā kapolaṁ viśati madhuraraṁ karṇapātiṁ gajayya).

The frosty winter is really a hard time for bees. Due to the ambiguity of the words, it is not always certain that it is frost and not just dew that is making lotuses cold. In a stanza quoted by Vidyākara, they have to drink honey mixed with cold (dew or frost) inside the waterlily in the wintry dawn (12, 3 (295) kumudavatīḥ koṣe madhukāśiśīraniṣṭe madhuluḥ lihantī pratyūṣe). The bees may even collapse under the weight of frost, but again recover with the warmth of the sun (Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa 2, 7f.).

For bees in spring, several passages have already been quoted and referred to. Let it just be added that a common alternative name for spring (vasanta) is madhu ‘honey’ or mādhava ‘honeyed’ (see Vogel 1971: 290, 315 with references).

4.9 Bees and arrows

The prince Vṛṣasena enveloped Arjuna’s chariot with his arrows, like a tree in blossom with bees (Bhaṭṭaṇārāyaṇa 4, 9+ kusumita iva tarur mūrtṝtena śīṃukhāḥ

64 Subandhu 118f. (rainy season) jaladakālasarvāvā gaṇdhaṇaḥ-karapiḥ-bhramamadhyāvahāramālāṇu-nīyamāṇa-jalamālamagna-kumudapūṇḍarikāḥ; Kālidāsa Ṛs 2, 14 & 15 (rainy season) and 3, 6 (autumn); Bhāṣ examples in 32, 87 N (86 Gh) gāvante bhamaṇa ramne pānas (ramye prāṣī) & 32, 330 (Gh, not in N); Vāmana 2, 2, 23+ (example); Varāhamihira BS 12, 10f. indīvarśasannasītoṣṭopāvivṣaḥ saradbhravatadpadaparikībhiḥṣiḥ.

65 Harṣa Pri 4, 8 dagdāḥ himena; Bāṇa HC 8, 131 (241) bhramarāṇām iva himahatukalamālākarākā-tairāṇām; Subandhu 45 tiśīrvaḥ-kārakaramānī-kumudamadhyāvahārdhacarāṇeśvarvātacarāṇeṣ; Śivavāmin, Kaṭṭh 8, 52, Śāṅgadharapaddhati 137, 6f. (392f.) and 13 (3931). On winter and snow in Sanskrit literature, see Kuttunen (forthcoming).
pracchādito dhanaṇjaśyasya rathavaṇaḥ). Bees and the arrows of a hunting king were also compared by Somadeva (KSS 7, 8 (42), 6). Note that the word śīlīmukha denotes both ‘a bee’ and ‘an arrow’. On another occasion, I have discussed the more common comparison of arrows with locusts (Karttunen 2003).

4.10 Black bees

The bee is as dark as a mountain (Divyāvadāna 30, 161 nīlāṇjanācalasavarnā). Accordingly, the black bee as a symbol of the dark colour was used in many comparisons. It is especially common for the black hair of beautiful women or boys:66 Viṣṇu’s black curls in the BhāgP (4, 7, 20 nīlākabrahamaramaṇḍita-kundalāsyah), an escaped lock before the lotus-face of Rādhā (Jayadeva Gītāg 12, 15 bhramaracayanyān racayantam ... alakam). In connection with a sinister omen, a swarm of black bees resembled Durgā’s hair (Bāṇa HC 5, 82 (148) kālarātrī-vidīyatmaṇḍapavēṇīḥ bandhavabhrāmām ... bhūmaranam paṭalam). Black bees are also used as a comparison for black eyes and their side glances,67 and for brows above the lotus-eyes.68 A more elaborate comparison is given in Śaṅkara ŚṬBh 59: a mark of musk on the forehead is the bee, with the eyebrows as its expanded wings (ṭīkam Mukhanālīke madhupat madhulolapam / satke saṅkocaratitau pakṣau loleśkanā bhravau). In Jayadeva, Rādhā asks for antimony that is blacker than the bee (Gītāg 12, 13 aṅkulaṅgaṇjanam oṅjanakam).

Occasionally, we meet black bees as a comparison to the darkened nipples of the pregnant queen’s lotus-breasts, to bruises on the sprouting beard, and to anklets on lotus-feet.69 Additionally, they are compared to the sprouting beard on the lotus-face of a young Brahman and to a black horse,70 to storm clouds, to darkness in

66 Women in Viśākhadatta 5, 23; Bhaṭṭhārī Śṛṅgāra 5 apākariṣṇur alinīṣeṣuḥ kaścānāṃ cayaḥ; Daṇḍin DK Č Pūrvap. 1, 3 satyāvṛśalabhavālīkṣajjālam and DK Č 3, 114 quoted above; Kṣemīśvara 5, 9 bhramaračaḥganiḥkalakṣāḥ; Śaṅkara ŚṬBh 122 alīkālaṃkē & 145 venjītamaraduḥpālīvastuḥ; BhāgP 4, 26, 23 nīlākalaḥ (the queen’s hair) and 5, 2, 13; BhūNS 16, 24 to bhūmaranībe kānti (Gī, the corresponding verse in N omits bees); Divyāvadāna 30, 161 varnālīpaṭrvasadṛśāyañāthe. Boys or young men in Daṇḍin, DK Č Pūrvap. 2, 22 madhukarāyāmānākakapakṣam; Kṣemīśvara 5, 10; Varāhamihira BS 105, 10 bhūmarodarasannibhaḥ keśaḥ; Jātaka 526 (5 p. 205) bhauaraṇavaghe keśeḥ.

67 Kālidāsa KS 7, 62 vīloanalobrahmarair, the same also in Rv 7, 11, Mādhukarāṣṭrijyaghaṅ kajāksāṃ & 47 madhukarāṣṭrijyaghaṃ; Daṇḍin DK Č 5, 138 quoted above; Somadeva KSS 9, 2 (52), 152 netraḥbrahmarah, of a prince in Kālidāsa Rv 5, 68 caṇāṣ tuva pracaḷiṭbrahmarah ca padāpam. The pupil of a lotus-eye as a bee in Kṣemīśvara 1, 19 apāṅgavatvatāraḥ ... bhūmarīva.

