

hung around their necks. In this poor, rural region, hand pollination actually costs less than renting traveling colonies of honeybees. With bee populations plummeting around the world, it's worrisome to think that such intensive and cheap human labor could become the norm.

DANGER BEES

Honeybees perform their vital service all over the world, but not all honey is

created equal. Himalayan giant honeybees in Nepal produce red-hued honey with psychotropic properties. Known as "mad honey," it sells on black markets in Asia for as much as \$80 (€70) a pound. Made from the flowers of rhododendron trees in springtime, this hallucinogenic honey contains chemicals called *grayanotoxins*, which produce unappealing symptoms such as stomach pain and vomiting, but also offer relief for

08 A traditional honey hunter hangs in the air as he seeks to collect sheets of honeycomb that cling to cliff faces in Nepal.

09 "Mad honey" is so valuable that Kulung honey hunters put themselves at great personal risk to collect it.

10 A honey hunter climbs back up with his prize—still buzzing with giant Himalayan honeybees.



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arthritis (and in larger doses, an unpleasant intoxication). It's so valuable that traditional honey hunters among the Kulung people risk their lives climbing tall cliffs to carve off large sections of hives for harvest. Before embarking on this death-defying honey hunt, they seek the help of Rangkemi, the guardian spirit of bees

and monkeys, to bless and protect them. But the young in Kulung communities are losing their appetite for mad honey; most no longer wish to stay and risk their lives for the harvest. They have smartphones—they've tasted the fruits of modernity and found them just as sweet.