**Advanced Aromatherapy Training™**

**Aromatherapy for Meditation & Spiritual Practices**

**Module 14**

Colleen: Hello everyone and welcome to Module 14 of Advanced Aromatherapy: Therapeutic Application of Essential Oils for Clarity, Health, and Happiness with David Crow titled Aromatherapy for Meditation & Spiritual Practices. This is your host, Colleen, at The Shift Network. Just a couple of reminders, if you have any technical issue or question and you're on Maestro, please press 5 on your telephone keypad and I will assist you. And if you're on the webcast, please type directly into the box and please provide your email. I also just wanted to let you know, we will be meeting next week as well. That covers it for the moment, so let's bring on David and get started. David, welcome!

David: Thank you, Colleen! Welcome back to everybody and a happy winter solstice wherever you are, a universal holiday or a universal celestial event. I hope everybody has had an enjoyable week of learning more about using your oils. I know that there were a few practices that I suggested that people learn a bit more about your olfactory system and I hope that you have been studying that. I see we have a few questions that have come in on the webcast. But we are moving now to a new topic, a few things to conclude from last week, but if anybody has any questions or comments concerning the larger subject of Aromatherapy for Emotional and Mental Well-Being, now is the time to ask them. I also have a file that I have posted as always with a few questions left over from last week and we can go ahead and take a look at that. Some of these questions will take us a little bit more time because we're going to give you a little homework and we're also going to have a little problem-solving session here.

 So if you would go to the course homepage, as we always do, and scroll down to Module 14 where we are now, you can see Aromatherapy for Meditation & Spiritual Practices, something that I enjoy discussing quite a lot and enjoy doing as well. And of course, this ties in directly with our previous two modules of emotional well-being. We're just continuing with that discussion and looking specifically at a particular group of resins, woods, and essential oils that have a long history of use. Let's go ahead and open up the link there, Module 14. Click on that and you can see your class materials. Let's go ahead and start with the file that we always start with, webcast questions. So if you can open webcast questions, those of you who might already be looking at this, you might be curious because some of these I didn't answer. And the reason that I didn't answer it was because I had decided that we should spend a little time discussing these first two questions in particular and possibly doing a little bit of homework on these. So the reason that I wanted to discuss these first two questions is because they indicate, they reflect, they reveal or they articulate a particular problem that everybody has to face when we move into using herbs and essential oils. And of course, this is easily seen here. The first question, "What oils should not be used for someone who takes tegretol to prevent seizures?" Well, that's a pretty significant question. The next question is, "What oils cannot be used for a person who has cancer, diabetes, and a cardiac condition?" Well, this is again a pretty significant question. Now, rather than answer this first, what I wanted to do here is I wanted to share with you my thinking process. Because as we move through the modules and as we complete the course, which will be coming to an end in another month, you will be on your own. And you will have the information that I have given you, which is an extensive, voluminous amount of information in the form of these monographs and the audios and the transcripts and your homework assignments and the oil collection that you have and the various meditation practices and so forth. But that doesn't necessarily mean that you have developed a particular way of problem-solving yet.

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 This is very important because we cannot just learn something from the internet and just start doing things without quite a bit of background and clinical training. And as you know, I'm attempting to do something very challenging here and I'm attempting to do it in an ethical way, and that is that I'm attempting to educate a wide, diverse audience of people that I have never met all over the world using a remote format of talking by phone and looking at these files and so forth. And as I have said several times, I have no idea who you are or what your health problems are, and because I have a background in clinical medicine, that concerns me. I have gone way out of my way here to make sure that you understand that essential oils are highly concentrated substances that you must use safely. And if we follow certain guidelines that we are using them safely and they're relatively safe in that context, but we don't know how people are going to react. I would say in general that if we follow the safety guidelines that we are pretty much protecting ourselves and that if we include in that the quality control issues that I was talking about, and we have good quality control issues, good quality sources. Then most likely we're not going to run into any difficulty, so that's what I have done on my side to try to make this very complicated course as safe and user-friendly as possible. You know that I'm not just telling you to go out and drink essential oils and put them directly on the skin or on the skin of your children or anything like that. Just by following those simple commonsense rules, we have eliminated a tremendous amount of danger. But this particular question here reveals something that we should consider. What oil should not be used for someone who takes tegretol to prevent seizures? Now, first of all, now, I'm going to share my thinking process so that you can understand that there's a certain thought process that will lead you to how to solve this particular problem and that's what I would like to emphasize a little bit here and in subsequent modules. You're going to be faced with all kinds of questions. How are you going to go about answering them? You're going to be faced with a number of challenges. How are you going to go about answering them? Well, the way that I would do this is I would look at this and I would say first of all, do essential oils aggravate seizures? That would be the first question I would ask in response. Do they cause seizures? Do essential oils cause seizures? Okay. Well, that's your homework assignment. I would like everybody to go online and I would like everyone to gather as much information as you can find and I would like you to see first of all the diversity of opinions that's out there, and second, I would like you to see the lack of concrete evidence that's out there.

 This takes us in to the first principle of the historical background of essential oils that I've mentioned many times, and that is this is a very new field. Lots of people are saying these have been around for thousands of years. That's simply not true. If it was true, we would have a lot more scientific documentation. Now, there is a lot of scientific documentation and a lot more is coming. But we could spend a little time and we could see if we can find, and I would do this also. I'll present my findings next week. We could see if we could track down are there any essential oils that are absolutely known to cause seizures. Now, we have to divide that into two fundamental categories, under the safe use of the oils versus unsafe use. And so, I can give you one answer here and that is that yes, seizures have been reported associated with essential oil use, but that's one of the adverse reactions that has happened when people have been advised to use them incorrectly. And so therefore, people who have been internally consuming essential oils have had seizures. Okay, so we know that essential oils, when they are abused, they can cause toxicity, but that's not what this question is asking here. And that is also something that we know very clearly that we are not going to be doing and this is one of the reasons why.

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 We look then and the question is now reframed. Are there any essential oils that are known to cause seizures if used safely? And this is where the information becomes a little bit more vague and I'll just go ahead and I'll tell you what I know about it, which is very little. Then the way that I would ask that particular question again is I would say what oils may be risky that could possibly cause seizures? And again, there's very little information about this, but the question that I would ask would be are there some essential oils that are strongly stimulant to the brain and especially might raise blood pressure? Okay, well the only concrete study and evidence that I have come across so far is that prolonged inhalation of rosemary oil can increase blood pressure. Now, to what degree, I do not have any information about. How dangerous that is, whether it's actually bad or not, I do not really know. We're in unchartered territory. Let's just see what we can find. Now, I would also say in addition to rosemary, which has a strong stimulant effect on cerebral circulation, which is a factor, we should also consider oils that are strongly toxic, potentially toxic, And the first two that will come to my mind will be winter green and birch, and you already know from your studies that winter green and birch can be very toxic to the central nervous system. So I would say based on connecting these dots that if there are any oils that represent a risk of causing seizure under normal safe use, it would be those three. But do those three actually have that reputation of doing that? Do they do that consistently? Is it a very individual thing? What happens when the tegretol comes in? Now, we get to the real question. Is there anybody in the world who understands brain chemistry at an individual level so that a particular patient who has seizures can understand exactly what's causing them and why? That's question number one. Number two, is there anybody in the world who knows exactly what the tegretol is doing in that unique individual's nervous system? Then is there anyone in the world who understands the neurochemical effects of hundreds of essential oil compounds that are found in one essential oil and how those hundreds of compounds might interact in a unique individual who is on this one particular medication?

 I think you're getting the point that if you put these three things together, the unique individual with their own unique health condition. The unknowns of how a particular prescription drug might be working in that unique individual and then all of the different compounds that could be inhaled into the brain. I think you can understand my point, which is there's nobody in the world who knows what essential oils should not be used. Or conversely who knows what essential oils could be used to actually reduce the seizures. So this is the kind of thinking then that we have to develop because these are the kinds of questions that are out there. And this is what makes internet medicine very complicated because if you were to post this online in discussion groups and so forth, you're going to have hundreds and hundreds of people telling you all kinds of things. They're going to be telling you, "You should try my brand. This particular oil has a thousand years of history that is going to cure seizures." And it's just not true, so we have to look at the complexities of this at the medical level and be very, very pragmatic. And so, what would my answer be? Now, we finally come to my answer ten minutes later. What oils should not be used for someone who takes tegretol to prevent seizures? I would say most likely under normal circumstances of using common basic aromatherapy oils safely such as in a diffuser, it's probably fine. But if you are concerned, if you want to practice precautionary principle, don't do aromatherapy, that's all, because aromatherapy can stimulate the nervous system.

