



AN ENCOUNTER WITH AYURVEDA AROMATHERAPY

BY FARIDA IRANI

Some years ago during my travels to India I stumbled upon unique and rare Ayurvedic Aromatherapy oils. I have experimented with, investigated and researched these oils, and the results have been profound and astounding! I feel proud and grateful to be the first to bring these ancient and unusual oils to Australia. My goal is to share this exciting discovery with my fellow therapists so you too can use them.

Ayurveda, the science of East Indian medicine which means science of life, goes back 4000 years in written script but the origins of this ancient science is said to be over 40,000 years old. The Vedas (ancient texts) state that a conference took place in the Himalayan caves by all the sages and masters to discuss how to alleviate human suffering. They put their heads together and realized that people were a microcosm of the macrocosm. People were interdependent with nature and had to live in harmony with the Universe but first with themselves. For this, they needed to attain Mental Equilibrium.

Ayurveda has specific ways in which aromatics, diet, herbs and even cosmetics could help to sustain this mental equilibrium as the balanced mind is of utmost importance for physical, emotional and spiritual well being.

The Vedas have different methods of extracting and purifying perfumes and aromatics with the use of mantras, oils, herbs and clays. The philosophy of this ancient science is practiced today in Indian households. We are reviving this science of using rare and unique essential oils and attars as most Ayurvedic institutes and pharmacies use decoctions and infusions of the herbs.

In India, for many centuries, herbalists have known and perfected Aromatherapy. They have utilized the healing properties of aromatic oils and rare chemical ingredients in flowers, roots and herbs. In fact, blends of lingering fragrances with medicinal properties were used to heal kings and queens in distant lands as far as Egypt and Rome.

The Indian science of Aromatherapy is based on inherited genetic constitution. Due to over-indulgence in food and sensual pleasures toxins accumulate in the bile and blood resulting in ailments and ultimately ageing. All humans are oriented either to gas, bile or phlegm. Thus to suggest essential oils, therapists first ascertain the constitution of the individual.

There are three types of personalities or Prakritis:

Vata (Air and Ether – light dry and cold)

Pitta (Fire and Water - hot and wet)

Kapha (Water and Earth – cold moist, slow and heavy)

Fierce smelling aromatic substances which are **wet, heavy, calming and warming** are beneficial for gas oriented or Vata people, e.g. Saffron (*Crocus Sativus*), Ajowan (*Trachyspermum Ammi / Ptychotis Ajowan*), Black pepper (*Piper nigrum*), Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*).

Essential oils classified as **coolants, heat dispelling, drying nutritive and calming** are conducive to **bile oriented** Pitta people, e.g. Chamomile (*Chamaemelum noblie*), Lemon (*Citrus limon*), Jasmine (*Jasminum grandiflorum*), Neem (*Azadirachta Indica*) Gul-heena (*Lawsonia Alba*), Jatamansi (*Nardostachya jatamansi*), Sandalwood (*Santalum album*), Neroli (*Citrus aurantium var*), Rose (*Rosa damascena/centifolia*).

Essential oils that are **warming, drying and stimulating**, are beneficial to phlegm oriented Kapha individuals, e.g. Clove (*Eugenia caryophyllata*), Cardamon (*Elettaria cardamomum*), Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*), Fennel (*Foeniculum vul-*

garis), Ajowan (*Trachyspermum Ammi / Ptychotis Ajowan*), Jasmine (*Jasminum grandiflorum*) Saffron (*Crocus Sativus*).

There is a large variety of Ayurvedic Aromatherapy oils, to name just a few—Ashwagandha, Lotus, Ajowan, Mogra, Neem, Costus, Gul-Heena, Heena leaf, Champa, Curry Leaf, Betel leaf, Davana, Lotus, Saffron, Rhukhus, Tulsi, Jatamansi, Kewda, Brahmi, Clove, Nutmeg, Cinnamon, Cardamon, Black pepper, Amla, Cumin and Coriander seed and leaf, the list goes on and on!!!

These oils can be used in conjunction with regular Aromatherapy oils.

