

# Agarwood: A Fragrant Link between India and Southeast Asia

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## ABSTRACT

In this era of globalisation, India is constantly striving to make better relations with its neighbours. In this direction, India launched the 'Look East Policy' in the year 1991 to redefine its social, economic and strategic relations with its immediate neighbours Southeast Asian countries. In the changing environment and encouraged by the success of the policy, in the year 2014, Act East Policy announced. Through these policies, India's main goal was to promote its strategic and trade relations with Southeast Asian countries. The history of trade relations between India and Southeast Asian countries goes back to thousands of years. Traders used to sell many valuable goods from Southeast Asian countries to the Arab and Western world through India. Among these valuable items, there is mention of silk as well as aromatic substances. Agarwood occupies a very important place among these aromatic substances. Agarwood is a very precious resinous aromatic wood. It is obtained from trees of *Aquilaria malaccensis* and other Indomalaysian *Aquilaria* species. In China, India, Japan and the Middle East, it is used in many cultural, religious and traditional ceremonies. The properties of Agarwood and its applications have been mentioned in many Sanskrit texts. Dioscorides described many medicinal uses of Agarwood in 65 BC. Arthashastra, written in the 2nd century BC, mentions it as a wood used in medicine and cosmetics. *Sahih Muslim* also mentioned it as medicine in the 8th century. Several historical texts describe the trade of Agarwood from Southeast Asia to India, China, Japan and the Middle East. Thus, looking at the trade and use of Agarwood, we see that its history offers a new glimpse of the relations between India and Southeast Asian countries. At present, Agarwood products (chips, beads, powders, perfumes) and oil are in high demand in the international market. The price of Agarwood oil can range from \$10,000 to \$40,000 per kg, depending on its quality, origin and distillation process. Innovative research in the medical field is also the reason for the increase in its international demand. Even though Agarwood is mainly obtained from Southeast Asian countries, its oil distillation is mostly done in 'Hojai' district of Assam province of India. Simultaneously, India is playing an important role in re-exporting many Agarwood products and reaching the largest consumers of Agarwood in Southeast Asian countries. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to know the cultural, traditional, religious and economic effects of Agarwood on the relations between Indian and Southeast Asian countries.

**Keywords:** Agarwood, Aromatic, Trade, Medicinal, Cultural, Religious, Cosmetics

## INTRODUCTION

Indian culture and traditions are strongly connected to Southeast Asia. South eastern Places like Java and Sumatra are mentioned in Valmiki's Ramayana (Sridharan, 1982). Indian epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata are very famous in Southeast Asia and there many trained storytellers are employed by the temples to narrate the stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata (Saran, 2018). From time immemorial, the people of the Southeast have been in contact with the main Indian groups like Aryans and Dravidians (Baru, 2001). Along with cultural and civilizational links (Saran, 2018), India and Southeast Asia are linked by the history of the use and trade of a resinous wood called Agarwood. Due to its medicinal properties, resin has been used in many civilizations throughout history (Lee, 2018). The earliest aromatic ingredients used are Frankincense and Myrrh, described on an Assyrian clay tablet (Oyen and Dung, 1999). The Frankincense and Myrrh are mentioned in the Bible as gifts brought by three wise men to Jesus (Organixx, 2017), people have been utilising the extracts and oils of aromatic plants as medicine, incense, perfume and cosmetics since ancient times (Marwah, 2011-2012). We get information about the use of aromatic plants in India through Vedas (1400 BCE) (López-Sampson and Page, 2018) these literatures demonstrate the various ways in which fragrant items are used during religious and other social performance (Marathe, 2017). The biggest sources of aroma materials are fragrant woods (Oyen and

Dung,1999). Fragrant woods were traded both route land as well as maritime, many Kingdom of different regions support this trade (Sridharan,1982). So many species of plants produce Aromatic oils, but Agarwood has their own medicinal, religious and historical significance (López-SampsonPage, 2018). Agarwood is precious resin infused fragrant wood (López-Sampson and Page,2018).