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 Most likely something like lavender oil in a diffuser is not going to be problematic, but the real answer is nobody knows. We don't know what oil should not be used. We don't know what oils should be used. Okay, let's move on. A similar conundrum that we're finding here, and by the way, whoever posted these questions, I just want to say thank you for asking these questions because it gives us this opportunity to look deeper at problem-solving with these issues of aromatherapy. I will have to say that most of the problems that come in the complicated world or aromatherapy are coming because people simply do not have a deep enough education and medical background to even know how to properly ask the question because if you have a clinical background then a lot of the issues totally change, and this is a good one. What oils cannot be used for a person who has cancer, diabetes, and a cardiac condition? Well, the first question I would ask is are you talking about three different people, one person has cancer, one person has diabetes, and person has a cardiac condition, or are you asking about a case where a person has cancer, diabetes, and a cardiac condition together? Let's just keep moving through this.

 Since cancer thrives in an anaerobic environment, would one use thyme oil? Would one use oregano oil? Well, this indicates to me that we're trying to think as clinicians or chemists or medical researchers and we don't have the fundamental information to work with yet, so that's what I see is the problem here with a lot of internet medicine, is that people are trying to solve very, very complicated medical issues because they're not getting help. Like I said at the very beginning of the course, there's a reason why internet medicine is so prevalent. They're not getting help, but they're asking the questions in the wrong way. And so, in this particular case, let's just assume here. What oils cannot be used for a person who has cancer? Well, I am going to postpone answering that until a couple more modules when we're actually going to be looking at using essential oils for benefitting complicated medical conditions including chemotherapy. It's not so much what can you not use because there are probably more things that you shouldn't use and there are probably just a handful of things that you should use. And so, that's how we're going to approach it. I'm going to present some of the problematic aspects of using some essential oils with cancer treatment, chemotherapy and radiation, but then there's going to be just a handful that I will go ahead and I will endorse. I would say just stay away from the rest of them, and that's the basic approach I'm going to have with pregnancy and children also. We simply do not know about the hundreds and hundreds of species of essential oils. But we can assume that if there are certain families of compounds that we should probably stay away from different conditions for different reasons. And so, it's a good question, but it's very, very complex, and so the cancer part of it I'm going to postpone. The diabetes part, I'm going to answer as I have answered before.

 Diabetes is not an aromatherapy problem. Let's also remember that when we're talking about the use of essential oils, you must think in terms of the relevance of the essential oils. This is a problem that is being spread and aggravated by internet marketing because people are being told that essential oils cure everything and that is just not true. Essential oils are not the primary treatment for diabetes. Are there essential oils that should not be used during diabetes? Are there essential oils that should not be used during a cardiac condition? These are good questions, but they are just as complicated as the first one because in order to give you a specific answer, I need to know the unique individual and their situation because it's entirely possible that one person with a specific type of cancer could use aromatherapy extensively and they would get great benefits, and the same for a person with diabetes, the same for a person with a cardiac condition. At the same, it's possible that because of the number of medications that they're on and the instability of their health and the reactions that they're having that they shouldn't use aromatherapy at all, but I can't answer that question.

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 That's why we have a consulting email because in order to address it on an individual basis, I have to have a lot more information. So my suggestion is take advantage of that email and I could give you a more specific answer. In the meantime, I'm just sharing with you how I saw this particular problem. Now, the question, "Since cancer thrives in an anaerobic environment, would one use thyme?" Well, that's assuming a lot of different things. It's assuming that first of all, you're going to be able to get the thyme oil into an anaerobic environment. Well, how is that going to happen? Well, that's the problem with people being told they can take essential oils internally. It's going to get into the cells and so forth. That's medically fraudulent to make that statement. There's no evidence that because an oil can do this and this against a particular line of cancer cells or microbes in a Petri dish that you can accomplish that in the human body. Okay, so the last part of this question, "Are there oils that support peripheral circulation and neuropathy in a diabetic?" Excellent question and the answer is yes. The answer is we have talked about that, and so I would refer you back to, I should've pulled this up before I answered this. It's the module where we talked about the essential oils for the nervous system because we did talk about essential oils for neuropathy of various types. And of course, the first thing that we would think about would be the helichrysum for supporting peripheral circulation. That's the number one, but then of course frankincense also goes along with it. Okay. Thank you for your patience, but I thought it would be important for you to understand that these kinds of questions can be very confusing for people, but we have to dissect them. We have to take them apart and we have to look at what are the assumptions that are inside these particular questions.

 All right. Here's one which I didn't get around to last week. "You've mentioned liver chi stagnation and that aromatherapy can help smooth the liver chi. Which oils are best for this?" Well, let's give a definition to what is liver chi stagnation first of all. It's a generalized condition of emotional tension with irritability, frustration and so on. And as it builds up, it can disturb the shen. It tends to be cyclical. It tends to be associated with premenstrual syndrome. That's the most common place where you hear liver chi stagnation, is a woman is feeling liver chi stagnant as part of premenstrual syndrome, so that whole complex then. And there is actually something happening in the liver physically as well, which has to do with the detoxification of the hormones and circulation and so forth, but how do we translate this to aromatherapy? This is a very important question actually because everybody gets liver chi stagnation at various times. It's not just a menstrual thing. Men get liver chi stagnation all the time, too. Therefore, we can say what does it feel like and what do we need to do. Well, anything that has a relaxing effect on the nervous system will help with this. I would say that we've just finished two modules on essential oils for emotional well-being and all of those are directly applicable for liver chi stagnation. But specifically the flower oils and the ones that are more euphoric are always my first choice, anything that has a relaxing effect. So obviously, if we look through our studies, we see that lavender oil has a relaxing effect. The clary sage has even more of a relaxing effect. And then today when we're talking about the things that are good for meditation, we're going to learn more things that have a relaxing effect. And that is one of the primary things that aromatherapy does, is it has a relaxing effect especially when combined with massage or combined with meditation as we're going to talk about today. So therefore, anything that relaxes nervous tension, anything that relaxes musculoskeletal tension, anything that basically improves, enhances the feeling of emotional well-being is going to help with liver chi circulation. Good! Excellent! Next question, we've covered part of this. There's a bit of a long story here, a person who has been on a breathing machine for a very long time noticing loss of sense of smell. So first, I would just like to say that I'm very sorry to hear that. It sounds like a very big life challenge. My answer is I don't again know specifically, but I imagine that losing sense of smell is probably a fairly common situation if you are not breathing through your nose for a long period of time. But I also imagine that it is also something that happens as a result of systemic changes.

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 I don't know why you are on the machine and need to have it, but undoubtedly it would have an impact on your sense of smell. And it would have an impact on your entire respiratory system, which could also be reflected in the sinus cavities and sense of smell. And so, my suggestion is that you enjoy the fragrances frequently, enjoy aromatherapy, and that will probably keep it more active. One of the things that I imagine that a lot of people have noticed at this point through incorporating more oils and studying them and doing contemplative aromatherapy practice. Is that you have probably noticed that your sense of smell has become more sensitive and you are probably noticing smells in your environment more acutely and you are probably noticing that that's both a good thing and a bad thing. That it's giving you greater enjoyment of the fragrance of nice food and nice environment and smell of the forest and all of that. Your nose is getting developed as it were, but on the other hand, it also means that you're noticing toxic smells more and that is becoming increasingly unpleasant to be around many different environments. Well, that's a good thing also because it means your sense of smell is developing and that's what our sense of smell is for, is to give that information. Okay, I hope that is helpful.

 Another important question here and then we're going to have to move on. If an oil smells rancid after many years, that means that it has been adulterated with a carrier oil, so there are basically two things to remember here. Essential oils do not go rancid because rancidity is oxidation of fatty oil molecules. Therefore, if an oil goes rancid, it means that there's fatty oil in it because an essential oil cannot go rancid because there is no fatty oil in it. Essential oils also do not ferment and that's because fermentation is a process of bacteria digesting sugar in water. There's no water and there's no sugar in essential oils, so they shouldn't be. Therefore, essential oils do not ferment and they do not go rancid, which is exactly why essential oils are being used more and more as preservatives against rancidity and fermentation. So if something smells rancid, it means that it was stretched with a carrier oil. And that's a very, very common thing especially for the most expensive flower oils. So for those that are rancid, throw them out. They're not good anymore. You can't put them in your diffuser, but the others, possibly like a patchouli, is mentioned that will get better with age. And then other things like the citruses, they're probably okay to use in a diffuser. Okay, a little comment here about a recommendation I gave for a fungal infection, we're going to spend a bit more time with fungal infection in the skin module. But let's go ahead and move on now and get into our primary topic.