SIX TASTES (RASAS)

Ayurveda emphasizes the Rasas (tastes) as the tastes influence the balance of the doshas in the body. The Rasas are derived from the five great elements (Panch Mahabhutas)- Air, water, fire, earth and ether. They have a total effect on all parts of the organism, not merely the tongue, as taste does not disappear from food even after it is digested. Each cell has a rudimentary sense of taste and each is affected by the taste of its nutrients. Similarly these oils go by the taste and the effect it would have through application on the skin.

SWEET (MADHURA)-COMPOSED

MAINLY OF EARTH & WATER

Increases kapha & decreases pitta
Cooling, heavy and unctuous
Good for pitta
Nourishes and exhilarates the body and the mind
Increases all tissues

SOUR (AMLA)-COMPOSED

MAINLY OF EARTH & FIRE

Increases kapha & pitta, decreases vata
Heating, heavy & unctuous
Good for vata
Refreshes the being
Encourages elimination of wastes
Lessens tremors and improves appetite and digestion

SALTY (LAVANA) -COMPOSED

MAINLY OF WATER & FIRE

Increases kapha & pitta, decreases vata
Heating, heavy & unctuous
Good for vata
Eliminates wastes and cleanses the body
Increases digestive capacity
Softens and loosens tissues

PUNGENT (TIKTA) -COMPOSED

MAINLY OF FIRE & AIR

Increases pitta & vata, decreases kapha
Heating, light & dry
Good for kapha
Flushes all types of secretions
Reduces kapha like tissues such as semen, milk and fat.

BITTER (KATU)-COMPOSED

MAINLY OF AIR & ETHER

Increases vata, decreases pitta and kapha
Cooling, light & dry
Good for pitta, kapha
Purifies and dries all secretions
Tones organism by returning taste to normal balance
Increases appetite and controls skin diseases and fevers

ASTRINGENT (KASHAYA)-COMPOSED

MAINLY OF AIR & EARTH

Increases vata & decreases pitta, kapha
Cooling, light & dry
Good for pitta, kapha
Heals purifies and constricts all parts of the body
Reduces all secretions
Can be anti-aphrodisiac

I have listed some of the rare and unique Ayurveda Aromatherapy oils in short for you to have an understanding of these oils.

BASE OILS

Common: Ashwaganda (infused in Sesame)

Latin: (*Withania Somnifera*) (Winter Cherry)
Family: Solanaceae
Part of Plant: roots Habitat: Western India and Southern Europe
Taste: bitter, astringent
Dosha effect: it pacifies Vata and Kapha, and if used in excessive amounts, it aggravates Pitta

Therapeutics

Body: tonic; nerve sedative; diuretic; rejuvenating; muscular weakness; insomnia; seminal debility; aphrodisiac
Skin: astringent; glow to the skin; leucoderma; oedema; anti-wrinkle
Mind/Emotions: mental irritability

Ashwaganda is used in Ayurvedic medicine for treatment of muscular disorders, especially for Multiple Sclerosis conditions. A popular oil called Narayana Taila, has Ashwaganda and Shatavri (*Asparagus racemose*) in it and is used as a muscular tonic. Ashwagandha though unheard of and not used in Western techniques of Aromatherapy, is an ancient Indian tonic for weak muscles and old age. It is considered to be the Indian counterpart to Ginseng (the Chinese herb known for its rejuvenating properties).

Common: Sesame

Latin: (*Sesamum Indicum*) (*S Tripholiatum/ S Luteum*)

Family: Pedaliaceae

Part of plant: Seeds Habitat: Indigenous to India and extensively cultivated in warmer regions

Taste: Sweet, pungent

Dosha effects: pacifies and alleviates vata

Constituents; Seeds contain 50 to 60 % of oil.oleic and linoleic acids, stearin, palmitin, myristin, esamin, and a phenol compound sesamol

Sanskrit/hindi name: Tila

Therapeutics:

Body: excellent muscle and brain stimulant, powerful antioxidant, uterine tonic, amenorrhoea, dysmenorrhoea, heat sensation in the eyes, good for headaches (blended with sandalwood, camphor and cinnamon) digestion, rejuvenation.

Skin: excellent for dry skin, basically good for all skin types, nourishing and protective (blocks up to 45% of the sun's UV rays), lesions of leprosy, ulcers, wounds, burns and scalds.

