



## AYNUL HIRRA (CAT'S EYE): INTRODUCTION AND THERAPEUTIC BENEFITS OF A PRECIOUS GEMSTONE IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF UNANI MEDICINE

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### ABSTRACT

In the Unani System of Medicine (USM), drugs are mainly obtained from three sources: plants, animals and minerals. Drugs from mineral sources are focused less in comparison to plant-origin drugs. 'Aynul Hirra' (cat's eye) is a precious gemstone, known for its specific glistening or shiny nature. Besides its ornamental uses, it is also used for Medicinal purposes in the form of paste and powder as mentioned by several Unani physicians. It acts as an exhilarant, nerve tonic, eye tonic, cicatrizing, antifatulent and digestive. This comprehensive study deals with vernacular names, identification, historical significance, medicinal properties and chemical constituents of the cat's eye. This review provides us with better information about various features of a cat's eye.

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### INTRODUCTION:

In the Unani System of Medicine (USM), the therapeutic arsenal comprises substances derived from three primary sources: plants, animals, and minerals. While plant-based remedies are predominant, minerals are also recognized for their medicinal properties. Various stones, gems and minerals are used for medicinal purposes like, *Hajrul Yahud*<sup>[1]</sup>, *Marwarid*<sup>[2]</sup>, *Marjan*<sup>[3]</sup>, *Zumurrud*<sup>[4]</sup>, *Lajward*<sup>[5]</sup>,

*Pukhraj*<sup>[6,1,2,3,4,5,6]</sup> etc. One such intriguing gemstone with both ornamental and medicinal value is 'Aynul hirra,' commonly known as cat's eye. It is a precious gemstone renowned for its distinctive glistening or shiny appearance. Beyond its aesthetic appeal, it has found a place in traditional medicine, particularly in the Unani system. Various other types of this gemstone exist, displaying white and sometimes coloured streaks. Its shimmer often manifests as a red hue

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with sparkling streaks, and occasionally it appears in white, gaining popularity in Western countries<sup>[7,8,9]</sup>. This aesthetically pleasing gemstone, formed from volcanic rocks, is renowned for its brilliant appearance in sunlight. It is found in America, India (Andhra Pradesh), Tanzania, Sri Lanka, and Brazil, it gained popularity in the 19th century, particularly among Jewish and Israeli communities. Prince Arthur of Duke Reign's engagement ring contributed to its fame. Its unique characteristics, including sparkling in the light like a cat's eye, intensified shine when rubbed against cloth, and a naturally milky appearance, make it identifiable. Greek philosophers noted its fiery shine when exposed to sunlight in a clay vessel. It is reminiscent of Sapphire, as mentioned in the book *Tohfa Alam Shahi*.<sup>[8]</sup> Various Greek (Unani) physicians have documented the use of the cat's eye in medicinal formulations highlighting its diverse therapeutic applications in powder and paste forms. Jewellers are particularly drawn to Chrysoberyl due to its luminous appearance. Its shiny characteristics make it a captivating choice for crafting exquisite jewellery, adding a touch of mystique and elegance to the gemstone market. This review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the cat's eye, covering several aspects such as vernacular names, identification, historical significance, medicinal properties, and chemical constituents. By delving into these facets, we gain valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of the cat's eye and its role in



the Unani System of Medicine<sup>[9]</sup>

*Mutaradifat* (vernacular names):

Arabic : 'Aynul hirra<sup>[8]</sup>

English : Cat's eye<sup>[8]</sup>, chrysoberyl<sup>[9]</sup>

Hindi : Lahsuniyah<sup>[7,8,10]</sup>, Vidurya,

Ded Dari<sup>[10]</sup>

Persian : Gurba Chashm, Lahsuniya<sup>[9]</sup>

Punjabi : Lahsuniyah<sup>[8]</sup>

Chrysoberyl, known by its English name, is a captivating gemstone that derives its from the Greek words "Chrysos" and "beryllos" signifying 'precious white metal.' The gem earned the moniker "Cat's Eye" owing to its distinctive shiny appearance reminiscent of a feline's eye. In Arabic, it is referred to as 'Aynul hirra, where 'Ayn' translates to eye and 'Hirra' to cat. Additionally, its resemblance to a garlic bulb has led to its alternative name, "Lahsuniya." According to Najmul Ghani, this gem is not found in Greek medicine under the name Lahsuniya but is mentioned as "Jawza". Lahsuniya is identified as one type of "Jawza," and another variant is recognized as Sang-i-Sulemani<sup>[7,8]</sup>