 Now, our primary topic is also going to include going back a little bit here and covering a few of the other modules. But if you will now go to the course page again, let's go ahead and open up this bigger topic of aromatherapy for supporting meditation. Go ahead and click on that link, aromatherapy for supporting meditation. The first thing that I would like to do is to introduce this module and talk about what the theme actually really means. Now, if we look at the history of all of this. And I know that I have debunked the idea that essential oils have been around forever, thousands of years, and that is based on historical evidence of when distillation equipment first started to be developed. But if we look at the history of aromatic plants and aromatic substances, we see that the use of those goes back a very long way. And so, if we're looking for aromatherapy history, aromatherapy history is very ancient. It's just that it wasn't using essential oils. And if we look at aromatherapy history, what we do see is that there is a smaller group of plants that were widely distributed all over the world that became part of the spiritual traditions and spiritual practices and hygienic practices as well of many cultures. And so, the opening theme here is the use of aromatic plants in ritual and ceremony is an extremely ancient practice. Yet still found in every spiritual and religious tradition around the world. That's summing it up, that it is very old but it's not essential oils. It's woods, it's resins, it's preparations, it's unguents and salves and so forth.

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 The essential oil compounds released by burning sacred woods and resins have a pronounced effect on consciousness. They purify the atmosphere of microbial toxins and often produce significant spiritual and even magical benefits. So I'm putting myself out there and I am making a claim here that aromatherapy maybe has magical benefits. Maybe some things happen that we can't explain. Maybe some things happen that are synchronistic and that's the beauty of this particular module and this particular group of substances because they are associated with something happening that is in a spiritual dimension. So we're going to look a little bit at the history. We're going to look at some of the modern ways that we can use woods and resins and botanical incenses. Talk a little bit about rituals and ceremonies for removing obstacles and manifesting intentions because that's a big part of healing actually. It's a big part of creating the conditions for getting connected to the right doctor, for example. It's not that you have to do a magical ceremony to find the right doctor, but let's just say that the more spiritual focus you have on getting good conditions for healing, the more the good conditions tend to happen. And sometimes, spiritual practices are absolutely the number one thing that people need to remove obstacles. And the primary obstacle of relevance for a lot of people that I deal with is the obstacle of having the resources and finding the right people to work with. So in other words, if you're facing a major obstacle or many obstacles, you can't even start to get better. You have to remove the obstacles. And so prayer, meditation, contemplation, using our intention, using our focus and so forth has always been a very big part of human activity in every culture and we should also do that and it works.

 If we use some of the plant allies that we have, they can support that. And in some cases, we see that these plants have incredible reputation of being able to really do that and they are relied upon. I don't think that there's been any double-blind, placebo-controlled studies on whether burning palo santo will create a shower of prosperity in your life. But if a particular plant has a reputation that goes back for thousands of years of being able to attract blessings then there must be something there. Maybe it cannot be duplicated all the time in a Petri dish, but it's something to consider.

 Okay, so we'll also consider that maybe one of the ways that these plants work is psychoactive compounds and that they might have unique effects on consciousness. Because let's keep in mind that the flow of time and space is nothing more than the flow of our Prana Vata. You remember Prana Vata as being the primary form of energy, the prana, the life force that is flowing through our nervous system. And what is flowing through our nervous system is basically what creates the appearance of the outer world. If you don't believe that, all you have to do is go to the Amazon and drink a big bowl of ayahuasca for breakfast and the flow of time and space will change dramatically. It's not that the time and space is changing. You're changing. Suddenly, you're not in ordinary consciousness sitting on the freeway with your coffee on your way to a meeting. You're in a totally altered state of consciousness where you are perceiving mythical realms around you and all kinds of things are changing to your sense organs. So therefore, your experience of time and space will be dramatically different. And so, it could be that maybe one of the ways that these plants change time and space, remove obstacles and attract blessings, maybe it's because they're actually working on our brain chemistry. So this is a provocative idea for you, but we should also consider that these sacred scents as we could call them have very strong antimicrobial powers. And they not only have very strong antimicrobial powers, but they also have very strong effects on consciousness and that is the key to understanding how these really work. And when we're talking about aromatherapy for meditation and spiritual practices, we are obviously talking about a link between a plant and our mind. We're talking about a link that is made when we use a plant in a particular way and maybe it has to do with our mental state and maybe not.

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 Maybe we are going to sit down in a really bad mood, but something will happen when we put the frankincense tear on a coal and the smoke comes out. It liberates the prana that the tree has accumulated from the sun and the moon and the five elements according to its own pranic intelligence. It's going to liberate those molecules into the atmosphere. And traveling through the air element, it will then come into the space element of our sinuses. And as you now know, the molecular energy of the entire cosmos that has gone into the intelligence of the plant will now be transformed from molecular prana into neurological prana and that will then arise as a perception within our consciousness. And so, that's the link and that's why I suggested that everybody study that. Because now when you light a piece of palo santo wood or you put a piece of agarwood on a burner, you are going to be experiencing these incredible fragrances with these incredible powers on consciousness that are so profound that they can actually change certain kinds of karmic conditions for us. Let's remember that karmic conditions are based on nothing more ultimately than our own mental state.

 And so, if we were to suddenly become enlightened and we were suddenly to become a holy person, we were suddenly to have no bad habits, we were suddenly to have our mind completely purified, we would have an entirely different karma. So obviously, our karma, the conditions of life are directly related to our mind and our mental state. And these plants are ones that have been recognized universally as being able to contact that aspect of our being. I say that because at every step of the way, I always want to remind us what the connection is. What is the connection between the fragrance, the aroma, the essential oil, the plant material that we're using, where does it come in contact with the body. You know that I have elaborated on this and said essential oils and aromatherapy are primary treatments for the respiratory system and you know why. I've said there are secondary treatments for the digestive system and you know why. Well, now we can say they are primary treatments for the state of consciousness and you already know why from previous modules. But now you know that this unique group of plants has a unique connection to a unique aspect of our consciousness, our spirit, our shen, our Prana Vata. Now, let's go ahead with that little orientation and take a look at this file that you just opened, aromatherapy for supporting meditation, practices for supporting meditation. The reference is in Modules 1 through 13. We always do this because I will introduce these very, very specific powerful plants for this purpose in this module. But we also have already learned a tremendous amount about things that have to do with supporting our meditation and contemplation practice. As a matter of fact, just the contemplative aromatherapy practice I gave you is a spiritual orientation to studying the plant, so let's look at this. Module 1, the first thing that I have noted here is distillation as a spiritual practice. Well, what does that mean? Well, in Module 1, I described and presented various types of distillation practices, but I did not spend any time talking about what a profound effect distillation has on people's consciousness. And I didn't spend any time talking about the history of distillation. I've mentioned a little bit, a few major historical developments, but this is a good time now to mention that distillation has always had a very significant link to alchemy and alchemy has always had a very strong link to the spiritual search. So alchemy to be defined very simply means extracting the essence and that means there are different definitions. Different cultures have named it differently. Like for example in Old Europe, they were trying to change lead into gold. Well, that's a literal kind of statement, but it's a metaphor. It means that they were trying to transform our base nature into our enlightened, radiant nature. Well, the Taoists will say it slightly differently. They will say that it is basically extracting the shen from matter. It's being able to distill our spiritual essence out of being immersed in gross matter of the body, so that's a universal theme of alchemy, distillation of our essence.

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 And of course, there is outer alchemy and inner alchemy. The outer alchemy was specifically to give long life. So a lot of the formulas in Ayurveda are very alchemical in nature, purification of metals and gems and minerals and so forth, and purification of toxic herbs. Well, that's alchemy and that alchemy was for the purpose of Rasayana, rejuvenation therapy, so that a person could live a long life. And the purpose of a long life was to be able to complete the inner alchemy, the inner alchemy meaning the practices that lead to spiritual fulfillment, however you want to define that. But basically it means to be able to extract our pure spirit from its entanglement in the world. That's probably the most common universal definition of alchemy.

 So what does this have to do with distillation? Well, distillation has always been linked to this inner process and many spiritual people have done distillation as part of a practice. What I have seen that's very interesting is that whenever people are around distillation, the actual mechanical and elemental process of distillation has a profound effect on people. I'm not exactly sure how that happens, but here you have the fire element and it's heating up the earth element, meaning the container, which is full of the space element and the plant materials in there. The plant material, of course, has all five elements in it. And it's heating up the water element that's then going to pass through a steam to the plant material into the space of the condensation tube and it's going to turn into the hydrosol, which is going to fall into the collecting vessel. The entire process is just fascinating for people to watch. I have been involved in many events where we have put on small scale and large scale distillation. I've been around a lot of distillation myself and I could just say that for some reason, maybe it's this kind of ancestral, spiritual or symbolic or an elemental thing, the process is deeply intriguing for everybody. People just like to see the whole thing happening. And at the end of it, you get this treasure. You have extracted something that has some real power in it. It's the intelligence of the plant. It's the cosmology that was within the plant that is now in the bottle. This is a metaphor also for an internal process and that is also something that we can link as we go in this module to our meditation practice. I just wanted to mention that because we hadn't actually talked about the history of distillation, but it's a very important aspect of distillation. Because it's actually the reason we got distillation. It was linked so heavily for centuries and centuries to people who are not just trying to find medicine, but they were also trying to actually find elixirs of longevity, and even better, elixirs of immortality. That's how the great Arab physician, Avicenna, basically gave us the first distillation in approximately 700 AD or something like that. I don't remember exactly, maybe not that long ago. I think it was actually more like about 1400 or 1200, something like that, is when that is reported to have happened with rose water. Okay, enough of that.