68 Subandhu 61 vilocanakauvalahabhrmarapaṅktibhyāṃ; Jayadeva Gītāg 3, 5.

69 Nipples in Kālidāsa Rv 3, 8 satāravayaṃ tirācakāra bhūmarabhūtiṣayoh suūtayoh patkajjasiṣayoh śṛṣṭam; bruises in Somadeva KSS 12, 18 (85), 26 ālabbhāmararā padmāviva hastau kīṃtātāvau; anklets in Rājaśekhara KM 2, 2, 13.

70 Beard in Somadeva KSS 13, 1 (104), 180 navinaṃsaṃradhupāṣeṇīritamukkhiḥbhūjaḥ, cf. also Vidyākara 8, 27 (178); horse in Mahāvastu 1, p. 108g bhṛṣīgaṇīlam ... turagaratanaṃ.
the evening, and to the peak of a mountain encircled by a net of clouds.71 A more sinister image is presented to us in the case of fallen soldiers with arrows sticking out like bees covering lumps of wax or honey (Kālidāsa Rv 4, 63 bhallāpavarjarītāīesaṁśiśrōbhīḥ ... tastāra saraghāvāyāptāḥ sa kṣaudrapajalāir iva).

5. BEES’ NESTS AND BEE SOCIETY

5.1 Beehives

Bee's nests are large and easily attract attention. They are often situated in hollow trees.72 Sometimes they hang down from tree branches.73 There are bee hives around a village or (in an unfortunate case) even inside a house (madhūvāyāyata Baudhāyana 1, 3, 6, 1; Jaimūkhyāna 2, 7, cf. König 1984: 151). The Śāṅkaraśātra also asserts that bees may build their nest in a house (2552 udvāśayitum veśmāni saraghāḥ kuvantān na madhucchātram).

Trees containing bee hives were not suitable for making furniture (Varāhamihira BS 79, 3), but they are valuable for looking for honeycomb (Jātaka 4, p. 205). Hundreds of bee hives are seen in the Vindhyas (Bṛhaṇa Kd 41 madhukūraśavatā). According to the *Bhavisyapurāṇa 1, 12, 54 (according to König 1984: 35), it takes long time to construct a honeycomb or an anthill.

In the mountains, the bee hives are often situated on precipices. John D. Smith (2002) has collected eleven passages from the Mahābhārata containing the popular wisdom of the stupidity of one who, in his eagerness to get honey, does not see the precipice (often applied to Kauravas challenging the Pāṇḍavas).74 Although quite common in the Mahābhārata, the simile seems not to appear elsewhere (as was also noted by Smith).

---

71 Clouds in Śūdraka Mk 5, 2 megho ... bhṛnganīlo; Varāhamihira BS 19, 4; darkness in Rājasekhara VīBh 3, 5+: peak in *Vijayasena’s Revaiśugiriṣṇu quoted in Warder (2004: 529).
72 Kālidāsa Śat 4, 7+ koderasahbhhasāvād mahuṣṇā and Māl 4, 2 above; Varāhamihira BS 79, 3; Dalāṇa on Suśruta Śūtra 45, 133 quoted below in 7.2.
73 Rāmāyaṇa 2, 50, 8. Look at the honeycombs, amassed by honeybees on one tree after another, they hang down large as bunches (patāya drenupramāṇīnī lamamāṇī ... madhūni madhukārībhītī saṁbhṛtāni nage nage).
74 See Mbh 2, 55, 4 madhūvāi mādhaviko labdhvīnā prapāṭhān nāvavudhyate / āruhya tān majjati vī patañjānā vadhigacchati; 3, 225, 21 madhū prapāyanti na tu prapātah; 5, 50, 26 visamaṁ nāvavudhyante prapāṭhān mādhudarāṇaḥ; 5, 53, 6; 5, 62, 20–31 developed into a narrative; 7, 49, 11; 7, 108, 10, 11, 1, 30; 12, 83, 45 just mādhuprapāṭh; 12, 297, 7; and 821* after 3, 159, 6.
5.2 Swarming bees and their king

The ruler of the beehive was called the ‘king’ of bees, instead of the queen that biology has shown her to be. The mere term bhṛṅgarāja is not sufficient evidence for the idea of a bee king as it has also another meaning (see 5.3), but see, e.g. Praśnapaniṣad 2, 4, where the (swarming) bees follow the bee king whether he goes up or down (maksikā madhukarājānam utkāmantakān sarva evotkāmante tasmiṃ ca pratiṣṭhamāne sarva eva pratiṣṭhante). In the BhāgP, the bee king is called bhṛṅgaḍhīpa (3, 15, 18) and madhuvratatati (3, 16, 20). The same error, king instead of queen, was also committed in classical West.75

A swarm (kula, gana) of bees is often mentioned in texts, but usually this seems to refer only to the numerous bees visiting flowers. However, the passage of the Praśnapaniṣad just quoted seems to speak of the real swarming of bees, when they move on in order to start a new colony.

5.3 Bees’ enemies

Occasionally some bees’ enemies are mentioned in texts. In my opinion, the bhṛṅgarāja can hardly be the humblebee of van Buitenen,76 but rather a bird, the fork-tailed black drongo (Dicrurus macrourus and related species, see Dave 1985: 62 ff.), feeding on bees and other insects. The case is thus similar to the lion called mrgeṇḍra, the king of deer, which he eats.77 In the zoological classification developed by medical authors, bhṛṅgarāja is included in the pratuda class of birds (Caraka Sūtra 27, 50, Suśruta Sūtra 46, 67). In the KAŚ 1, 20, 7, it is listed among protected birds. Its voice is described with the verb kājati (Suśruta Kalpa 1, 32).78 In Varāhamihira (BS 53, 44 & 63), Bhṛṅgarāja is a minor deity.