The primary source of agarwood is Aquilaria species (López-Sampson and Page,2018) and distribution of these species to various parts of Southeast Asia and India. Aquilaria malaccensis is reported in Bhutan, Bangladesh, Assam of Northeast India, Kalimantan and Sumatra of Indonesia, Iran, Myanmar, Malaysia, South of Philippines, South of Thailand and Singapore (CITIES, 2011). Although Agarwood is used in traditional and modern medicines (Mohamed and Lee, 2016) but nowadays Agarwood is popularly used in perfumery to make different kinds of scent (Mohamad and Lee, 2016). The use of Agarwood in perfumery is described in various Indian texts such as Brihat-Samhita, Gandhasāra and Abhilashitartha Chintamani (Macang, 2012). Due to the huge demand in the market and good economic value of Agarwood, Aquilaria draws attention to various communities (Mohamed and Lee, 2016). Publicly accessible research has just recently been released, and the vast majority of this study focuses on “practical knowledge” (Jung, 2013). Agarwood is widely used in Arabian culture, today Agarwood has been highly demanded in Japan and Taiwanese markets in many aromatic materials (Traffic report India). From Kannauj to Grasse Agarwood oil is one of the basic required materials for making best branded perfumes.

## Etymology

Southeast Asian architecture, politics, structure, mythology, rites, art and scholarship clearly show a strong Sanskrit influence (Tom, 2013). Even the name of Agarwood varies by place, but in Southeast Asia it is most commonly known by the name Gharu (Mohamed and Lee, 2016), which derives straight from the Sanskrit words aguru and agaru (López-Sampson and Page, 2018). The multiple names for Agarwood come from the reverence with which it is regarded in diverse civilizations around the world (Mohamed and Lee, 2016). In ancient texts, agarwood is referred to as aloes (López-Sampson and Page,2018), where as agarwood called agar in Hindi, agaru in Tibetans, sasi or sashi in Assamese (Mohamed and Lee2016), agallochum in Greek, ahaloth in Hebrew (Grepping 1988; Schafer 1963;yule and Burnell 1903) Chen Xiang in Chinese (Miller1969:35) jinkoh in Japanese. Agarwood genus name Aquilaria is derived from the Latin word aquila meaning eagle (Shabna.P). The botanist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck gave the genus its final name, Aquilaria, in 1783, replacing its synonym, Agallochum of Dioscorides (Mohmed and Lee, 2016).

## Etymology Of Agarwood

Language	Agarwood	Meaning(if any)	Reference
Sanskrit	agāru and aguru	Non Floating wood	Miller (1969)
Prakrit	agaru and Pali agalu		
Greek	agallochum		Greppin (1988), Schafer (1963), Yule and Burnell (1903)
Hebrew	ahāloth		Greppin (1988), Schafer (1963), Yule and Burnell (1903)
Arab	ālūwwa and ūd		Greppin (1988), Schafer (1963), Yule and Burnell (1903),Kahl (2011)
Mala	gāharu		
Chinese	chén xiāng or kilam and bac	"Sinking incense"	Mathews (1974)

Japanese	jinkoh	"Sinking incense"	Brechbill (2012)
Portuguese	aguila or pao d'aguila		McKenna and Hughes (2014)
French	d'aigle		McKenna and Hughes (2014)
English	eaglewood		McKenna and Hughes (2014)
Burmese	Thit-hmwe		CITES

## Religious Texts

The Greeks and Romans made extensive use of frankincense and myrrh both in the worship of their deities and in the cremation of dead bodies (Liu, 2010). Agarwood is used in Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic ceremonies, as well as various Southeast Asian folk religions (Jung, 2016). Incense and other aromatic substances have long been connected to holiness, spirituality, and rituals (Jung, 2016), and people believed that fragrant clouds take their prayer to heaven (Hyams, 2004). Agarwood is sometimes referred to as "The spirit of heaven/god," "The aroma of heaven," and "The wood of the gods" (Jung, 2016). Agarwood is occasionally used in Buddhist contexts to make food for the Buddha and for the sangha (Lopez-sampson & Page,2018). Important people are currently and historically cremated using Agarwood in Hindu and Buddhist ceremonies (Jung, 2016). The use of agarwood is also discussed in the Valmiki Ramayana (Das and Bajpai, 2021). Agarwood was utilised in cremation of Dasarath's body along with sandalwood and devdaru (Das and Bajpai, 2021). For the royal cremation of King Bhumibol of Thailand, who passed away in 2016, four Agarwood trees were recently chosen (The nation, 2016). Several hadiths in Islamic contexts indicate that Paradise will have been fragrant with oud (Lopez-Sampson and Page). Agarwood is mostly associated with the mother goddess in Southeast Asia (Jung, 2016).