 Now, in Module 1, you'll also see that you already have received the language to understand the essential oils according to the cosmology. And so, you'll see then that the essential oils were categorized according to prana and according to ojas. Now, prana and ojas, as you know, prana is also the chi or the life force. It is the power of our brain. It's the power of our respiratory system and the power of our immunity, many things as we've described, and ojas is basically the immunological power, the nutritional essence, the moonlight and the flowers, the light in the eyes, the brightness of the aura, many things that we have talked about. I have presented links with certain oils that strengthen those things and are associated with those things so you already know that there are a number of essential oils that strengthen prana and that can be used for enhancing the flow of prana and that's directly relevant to meditation. Some of you may have recognized that right away and you may have remembered or heard me say in the first module tulsi essential oil is very good for the Prana Vata.

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 Well, you may have then connected a few dots and understood Prana Vata is the main power of concentration. Therefore, I should put a little bit of tulsi oil in the diffuser when I sit down to meditate when I'm feeling on the tired side. So we've already covered basic groups of oils that are very supportive of meditation practice. Then in that same file, we also talked about essential oils for the three gunas of consciousness, just to refresh your memory, essential oils that are very sattvic in nature. Those are the oils that we're going to talk about in this module. Those are the ones that are most strongly associated with supporting and enhancing meditative contemplative states of mind. Sattvic fragrances include things like frankincense, palo santo, agarwood, sandalwood, and basically those things that go directly to our consciousness and support our spiritual awareness. We also looked at that through the lens of well, what helps to pacify the rajasic, the irritated, the fiery, the aggressive states of mind. Which is a different way of saying the same thing because if we are cooling down the rajasic states of mind using the flower oils and becoming more peaceful and euphoric and relaxed, we're also becoming more sattvic. And likewise, we also talked about the oils that can have an uplifting, energizing effect for the rajasic or dull states of mind and that also is saying the same thing again. That if we are overcoming dullness that we're actually moving towards a more sattvic state of consciousness.

 We also introduced the method of contemplative aromatherapy, so right away from the very beginning, I have been encouraging you to actually use essential oils in a meditative, contemplative way and that transforms the experience. It adds more depth of perception. It enhances our olfactory sense and it also reveals the underlying cosmology of the oils which then helps us to have a much deeper sense of connectedness and biological unity to the plants, which you now have a new very important tool to consider. Which is the mindfulness of how the molecular energy of the plant prana actually becomes neurological prana when you inhale it. Now, you know the entire process to pay attention to when the molecules come into the sinus cavities and are transformed into neurological prana that then arises consciousness. And that's all one flow, sun, moon, biosphere, plants, ancient intelligence, five elements, essential oils, inhalation, stimulation of olfactory receptor sites, arising of neurological prana, arising of perception that is all one inseparable flow of prana. So in other words, when the sensation arises in our consciousness of anything, it's arising inseparable from all reality. Well, I'm not going to unpack the meaning of all of that, but for those of you who have studied the profound doctrine of emptiness of the self, well, there it is. Okay. What else do we have? Module 1, Attar and Marma Therapy, we also talked about that in Module 1. This is a spiritual approach also and it's also a therapeutic approach. Marma Therapy is a part of Ayurveda. The Attar is used specifically for that and they're based in sandalwood oil, as you will recall. Sandalwood oil is a profoundly, deeply sattvic fragrance and has a sattvic effect on consciousness. And so, these are the things that you have already learned in Module 1.

 Module 3, primary functions, botanical therapeutic category, that's basically going to give you a good overview of how the different types of plants affect our consciousness. We don't need to review that. You can just look at it at your own time, but there's a list of some oils there that I gave in the pharmacopeia ,and now I'm going to basically give you primary oils and supportive oils. The primary oil that is of relevance to us in spiritual practices, ceremony, ritual, meditation and contemplation is going to be frankincense, of course. You have that in your pharmacopeia. We can look back on it if we have the time, but I'm going to give some more specific instructions about it today. Supportive, we find lavender or we find bergamot. Now, lavender does not have thousands of years of ritualistic use; frankincense does. Frankincense goes back, there's evidence that frankincense was used in rituals in caves 10,000 to 15,000 years ago. There's no evidence that lavender was used in that particular way. However, aromatic plants in general were used around the home and lavender, wild lavender I'm sure probably does have a long history of use. But linking it clearly to spiritual purposes as opposed to just hygienic purposes or aesthetic purposes in the home.

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 We know that they used to throw lavender all over the floor to keep away bad smells and so forth. We don't see so much of that type of evidence. And so, therefore we can say, why lavender? What does lavender have to do with meditation? Well, people can definitely understand based on our studies and from personal experience that lavender can help with our meditative practice. Here I will go on a slight tangent and I will explain that a meditation practice has two primary obstacles and this is where the plants come in. Meditation practice has the first primary obstacle of agitation and agitation happens when we first sit down. Agitation happens after we've been running around all day and we come home and we sit down in our meditation cushion. We're agitated. We are metabolizing things. Our nervous system is moving around very quickly. Prana Vata is flowing quickly. We're metabolizing all kinds of thoughts and emotions and memories and plans and things that we need to do, and that's normal and that happens even in monasteries. And so, at a long meditation retreat, generally the first three or four days are pretty much just written off as time to metabolize the outside world before your Prana Vata is actually going to start to stabilize, so the first obstacle is agitation. We can see that a relaxing oil can help to overcome that obstacle more quickly. Do you have to sit and be physically tense to become more spiritual? No. As a matter of fact, there's no link whatsoever. Can you move through that agitated phase more quickly using plants? Yes, you can make some tea. You can drink some relaxing herbs. You can put some oils in the diffuser. You will be able to enjoy more time in a relaxed, meditative state.

 Then the second primary obstacle to meditation is that as soon as the agitation wears off, we have a little period of time where we basically can meditate with clarity and awareness and relaxation all combined. Which is a good definition of meditation, but then we quickly fall into tiredness and that's because the agitated state requires so much constant energy. We're all running basically on false energy and true fatigue. And so, as soon as we calm down, we immediately start to nod off and that's what happens in the first three or four days of any meditation retreat. Everybody, including the teachers, is sleeping in their cushion. Therefore, the second obstacle is dullness. We move from a rajasic state as the obstacle to a tamasic state, which is the obstacle, and nowhere in there except for maybe brief periods of time do we have an actual sattvic meditative state of clarity. Therefore, we can also see the fragrances certainly have some role in that and those would be the things that we can use to wake ourselves up. Okay, so the citruses then, we can see bergamot, uplifting. That's something that you have learned in Module 3. Modules 4 and 5, I would say no major essential oils for spiritual purposes, but respiratory oils are all very supportive. And we can also see that some of the respiratory oils actually do have a historical link. Like for example, juniper has been a major ceremonial tree in many parts of the world and it has also been a major incense ingredient in certain parts of the world that is also associated with spiritual traditions. For example, in Tibet, they typically don't burn a lot of frankincense. It's expensive, it's hard to get and so forth, but they have an abundance of juniper and it's an aromatic. And so, when they fumigate the monasteries and temples and shrines and so forth, they burn juniper. They put the dry juniper or fresh juniper on a coal and it creates a big column of smoke. They breathe that and bathe themselves with it, wave it around, parade it through the hallways and so forth, and so juniper does have some historical link. Some of the other respiratory oils also have some historical uses as well. And if nothing else, the trees have always been revered, cedar, pines, the juniper, the fir trees, spruce trees. All of these trees have always had a very important spiritual connotation in traditional cultures, but the essential oils are not primary for our purposes here. Module 7, I just want to bring your attention to the file here, essential oils and the 15 sub-doshas. And specifically, I want to bring your attention to the Prana Vata because the Prana Vata is the main connecting point for all aromatherapy, but it is especially the connecting point for the sacred scents. Module 8, essential oils, studies for cognition. Well, let's just ask a simple question here. What does cognition have to do with our meditation and contemplation practices or spiritual development in general?