75 Aristotle, H. an. 5, 21, 553ab and 8 (9), 40, 623ab, etc.; Vergil, Georgica 4 often, e.g. 67 ff. and 201 ff.; Aelian, N. an. 5, 10f., and Plinius H. N. 11, 17, 52–54.
76 Frequently in the Mbh translation (e.g. in book 3: 146, 20; 150, 23; 155, 52; 175, 7). The same also in the DEDR. But van Buitenen is not quite consistent here. In Mbh 3, 155, 75 (a list of kings), he translates bhṛṅgarāja as ‘bee-king’ and in 3, 155, 47 (a list of birds) as ‘shrike’ (i.e. drongo). The word humblebee (or humblebee) is sometimes used in the sense of the black Indian bees, but this is rather misleading. The real humblebees belong to a different genus (Bombus). They visit flowers and prepare honey, just like bees, and do not harass bees. According to http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9018065/?hook=235212, they are absent from most of Africa and from the lowlands of India. From the site http://www.nhm.ac.uk/research-curation/projects/bombus/oriental.html we further learn that in South Asia, they are restricted to the Himalayas. Some authors explain bhṛṅgarāja as just a large bee (Banerjee 1980: 185). The PW has both meanings from lexicography: ‘eine grosse Bienenan’ from Flemacandra and ‘ein best. Vogel’ from the Trīkāṇḍaśeṇa.
77 On lions, see Karttunen 2009. Note that among the animal categories of Ayurveda, the bhṛṅgarāja is listed in the pratuda class of birds (Suśruta Sūtra 46, 67, Caraka Sūtra 27, 50, and Vāgbhaṭa Sūtra 7, 72).
78 But note that kājati also applies to the humming of bees (dvirepha in Vallabhadeva 18, 737, also 752 with utkājati and the onomatopoeic ‘r ū’.


The most specific bee-eaters among birds are the members of the Meropidae family, but they are apparently not mentioned in literature at all. Dave (1985: 147 ff.) identifies them as śārīga and quotes a number of text references, but has nothing connected with bees. The tiny honey guides (Indicatoridae) are rare Himalayan birds, without any known Sanskrit name (Dave 1985: 126). Perhaps they were known to the honey-collecting tribes (as their relatives are in Africa), but literature seems to be silent. Honey was collected by low-caste people and the poets were not familiar with their methods.

Monkeys, bears and badgers are known to be often raiding bees’ nests for honey. In literature, beehives were broken open by monkeys seeking for honey (Subandhu 261f. golāngālahbagnamadhupatāla), or licked by monkeys and bears, thus disturbing the bees.79 In the Dhammadpa commentary (1, 5, p. 59), a monkey found a stick with a honeycomb (nimnakkhi kon dāṇḍakamadhuni), broke it, put the honey on a plantain-leaf and offered it to the Buddha.

In a humorous verse ascribed to Rājasēkhara by Vidyākara (8, 6, (157)), parrots mistake bees visiting jambu flowers for ripe berries, peck and drop them (kīrāḥ pakkaphalāśayā madhukarīś cumbanti muñcanti ca). However, the bees, too, seeing the red beaks of these green birds mistake them for the red flowers of the flame of the forest tree (4.2.2.18) amidst green leaves and fly to them (kiṁsūkataroh patraṁ abhinmaivīśāṁ puspabrāntībhiḥ āpatanti sahasā cañcīśu bhrīṅgānganāh). The same idea is found in the Bhāmarāṣṭa 5. Syed (1990: 289) also quotes another from *Hāla (532 Weber) with a similar idea about a monkey, who dares not take the jambu fruit remembering being stung by a bee earlier.

Men, too, can be bees’ enemies. Thus smoke was used to destroy bees (madhu-karā vā dhūmena bādhitā bhavanti) – either beehives built in an unwanted place or to obtain honey without danger, we may suppose – and the Mahāvastu (1, p. 20 & 23) promised a rebirth in a hell for people doing this.80 On the other hand, Majupuria (1977: 182) mentions a Nepalese tradition of bees attacking armies. The same author asserts that bees do not sting if one is holding one’s breath.

6. BEESWAX

In addition to bees and their nests, we find various bee products mentioned in literature: Beeswax or Sanskrit sīthaka,81 honeycomb and honey (Chapter 7

---

79. Bāṣa HC 2, 26 (45) acchabhailagolāngālahalihyamānamadhugolalitavaraḥpadāgadhātās.
80. Mv 1, p. 20 yeḥ ... madhukarā vā dhūmena bādhitā bhavanti & p. 23 yeḥ ... madhūni tamḥukena (so Jones for -lōni) vā āgniṇā bādhitāni bhavanti. The use of smoke in order to kill bees or to keep them quiet seems to have been widely known in the antiquity. See Aristotle, H. an. 8 (9), 40, 623b, Vergil, Georgica 4, 230, and Pliny, H. N. 11, 45.
81. The dictionaries (PW, pn, Edgerton) quote mainly lexicographical sources. According to the PTS Dictionary, Pāli sīthaka is attested in the Vinaya 2, 107, 151 sīthakdalaka ‘oil of beeswax’ and 2, 116 madhusīthaka. Note that sīkha, Pāli sīthu, also means ‘a lamp of boiled rice’.
below). Another name for beeswax is *madhīcchiṣṭa*, e.g. in the Mahābhārata. From the epic, we learn that it was used to anoint cudgels (Mbh 3, 268, 20 *sa madhīcchiṣṭamudgara*) and to seal a basket (3, 292, 7), but more often we meet it used in cosmetics.

Pale as beeswax without honey is used in comparisons. Like Kādambarī’s lip in Bāna (Kd 395 *madhīcchiṣṭapatapāṇḍhuram adharam*). Damayantī used beeswax to brighten the lustre of red lac on her lips and Śrīharṣa, always fond of word-play, compared this to a bee forsaking honey in order to drink the nectar of her lower lip. In Kālidāsa, beeswax is also applied to the lower lip of a lady (KS 7, 18 *kiñcin madhīcchiṣṭavimśatrāgagāḥ ... adharosṭhīḥ*). According to Varāhamihira (BS 16, 25), beeswax belongs to the planet Jupiter.