## Hindu Texts

Agarwood is widely used according to Hindu traditions, although the Mahabharata describes Agarwood in multiple places (López-Sampson and Page, 2018) as luxury, enjoyment and well-being (Rhind, 2014). The residents of the ancient city of Khandavaprastha welcomed faraway visitors by filling the entire city (López-Sampson and Page,2018), with the "sweet aroma of burning aloe", according to the First Book of the Mahabharata (Book1,section CCXXIII). In book number second of Mahabharata a brief description of garland of flowers and aloe incense (Book 2, sectionXXIX). Duryodhan recalls the abundance of aloe wood, sandalwood, and fragrances he lavished on as a tribute in the Mahabharata (Das and Bajpai 2021). It is known that people in that time knew how to use cosmetic and aromatic goods in a variety of ways (Marathe,2017).

## Cristian Texts

Agarwood, frankincense, and myrrh are prominently featured in the biblical account. The gospel of John in the New Testament provides a comprehensive explanation of the spiritual importance of Agarwood (20:39-40), where after Jesus' crucifixion his body was anointed with a mixture of myrrh and aloe (López-Sampson and Page,2018). However, several academics argued that the medicinal Agarwood mentioned in this passage is distinct from the aromatic Agarwood (crosswhite and crosswhite 1984;Greppin 1988). Although there are so many differences in opinion but old and new both Testament describe the use of aloe. Agarwood was and still is the most prized type of however, several academics asserted that the medicinal Agarwood mentioned in this scripture is distinct from the aromatic Agarwood.incense in many regions of the world (Jung, 2016). The aromatic aloes mentioned in the Bible and recognised by numerous authors as coming from the East Indian tree agarwood (Balfour 1866; Greppin 1988; Harbaugh1855) should thus not be confused with the bitter agarwood (Balfour1866; Rimmel1865; Schoff1922; Tielle 1885).

## Buddhist Texts

With the expansion of Buddhism, Southeast Asia's incense culture has flourished and they used agarwood mainly in prayers in front of Buddha. Jataka tales, a detailed literature about Buddha birth, referred to the use of

Agarwood (López-Sampson and Page, 2018). Agarwood and sandalwood were also used with other woody materials in the funeral ceremony of Sariputta (Ireland, 2005). (Bazin, 2013) recommended that five natural incense products reflected the speech of the five Buddha's included sandalwood, Agarwood, pine resin or juniper, camphor, and vetiver root. It is clear fragrant materials are widely used in Buddhist religion (López-Sampson and Page, 2018).

### Islamic Texts

There are accounts in the hadiths that the Prophet Mohammed enjoyed wearing perfume (Behrens, 1999) and incensed his clothing with oudh (cities, use). Iban Battutha gives a detailed description about the use of perfume in Arab countries. Agarwood is described as a form of Indian incense (Ud Al-Hindi) in various Hadiths (Lucas, 2008). According to a quote from Allah's Messenger, Agarwood would be utilised in their censers in paradise along with other wonderful things (Sahih al-Bukhari 3327, Book 60, Hadith 2; USC-MSA English reference Vol. 4, Book 55, Hadith 544). Prophet Muhammad suggested Agarwood as a medical treatment (Shih al-Bukhari 5692, 5693, Book 76, Hadith 15, Lopez, 2018). Agarwood was employed in the significant practise of fumigation, according to Nafi's account of Ibn Umar, either by itself or when combined with camphor (Sahih Muslim 2254 Book 40, Hadith 23; English Translation Book 27, Hadith 5601). It is well known that the prophet Muhammad favoured the aroma of aloe or a blend of aloe and camphor (Book 27 no. 5601) (Shih Muslim n.d).