The use of this oil dates back to ancient Indian times and is used extensively in Ayurvedic treatment and is very rich in vitamins A and E. If carefully extracted, this oil can stay sweet for years without becoming rancid and has a high mineral content. It is an excellent carrier oil for the essential oils and enhances the properties of the essential oils added to it. We have received very positive feedback even when used on its own as a moisturizer, for skin problems and also for pain relief. A compound decoction of the seeds with linseed is used in cough and as an aphrodisiac. Sesame is used extensively in making Ayurveda herbal oil decoctions and is used in Panch Karma (Cleansing and detoxification programs), clinics for allied body works. **Black seed sesame oil has more medicinal and therapeutic properties than the white seed oil. The white seeds yield more oil than the black.**

Common: Lotus (Infused in Sesame)

Latin: (*Nelubium speciosum*)

Family: Nymphaeaceae

Part of Plant: Flowers; Habitat: Ponds all over India

Taste: astringent

Dosha effects: pacifies pitta, vata, increases Kapha in excess

Therapeutics:

Body: fevers, cardiac tonic, diuretic, refrigerant, eyes, headaches, nausea, morning sickness

Skin: excellent for skin care, cooling, heat disorders, skin allergies, rash

Mind /Emotions: clarity, joy, depression, prosperity, abundance, meditation

Macerated lotus oil is produced by using the flowers. The flowers are considered sacred and in India most of the Gods and Goddesses especially Laxmi, the prosperous and joyous form, (Shakti) of the Divine Mother is always seated on the lotus. In fact the feet of the divine mother are referred to as "the lotus feet." It is considered very spiritual in Buddhism because of its many medicinal properties. This flower is highly revered by the Hindus. The petals of the lotus also represent the petals of the chakras as they close and open beckoning the mind into stillness and meditation unfolding the God Essence within. Therefore it is a wonderful oil to bring in joy and abundance on all levels. It increases clarity, devotion, harmony and prosperity besides being very therapeutic. The oil from the seeds is an aphrodisiac and very beneficial for vata and pitta imbalances. Large leaves are used in high fever or burning of skin and a paste of the leaves, flowers and sandalwood is made for headaches and skin inflammation. It is good for preventing miscarriages and to nourish the fetus. This oil is also available as an essential oil in absolute form.

**AYURVEDA AROMATHERAPY
ESSENTIAL AND COLD PRESSED OILS**

Common: Ajowan

Latin: (*Trachyspermum Ammi/ Ptychotis Ajowan*)

Family: Umbelliferea (carrot family)

Part of Plant: seeds Habitat: Eastern India

Taste: pungent, salty

Dosha effect: it pacifies Vatta and Kapha and it aggravates Pitta if used in excess

Constituents: 40-50% Thymol, Cumen, Terpene, Thymene

Therapeutics

Body: diarrhea, dyspepsia, indigestion, flatulence, spas-

modic affections of the bowels, chronic bronchitis, relieves sinking and fainting feeling, rheumatic & neuralgic pains. Colic pain, anthelmintic, common cold expectorant, laryngitis, lithotropic (dispels stones) stimulant

Skin: powerful antiseptic and germicide carminative

Mind/Emotions: Hysteria, Feeling of warmth & exhilaration

Contraindication: not to be used for excessive hyperacidity

Ajowan contains a crystalline substance called Stearoptine known as Ajwan-ka-phul (crude Thymol) or flowers of ajowan camphor which is identical to English Thymol contained in *Thymus Vulgaris*. Ajowan seeds are heated on a pan tied into a voile cloth and then used to ferment the abdomen for babies & children suffering from colic pain. Ginger root with fresh lemon juice, honey, cumin /corriander seeds and ajowan seeds infused in hot water is an ideal tea to ingest specially for vata/kapha problems.