Beeswax was used in moulds for casting metals. This was known to the author of the Carakasaṅghātī (Śa 3, 16) who mentioned the various wax moulds (*madhīcchiṣṭavigraheṣu*), giving various shapes for metal as a comparison with genetics, each species giving birth to its own kind. Beeswax was also used for seals (Kṣemendra Kallav 8, 5 *sikīhamudro*). The medicinal uses of beeswax will be discussed in the next chapter.

7. BEES IN MEDICINE

In medicine, fat, ghee and wax were added to medicinal smoke made of the best drug plants (Caraka Śūtra 5, 25 *vasāṅghatmadhūcchiṣṭair yuktiyuktair varacuṣadhāiḥ ... dhūmam ācareṇ, cf. Vāgbhaṭa AH Cikitsā 3, 75). Together with other oily substances, *madhūcchiṣṭa* is used in cauterisation (Caraka Cikitsā 25, 103).

Bee stings can be painful and meeting a swarm of wild black bees is positively dangerous. It seems obvious that physicians were asked for help. And yet, even in the very full treatment of toxicology in Suśrutasaṅghātī (Kalpasthāna), there is no special chapter on bee stings. We find *bhramara* included in the general list of the *pitāja* type of insects (8, 9), but apparently bee sting was just taken as a variety of the *maksikā* type of stings (in 8, 35).

Bees themselves were used as an ingredient in magical preparations. Without success, I have looked for other medical uses, but Āyurveda seems to be silent. In Nepal, according to Majupuria (1977: 182), bee-venom therapy is used for rheumatism, arthritis, etc.

82 For the alternative *madhusiṣṭa* in the Rāmāyaṇa and Finno-Ugric evidence for its early origin, see Parpola 2005: 21.

83 Śrīharṣa Nais 15, 43. According to Warder (2004: 547), Addahamānu’s Sarimehrāsaya (187) mentions a cosmetic for the lower lip made of mixed wax, camphor and sandalwood (but apparently no lac to give colour).

84 KAS 14, 3, 78 (*āli, to cause impotence*); Agnipurāṇa 315, 16 (*spvada, to cause leprosy*).
8. HONEY

8.1 Preparing honey

Bees’ ability to make honey (madhu) was a cause of permanent wonder. They are capable of making honey (madhu madhukto nisitthanti) of the nectar of quite different trees, collecting it into one taste (rasa), and there one particular nectar cannot claim that I am the nectar of this particular tree (amasyāhām vṛkṣasya raso smīti, Čāndogyopanisad 6, 9, 1f.). The use of many flowers of different kinds and quality for obtaining honey was also emphasised by Suśruta (Śūtra 45, 143 tat tu nānādṛvyagarasagunavrīvopācavitraddhānām ... sanbhavatā).

The bees make honey for others. Doing this, they do not disturb the flowers and they collect honey from different places (flowers) like alms (Agnipuruṣa 161, 9). The wise king (Pārīkṣit) is like bees, capable of drawing the best out of everything.

An interesting account of the preparation of honey is found in the Mahāvastu. In the same text, honey made by bees is used as a comparison for good smell and taste (p. 69 kṣudramadhushadṛśāni).

On Gandhamādana mountain, there was a miraculous honey not prepared by bees (madhipitam amakoṣikam, why not ´unstained by flies´?), but nevertheless situated on a craggy precipice (maruprapate) and guarded by venomous snakes. It is said to have great medical virtues (Mbh 5, 62, 20 ff., cf. Smith 2002). On Supārśva mountain, there was a great Kadamba tree from the hollow of which flowed five sweet streams of honey (Bhāg 5, 16, 22 yas tu mahākadamabh supārvavānirūdho yas tasya koṣṭrebyo vinīḥsrṭāḥ paṇcāyāmaparīvatāḥ paṇca madhudhārāḥ).

85 Viśākhadatta 2, 11 jaṭh aggirivi bhamaro amānāhan kunāl taṁ kajāṁ, for Asoka in Dipavaliṁśa 6, 11 and Mahāvāṁśa 5, 31 bees made honey for Asoka (akahṛṣ satataṁ tassa madhūṁ madhumakkhiṁ).

86 Mbh 5, 34, 17 yathā madhū samādattē rasān puspāṁ satpadāṁ, Dhammapada 4, 6 (49) yathāpi bhamaro puspam vṛṣagandham ahethayam / paleti rasaṁ ādāya; Āṣāghoṣa BC 26, 40 (Tibetan).

87 Bhāg 1, 18, 7 sārāṅga iva sārabhuk, cf. 4, 18, 2 sarvataḥ sāram ādattē yathā madhukaro. If the text were intact, we would probably have a more elaborated form of the same in the Mahāvastu 1, 297f. quoted below.

88 Mahāvastu 1, p. 297f. (gāthā) As the bees come together and dull the essence of various flowers, gathering in their mouths and on their feet … (lacuna) (298) Through their concerted efforts is made a juice that is sweet of taste and smell, and that, pressed together, becomes choicest honey, goodly in colour, taste and smell, and useful as food and medicine (yathāpi te madhukarā nānādṛvyāh kṣaramaraśāṁ grahevatā / tuṇḍehi pādehi ca saṁharatvā ... // sāmagraīye bhavati rasagandhayavoso taṁ sanstṛtāṁ bhavati madhu prajātāṁ / vṛṇena gandhena rasagandhataṁ bhāṣājyabhaktāya ca taṁ spti).
8.2 Obtaining honey

Jungle tribes and low-caste people collect and sell honey and wax. They used to bring honey or honeycombs to the king as gifts (Milindapañha 4, 2, 22, p. 155 Tr = 117 Sastri yathā... puriso rañño cakkavattissa madhuṇa vā madhupiṇḍikāṁ vā... abhiṭṭhāya). Honey prepared from Himalayan flowers is praised as sweet in Mbh 2, 48, 5 himavatupajājan caiva svādu kṣaudraḥ. The Śabarās had vessels made of leaves for keeping honey (Bāha Kd 63 acchitraparnabaddhamadhuṇaṭaṁ).

