

**AGNIJAR (AMBERGRIS): A REVIEW STUDY OF AN ANIMAL  
PRODUCT W.S.R IN AYURVED MEDICINES**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Ayurvedic* medicines are the ancient and most trustable therapy. Occurrence of the therapy is of least or with no side effects and also eradicates some diseases are the special qualities of *Ayurvedic* drugs. *Ayurveda* has plant origin drugs like *ashvagandha*, *tulsi*, *brahmi*, *sunthi* etc. Metallic origin drugs as *parad*, *gandhak*, *loha*, *tamra* etc, animal origin (ex-*ghee*, *dugdha*, *mukta*, *sukti*, *amber* etc). *Agnijara* is an animal origin product obtained from whales. It is called as ambergris, amber. This drug is a decayed intestinal part of whale. Due to ingestion of some grass in sea, the intestine of whale gets obstructed which leading to death of Whale. After the death, the intestinal part starts decaying and floats on sea. Fishermen collects the intestinal part

and keep it under sunlight for drying. Drying is an important process because intestine of whale in vivo has a very foul smell and on drying this smell disappears. In *Rasa Shastra* *Agnijara* is mentioned under *Sadharana Rasa*. *Agnijara* is available in the oceans of Sri Lanka, Indian Ocean, Arabian ocean, seashores of Africa, Lakshadweep and Nicobar island. *Agnijara* is *Tridosha Shamak* but specially plays role on *kaphavata Dosha*. *Agnijara* is *Hridhya*, *Vajikara*, *Sheeta Prashamak*. In medicinal compounds as *Chintamani Ras*, *Bruhat*

*Vata Chinta amani Rasa, Vadvanal Rasa, Javaharmohara Vati*, all have *Agnijara* as an Active ingredient.

**KEYWORD:** *Agnijar, Rasshastra, Ayurveda, Medicine.*

## INTRODUCTION

*Agnijara* is an animal by-product obtained from whales. It is called as Ambergris. Ambergris is a solid, waxy, flammable substance of a dull grey or blackish colour produced in the digestive system of sperm whales. Freshly produced ambergris has a marine, fecal odour. However, it acquires a sweet, earthy scent as the time passes. The odour of Ambergris is commonly likened to the fragrance of rubbing alcohol without the vaporous chemical astringency. Ambergris has been very highly valued by perfumers as a fixative that allows the scent to last much longer, although it has been mostly replaced by synthetic ambroxan (active principle). In *Rasashastra* literature, '*Rasarnava*' mentioned about *Agnijara* for the first time. This product had been classified under '*Sadharana Rasa*'.<sup>[1]</sup> According to *Acharaya Vagbhata* *Agnijara* is a product of *Agninakra* fish's chorion.<sup>[2]</sup> It is used in the treatment of neurological disorders and *Mandagni* as it is *Deepan Pachan* in nature. There is no reference of this product in any of the *Ayurvedic* classical books like *Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita* etc. This product is an ingredient of various formulations of *rasashastra* medicines that are used in the treatment of fever, joint disorders, obesity and also in the manufacture of perfumes.

## SYNONYMS

*Agniniryasa, Agnijwala, Sindhuplava, Agnijara, Agnija, Sindhuphala, Vahnijara*<sup>[3]</sup>, *Agnijara* (Latin: *Ambra Grisea*, Old French: *Ambre Gris*), *Ambergrease*, or *grey amber*<sup>[4]</sup>

## PHYSICAL AND CHEMICAL PROPERTIES<sup>[5]</sup>

- Amber is very light in weight, and in greyish color.
- It floats over water.
- It has a specific gravity of 780-927.
- When kept in glass bottle and heated, it melts at 145oFs.
- when put in fire after drying, it gives aromatic smell.
- When heated to 212o F, it evaporates with white fumes leaving ash.
- It's melting point is 145oF and boiling point is 212o
- Amber is an insoluble in water but soluble in alcohol and oil.
- According to P.V Sharma it is soluble in ether, chloroform and oil only.

- In *Rasarnava* it's physical appearance is described as *muktaphala* prabham.<sup>[6]</sup>

*Ambergris* is relatively nonreactive to acid. White crystals of terpene known as *Ambrein* can be separated by heating raw ambergris in alcohol allowing the resulting solution to cool.

Breakdown of the relatively scentless *Ambrein* through oxidation produces *Ambroxan* and *Ambrinol* the main odor components of ambergris.<sup>[7]</sup>

*Agnijara* is black or *kapot* in colour.

#### **AGANIJARA SHODHANA**

*Agnijara* is triturated with *Adraka Swarasa* (ginger juice) or *Matulunga Swarasa* (lemon juice) for 3 times.<sup>[8]</sup>

'*Marana*' (another method of purification involving burning and exposure to heat) for the product is not needed.

#### **DESCRIBED IN RASASHASTRA**

It was first mentioned in 8<sup>th</sup> century in the text '*Rasarnava*' while explaining its role in '*Abhrak Druti prakarana*' (Method to melt *Abraka*).