Common: Betel Leaf

Latin: (*Piper Betle*) or (*Chavica Betle*)

Family: Piperaceae

Part of Plants: leaves Habitat: Warm and moist parts of South India and Sri Lanka

Taste: Sharp burning, Pungent, Astringent

Dosha effect: pacifies Vata & Kapha, alleviates Pitta, aggravates in excess

Constituents: Chavi Betol, Chavi col, Eugenol, Arakene, Terpenes, Sesquiterpene, Tannin (the higher the quality of the leaf the higher is the proportion of phenols in the essential oil)

Therapeutics

Body: non-healing wounds; blood purifier; tonic; anthelmintic stimulant; loss of appetite; fever; worms; nausea; diabetes; nasal inhalation; excessive thirst; teeth and gums; aphrodisiac

Skin: eczema; astringent; boils; tetanus; leprosy; urticaria; wounds and skin disease; dandruff; discolouration of skin; excellent for hair care

Contraindication: Not to be used in pregnancy

The essential oil in the leaves of Betel Leaf is a powerful antiseptic and gives rise to a sensation of warmth & well being in the mouth and stomach. It is highly aromatic and is an astringent. It is known to produce a primary stimulation of the central nervous system followed by a kind of inebriety in large doses. The leaves are used in India for chewing and are filled

with burnt lime, Betel nut, tobacco (optional), Cardamon, Nutmeg, Clove Camphor, Gulkand (rose petals jam). This is called Paan, which sweetens the breath, improves the voice and removes foetor from the mouth.

Common: Curry Leaf

Latin: (*Murraya Koenigii*)

Family: Rutaceae (citrus family)

Part of plant: leaves Habitat: From Garahwal to Sikkim, Bengal & south to Travancore

Taste: Pungent, Bitter

Dosha effect: Pacifies Vata and aggravates Pitta

Constituents: Koenigin

Therapeutics

Body: tonic, stomachic, digestion, helps reduce blood sugar, laxative.

Skin: excellent for pre-maturing grey hair and to maintain natural pigmentation

Curry leaves are eaten raw for the cure of dysentery. When boiled in milk and ground, they form a good application to poison bites and to skin eruptions. Decoction of leaves is given with bitters as a febrifuge in fevers. Leaves are popularly used for flavouring curries and condiments.

Common: Champa Absolute

Latin: (*Michelia champaca*)

Family: Magnoliaceae

Parts used: flowers Habitat: India, Nepal, Burma

Taste: sweet, bitter, pungent

Dosha effect: pacifies pitta, kapha, increases vata in excess

Major Chemical Constituents: 60% L linalool, geranol, Methyl eugenol, methyl ethel, acetic acid

Therapeutics:

Body: aphrodisiac, emmanagogue, febrifuge, purgative, antipyretic, vertigo, stimulant, tonic, carminative, frigidity

Skin: cooling, moisturiser, skin irritation

Mind/Emotions: manic depression, anger, centering, grounding

Champa absolute is commonly distilled with sandalwood and is very similar to ylang ylang in its aroma but a lot stronger. It is a powerful aphrodisiac and is recommended for nausea it has a cooling moisturising effect on the skin and is very good for fevers. Young leaves macerated in water and instilled into the eyes clear the vision. Leaves anointed with

ghee and placed round the head with cumin seed powder sprinkled over them help to relieve delirium and maniacal excitement.

Common: Davana

Latin: (*Artemisia Pallens*)

Family name: Compositae

Parts used: Leaves Habitat: Western India

Dosha effect: decreases vata, pitta, kapha

Taste: Sweet bitter

Chemical Constituents: davanone 50%, nordavanone, artemone, davana ether, davana furan, hydroclated, hydroxylated, isodavanone, allodavanone, c-11 compound, 8 oxonerolidol, linalool, monoterpenes, acetoeugenol, γ -cardinene

Therapeutics:

Body: antiseptic, aphrodisiac, nervine tonic, heart, reproductive, muscle toner, ovarian cysts

Skin: skin irritation, gout

Mind /Emotions: anger, energy balance

Davana is a rare oil in the west and is used extensively in Panch karma clinics in India for ovarian and uterine cysts. It is excellent for menopausal women and useful in regulating and balancing menstruation. It is highly valued for flavouring in the liquor industry and should be used in very small quantities. It is a great aphrodisiac.

Common: Gul Heena (Infused in sandalwood) (Attar)

Latin: (*Lawsonia Alba*) (inermis: spinosa)

Family: Lythracea

Part of Plant: flowers Habitat: All over India

Taste: sweet, bitter

Dosha effect: pacifies Pitta, suitable for Kapha

Chemical Constituent: a-ionine (more is known on the chemical constituents of the leaves)

Therapeutics

Body: sedative; rheumatism; headaches; burning feet

Skin: excellent for skin, hair care and nails; astringent/deodorant; cooling; good as a bath oil.