### Secular Uses

Agarwood has long been used for secular purposes. Agarwood is mentioned in the Arthashastra of the year 2 BCE as a medicine that is also used in cosmetics. Agarwood and other aromatics were also subject to a state tax in the Arthashastra, which was set at a rate of tenth or fifteenth of the item's sale price (López-Sampson and Page, 2018). The poetic work of Cilappatikram (Circa 5th century C.E.) provides evidence of the significance of aromatics in Tamil Nadu, India. It mentions that travellers could detect the scent of sandalwood, aloeswood, musk, and civet emanating from the city of Madurai (capital of the Pandya kingdom) from a distance (Atikal, 1994). Many terms have been used for Agarwood in Gandhasāra and Brhatsamhita like just like rājārham (worthy of a king), anāryajam (produced in non-Āryan land), Kemija (produced by worms) and jongaka (Because coming from Mount jonka). Harshacharita a Biography of Indian emperor Harsh who ruled in 7th century. This Biography contains a description in chapter number VII use of agarwood oil as a valuable gift. Gifting agarwood along with other precious things is a very common trend these days (Cowell and Thomas 1887:243). Many South-Eastern Kings Have Tributed As Aromatic Materials (Macang, 2012). Beautiful females, ready for the feast of delights, purify themselves with the yellow sandal powder, clear and pure, freshen their breast with delightful fragrances, and suspend their dark hair in the smoke of burning aloes, according to the Sanskrit poet Kalidasa (c. 353-c. 420) (Mohamed and Lee, 2016). Due to lack of water in the Middle East, bathing could not be done every day, so they used perfume to remove bad smells (Marwah, 2011-12). But after sometime Agarwood is utilised as a symbol of wealth and prestige in many Middle Eastern countries, especially during religious ceremonies and social gatherings (Antonopoulou et al. 2010; Jung 2011, Lopez, 2018). High-quality wood chips are burned by sheikhs to honour their guests, to perfume clothing before important events and in preparation for prayer, as well as to generally fill the home with aroma (Compton, 2010). The history of Agarwood in Japan begins with the arrival of the Buddhists in the 6th century AD (Reddy, 2014). A ceremony called Ko-do (Way of Fragrance) is celebrated in Japan (Heart of the matter). In this ceremony, the highest grade of Agarwood, which is called 'kyara' in Japan, is burnt. But due to non-availability of wild 'kyara' and rising prices in international markets, it is no longer possible for common people to burn it. Agarwood is an aromatic component of the wines chu-yeh ching and vo ka py in Taiwan (Barden et al., 2000).

### Medicinal Uses

Agarwood is also known as an antimicrobial agent. It is used in the medical field either alone or mixed with other herbs. From ancient times agarwood was used in traditional medicines (Cities Indonesia). Sushrut the ancient Indian physician (Father of Indian medicine) described it as a useful drug (Barden et al. 2000). Many health related problems like Joint inflammation, Giddiness, Asthma, Headache and in various skin diseases like Eczema, Blisters, Inflammation, Itchiness fever headache and Bleeding (Adhikari, Pokhrel and Baral, 2021). Agarwood may have anticancer activity, it can be used as an antidepressant and used to promote good health in



general (CITES 2005, Dash et al. 2008, Mei et al.2008, Miller and Miller 1995). Agarwood is used in different communities to get rid of different diseases.

Country name	Ethnomedicinal Uses	Reference
India	Treatment of diarrhoea, vomiting, dysentery, ano.	Anon (1978) Iyer (1994)
China	mouth and teeth diseases, inflammation, arthritis, cardiac disorders, cough, asthma, leprosy and anorexia.  Treatment of gastric problems, coughs, rheumatism and high fever; and used as sedative, analgesic and carminative agents.	Chinese pharmacopoeia Commission (2010)
Bangladesh	Treatment of rheumatism	Rana et al. (2010)
Indonesia	Treatment of joint pain	Grosvenor et al. (1995)
Japan	Stomachic and sedative agent	Okugawa et al. (1993)
Korea	Treatment of cough, asthma, stomachic agent, tonic, sedative an expectorant	Takagi et al. (1982); Yuk et
Thailand	Treatment for diarrhoea, dysentery and skin diseases.	Kamonwannasit et al.

### Historical Description Of Agarwood Quality And Grades

Many accounts are found in ancient historical texts about the quality and grades of Agarwood. Grading is crucial for categorising goods according to their market attributes; it affects both price determination and trade transparency (Giovannucc and Reardon 2000; Ismail et al. 2015). Between 1512 and 1515 C.E The Portuguese apothecary Tomé Pires travelled to Malacca and India (Pires,1944). He asserted that the quality and costs of agarwood varied as widely as those of gold and lead (Lopez,2018). In 320 B.C.E Arthaśhāstra agarwood described as" heavy, soft, greasy, smells farand long, burns slowly, gives out continuous smoke while burning, is of uniform smell, absorbs heat, and is so adhesive to the skin as not to be removable by rubbing" (Shamasastri 1915:107). The Arthahstra gives three distinct Agarwood product descriptions with its characteristics (Shamasastri 1915:106).