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 Is there a link between our cognitive function and spirituality? That's a very interesting question to ask. I think that we could say yes, absolutely, but in many cases, no as well. For example, I know of certain very spiritual people, Lama in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition who as they got older, they suffered from dementia, but they actually had become all heart chakra and so it didn't really matter. Their mind wasn't working well, but their heart was working very well. Therefore, cognition is something that we associate with spiritual practice in certain ways because if we have difficulty concentrating, it's very difficult for children to go to school and to learn and so forth. It's very difficult for adults to stay focused. That's a basic reason when you think about the cognitive herbs. The herbs that we use to support cognitive function, and we know from previous modules that essential oils have a profound, direct connection on cognitive function. Rosemary, lemon balm, these types of things were a few examples to support our cognitive function. Therefore, I would say these have a direct link to our state of awareness, but obviously, spirituality is more than just cognitive function. Cognitive function is fundamental to spiritual practice, but it's not everything. So a primary essential oil that we found in Module 8 would be the tulsi. And tulsi, as the herb can be consumed, very supportive for the central nervous system, it is said to basically transmit the essence of devotion. That's why it's offered. That's what the mythology around it is all about that it has a kind of devotional characteristic. Bhakti, would be the word that spiritual devotion is cultivated by drinking tulsi tea or breathing its fragrance. Be very careful. Remember, it's very high in eugenol. It's a dermatoxic oil. In that sense, it's not sattvic. It's not devotional. It's painful. Supportive oils in Module 8, rosemary, lemon balm, and another citrus, grapefruit. Module 9, helichrysum and juniper, well, this was the module where we basically talked about circulation and musculoskeletal issues and so forth. The reason I'm putting helichrysum in here is because there's a term I'm going to introduce here in a few minutes, and that is wish-fulfilling gem. So that should grab your attention, a wish-fulfilling gem. And I have found that there are a core group of plants that qualifies wish-fulfilling gems. Helichrysum is one of them in my opinion. I'm going to create a whole new buzz on the internet here that the helichrysum is a wish-fulfilling gem along with agarwood and palo santo. Those are your three wish-fulfilling gems, so stay tuned.

 I'll unpack that in just a minute, but also, we learned about juniper there and juniper as I said is a primary essential oil because we can link it back historically to ritual and ceremony. Module 10 is where we start to get into women's health issues. Rose is a primary essential oil for spiritual practices. We can see for example its mythological connotation in Islam. It is the Heart of Allah. In Christianity, it is the Heart of Christ. Well, there's something connected between the major world religions and the association with the heart. So here, we're not talking about cognitive function so much as we're talking about the sattvic consciousness and the heart, which is a different kind of cognitive function. The heart has a cognitive function that's deeper in some ways, the deeper intuitive cognitive function of the heart, and rose supports that. Rose is a major oil not just for emotional well-being, but also to support our contemplative spiritual practices. Supportive would be all the other flower oils and I have mentioned that we saw geranium and clary sage. And clary sage, of course, anything that helps you relax gives you a nice euphoric sort of feeling -- is supportive of meditation practice. I do not believe that we have to suffer unnecessarily. There are times and there are places where strengthening our endurance physically, mentally, emotionally and so forth are absolutely the primary spiritual practice. There are other times where we don't have to force ourselves into a high level of discipline. We just need to basically enter into a state of clarity and relaxation. And that's the most basic approach to meditation that I can give, the flow of the mind and the body together, the flow of the mental states and the body sensations together, and that flow is based on being simultaneously alert but relaxed, and anything that helps us to do that is fine.

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 If we look back at the traditional spiritual practices, we see that all the senses were engaged and that's why I think it's really okay to bring in aromatherapy as a support because, let's go through the senses. What has been used historically to support spiritual practices from the ears? Well, that's either complete silence or it's chanting, music, kirtan and so forth, mantra. All the things that have to do with the ear also can support our spiritual practice. What about the eyes? Well, that's going to be the visual environment of where we are. Maybe it's the cathedral of the forest or maybe it's the iconography of the tonkas of the deities or the statues or the saints or the immortals. It's all the same everywhere. You're seeing something and it's symbolically activating, visually activating your spiritual practice. What about the sense of taste? Well, that has to do with the food offerings and the diet that you're taking to support your spiritual practice. What about the sense of touch? Well, it becomes very important in the Ayurvedic tradition especially of panchakarma, the detoxification and so forth. And yoga is all based on strengthening the body and that activates the sense of touch, the musculoskeletal aspect of it. Finally, what about the sense of smell? Well, the sense of smell has the most powerful, direct, deepest connection to our spiritual consciousness of all the senses and yet we for the most part have neglected it, and so I think it's perfectly fine to bring it back. Module 11, a primary oil, jatamansi, we will also come back and study that one. I keep saying that and we keep missing an opportunity to look at the monograph for jatamansi. That is a major important spiritual oil, long history of use also, not as essential oil as infused roots; supportive, again, more citruses, mandarin. A very important oil that I think you should consider adding to your meditation is vetiver and we've already studied that for its emotional well-being properties.

 Module 12, look at all the anxiety and depression references. Anything that helps to settle anxiety is helping our sattvic consciousness. Anything that helps uplift us from depression is helping our sattvic consciousness. Stress, anxiety and depression studies, look at that file again. A primary oil in this department is going to be neroli. Neroli just worn as a single-note perfume I have found to be lovely for creating a sattvic state of consciousness. It doesn't necessarily have to do with okay, now you are sitting formally on a meditation cushion. It could also just be that you're going into a social situation and you don't feel like going into a social situation, but you have to be sattvic or you have to try to maintain a little bit of equanimity and some detachment and you have to be entertaining and so forth. Well, I'm sure this is one of the primary uses of botanical perfumery for centuries, is that people would fortify themselves with a nice aroma so that they would actually feel better in social situations and would be in a better mood. Supportive, jasmine, orange, and patchouli. Well, jasmine is more known as an aphrodisiac, as you have learned. Does it matter? Is that not spiritual? No, it's absolutely totally spiritual. Jasmine also we know has uplifting effect on consciousness.

 The question is the same kind of question that would maybe come if you were in a monastery and doing a retreat. Should you eat a lot of garlic at dinner? Well, garlic is forbidden in monasteries because it heats up your blood and it's a known aphrodisiac. And so, you don't want to have it especially if it's a mixed crowd and you have a bunch of monks and nuns sitting together and everybody is eating a bunch of garlic. They may have a little bit of difficulty staying in a sattvic, detached, meditative state. They might want to go out. The garlic may heat their blood in such a way that they start to feel like, "Well, I'd rather go out and have a glass of wine," and so garlic is forbidden. The same thing is what maybe we could say about jasmine. I think that if somebody walked into a real formal Zen retreat wearing a strong jasmine that it might turn people's attention to other subjects other than detachment from the world. Orange and patchouli are also here.

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 Now, we are at Module 14 and these are the most important things that we want to talk about, agarwood, cedarwood, cistus meaning rock rose, palo santo, and sandalwood. Okay, so I have given you a review and now let's go ahead and jump into our primary topic. How do these things work? What do they do? Why should we use them? Well, first of all, if you open the file with the pharmacopeia, the current pharmacopeia, so you go to the course page, click on Module 14, and then you will see the link that says Pharmacopeia for Module 14. If you click on that, you will then see that what we have, agarwood, cedarwood, cistus, palo santo and sandalwood. Now, I'm going to spend the rest of this module basically telling you about these. And since this is one of my favorite subjects and because I tell so many stories about them. And because the stories in some ways are more interesting than the monographs, I'm just going to invite you to read the monographs on your own, but what I'm going to give here I guess they would call in Tibetan Tantric Buddhism the secret oral transmission. I'm going to give you the information that goes along with it. So let's just go ahead and start with one of the most important for meditation. We should preface this by asking a basic question. Well, what makes these particularly unique and sacred? Well, there are several things.