#### **Shanakht, Mahiyat wa Husul (Identification, Nature, and Acquisition):**

Cat's eye, obtained from minerals like ruby or agate is considered blessed by Hindus. Described as crystalline and lustrous, it has a streak, or line resembling a cat's eye, hence named 'Aynul hirra. It comes in various colours, each with a pink or yellow hue, categorized into different types. In Persian, the round stone with different upper and lower layer colours is Lahsuniya; red and black are Sang-i-Sulemani, and green or yellow is 'Aynul hirra, representing four colours: yellow, brown, green, and black<sup>[7,9]</sup>

Indian jewellers describe the following types of cat's eye:

1. *Kank Khait* : like cat's eye<sup>[8]</sup>
2. *Dum Khait* : Milky white colour<sup>[8]</sup>
3. *Sham Khait* : Black colour<sup>[8]</sup>
4. *Ghee Khait* : Ghee colour<sup>[8]</sup>
5. *Kalkatta Khait* : It is extracted from ores found near Kolkata<sup>[8]</sup>

6. *Hadia* : without streak<sup>[8]</sup>

Persian people described its three types<sup>[8]</sup>

*Lahsuniya*: That round stone which has different colours on the upper and lower sides<sup>[9]</sup>

*Sulemani*: Reddish or Blackish<sup>[8]</sup>

*Aynul hirra*: Green or Yellowish<sup>[8]</sup>

**Mizaj (Temperament)**: This stone has a hot and dry temperament in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Degree<sup>[7]</sup>

**Za'iqa (Taste)**: Hakim Azam Khan mentioned its taste as Tursh (citrus)<sup>[10]</sup>

**Miqdar (Dosage)**: usually it is used locally, sometimes used internally in the quantity of 15-60 mg<sup>[9]</sup>

**Musleh (Corrective)**: The corrective of its adverse effect is the root extract of Babchi (*Psoralea corylifolia*)<sup>[10]</sup>

### **Nisbat-i-Sitara (Associated Star)**

*Aynul hirra* is associated with the Sirius star and the planet Venus<sup>[8]</sup>

### **Afal (Actions)**

*Muqawwi-i-Qalb* (cardiac tonic), *Muhallil* (anti-inflammatory), *Mujaffif* (cicatrizant), *Jali* (detergent), *Muqawwi-i-Mi'da* (stomachic), *Muqawwi-i-Dimagh* (brain tonic)<sup>[7]</sup>

### **Iste'malat (uses):**

It is good for the heart, it safeguards against phlegmatic ailments, dispels diphtheria, eases colitis, induces extreme dryness, acts as a detergent, and is beneficial for jaundice, alleviating stomach diseases, flatulence, aids in digestion, strengthens intellect and power<sup>[7,9]</sup>

### **Tarkib-i-Iste'mal (method of administration):**

It is used in the form of Safuf (powder), Dimad (paste) and other formulations<sup>[7,9]</sup>

| S. No. | System                                                            | Indications                                                                                                                                                |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.     | <b>Amrad-i-A'sab</b> (Diseases of the nerves)                     | It is used in nerve weakness. It alleviates twitching and convulsions and reduces spasms. It is beneficial in paralysis and severe tremors. <sup>[9]</sup> |
| 2.     | <b>Amrad-i-Chashm</b> (Eye diseases)                              | Its paste helps in treating all kinds of eye diseases, especially benefiting cataracts. <sup>[9]</sup>                                                     |
| 3.     | <b>Amrad-i-Dandan</b> (Dental diseases)                           | Its powder is used for strengthening the teeth. <sup>[7,9]</sup>                                                                                           |
| 4.     | <b>Ilthihab, Juruḥ, Quruḥ</b> (Inflammation, injuries and wounds) | Its paste helps in wound healing. <sup>[9]</sup>                                                                                                           |

### **Recent scientific research on the Cat's eye:**

This stone comprises two components Silica and Oxygen. In compound form iron and chromium are found in less quantity. Its chemical formula is BeAl<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub>. On the Mohs scale, its hardness is 8 and it is difficult to scratch, due to its hardness. It is unaffected by acids. The Refractive Index is 1.54 and the Specific gravity is 2.6<sup>[8,9]</sup>

### **CONCLUSION**

Among the minerals, 'Aynul hirra, commonly known as cat's eye, stands out for its ornamental allure and medicinal significance. This

gemstone's aesthetic beauty and medicinal properties have been acknowledged for centuries. In the USM cat's eye finds applications in medicinal formulations, with its powder and paste forms offering diverse therapeutic benefits.

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