Types of Agar (Aquilaria agallocha)	Characteristics
Jongaka	black or variegated black and is possessed of variegated spots
Dongaka	black
Parasamudraka	variegated colour and smells like cascus or like Navamalika (jasmine)

John Huyghen van Linschoten in 1500C.E characterised the best Agarwood as Calamba (obtained from Malacca), which was black in colour and rich in fragrant resin (Tielle 1885).

### Chinese Grades

Agarwood trade was mainly influenced by the type (possibly variety or spe-cies) , maturity (fresh" vs. ripe"), biological resources (branch, trunk, roots) and regional bases (geographic loca-tion) in the time of Song Dynasty. In Materia Medica Based on its density, a more straightforward system of rating Agarwood was described. In this text three grades were defined first huang shu xiang (does not sink), second zhan xiang (partialsinking) and

third shui chen (total sinking) (Lopez-Sampson and Page, 2018), with the amount of resin (wood density) present in the agarwood being positively correlated with the depth of sinking (Mohamed and Lee 2016; Shizhen 2003).

## Japanese Grades

In the late 16th century Agarwood gained popularity in Japan, and experts chosen by Shoguns Ahsikaga Yoshimasa defined the scents of six known varieties of jinkoh (Lopez-Sampson and Page, 2018). The six varieties of Agarwood were then both expensive and rare, and they were mostly traded to be given as gifts to eminent people (Bedini, 1994).

## The Six Kinds Of Agarwood (Jinkoh) Used In Japan In 16th Century Ce : Name, Description, And Possible Origin (Morita ;1992, Lopez;2018).

Jinkoh type	Possible origin	Description (16th century)
Sasora	Assam	Cool and sour. Good-quality sasora is mistaken for kyara, especially when it first begins to burn. Sometimes it is so light and faint that one may think the smell has disappeared. It reminds one of a monk.
Kyara	Vietnam	A gentle and dignified smell with a touch of bitterness. The fragrance is like an aristocrat in its elegance and gracefulness.
Rokoku	Thailand and Laos	A sharp and pungent smell similar to sandalwood. Its smell is generally bitter and reminds one of a warrior.
Sumotara	Sumatra, Indonesia	Sour at the beginning and end. Sometimes easily mistaken for kyara, it has something, however distasteful and ill-bred about it, like a servant disguised as a noble person.
Mankaka	Malacca, Malaysia	Smells light and enticing, changing like the mood of a woman with bitter feelings. None of the 5 qualities (tastes) are easily detectable. The fragrance is of good quality if it disappears quickly
Manaban	Unknown	Mostly sweet. The presence of sticky oil on a mica piece is often a sign that the fragrance is manaban. The smell is coarse and unrefined, just like that of a peasant.

## Global Distribution Of Agarwood Species

Ten nations have been named as range states for *A. Malaccensis*. Seven *Aquilaria* species are categorised as vulnerable according to the IUCN Red List Criteria. All agarwood producing species cites listed in Appendix II.

## Agarwood Species Distribution In Asian Countries

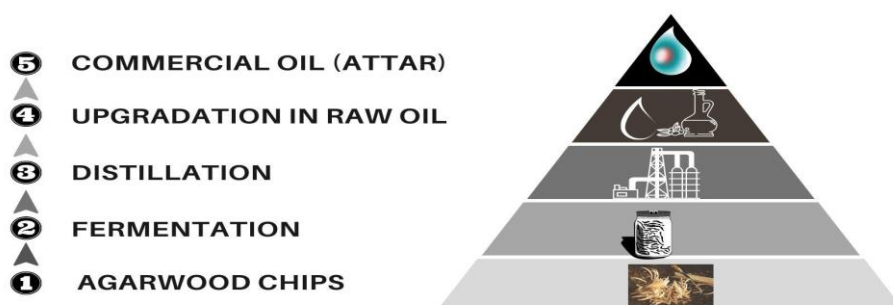
Country	Species	Reference
Indonesia	<i>A. malaccensis</i> , <i>A. hirta</i> , <i>A. beccariana</i> and <i>A. microcarpa</i> , <i>Aquilaria cumingiana</i> , <i>A. filaria</i> , <i>Gyrinops decipiens</i> , <i>G. caudate</i> , <i>G. ladermanii</i> , <i>G. moluccana</i> , <i>G. podocarpus</i> , <i>G. salicifolia</i> , and <i>G. versteegii</i>	(Indonesian CITES Scientific Authority)
India	<i>Aquilaria malaccensis</i> and <i>A. khasiana</i> .	Traffic
Bhutan	<i>Aquilaria malaccensis</i> , <i>A. khasiana</i> .	Old field et al., 1998
Lao PDR	<i>Aquilaria malaccensis</i> , <i>A. baillonii</i> and <i>A. Crassna</i> .	TRAFFIC International, 2 May

