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the million dollar scent

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Gaharu has a long history in the human race. Since over two thousand years ago, gaharu was held in high esteem compared to any other known aromatic woods or herbs. Its mystical scent and rarity confined its usage among the ancient kings, royals and elites. Today, the mystery shrouding gaharu formation has been lifted. Gaharu is a product resulting from the complex interaction between a tree host (*Aquilaria malaccensis* or 'karas') and microbial pathogens (fungi such as *Aspergillus*, *Fusarium*, *Cladosporium* and many more). In the environment, often the first cause is wounding that is naturally inflicted onto the tree stem. The wound acts as an entry point for the attacking microbes, which in turn provoke the host to produce volatile organic compounds that are harmful to the pathogens. Intriguingly, the supposedly harmful substances are what make gaharu so fascinating to human. Gaharu essences are highly unique and have been described as the scent from heaven. Indeed, gaharu, either in its original form or oil have been sought for spiritual cleansing by many traditions in the world. In modern times, gaharu serves as raw material for the production of many medicinal products such as stimulants, tonics and carminative medicines. It is also sought after as a constituent in making high-end perfumes and cosmetics. Interestingly, a product that is detrimental to the microbes turns out to be beneficial for human. Although this form of relationship is not in the best interest of the pathogen, it is highly desirable for us as it contributes to the nation's economy.