Professional honey collectors or dealers (mādhvika) are occasionally mentioned in texts, but Gautama forbids this trade for Brahmans. In the Mahāvaṁsa, we meet three brothers making a living from the honey trade, two of them obtaining it and one selling it in a shop in the town (5, 49 pubbe kira tayo āsrū bhātaro madhuvānijija / eko madhuṇa vikkināti, āharanti madhuṇa dve). The seller, the future Asoka, then donates some honey as alms to a Pacekeabuddha and has to explain this to his brothers. In another narrative, a poor villager brought a honey pot to the town market, but stumbled and thus caused the first chain in a series of accumulating accidents leading to a massacre (Tantropākhyāna 2, 15, Sanskrit text p. 55f. according to Warder 1992: 89 ff.). In the Dhammapada Commentary (2, 1 p. 166), a hermit offered honey to a guest, but we are not told whether he collected it himself or obtained it from forest people. It is characterised nimmakkhico, which Burlinggame translates ‘free from flies’, but perhaps it could also be interpreted as honey found ‘without bees’. We had a similar case (1, 5 in the same text) earlier.

However, honey collecting could also be dangerous as the bees attack the collector (Mbh 3, 34, 68 amitrāḥ sakyate hantum madhuṇhā bhrumaraṁ iva). The BhāgP makes a point that honey, difficult to obtain, is found through killing its owner, the bee (7, 13, 35 kṛcchraṁ pataṁ madhuṇa vittam hatvāpy anyo haret patim).

8.3 Consuming honey

Honey was used in food and drink, in medicines and in magical potions (KAŚ 14,1, 21 & 24). Unfortunately, its sweetness could also be used to hide the pungent taste of poison (Kṣemendra Kalāv 3, 1 viṣaṁ iva madhuṇa sāhitaṁ).

---

89 HC 7, p. 124 K. (227 C & Th) in the description of foresters, honey (bharāhī ca madhuṇa māksaṁ) and wreaths of compressed (or easily obtained) wax (lambamāna- lāmaqajītāyatām apattacām).


91 Mādhvika, e.g. in Mbh 2, 55, 4; Varāhāmihira BS 15, 9 māṣika among trade items presided over by Pṛṇvapahlgama, and 42, 5 on times for storing up and selling honey; prohibited for Brahmans in GautDh 7, 12, cf. Gopal 1969: 262.

92 At the time of the finishing of this study, I have procured a copy of this rare edition and can thus confirm the reference from the text itself.
There were several types of honey distinguished in literature, especially by medical authors. Thus Caraka (Sūtra 27, 243 ff., also AS 6, 98) has māṣīka, bhrāmara, kṣaudra and pauttika kinds of honey, while Suśruta (Sūtra 45, 133) lists these four and four additional ones (chātra, ārghya, audāka, dāla). Suśruta has a whole chapter devoted to honey, its different kinds and their uses (Madhuvarga in Sūtra 45, 132–147).

Different kinds of honey and beeswax are also listed in the Amarakośa (2, 10, 1921 = Gopal’s 2, 9, 107 madhu kṣudraṁ māṣīkādi madhucchīṣṭaiṁ tu sīktakam) and some Jaina texts. Gopal (1969: 258–259) attempts to identify these. His biology is not very exact (Sastry 2006: 51–52 is still worse), but I think we can agree that bhrāmara comes from Apis dorsata, māṣīka, which is the best kind, from the cultivated Apis cerana, and kṣaudra⁹ from the small Apis florea. For the rest, Gopal suggests some further, probably non-existing species or subspecies of bees, but there is also great difference in honey made from different flowers and this seems to me to be a more likely explanation.

In this connection, we must also note Dalhaṇa’s comments on the list given by Suśruta. It deserves to be quoted almost entirely (Dalhaṇa on Suśruta Sū 45, 133):

pingalā mahatyā māṣīkāḥ putikāḥ, tadbhavan pauttikāṁ / ane māṣākośamamāṣīkāḥ kṛṣṇavarṇāḥ putikāḥ iti vadvanti / bhramarāḥ prasa-siddhiḥ, tadbhavan kṣaudram / pingalavarnā mahatyā māṣīkā, tadbhavan bhrāmaram / māṣīkāḥ pingalā eva svalpāḥ kṣudrāḥ, tadbhavan māṣīkam / ane atyapāḥ māṣīkā iti āhuḥ / pītalā pingalā eva caga iti loke yat kuryanti chitrakākāraḥ himācalavane tat chātraḥ / madhuvarṇakṣapaspebhyo jatakāvāsramodbhavam / sravery ārghyaiṁ madhu prāhuḥ śvetacakā mālave janāḥ / tīkṣṇauṣadāṁ tu yāḥ pitarvarṇāḥ sajpadasannitāḥ / āgarā nāma ca tadbhūtam ārgyam ity apace jaguḥ / .. udālaḥ kapiṇākōḥ svalpāḥ prāyasi vālmīkeṣu madhu cintanti, / tadbhavan audḍālakam / dālam iti dalaṁ pataṁ tadaparisthitam dālai / aney tu kapiṇā eva svalpapataṁ māṣīkāḥ prāyeṇa vrksakṣaroḍbhavāḥ dāla ity ucyante, tadbhavan dālam iti //