		2000
Malaysia	<i>Aquilaria malaccensis</i> , <i>A.hirta</i> and <i>A.rostrata</i>	Ng.et al.,1997
Myanmar	<i>Aquilaria agallocha</i> and <i>A.malaccensis</i>	CITES report,2011
Philippines	<i>Aquilaria filaria</i> , <i>A.cumingiana</i> and <i>A.apiculata</i>	CITES cop 13 prop
Singapore	<i>Aquilaria malaccensis</i>	CITES Secretariat,20 October 1999
Thailand	<i>Aquilaria malaccensis</i> , <i>A. Crassna</i> and <i>A.baillonii</i>	Oldfield et al.1998,Heuveling van Beek and Phillips.1999
Vietnam	<i>Aquilaria malaccensis</i>	Oldfield et al.1998

### Tree To Oil Process

Agar plants prefer high humidity sub-tropical climate with 1000 m altitude above sea level, 125cm - 750 cm rainfall. Agar can be grown from deep sandy loam soil rich in organic matter to hill slopes and also in forest. Naturally infected plants produce high quality agar. They become infected by ants, snails and fungus and extract resins to heal their wounds. Several fungal infusion methods are being used to artificially produce resins. These methods have found great success in Vietnam. Artificial Agarwood production has provided a new source of income to the farmers and has also protected wild Agarwood. Two types of wood are obtained from Agar trees of 10 to 12 years. The first one which is deep black in colour which contains oil and one which is light coloured which does not contain oil. The black coloured wood is separated from the white wood in the form of chips in the distillery. In Assam Agarwood is soaked in a water tank for 45 to 90 days followed by hydrodistillation to obtain three grades of Agarwood oil. In which the oil obtained from the first batch is called saline, the oil obtained from the second batch is called Boha and the oil obtained from the third batch is called Boya (Abidin et al., 2009)

### THE STAGES OF AGARWOOD OIL DISTILLATION



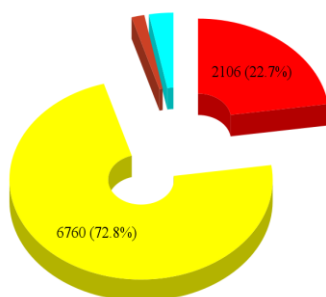
### Indian Role In Trade Of Agarwood

Trade between India and Southeast Asia has been going on since ancient times (Baru, 2001). Many goods from Southeast Asia were transported to the Arab and Western world through the port of India (Lee, 2018). Even in ancient religious texts, Agarwood is mentioned to be of Indian origin (López-Sampson and Page, 2018). Because Indian traders used to buy it in large quantities from Southeast Asian countries and sell it through land and sea routes. A clear description of Agarwood's international trade is found in the texts of the thirteenth century (Barden et al. 2000). India is the first country to make Agarwood available in foreign markets (Barden et al.2000). Even in modern times, India is engaged in processing and exporting various Agarwood products. Heuveling Van Beek and Phillips(1999) state that Indian importers buy tons of Agarwood powder for distillation purposes. Chakrabarty et al (1994) gives information about having 200 agarwood oil distilleries in the Hojaye,