Mind/Emotions : mental disorders; anger; frustration; opening of the psychic self; rejuvenating; relaxant; clarity of mind and third eye activator; good for anointing chakras; meditation

Gul Heena oil is from the flower of the Heena plant. It is infused in sandalwood and is used for religious ceremonies,

prayers to create connection or attunement. It is excellent for devotion, for opening psychic abilities and clairvoyance. Arabic and Persian writers recommend a paste of the leaves with oil and resin, to be applied to the head and soles of the feet in small pox, to prevent the eyes from being affected by the disease. Many gurus in India used this oil. Renowned master, Swami Mukthananda, was always remembered by the smell of Heena. His disciples still use the oil. Fragrant water distilled from the flowers, was formally used by the Jews in baths and for perfuming oils and ointments with which they anointed the body. The Heena leaf has essential oil as well.

Common: Mogra Absolute

Latin: (*Jasminum Sambac*)

Family: Oleacea

Part of plant: flower Habitat: India, Burma and Ceylone

Taste: deep, sweet, spicy with some undertones

Dosha effect: Pitta, Vata, Kapha

Constituents: Benzle acetate, Methyl benzoate, methyl salicylate, Benzyle benzoatesalicylic acid, jasminine

Therapeutics

Body: uterus tonic; excellent for impotence; frigidity; anti-septic; headache; galactagogue

Skin: deodorant- gives a glow to the skin and eyes, tantalising as a perfume with Neroli/Sandalwood; skin disorders

Mind /Emotions: euphoric; promotes tranquility; anxiety; antidepressant; promotes confidence

The Mogra can be called the 'Queen of Jasmine'. It has an exquisite aroma and when I first smelled the oil I was ecstatically euphoric! It is an oil of great joy and divinely refreshing! It literally takes you into another dimension! A great aphrodisiac too!!! It is used as a deodorant in foul smelling ears and nose diseases. The leaves infused in oil exude a balsam which is good for anointing the head in eye complaints and to strengthen vision. It is also used as a remedy in cases of insanity. Dried leaves soaked in water and made into a poultice are applied to indolent ulcers.

Common: Neem

Latin: (*Azadirachta Indica*)

Family: Meliaceae

Part of Plants: seeds Habitat: India and Burma

Taste: bitter, hot

Dosha effect: pacifies Kapha and Pitta

Major Chemical Constituents: Azadirachtin, Iodine, Margosic acid, clycerides of fatty acids, Valeric acid

Therapeutics

Body: non healing wounds; blood purifier; tonic; anthelmintic stimulant; loss of appetite; fever; worms; nausea; diabetes; nasal inhalation; excessive thirst; teeth and gums; hyperacidity

Skin: eczema astringent boils; tetanus; leprosy; urticaria; wounds and skin disease; dandruff; discolouration of skin; excellent for hair care

Neem is a very popular oil in India and is used extensively in Ayurvedic medicine for skin disorders, hair, teeth and gums. It is a common sight in Indian villages in early morning to see people brushing their teeth, by biting on twigs of the neem tree. It keeps the system healthy and the breath and mouth clean and sweet. Neem leaves are put round children who have small pox and measles, as they have a cooling effect and prevent itching. The oil contains Margosic Acid, clycerides of fatty acids, Butyric acids and a trace of Valeric Acid detected as volatile acids. The oil is therefore known in some places as Margosa oil (Nimbadi Tailum) and is effective when taken internally with milk in early stages of leprosy. Neem oil is used for nasal inhalation, which is very effective in baldness (together with dietary restrictions). Neem blended with Cardamon, Sandalwood and Jasmine is used in skin disease.