Tawny large bees are putikas (‘dolls’), hence (is derived) pauttika (honey), others say that putikas are black-coloured bees resembling mosquitoes. Proper bees are bhramaras, hence bhrāmara (honey). Tawny small bees are kṣaudras (‘tiny’), hence kṣaudra (honey). Tawny-coloured large bees are māṣīkās (‘flies’), hence māṣīka (honey), others say (they are) very minute bees. When yellow or tawny ones make ‘caga’ (noise) and build an umbrella-shaped (hive) in the Himalayan forest, that is chātra (honey). Produced in Jatakā’s áśrama from the flowers of madhuka trees, (this) whitish liquid honey is pronounced by the Mālave people ārghya (honey); and those with sharp sting and yellow colour, resembling insects, are called arghas, derived from them is ārghya (honey) as others say .. Uddālakas, small yellow insects, usually prepare honey in white ants’ mounds, hence audḍālaka (honey). Dāla (derived from) dala, i.e. leaf, based on this (is the

⁹ This is probably same as the kṣudramadhu in the Mv 3, p. 69. The term kṣaudra also in Mbh 2, 48, 5 (above), but this refers to the Himalayas, where Apis florea is not found.
name of the) dāla (honey); but others call dalas the yellow bees usually coming out from tree hollows, hence dāla (honey).

We see that there were already different opinions about what kind of bees prepared each of these sorts of honey. It is possible that these different opinions were due to geographical differences.

In Āyurveda, honey is much used in medicines, anointing and diets (see Jolly 1977, index s.v. honey). It is said to be the best among the drugs alleviating phlegm and bile (Caraka Sūtra 25, 40 śreṣṭham ... madhu śeṣmapittaprasamānānām). Suśruta (Śūtra 45, 132) and Vāgbhata (AH Śūtra 5, 51f.) list several cases where it is useful. In popular medicine, the honey of *Apis florea* is particularly reputed to have medicinal properties in some regions (Hooper 1910: 511). In Surapāla’s Vṛkṣāyurveda, honey is often an ingredient in the various medicinal liquids given to trees (see Das’s Index p. 584 s.v. ‘Honig’).

Occasionally, honey can also be pungent in flavour (Agnipurāṇa 281, 8 madhuro ’pi kāṭuḥ [ed. kṛṣṇuḥ?] pāke yac ca kṣaudraṁ prakīrtitam), even a cause of stomach problems (cf. Watt 1890: 270). Suśruta (Śūtra 45, 143f.) points out that honey is made by poisonous insects (saviṣamākṣikāḥ-anbhavatāḥ), therefore it should not be heated or taken with hot things. Vāgbhata warns that it can be fatal, when taken heated, in heated condition, or season, or together with hot food (AH Śūtra 5, 53 uṣṇam uṣṇārtam uṣṇe ca yuktam coṣṭhāvam niḥanti tat).

In fact, it seems that the best honey did not come from the large black *Apis dorsata*, although this is often the idea given by texts (and adopted by many Indologists), but from the smaller species (*Apis cerana* and *Apis florea*). Of the honey of *Apis dorsata*, collected and sold in the traditional way, Watt (1889: 435) had no favourable opinion: “The honey [...] is commonly of very inferior quality, being contaminated by pollen, the juices of larvae, & c. It is also commonly thin and liable to fermentation.” Perhaps this is why it was sometimes mixed with water (as madhūdaka). The exaggerated fame of *Apis dorsata* honey is perhaps due to the fact that collecting it is much more dangerous than that of the lesser species.

### 8.4 Honey preparations

According to Gopal (1969: 257), madhuśarkarū or honey-sugar is crystallised from honey in a few days. It is generally mentioned in medical works (Caraka Śūtra 27, 242, Suśruta Śūtra 45, 166, Vāgbhata AH Śūtra 5, 52). Dalhaṅga’s commentary on the Suśruta passage gives a clear definition: pākāt kālāntaraśoṣaṇād vā

---

94 See e.g. Caraka Śūtra 27, 323 and Cikitsā 6, 46.
ghanībhūtāvayavain madhu śarkarātūlyatvād madhuśarkarā ity ucyate. For medical purposes, honey was also mixed with sesame oil.\textsuperscript{95}

The honey-based madhuparka offering is given to the honoured guest to drink (dadhisarpir jalam kṣaudram sitā ca ‘dadi, ghee, water, honey, and candy’).\textsuperscript{96} Honey mixed with ghee was offered to the Buddha in the Mahāvastu (3, p. 304f. madhıṣarpīryuktam tarpānam, then just madhutarpaṇam). The honey used for this purpose, of course, was choice and exquisite, having good colour, smell and taste.

Honey-based mead was the favourite drink of Nordic Vikings. It seems that a similar preparation was also known in India. Often it was called just madhu ‘honey’.\textsuperscript{97} The Viśųṣnuṃrī 22, 83f. lists mādhvīka among the ten intoxicating drinks forbidden to a Brahman, but allowed for a Kṣatriya and a Vaiśya. Jolly’s translation speaks of a liquor distilled (so early?) from the sweet madhūka flowers, but this kind of drink is the mādhūka mentioned a little before (and translated by Jolly as the same). Therefore, I agree with Gopal that mādhvīka is made of honey. Manu (11, 94/95) has mādhvī as a kind of surā and the commentators variously explain it as made of honey or flowers.\textsuperscript{98} It is probably the same as Caraka’s and Vāgbhaṭa’s (AS Śū 6, 130 & AH Śū 6, 75) madhvāsava. In the passage quoted above, Watt said that the honey of Apis dorsata is liable to fermentation – perhaps this was an additional cause for its popularity.

The Greeks and Romans occasionally liked to sweeten their wine with honey (Latin vinum malsum). The Carakasaṃhitā recommends a drink suitable for the rainy season to be wine or other alcoholic drinks mixed with honey and a little water (Śūtra 6, 39 pibet kṣaudrāṃvitam cālpaṁ mādhvāriṣṭam ambu vā).