*Ayurveda prakasha* considered it to be '*Kshara vishesh*' (Type of alkali). It has been used for '*Parad bandan karma*' and '*Parada jaran*'. (Procedure related to Mercury).

#### **TYPES OF AGNIJARA – AMBERGRIS<sup>[9]</sup>**





**Image 1: Types of Agnijar with different colors.**

On the basis of availability, *Amber* is classified into different forms and names<sup>[10]</sup>

1. Baltic *amber* – *Peeta varnayukta* (Green colored)
2. Susyhan *amber* – *Arunabha yukta peeta* (Pale white)
3. Rumenian *amber* – *Neela lohita varni* (Bluish red colored)
4. Vermi *amber* – *Peeta neela lohita varni* (Bluish red colored)

### PROPERTIES OF AGNIJARA<sup>[11]</sup>

- *Rasa* (Taste) – *Katu rasa* (pungent)
- *Guna* – *Laghu* (Light), *Rooksha* (Dry)
- *Vipaka* – *Katu* (Pungent)
- *Veerya* (Potency) – *Ushna* (Hot)
- *Doshakarma* (Action on *dosha*)
  - a) *Kaphavatahara, Pitavardhaka, Raktarog, Medhohar, Sannipatajrog, Shool* etc.
  - b) *Tridoshagna* (Pacifies all the vitiated *Dosha*), *Dhanuarvata* (teteny), *Vataroga*,<sup>[12]</sup>
- *It is used for viryotkarsh in Parad and made it Bubhukshit*
- *It is used in Jarana Karma*
- *With the help of Aganijar, Parad become Sparshvedhi.*<sup>[13]</sup>

### SYSTEMIC MEDICINAL USES

• <i>Samsthanik karma</i> – <i>Nadi samsthan</i> as it is helpful for <i>mastishka</i> (Neurogenic)
• <i>Pachan Samsthan</i> (Digestive system)– <i>Dipan, Pachan, Anuloman, Grahi</i> (Helps in proper digestion)
• <i>Raktavaha Saimsthan</i> (Circulatory system)– <i>Hridhya</i> (helps in cardiac function)
• <i>Prajanan Samsthan</i> (Reproductive system) – <i>Vajikaran</i> (Improve sexual function)
• <i>Tapakrama</i> (Temperature regulation)– <i>Sheeta Prashaman</i> (Pacifies coldness in the body)

**DOSAGE**

1/4 Ratti to 1/2 Ratti (30-125mg)

**ANUPAN**

Mixed with *Ghee*, butter or honey.

**AYURVEDIC FORMULATIONS<sup>[14]</sup>**

- **Chintamani Rasa**– It is an *Ayurvedic* medicine, with herbal and mineral ingredients, in tablet form. It is used in treating heart diseases, diabetes etc.
- **Dhatri Rasayana** – Useful to treat *prameha* (diabetes)
- **Brihat Vatachintamani Rasa** – Useful to treat *vata roga* (Disease related to *vata dosha*)
- **Vadvanal Rasa** – Useful to treat *agnimandhya* (indigestion or reduced appetite)
- **Javaharmohara vati** and **Ratneshvar rasa**
- **Yakuti rasa**

**DISCUSSION**

*Agnijara* is a rare drug, which is briefly described in *Rasashastra*. It is not mentioned in *samhita* like *charak* and *sushruta*. This product has been classified under *sadharana rasa*. According to various *Rasashastra* texts, it is an intestinal part of whale. As I had described before, *Agnijara* is tridoshagna but it is very much effected in *kaphavata pradhana roga*. *Agnijara* is *katu* in *rasa* so it is effective in *kapha dosha* also has *ushna virya* so effects on both dosha, *vata* and *kapha*. It is *laghu* and *ruksha* in *guna* so plays role on *kapha*. *Agnijara* has good effect in circulatory system and considered a good *hridya dravya*, for example; *Chintamani Rasa* is *Hridya* drug and it's contents includes *Agnijara*. It has *anulomaka* property that's why it also works on *Pitta Dosha*. *Agnijara* has *Sheeta Prashmana* property that helps in body temperature regulation. So many of the medicines of fever (*Jwar*) has *Agnijara* as it's main content. Some examples of these medicines are - *Javaharmohra Vati*. *Agnijara* is a good nervine tonic, that's why it is used in *Vata Roga*. *Brihatvata Chintamani Rasa* - a good *Vata Shamak* drug and have *Agnijara* as it's main content.

**CONCLUSION**

As discussed earlier, *Agnijara* has *tridosha-shamak* property specially *kapha Vata Hara* and due to many other qualities it is liked and used by *Ayurveda* practitioner in *Dhanurvata* (tetany), *Prameha*(diabetes), *Hridaya Roga*(heart diseases). It is not only useful as a medicine but also used as *Kshara Vishesh* according to *Ayurveda Prakash*.<sup>[15]</sup> So it has been used for

*Parad Bandhan Karma* and *Parad Jarana Karma*(process used in purification of mercury), it also works as helping agent in *Abhraka Druti Prakaran*(method to melt *Abharak*).

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