 First of all, they have the longest use in the human history for spiritual purposes. I think that can be said undoubtedly about all these. Certainly, sandalwood, palo santo, cistus the rock rose also, cedarwood and agarwood. All of these have a very long history of being used in human spiritual endeavors. We could add to that frankincense and myrrh. Now, by human spiritual endeavors, what I mean is giving offerings, offerings for prayer, asking supplications, "Please bless us with good weather," "Please bring the rain," "Please stop the rain," any kind of communication with the divine. And here, we also see a visual representation of the elements because when we use these substances, we are actually utilizing all five elements. Traditionally, the way that these were used was in a fireplace or in some type of censer, a large altar of some type, and the fireplace would be built in the earth or a container of some type. This will represent the earth element and the space inside of it is the space element and then the fire element is built inside of it. And then the offerings are made, not just thrown mindlessly into the fire, but they're put in the fire, specific offerings for a specific purpose. They're put in the fire and the fire is regarded in many traditions as being the embodiment of God at the elemental level, just as water is a physical expression of God. A very nice way to think about it is you have the five elements, earth, water, fire, air, and space, and these are actually the five fingers of God, the five fingers of the Creator, and that is what all of creation is made from. So therefore, if we look at what is fire, fire is solar energy that has been captured by the trees that is being released through the combustion process, but it's ultimately sunlight. What is sunlight? Sunlight is stellar energy. What is stellar energy? Stellar energy is the universal galactic energy of the fire element that gives life. And so, fire is one of the sources of life. It's one of the profound universal sources of intelligence and life, likewise earth, likewise water, likewise air and all of this. The mythology states it so nicely in different traditions especially in the Vedic tradition of fire worshipping and making fire offerings. It says that the fire is the mouth of God. Why? Because it eats things. What does it like to eat? It likes to eat the best things. It likes to eat the highest, most valuable, most pristine, most purified substances from the earth made with gratitude, offerings made with gratitude to give reverence to God. You don't want to just throw anything in the fire. You want to give the highest quality, the most valuable things. You want to put it directly into the mouth of God because the fire is going to transform it, and I guess this is a good subject for winter solstice.

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 So the mouth of God eats things and it has tongues. Those would be the flames, and it speaks. That's the sound that the fire makes. So this is how the traditional people especially in the Vedic fire-worshipping tradition viewed fire, and this is to give you a context of how these plants were used. Now, agarwood, agarwood is still burned in this kind of traditional fires in a few places in the world, but it's extremely expensive. It is something that is used in large amounts basically by the Saudis. That's a part of the world where agarwood is greatly treasured, but it's also in Chinese and Japanese monasteries. It's associated with both Buddhist and Taoist tradition. Just to give you a little historical overview here, agarwood is also known as oud. That's its Arabic name and it is also known in the Bible as aloeswood, so it does have a very long, very fascinating spiritual history. Now, I first learned about agarwood in my studies of Chinese medicine, and even then, it was extremely expensive. I purchased a little bit of very high quality agarwood and I discovered its profound beauty as an incense. Now, since that particular time, the price of agarwood has gone up tremendously and it's because it is in such demand.

 Now, there are basically two types of agarwood, the wild type and the cultivated type. There are also a couple of different varieties and species, but we don't need to worry about that. What we do need to understand is that the wild agarwood is extremely rare. It is so rare that there's a very, very serious black market and the black market is so serious that it's violent. People get killed poaching agarwood. And so, this is something that we have to be aware of in this particular industry. But now there's more and more agarwood coming from sustainable cultivation projects and it takes a long time actually for the wood to start to produce the oil and part of the problem is that the oil in the heartwood, which is what gives it the fragrance, doesn't happen naturally. It has to happen through a fungal infection, so in an agarwood forest, not all the trees have agarwood, only a few of them, which makes it even more precious. So now, agarwood cultivation is becoming increasingly widespread in places like Southeast Asia and they have also learned how to inoculate the trees so that the tree produces this essential oil in its trunk and its branches, and that means also they don't have to destroy the tree to get it. Now, the quality of course is inferior to the old wild trees, but unless you actually want to go in search of something that's going to cost a fortune and you want to get it from the black market. Or trust somebody that you don't know who can make all kinds of claims, you're probably never going to meet this.

 Now, I have actually had a good fortune to meet true agarwood occasionally. It's not something that I can afford personally. It's one of the most expensive woods in the world, one of the most expensive oils, and that's why I have not met it very much. I have been fortunate to meet very small samples here and there, but we do have a source from a sustainable project and this wood is very nice to use as an incense. Now, this is best to use on an incense heater, not on a coal. Frankincense typically is burned on a coal and you want to get a traditional Japanese incense burner or any incense burner will do actually. Just a heat-proof container. You want to fill it with something heat-proof. Japanese traditionally use white ash, but you can use sand or you can use little pebbles or whatever. You want to light a coal and there are two basic types. Again, there's the traditional Japanese type, which is non-toxic, but it also takes longer to light and it doesn't stay lit as well. But everything in traditional ceremony goes slowly, or you can use the round type where you light it and it sparks. That's great for lighting it, but you want to do that outside because the reason it sparks is because it has gunpowder in it which is giving off toxic fumes and you don't want to breathe that. So you light the coal, you put it on the ash or the sand in the burner, and then you put your resin on that. That's the best way to do frankincense or other resins.

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 Now, what will happen is that the resin will melt and as it melts, it will release its essential oil compounds into the atmosphere. And of course, just like essential oils, there will be a top note, middle note, and base note. The top note will be the sweetest, the lightest. The middle note will start to get heavier and smokier, and the base note will basically be everything else that's left over and burning. That's the disadvantage of burning resins is that after a while, you will have accumulation of soot from the smoke. Now, going back to the symbology of all of this, when you light the fire and you put one of these precious substances on the coal, it creates a column of smoke. So if you are outside, if you're in a temple, this is fine. It's wonderful because it gives you the idea, the impression that you can actually send your prayers through the fire element up into the space element and that the prayer will have substance. The prayer, the voice of your prayer or the thoughts of your prayer will have formed an etheric shape of smoke that rise into the sky where they disperse into space. Now, this is an important concept because we want to be able to take what's inside of us. We want to take our thoughts and feelings and we want to articulate them with our voice and we want to say them with prayer. We want to think them with concentration. We want that which is inside of us to go into the fire and to come out of the fire in the form that is then going to rise into the space element around us. And the space element has its own profound connotation of the space of our own universal mind, the space of mahat, the mind of the universe, the space of the biosphere, the entire planetary consciousness, the space of whatever deity or form of God we think about, the space of our own mind. So basically, that's a symbolic aspect of these rituals. Now, agarwood, I first learned about the magical powers of agarwood from the King of Nepal's alchemist, Dr. Bishnu Prasad Aryal, who has since passed away. He basically gave me a recipe which he called, [Foreign Language] which means "That which you think manifests," or in other words, the wish-fulfilling gem incense, and that's what agarwood has a reputation of doing, is that it will manifest your desires.

 Now, how does that work? Let's take this apart here a little bit. The way that you want to do this is you want to start with a very small piece of high quality agarwood and you want to put it in a burner, I'm sorry, a heater, not a coal, so it's not the burner with the coal. There are actually special agarwood heaters that are available and this heats the wood slowly. You can also do this on your own. You can put it in a pan or something that's warm and you don't burn the wood, so burning the wood on coal would be considered barbaric. You want to do this so that it releases the aroma of the essential oil that's in the wood very, very softly and gently. It is done in such a refined way in Japanese culture that they actually pass around the heater for everybody to just breathe a little vapor coming off of the warm wood, and that's the agarwood ceremony where they pass around the agarwood to breathe. It's a very, very interesting fragrance. A lot of people feel that they recognize it even though they never met it before. It has deep connections spiritually and it has a fascinating effect. The effect of breathing agarwood is deeply hypnotic, relaxing and meditative, very, very euphoric and uplifting to the mood. It's probably the most consistently psychoactive fragrance in terms of a kind of sattvic meditative state, so that's my impression of it. Now, we come to the question of how does a wish-fulfilling gem work, and this is also going to be applicable for palo santo and for helichrysum. Well, agarwood has probably the widest, most ancient reputation of being a wish-fulfilling gem. A wish-fulfilling gem, as I have just described, is the process of taking that which is inside of us and manifesting it. Now, we have to ask here, what do we want to use this for? Dr. Aryal told me use this with a pure mind.

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 In other words, be careful what you ask for. So is this something that we basically want to use for financial purposes? Well, it certainly can be. Why? Because our financial situation is very important. Now, I'm not going to make any claims and I'm not going to make any marketing about this. I'm just telling you that in my personal opinion, there is something to this. The way that I describe it is that certain plants help us to create sattvic synchronicity. Well, what does that mean? Synchronicity means that there's coincidence that has meaning and specifically that is of a sattvic nature. So the way that I have always approached using this personally, and have advised other people to use it is for supporting the manifestation of your personal dharma, meaning the deeper purpose of your life. It's not so that you can get a new car. It's to remove the obstacles and to attract the resources and the conditions that you may need at any stage of life to accomplish what your deeper purpose in life is about. That's what I think is so profound about this group of three plants especially. Lots of other plants do that. Now, we've talked about this in the herb course especially because if we look at the powers, the healing powers of plants, we see that even the really bitter, terrible-tasting herbs that detoxify the liver. If they get us feeling better, they are removing obstacles to our life purpose. All plants can help us at that level, but these seem to operate not by treating our liver or getting us functional again by getting our pain and inflammation down or whatever. These seem to operate directly at a spiritual level by somehow influencing our consciousness, so here's the way that I suggest that you use this. Use it with a heater. Don't put it on the coal. Start with a very small amount and just heat it very slowly and do it recognizing how valuable a botanical resource it is. Do it mindfully with deep reverence and respect and appreciation knowing that this tree is becoming harder and harder to find, and don't just use it for just any kind of superficial purpose. Use it with an intention specifically to remove the obstacles and attract the resources and conditions that you need at this time of life to manifest yourself fully.

