



Sacred Scents

by John E Smith



Healing Perfumes of The East

Avicenna (980-1037) was a Persian Scholar and physician who brought together Eastern and Western approaches to healing. He was born near Bokhara, Uzbekistan, a place once described as 'The Centre of Enlightenment' due to the interchange of cultural and religious ideals.

Avicenna was a busy man, famed for writing four hundred and fifty treatises on subjects ranging from astronomy to religion, psychology to physics. The most well-known of his medical texts is the 14-volume classic, known as The Canon of Medicine.


He also developed 62 cardiac medicines of which around 40 were perfume essences (attars). They included rose, amber, saffron, jasmine and Oudh.

The word 'Attar' is an Arabic word meaning 'fragrance'. Attars are traditionally prepared by 'cold rolling' or 'steam distillation'. Avicenna was the first person to distil roses and other plants. One big difference between Attars and other perfumes is that, in the Islamic tradition, alcohol is considered to destroy the soul of the plant. So, although solvents are used in most perfumes (including absolutes) they are forbidden in attar manufacture.

The Rose: Rose works directly on the heart. More than 100 roses are used in attar manufacture and many attars will combine several (together with other plant substances, including musk, sandalwood, etc.).

Amber: Often considered to be the male equivalent of rose, amber attar also calms the spirit. There are many different amber attars, ranging from the lighter notes to the darker more masculine fragrances. My current favourite is the subtle fragrance of White Amber.

Oudh: A resinous wood taken from ancient trees. The resin is produced as a natural defence against parasitic growths and is, therefore, only found in infected trees. As a result, Oudh is exceedingly rare and expensive, often priced in the region of £30-£300 per dram (3ml), depending on age, quality and origin. Oudh attar inspires a relaxed positivity.

Whichever you are drawn to, they all have their unique healing qualities, as well as smelling divine. 

John E Smith, B.A (Hons) M:URHP Dip C.H., is a classical herbalist. He can be contacted by email at jesmithbodytonix@aol.com.

powerful herbs by John E Smith



USNEA (*Usnea longissima*):

History: I find it very interesting that the first land plant species to evolve from the ocean was the lichen family, including such members as Usnea. These plants are now considered to be high on the list of natural alternatives to the toxic chemicals used in the treatment of cancer. Usnic Acid, an anti-cancer nutrient, has been available for 400 million years (yet another example of modern man's refusal to accept nature as a superior force!). Usnea has been used for 3,000 years in ancient Egypt, Greece and China to treat unspecified infections.

Other Uses: Respiratory tract infections and fungal conditions. Usnea appears to be much more powerful than penicillin against staphylococcus and streptococcus without destroying friendly bacteria.

Contraindications: No known contraindications or side effects.

The above extract features in John E Smith's book, '100 Herbs of Power', which is available at www.strategicbookpublishing.com