

# Oudh – ‘The King of Scents’

By: Ml. Afzal Yusuf

Oudh or Dahnul Oudh is regarded as The King of Fragrance and rightfully so. Oudh is extremely rare and costly because of its origins.

Oudh is a resin that originates from the Aquilaria tree found in the South Asian regions or more specifically: Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Assam and Burma. The tree has to be at least 50 years old before a fungus attacks it. As a natural response to counteract this infection, the Aquilaria tree produces the resin known as Oudh, thus preventing a total decay of the tree. Once the Oudh is produced within the core of the bark, skilled collectors remove these Oudh rich barks for distillation. On average, it takes a kilo of Oudh sticks to yield approximately 3ml of Oudh oil.

Those familiar with its effects do not find the price a consideration. Research has revealed that there are just four nations in the world that use Oudh and amazingly each nation has its own belief system in regards to Oudh and its virtues. Firstly, the Japanese use Oudh to strengthen their memory by way of a complex fragrance guessing game called Koh-do. They also believe that by burning the Oudh sticks and inhaling the aroma within, gives the body longevity.

The Chinese primarily use Oudh in ceremonial events and the very affluent would use Oudh as a general tonic and cure for tumours.

Thirdly, the Jews also use Oudh as they believe its use brings about prosperity in their homes and businesses.

Finally, the Arabs have been using Oudh as it is a recommendation of the Prophet Sallallahu alaihi wassallam, as Oudh contains a cure for many ailments.

Imam Bukhari reports that the Prophet Sallallahu alaihi wassallam said: “I recommend the use of Oudh al Hind, for verily it has a cure for seven ailments.” Commentators have listed some of the seven sicknesses as: Pleurisy (inflammation and water retention in the lungs), Anticoagulant (prevents clotting of the blood), Cardiac Tonic, ailments of the throat, Kidney disorders, Chest problems (including respiratory complaints) and amongst others, prevents impotency.

One derives benefits by both applying the Oudh oils and burning the Oudh sticks. The burning of Oudh sticks was a practice of Sayyidina Umar (R.A.) in Masjidun Nabawi as it is mentioned that Oudh originates in Jannah and Iblees despises its scent because the beautiful fragrance of Oudh brings nostalgic memories of his residence there once. Also, whenever Sayyidina Abdullah ibn Umar (R.A.) used to burn incense, he would burn pure Oudh or Oudh mixed with camphor. He used to further comment that Nabi Sallallahu alaihi wassallam used to burn incense in that manner. (Nisa'i, vol. 2 page 283).

Of late, Oudh has become a buzzword in the west. We find almost every designer label boasting an Oudh fragrance in their collection of eau de parfums. Some are making ludicrous claims of even inventing Oudh altogether. These claims of ownership by the west are not surprising to the Muslim world. We have witnessed how they have taken the science of medicine, mathematics, astronomy, numeracy, literature and a host of other mechanical inventions from the Muslims and ostentatiously laid claim over them.

What is rather disturbing to note, is that as Muslims, we have been encouraged to use pure fragrances such as Oudh, Musk, Amber, Rose and Saffron by our Rasool Sallallahu alaihi wassallam. However, we have been dragging our feet in taking to these scents, yet the moment the west markets these name alike fragrances to us in a highly diluted, alcohol version, then we seem to scuttle and embrace "their invention." Incidentally, very little to no traces of Oudh is to be found in their perfume blends.

It is a highly stressed upon Sunnah of Rasullullah Sallallahu alaihi wassallam, to apply attar on Fridays, on the occasions of Eid, when acquiring knowledge, when attending Islamic gatherings, before entering the state of Ihram, when husband and wife meet and before any Salaah. Mulla Ali Qari (R.A.) has recorded this in his Jama'ul Wasa'il pg. 5.

Ibn Al Qayyim (R.A.) has also written that one of the distinguishing features of Friday and Eid is that the usage of Itr is stressed and it merits greater rewards. Zad al Ma'ad vol. 1 pg. 377.

As mentioned in our previous article that Attar, besides affording the user and those around a pleasant scent, inadvertently adds value to the general wellbeing of the user both physically and emotionally. Good quality fragrances should be applied on the pulse points for maximum benefits.

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