 Anything that has to do with manifesting your life purpose is also going to be completely in line with the purpose of humanity at this time. Therefore, anything that you feel you need, you don't even have to have that specific intention. That's one of the beautiful things about this kind of contemplative practice. You don't even have to know. You don't even have to have clarity. As a matter of fact, this is one of the best times to use it, is when we have confusion, when we don't know about what direction to go in, we don't know what life purpose is. And I will say from many years of clinical practice that people who come in and do not know what they should do with themselves have a very deep level of anxiety and depression. And it can contribute significantly to that unless they have a sattvic orientation to the confusion. Being confused is okay. It's how we relate to it and solve it that matters. And as like any other kind of suffering, we can become anxious, we can become depressed, or we can tackle it as a spiritual challenge. This is where these plants are most beneficial, so we do not know. We know that we don't like conditions currently. We know that we're going to have to change something, or maybe we don't. Maybe we just have a sense that something is not right, that we want to go in a particular direction, or maybe we have a really well-developed plan, but we just can't move forward. Things aren't moving forward. Well, here's the general report. Things start to change. Now, the question arises. Is it because we put the agarwood on the heater, or is it because we sat down with the belief that the agarwood is going to do it? Or is it because millions of people throughout history have all done this collectively, or is it because the tree has some kind of power, or is because these aromatic molecules get into a certain part of our brain that enhances our capacity to move things forward with our concentration, or is it all of those things?

**[1:25:15]**

 Well, I don't really know, but no matter what happens, the one thing I will absolutely guarantee you is that you will enjoy a beautiful fragrance, and that's a really good thing to do. Even if nothing else happens, just enjoying a beautiful fragrance changes the quality of our life. And if we enjoy a beautiful fragrance on a regular basis in a contemplative mood, that starts to actually retrain our nervous system, and that really helps us in a lot of ways. It makes it easier to go back into a meditative state. Now, I will share what I do personally with this because I like it. I'm not wealthy. I don't have a lot of it. I don't use a lot of it, but I'm fortunate because people give me things. I also consider this an aspect of the synchronicity. I have found in my personal life that many plants have come to me in many synchronistic ways that have indicated that they want to have a relationship with me. And so, this is a lot of how the agarwood has happened for me over the last several years. I'm not investing huge sums of money. I'm not a wealthy sheik or something like that. Or a wealthy Chinese collector of agarwood products, but what I find interesting is that they keep showing up on my doorstep anyway and I take notice of that.

 I have two primary ways that I use agarwood. One is that we actually have an agarwood attar that I had made myself from totally sustainable sources. The agarwood oil that goes into that comes from Thailand, from a project that we have researched extensively and we've had the oil tested, and I'll say a few words about contamination in a moment. We've had the oil tested. We are absolutely certain it's the real thing and then we have put that into an Australian sandalwood, the spicatum species, which is government-controlled and managed by the aboriginal people in Australia. And so I feel totally confident about that product. Now, one of the ways that I use it is that I simply take that agarwood attar, sandalwood-agarwood combination, and I just put a little bit on my moustache and a little bit on pulse points on the neck. I anoint myself with a lot of gratitude every time I use it. I don't take it for granted. I always recognize the plant, say thank you, sit down, and I enjoy it, and then I do nothing. I just sit there and I just enjoy the fragrance. I mindfully completely partake of what it is giving me. Sometimes I will do it differently. Sometimes what I would do is I would put a little sample of something that just showed up on my doorstep from somebody who wants me to check something out. I'll put a little sample of that on the heater. I'll turn it on low and then I would just sit and I will meditate, and then slowly what will happen is this very tantalizing fragrance will start to appear in my consciousness. And then I'll start to feel the effects enhancing my meditation and so forth. The key here is that the way I am using it is fully engaged.

 Now, whether that produces any series of synchronicities or not I don't think is important. What it does is it increases a very deep, mindful relationship with this particular tree and its blessings. And so, this is a good thing to consider for lots of other things as well. All right. Now, we're running out of time. I hope you didn't mind my going off on this little tangent about the spiritual topics. I want you to read the monographs here. I'm going to tell a few more stories and then transition out of this. I want to tell you a little bit about palo santo because palo santo is also magical. It has these magical qualities. Now, palo santo is also considered a wish-fulfilling gem. It comes from South America. Primarily it grows in the tropical dry forest and especially coastal tropical dry forest. Now, this is one of the most unique ecosystems in the world. It is basically a desert terrain and yet it is very lush. It's a forest. It's got a lot of biodiversity and yet it's very, very dry nine months out of the year, very hot, and then it rains intensely; that's monsoon. Now, the palo santo tree is actually a relative of frankincense.

**[1:30:01]**

 It's in the Bursera genus, which is not the same genus as the frankincense trees, but it's in the same family. It looks similar to frankincense trees, superficial roots. It can go dormant for 50 years waiting for rain and so on and so forth, but there are a few magical things about palo santo. Those of you who have read the little book that I wrote about the travels that Sara and I made, you know some of these stories, but I'll just tell you a few things and it should give you a great appreciation. First of all, I met palo santo about ten years ago. This was in Ecuador in a little fishing village and the way that I met this distiller was entirely synchronistic. It was an unbelievable chain of coincidences that stretched all the way from India around the world to South America and it's a long story. But if you saw that chain of synchronistic event, there's no conclusion that you could come to other than this tree wanted me to meet it, and I didn't even know it. It didn't become clear to me until much later.

 It also was so synchronistic that at any point along the way, the entire thing could've simply stopped. But because of the synchronistic chain of events, I was very fortunate to meet a gentleman, a retired Italian psychotherapist who had settled on the Ecuadorian coast and had started to learn about the ethnobotanical history of this tree and became deeply interested in it and is now one of the world's experts. And also one of the few distillers of this wood. And one of the reasons why he's one of the few distillers is because there are so many very interesting magical things about the distillation of the wood itself. Now, the interesting thing to start with is that the tree itself, while it is growing, has no oil in it. It has a little fragrance, but it's more like a latex in the roots and in the leaves and the branches. So if you chop down that tree and you distill it, you will not get any essential oil. And furthermore, if a tree dies from any kind of disease, you will not get any essential oil. And so, where does the essential oil come from? The essential oil happens only after the tree has lived a full life, full, healthy life, and then died a natural death and stood for years and years dead and it still has no oil.

 Finally, after many years of standing dead in the forest, it will fall over. It still has no oil, and finally after many years of lying on the forest floor, it will develop an oil in the trunk. Now, this is an intriguing physiological biochemical process. Why is it that this trunk takes so long to develop this essential oil? So therefore, you cannot get the oil from living trees. It only comes from trees that have been lying on the forest floor aging for many years. Now, here's another interesting fact. As soon as you pick up that wood and you take it out of the forest, the oil stops being produced and it starts to evaporate. Therefore, as our distiller, Dante, said, the wood of the trunk is the perfume bottle and the forest is the lid. You take the tree out of the forest, the vapor escapes. Well, that's intriguing. Well, here's another little tidbit for you to think about. This wood, when it is distilled, gives a significantly different amount according to the cycles of the moon. Therefore, the distillers in that part of the world have learned that it is much more economically feasible to distill on the full moon than on the new moon. That you actually get almost double the amount of oil on the full moon than the new moon. Now, let's put all of that together and I think we can understand why it is that there's this great spiritual mystical respect for this tree. Now, in that part of the world, the primary religious motif as it were is Catholicism and the primary archetype of Catholicism, one of the primary archetypes is the death and resurrection of Jesus. Well, here you have a tree that dies and is resurrected in the form of giving an oil that then gives life, so there's a symbology here. The symbology is mixed in a very interesting way with some of the older indigenous beliefs because the tree that gives the most oil is also considered feminine, so it's a mother tree.