9. SOME FURTHER IDEAS ABOUT BEES

9.1 Bees in allegories

Sometimes bees were used in allegories. Thus, there is the famous comparison of the man in the well: Even in his great danger, the man is happy to taste honey dripping from the nest of wild bees.\textsuperscript{99} Too elaborate to be fully cited here is the

\textsuperscript{95} Caraka Siddhi 7, 20 mādhutālīka, mixed with (cow’s) urine and salt, cf. Śāṅgadharmaśarīhita 3, 6, 29.

\textsuperscript{96} Often mentioned in Gṛhya- and Dharmasūtras, also in Manu 3, 119f. See Kane 1997: 542 ff. and Gopal 1969: 256–257 (both with references).

\textsuperscript{97} Aalto 1963: 18, cf. madhvāsava in Caraka Śūtra 27, 187.

\textsuperscript{98} Olivelle, note ad locum. Olivelle himself accepts honey, but does not specify the opinions of commentators. I have only Kullaka available to me and he explains it as made of flowers (mādhukarikṣo madhus tatpupātha krtā sā mādhvī). See also Aalto 1963: 22 and Gopal 1969: 257.

\textsuperscript{99} Mbh 11, Chapter 5 (and explanation in 6).
long illusion parable of Somadeva (KSS 12, 3). In it, the bees represent living beings, alternately drinking good or evil actions in the form of the foam of a bull and a donkey representing the righteousness and unrighteousness. According to Amaracandra (*Bālabhārata 40, 107 according to Warder 2004: 577), the dependants drink up the substance of a smiling king, just like a flower is emptied by quivering bees. For Kavirāja (*Rāughavapāṇḍavīya 1, 25 in Warder 2004: 418–419), the king is a bee to the foot-lotus of fortune.

9.2 Bees as omens

There are omens derived from bees as early as in the Jaiminīyaghyasūtra (2. 7 madhu vā jāyeta, bees making honey in a house). Bees inside a house as a sinister portent are also met in Bāna (HC 5, 82 (148) quoted above) indicating the death of the king, and again (6, 106 (194f.) madhusaraghāsanghāta) indicating an imminent war. Varāhamihira also noted the appearance of bees and other insects in houses, caityas and toranās as sinister portents.100 According to Jagaddeva 2, 54, the bees coming inside a house both in dream and during the daytime (madhu-maṣṭikā viśanti svapne divase 'bhavā grham') forebode death or bad luck for the owner. However, König (1984: 151) refers to Ramlaī’s (in North Indian Notes and Queries 5 (1895): 52) account of a popular belief that bees and termites living in an empty house or at the town gate are auspicious. König also refers to the BaudhāyGītā 3, 3, 23, 17 & 3, 4, 20, 1.101

The Vasantarājasūkā (15, 2) briefly mentions bees (bhṛṅga) flying left as a good omen.

9.3 Bees in dreams

We just saw that bees entering a house are a sinister portent even when seen in a dream. Even before this, Jagaddeva 2, 23 listed saḍarana among insects considered bad omens when seen in a dream.102 Dreams of being stung by leeches, bees, serpents and flies (gadflies?) foretold recuperation for the sick and wealth for the healthy persons (Śrīrādadharasūkīhitā 1, 3, 26 jalaukā bhramari sarpo maṣṭikā vāpi yajnā daśet / rogī sa bhūyād ullāgghāḥ svastho dhanaṁ avāpnyāt). At least in Nepal, according to Majupuria (1977: 182), a dream of bee swarms foretells that

---

100 VM:BS 46, 70 grhaicaityatoraṇeṣu ... madhuvamkāmbhοrūhhasamudbhavaś cāpi naśayya, see also 8 on beeches as portents.

101 I cannot locate the first passage in the Mysore edition. The second is on p. 376 where madhunā upaveśanam and valmiṅkāpūkṣa karotpinnam are listed among inauspicious buildings and places.

102 Von Negelein gives as parallels the Yogāyātra 3, 6 and *Māyūrācitra in Adhutāsāgara 588 and *Kaṭhasūtu ibid. 725 (these two unavailable to me). In the Yogāyātra, Varāhamihira explains pigeons, owls, or bees (kapotakolakamudbhūti) descending on the king’s standard or flywhisk as a bad omen.
a friend will betray one, while the dream of bees making honey foretells that one will need money

9.4 Bees and poison

In an earlier article (Karttunen 2001), I have discussed the traditions about finding out the existence of poison from the exceptional behaviour of various animals. Monkeys and birds were considered more important for this purpose, but among other indications of poison, the Matsyapurāṇa (219, 18) claims that a bee starts humming in its proximity.

9.5 The ‘bee instrument’

In the Mahāvastu (3 p. 407), a list of musical instruments includes the bhramarikā, perhaps a sort of humming instrument. Edgerton in his dictionary suggests ‘humming-top’. The word is also found in Pāli (e.g. bhamarikam bhumanto viya in Jātaka 537 = 5, p. 478) and in Ardhamāgadhī. In 4.6, we saw that Bāṇa (Kd 395) compared the sweet flutes of the Kinnaras to the humming of bees. The humming itself was considered a sort of sweet music as it symbolised the pleasures of springtime.

10. POEMS ON BEES

There are also some special poems on bees. The Bhramarāṣṭaka is a small poem of eight verses. It belongs to the great number of spurious works that were later ascribed to Kālidāsa. The text was long ago edited by Haeberlin. Among its eight stanzas, the last is identical (with minor variants) with Vallabhadeva 18, 754 and 2 is a somewhat modified version of Vallabhadeva 18, 753.

Some anthologies contain a separate division for bees. In the Śārṅgadharapaddhati, this is Pariccheda 45 Madhukarāṇyoktayaḥ containing 23 stanzas numbered 815–837. In Vallabhadeva’s Subhāṣītāvalī, the corresponding section (18. Bhramarāḥ) contains the stanzas 724–756.