Common: Tulasi (Holy Basil)

Latin: (*Ocimum Sanctum*)

Family: Labiatae (mint)

Part of Plant: leaves Habitat: All over India & cultivated near Hindu houses and temples

Taste: pungent

Dosha effect: pacifies Vata, Kapha

Constituent: Thymol, Linalool, Limonene, Citronellol, Eugenol

Major Chemical Constituents: thymol, linalool, limonene, citronellol, eugenol, methyl chavicol, pinene, camphene, myrcenel, fenchyl acetate, camphor, terpineol, geraneol, methyl cinnamate, fenchyl alcohol, cis-ocimene, carvacrol, eugenal, limatrol, caryophylline

Therapeutics

Body: antiseptic, antifungal, anti-spasmodic, carminative, digestive, emmenagogue, expectorant, febrifuge, galactagogue, nervine, prophylactic, stomachic, stimulant of adrenal cortex, tonic, cephalic (clears congestion in the head) asthma, reproductive system,, mosquito repellent.

Skin: skin diseases, ringworm, leprosy boils, blood purifier

Mind/Emotions: Anti-depressant, for clarity of mind

Contraindications: avoid use in high Pitta conditions

Tulasi or Holy basil is commonly used in India for the worship of Lord Vishnu, The Preserver, Shiva Shankar the Destroyer and Ganesh (the Elephant God) The Protector. Krishna always wore Garlands of this Basil around his neck. The holy basil is excellent for detachment, faith and devotion. Tulasi is considered a sacred plant in India as it opens the heart and brings harmony to the mind. Basil has strong effects on the emotions and helps to eliminate fear and depression. It is an excellent oil for asthma and headaches, liver and gall bladder. In India, they recommend holding the basil root during storms in order to eliminate fear of thunder. Basil is believed to induce longevity and enhance spirituality. The powder and the juice of Basil is used for snake bite and scorpion bite. Infusion of the leaves is given in malaria and as a stomachic in gastric diseases of children and in hepatic affections. In India it is also used to assist in the treatment of cancer as a therapy by adding 20 leaves to a glass of buttermilk and drinking it morning and night. Antimicrobial activity of the essential oil has been shown against M. Tuberculosis and staph aureus in vitro and other bacteria and fungi. (Selected Medicinal Plants of India: Chemexcil: 1992). ❀

For a complete list of Ayurveda Aromatherapy oils visit www.naha.org.

I end this article with a meditation on peace by the Great Yogi Paramahansa Yogananda (Author-*Autobiography of a Yogi*), (taken from Metaphysical Meditations).

ON SPREADING RIPPLES OF PEACE

Fix your mind inwardly between the eye brows on the shore-less lake of peace. Watch the eternal circle of rippling peace around you. The more you watch intently, the more you feel the wavelets of peace spreading from the eyebrow to the forehead, from the forehead to the heart and on to every cell in your body. Now the waters of peace are overflowing the banks of your body and inundating the vast territory of your mind. The flood of peace flows over the boundaries of your mind and moves on in infinite directions.

Affirmation:

I am the princess of perpetual peace playing in a drama of sad and happy dreams on the stage of experience.

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Ayurveda and Aromatherapy by Dr. Light Miller ND & Dr. Bryan Miller DC.

Farida's own personal experiences and memoirs from her early days in India and research/experiences/feedbacks from the use of these oils in her practice on her patients, and on herself and her family/friends over the years



Farida Irani B. Com. Adv Dip Ayur, DAroma, DRT, DRM, Dref, D.Bow, runs a successful practice in Sydney where she practices: Ayurveda, Ayurveda Aromatherapy, Remedial and Therapeutic Massage, Acupressure, Reflexology, Remedial

therapies, Bowen Technique, Stress Management, Relaxation and Meditation, Colour therapy, and Pranic healing.

She is an accredited Bowtech Instructor and conducts seminars and workshops on Ayurveda Aromatherapy all over Australia, New Zealand and last year Canada, wherein she trains both practitioners and lay people. Her mission is to spread the true spirit of Ayurveda to the western world. She also specialises in palliative care and has worked for several years with cancer patients giving them the strength to cope with the fears and emotions of the disease and building up their immunity and their subtle spiritual beings. Her Diploma in Ayurveda Aromatherapy is now government accredited in Australia.

Her book, *The Magic of Ayurveda Aromatherapy: Discover the Magic of Rare and Unique Ayurveda Aromatherapy Oils in Harmony with Universal Healing Sciences* can be ordered by email. Farida Irani email: subtle@bigpond.net.au