Islam Nagar, Neel Bagan and Naugaon districts of Assam in the year 1993. India's Agarwood industry mainly imports Agarwood from Singapore. Singapore's cities annual report For Arab countries, Agarwood is mainly exported from Mumbai. The wood for many Agarwood products produced in Assam is collected from Bangladesh, Vietnam, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. Some special aromatic materials are considered very important in South-Eastern countries. In this, the name of aloewood also comes along with some special resins like Kempthor, Saffron, Nutmeg (Macang, 2012). Along with Arabian perfume, agarwood oil is One of the five essential components in Chinese perfumery (yungun;2013, Lopez;2018). Agarwood is available in the international markets in two forms first as raw materials (chips, oil, raw powder and pieces) and second in finished products. Agarwood incense (incense sticks, standing and lying incense coils and incense cones ), Agarwood sculpture (Buddhist religious purpose and art collection), Agarwood beads(wristlet, rosary and Buddhist religious purpose) Agarwood liquor, tea bags, capsules, soap, name and seals are the major product in Agarwood's long line of finished products in the International Markets. Agarwood and its products have been traded since antiquity (López-Sampson and Page, 2018), and some authors give description tea bags, capsules, soap, name seals that traders transported Agarwood from China to the Middle East frequently via India using the well-known Silk Route (Shabana.P). The UAE is connected to other Agarwood-consuming nations in the region, such as Saudi Arabia, and is a major importer, consumer, and re-export within the Middle East Agarwood (Compton,2010). The largest source of wild Agarwood is in Indonesia and Malaysia (CITIES report). There is currently a significant commerce in Agarwood. Aquilaria malaccensis agarwood exports totaled about 700 t in international trade in 1997, with shipments from Indonesia and Malaysia leading the list of about 20 nations that reported exports and re-exports (Barden et al, 2000).

*Share of wild-sourced Agarwood exports by country of export {metric tons}, aggregated 2005-2014*

● MALAYSIA:- 2106 ● INDONESIA:-6760 ● OTHER :- 147 ● THAILAND :- 277



## Market And Demand

The demand for agarwood products is increasing continuously, due to its increasing demand, agarwood chips are mixed with load and astrang chips (Abdin, 2014). Many cheap oils and chemicals are mixed in agarwood oil (Barden et al.,2000). Despite strict laws on wild Agarwoods, smuggling is also being done in full swing due to rising prices (Antonopoulou et al. 2010). Smuggling wood from Southeast Asian countries is being brought to several distilleries in Kolkata, Mumbai, Delhi as well as Hojai areas (Barden et al.,2000). Due to the continuous increase in its demand in Arab countries, its value is increasing continuously. Various grades of Agarwood are prevalent but the cost of high quality wood is very high (Abidin et al., 2009).First grade Agarwood is one of the world's most expensive natural products and its price is near about \$ 13000. The Agarwood chips market is forecasted to reach nearly USD \$ 64 Bn by the end of 202. Over the years, the international agar wood industry has witnessed a number of booms and busts. Top grade Agarwood sold for up to USD \$ 1 per kg in 1880 (Abidin, 2014). Best quality reached around 42.5 in the 1970s, then rose straight into USD \$ 1250 in 2000, and USD \$ 2500 in 2005 (Wyn and Anak, 2010). Pure agarwood oil prices vary between USD \$10000 to USD \$ 40000. Agarwood Oil has anti-depressant and stress-relieving effects and is widely utilised in the production of pharmaceuticals for mental health disorders. According to a 2016 WHO research, 4 out of every 100 persons suffer from mental health concerns such as stress, anxiety, and depression (W.H.O,2016). The use of Agarwood Oil in Aromatherapy has gained its popularity in the Western Hemisphere (persistence market report). The demand for agarwood in Eastern and Western perfumery continues to grow. Agarwood is used the most in Asia by Ajmal Perfumes in making their perfume/attar. In the West, it is used by well-known brands like Tom Ford, Christian Dior, Louis Vuitton, Creed, Germany and Gucci.



## CONCLUSION

The demand for Agarwood has remained constant since ancient times. Even though the main place of production of Agarwood has been Southeast Asia, India's position in the field of trade and use of Agarwood has been important. Agarwood has been known as Indian wood in the western world. The first credit for reaching Agarwood from Arab to European and American markets goes to Indian traders. There is also a lot of similarity in the method of using Agarwood in India and Southeast Asian countries. In India, when a child is born, Agarwood resin is burned outside the house to ward off evil spirits and good health of children. Similarly, in Southeast Asia, Agarwood resin is used for the good health of the child and for offering to regional goddesses. Gaharu, the very popular name of Agarwood in Southeast Asian countries, is also influenced by the Sanskrit word aguru. Agarwood's impact on the Indian and Southeast Asian economies has also been similar. This is confirmed from Mahabharata, Arthashastra and Harsha Charitra to Manasolas, a book written in the 13th century. Even in modern times, India's place in the trade of agarwood is notable. Agarwood is being collected through agents from Southeast Asian countries and transported to major markets of the Middle East from regions like Assam and Mumbai. Thus the history of the use and trade of agarwood offers a beautiful view of the social, religious and economic ties between India and the Southeast Asian countries as well as the deep aromatic links.

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