The model of Kālidāsa’s Meghadūta produced a number of dūta or sandeśa poems with various (more or less romantic) messengers used. Few poets seemed to heed Bhāma’s warning (1, 42) that the use of messengers such as clouds, winds, the Moon, the bee, or various birds, contains the doṣa called ayuktimat (incongruous, as they cannot speak). Thus we have, for instance, the Bhramaradūta by Rudra
Nyāyavācaspati Bhaṭṭācārya (edited in the Kāvyamālā)\textsuperscript{103} and another anonymous sandeśa using bees as messengers. On both, see Krishnamachariar 1937, § 323 (with note 14), also on bees as messengers in § 170. Furthermore, there is a modern Bhrumarasandesā by Makalinga Sastri (born 1897) of Madras, see ibid. § 746.\textsuperscript{104}

11. FALSE BEES

Finally, we must also note some false bees. Instead of moths flying to the light and used by burglars to extinguish lamps, Duṇḍin (DKC) spoke of bees.\textsuperscript{105} ‘Bees’ (alivṛndaikāḥ) were also accused of destroying crops (Matsyapurāṇa 131, 50). These were rather locusts or moth larvae. The six-legged sātpada can rightly be any insect (as they all have six legs), but often the word was used only for bees. The other way round, one may think that the words for a bee can also more generally refer to an insect (like the Hindi and Malayālam words for ‘bee’ and also for ‘beetle’ mentioned above). In any case, I think that in the just-mentioned instances, the word for ‘bee’ should probably be translated as ‘insect’. Amarakośā (2, 6, 1040) identifies saraghā as madhumakṣikā, but is this a ‘bee’ or rather a ‘fly’? Flies are also attracted by honey.\textsuperscript{106} Bees are listed somewhat later in another passage,\textsuperscript{107} and just before saraghā, the word māṇikā is glossed as nilā, evidently a fly (or even the black bee!).

12. CONCLUSION

Visiting flowers, making honey, humming loudly, harassing people – the bees were always easily noted. At an early stage, they became part of the standard imagery of Indian poetry, used – as we have seen – in remarkably varying ways. The biology was often quite inexact, but the poets probably did not know better and did not care. While the unseasonal flowering of the aśoka tree when touched by the feet of young women was a common poetic motif, we have seen several examples of bees visiting certain flowers in the wrong seasons or at night, both against biological facts. Often it is even difficult to keep bees and flies separate. In a way, I think my collection

\textsuperscript{103} Unfortunately not available to me.
\textsuperscript{104} Unfortunately, the New Catalogus Catalogorum ends with Brahmasūkta thus leaving out most of these texts.
\textsuperscript{105} This motif has been fully discussed by me in Karttunen 2003. It refers to the natural behaviour of moths (patanigā) and has nothing to do with bees.
\textsuperscript{106} Note the Buddhist proverb about making sweets although they attract flies: yathā na mrghāḥ sanlitī yavā nopyante / yathā na māṣikāḥ patanīti modakā na bhakṣyante //
\textsuperscript{107} AK 2, 6 madhuvratato madhurakaro madhūnī madhipālināḥ / 1045 / dvireṇaphuspalibṛṛgasat- padabhrarāśiṇyāḥ / 1046 /
has shown Nilakantha’s reproach to be true: That great trouble is wasted by poets in praising the insect called bee, instead of praising virtues.108

REFERENCES

Primary109

_Agnipurāṇa_ (AP): Šrīmaṅkaśvajñananuvaminiśṛṣṭiitian Agnipurāṇa (tattadhyādyagataviśayānunukramanāthāḥ). Etapustakam Ānandāśramaastihaṇḍitaḥ sansodhitam. ÂnSS 41. Poona 1900 (repr.).


——_ Bāṇa’s Harsacarita_. Tr. E.B. Cowell & F.W. Thomas. 1897 (Indian repr.).


——_ The Kādambari of Bāṇa_. Tr. C.M. Ridding. 1895 (repr. ND 1974).


108 Nilakantha Kalidivaṃbana 35f. _stutam stuvaṃi karayo na svato guṇadarśinaḥ / kītiḥ kaścid aḥiḥ nāma kiyaṇi tatra varṇanā //

109 Frustrated by the difficulty of giving exact references to certain texts with available editions, I have taken the trouble to identify the pages of old standard editions in the margins of my copies of modern Indian editions (e.g. of the Kādambari and Vīṣavatātā).


Bhattanârayaṇa, Vêṣṭânâhâra. Indian edition with English transl. without title page, perhaps printed in the 1930s.


Harṣa, Priyadarṣikā (Pri): Priyadarṣikā of Śrī Harṣadeva. Ed. with transl. and commentary by Moreshwar Ramchandra Kale. 1928 (repr.).


Kālidāsa: Ṛgvedaṇās (Rv): The Ṛgvedaṇās of Kālidāsa with The Commentary (the Saṁjñāti) of Mallinātha, ed. Kāśināth Pānḍurang Parab & Ṣārveṣve Parāṅga. 10th edn, Bombay (NSP) 1932.


Makka, Śrīkaṇṭha-carita (Srīk.). summary in Warder 2004: 78–97.


Matsya-purāṇa. Ed. ĀnSS 54. Poona 1907 (repr.).


Śāṅgadharapaddhati. Śāṅgadharā Paddhati being an Anthology of Sanskrit Verses compiled by Śāṅgadharā. Ed. Peter Peterson with introd. by Satkari Mukhopadhyaya. Vrajaśivan Prachyabharati Granthamala 25. Delhi, Chaukhamba 1987 (repr. from 1915 NSP edn, the promised introduction is not included).


Śūdra, Mycchakatikā (Mk): Mycchakatikā of Śūdra. Ed. with transl. and commentary by Moreshwar Ramchandra Kale. 1924 (reprint).


Śukasaptati. Delhi 1959 (plain text without introduction or the name of the editor, but it is in fact Schmidt’s Versio simplicior).


Western Classics


Dictionaries


Secondary


SMITH, John D. 2002. The honey and the precipice. Appeared in Subhāṣīṇī, Prof. Dr. Saroja Bhate Felicitation Volume: 316–324. Pune (Not available to me. Instead, I have used the manuscript version kindly sent to me by the author).


