

Chapter 19. Ayurvedic Perfumes & Fragrances (Attars)

1 What Is an Attar?

Easy Definition	Classical Line	Key Take-Away
A 100 % natural perfume made by steam-distilling flowers, herbs or woods into sandalwood (or vetiver) oil	“ <i>Gandha dravyam taila saṁyuktam rasāyanam mano-haram</i> ” - scented oils please mind & act as tonic	Think of attar as “aroma captured in sandalwood.” No alcohol, no synthetic fixatives.

2 Why Sandalwood as the Base?

- Heavy, slow-evaporating - **fixes** lighter floral notes.
- Cooling **Sita virya** - balances fiery Pitta (heat headaches, flushed cheeks).
- Micro-antibacterial - extends shelf life 20 + years!

3 The 7-Step “Bhāpka” Process (see diagram)

Castor-oil lamp soot > copper still > bamboo chonga pipe > sandalwood receiver > separate water > mature in leather bottle > filter & bottle.

(Visual flow-chart created above for classroom projection.)

4 Fragrance Wheel - Match Each Attar to Doṣa

Note Type	Famous Attar	Dominant Doṣa Effect	Quick Mood
Floral	Ruh Gulab (Rose), Mogra (Jasmine)	Cools Pitta, lifts Vāta sadness	Romantic calm
Earthy / Root	Ruh Khus (Vetiver)	Grounds racing Vāta, deodorises Kapha sweat	“Petrichor” rain smell
Sweet-woody	Sandal Mysore, Kesar Chandan	Pacifies Pitta, subtle aphrodisiac	Meditative warmth
Citrus / Herb	Kewda, Lemon-Grass	Wakes sluggish Kapha	Fresh shower feel
Resin / Oud	Dehn-al-Oudh	Warms cold Vāta, luxury depth	Royal, contemplative

5 Classroom-Friendly “Mini-Attar” Recipes (50 ml)

Dilute in fractionated coconut if real sandalwood is cost-prohibitive.

Name	Formula (by drops)*	Matures
Rose-Sandal Calm	Sandalwood 45 ml + Rose Otto 3 ml + Vetiver 2 ml	14 days amber
Orange-Jasmine Joy	Sandal 40 ml + Sweet Orange 6 ml + Mogra absolute 4 ml	10 days
Cedar-Oudh Depth	Sandal 35 ml + Cedar 8 ml + Oudh 2 ml + Patchouli 5 ml	30 days

*Drops ≈ with 20-drop/ml EO or absolute.

Student Tip: Shake in warm water bath (40 °C) 10 min every 2 days → faster marriage of notes.



6 Application & Safety Cheatsheet

How Much	Where	Why
1 drop	Marmas : wrists (Manibandha), behind ear (Vidura), 3rd-eye (Ajna)	Quick mood, pulse warm diffuses scent
3-5 drops	Hair ends / Beard	Scent trails without skin over-dose
< 0.25 ml	Bath-water (mixed in milk first)	Total-body aroma therapy

Contra: sandal allergy rare; test elbow pit; avoid Citrus attars before sun (phototoxic).

7 Interactive Activity for Students

1. **Blind-smell quiz** – pass cotton buds of 4 attars, ask class to tag “flora / root / resin / citrus”.
2. **Doṣa match** – give case snippets (“Kapha teen, hates waking up”) → students choose attar.
3. **Mini-macération** – pair up, create 10 ml blend, label, present scent story.

8 Mini-Quiz Answers

1. **Why is sandalwood the “fixative”?** – Heavy molecules slow evaporation.
2. **Which attar cools overheated eyes?** – Vetiver (Ruh Khus).
3. **What must you mix attar into before tub-bath?** – A carrier like milk or almond oil so it disperses.

Key Take-Aways

- Attar = **steam-distilled aroma + sandalwood fixative** – alcohol-free, ancient.
- Choose note by **doṣa & mood**.
- Safety = use micro-doses, patch-test, beware citrus sun sensitivity.
- Distillation workflow (diagram) shows **seven steps**; understanding process helps in quality control and craft marketing.

Perfumer mantra: “Capture the flower’s breath, anchor it in sandal, balance the doṣa – fragrance becomes therapy.”