**[1:35:14]**

 It's a mother archetype but it is also linked to the death and resurrection archetype. Therefore, it is called santo. It is mysterious. It is powerful. It is spiritual. So what do the indigenous people say about it? It repels negativity and this is one of the first things that Dante told me when I met him ten years ago. And he told this to us again when we were there about three years ago. And by the way, I brought the first leader of essential oil of palo santo to the United States and it became very, very popular. It's a very popular oil, but we basically introduced Dante to the Western market. Now, he told me two very important things and these are therapeutic things and then I'll wrap it up and we'll explore a little bit more next week. He said a few drops on the palm for direct inhalation will cure the epidemic of urban panic attacks. Well, that says a lot. He's a psychotherapist. He knows something about panic attacks. And since that time, I have tested this and I have found that many, many people report that palo santo has a very pronounced anxiolytic effect. So it is profoundly spiritual in that sense that it really helps people when they are shen-disturbed, when they are in an extremely rajasic, agitated state, when they have phobias, when they have anxiety, when they are having panic attacks. That's one thing.

 A more esoteric thing that he said was palo santo opens the channels of creativity. Well, I didn't really know what he meant by that, but as I got to know him more and then especially visiting with him later. I asked him, "Well, what do you mean it opens the channels of creativity?" and he said, "What happens when we remove the negativity? What remains? What remains when we remove the negativity?" And so, palo santo, the burning of the palo santo in the ceremonies, which are widespread in Ecuador, the burning of the palo santo around the home and so forth. The ritualistic use of it is said to have one primary power with lots of facets to that, and that is removing negativity. Now, what Dante is postulating is that by removing negativity that we open the channels of creativity. And so, when I asked him about that, he answered it very simply. He said, "What remains? When you remove negativity, what remains?"

 All right. I think that's a good place for us to conclude for now. We can pick up on that because obviously, something to think about here is well, what is our true nature? What is our shen? That's what this question is asking from a different angle. If our shen is not disturbed, if our spirit is not obscured by anything, what remains? Well, Dante's answer was it is creativity that remains. Okay, I will stop with that. I took extra time because it's one of my favorite subjects and we will pick up. Go ahead and read the monographs. Read through all the files and I will tell you some more magical stories starting next week. Because there's more to say about palo santo, more to say about sandalwood, cedarwood, and cistus also. Okay, so Colleen, I am going to turn it back to you and let's see if anybody would like to raise their hand, if I have stimulated anybody's interest on this winter solstice. And if nobody wants to speak up, we can take a look here. I see a few answers. If you want to go ahead and invite people, go ahead and do that. Yeah, you can go ahead and tell people how to do that.

Colleen: Right. Thanks so much, David. That's wonderful. Someone did have their hand up, but now it looks like they must have hung up by mistake, but please put your hand up. Press 1 on the telephone keypad if you're on Maestro, and if you're on the webcast, please type in directly onto the webcast. We have [Participant]. I might be saying that incorrectly, sorry. Go ahead please.

Participant: That's okay, [Participant]. My focus spiritually is the pre-Christian Celtic tradition. And in this winter solstice, I'm wondering if there are any special essential oils in reverence of this wonderful turning point.

**[1:40:12]**

David: I'm not familiar so much with the Celtic tradition, but I do know that there was always a great reverence for the trees in the north and that would be linked back to what I was saying about the respiratory oils. And so, if we are using any of the oils from the great trees of the northern forest, I would say that that's probably the closest link. I do not know anything about the rituals or ceremonies or the use of plants from that particular tradition. I do know that those traditions are very rich in medicinal plant use and ceremonial plant use and so forth. But that's something that I have come across, little pieces of information here and there, and it has not really congealed in my consciousness so much to be able to say anything about it. I am more familiar with the traditions from Ayurvedic medicine, Chinese medicine, and the use of the frankincense. Which has been a specific personal interest of mine, and so I have studied that. Also, I just want to make a note here for your homework assignment that you have a file here titled "Frankincense and Myrrh." This is a very extensive article that I wrote many years ago actually and a lot of people have read it and it gives a good overview of a lot of the therapeutic functions of the resin. How it's used traditionally, harvesting and so forth, so please look that over. That's the full extent of my knowledge. I'm sorry that I don't have more other than just mentioning that relationship with those trees that we know as the respiratory oils from the conifer department. I don't know if that's helpful or not, but I'm unfortunately quite ignorant in that department.

Participant: Oh, no worries. Actually, thank you for that because it got me thinking back on my past studies and I think you're absolutely right. I think especially the fir trees and spruce trees and pine trees and the Yule log, I didn’t know what the Yule log was. I didn't know if it was an oak log or what, but anyway, thank you for that and happy solstice!

David: Well, thank you and same to you. One thing that just popped into my consciousness, I do know that rowan tree was very, very sacred. But whether that's something that was used in ritual ceremony or how they did it, I really don't know, but that's a very rich vein of study. Okay, good question, and thank you. So Colleen, let's see. Is anybody else calling in or shall I take a couple of comments from the webcast?

Colleen: Yes. We have a caller actually just putting their hand up, called in on the general PIN from the area code 214. You have the mic. Go ahead please and share your name with us.

Participant: Thank you. Yes, thank you. This is [Participant]. I have a quick question about the connection with religion and use of fragrances. Because I know in Catholicism, a lot of times they'll do a lot of the fragrance that as they move down the aisle, they've got the fragrances that are used in a ceremony that way. There's a relative of mine, kind of a distant relative who started to have fainting spells anytime that she would be encountered with a fragrance. Now, I'm assuming that at some point that it was sort of a resistance that she was associating the smell to the place and that would be more of a psychological moving into a physical space with that. And so, she removed herself from going to church for many, many years, and then she's come back. But I just thought that it was very interesting that it didn't have a resonance or a certain connection with that smell being a positive experience that her physical body was actually creating this disconnect. Do you have any thoughts about that type of experience with people?

David: Sure, yeah. Actually, some people do have very strong emotional reactions to fragrance. And some people have very strong neurochemical reactions to fragrance also. And so, the first question that I would ask if I was inquiring about this from her is I would say, "Did this have any spiritual meaning or value to you?" Because that would be the first question, would be is this a negative thing or a positive thing? If somebody goes to a spiritual place like a church and they move out of ordinary consciousness, the first thing I would be personally curious about was what did they experience. And I would diagnose that based on whether it appeared to be more of a medical problem, a psychological problem, or it was a spiritual phenomena. Because when some people go to temples or are involved in religious ceremonies, sometimes they have altered states of consciousness. If she reported for example that, "Whenever I go to this particular church and I smell this particular frankincense burning, I faint, but I have these beatific visions of Christ." I would say great! You're having a mystical experience and there's not a problem with that except just make sure that somebody is there so you don't hit your head. And some people, they do have a kind of propensity to move out of ordinary consciousness from various kinds of stimuli and I don't know that it's necessarily unhealthy.

 But on the other hand, there are other factors that we could consider. For example, some people do have very deep emotional trauma that is under the conscious mind that can be triggered by fragrance. As a matter of fact, that's a classic definition of PTSD. Fragrance is the primary trigger of PTSD and therefore, that would be something to consider. Because if she's having this trigger, an olfactory trigger with a strong effect on consciousness, we could ask from the psychological standpoint, is there PTSD involved? Is there a reaction by the subconscious mind to protect itself that's involved here? And then the third possibility is that perhaps there is a neurochemical reaction that has to do with maybe it affects her blood sugar in a certain way. Or maybe if it is associated with one particular blend, maybe there's some synthetic fragrances in it. I'm sure that's a possibility nowadays, so those would be the three major things that I would try to narrow it down to. And then of course if she wanted to continue and felt that this was ultimately okay, I would just say, "Why don't you lie down before they bring the frankincense?" Okay, so if you're going to have an out of body experience, why don't you do it safely? How's that?

Participant: Yeah. Thank you. I really appreciate it.

David: Okay, good! You are most welcome. And one question that I will answer here from the webcast and then it's time to sign off, somebody is asking if the helichrysum that I'm saying, the wish-fulfilling "jen" or "gem" as in jewel. I'm saying jewel, a wish-fulfilling jewel. Okay, so Colleen, our time is over. I'm going to turn it back to you. I encourage everybody to take advantage of the wonderful diversity of knowledge that's available to you in the breakout groups, and I'm also going to remind everybody to do a little homework assignment. I'd like everybody to do as much research as you can and see if you can find which essential oils should not be used with people who have a propensity for seizures, a little homework assignment. I will give my report on that also. I gave my preliminary first thoughts on that. With that, I would just wish everybody a wonderful winter solstice and Merry Christmas for those of you who celebrate it. Let me look at my calendar here. We are coming back next week on the 28th, and so I wish you a Happy New Year's then. Okay, so Colleen, I'll turn it back to you.

Colleen: That's wonderful. Thank you so much, David. We will see you next year. I'm glad we get to meet again before the year is finished. Very merry days to everyone and we'll see you all next week. Thank you so much for joining us.

**[1:49:39] End of Audio**

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