



## **Contribution of Agasthiyar Hills to Tamilnadu**

*<sup>1</sup>Prasoon Saxena, <sup>2</sup>Dr Avinash Sharma*

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Botany (Ethnobotany), University: Monad University, Hapur, UP

<sup>2</sup>Guide, Associate Professor, Botany Department, Monad University

### **ABSTRACT**

The Agasthiyar Hills occupy a multifaceted place in the ecological, cultural and monetary panorama of Tamil Nadu, making it a valuable asset for the kingdom. Agastya Muni has a unique significance in Tamil life. He is considered a cultural hero and a pioneer in Tamil literature. The Agasthyamalai Hills in the Western Ghats are named after him. He was also involved in bringing and spreading the Tamil vyakaran in the southern region of India. Agasthyamalai is known for its rich environment and plant diversity. The beauty of the place is apart from other factors. This hill is home of tribes known as Kanikkarans, thodar, peliyar, malamarasam, marasam tribes etc. Their understanding of herbal medicines is very rich. The Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserves has been recognized as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO since 2001. The area is divided between Kerala and Tamil Nadu with 1828 km<sup>2</sup> belonging to Kerala and 1672.36 km<sup>2</sup> belonging to Tamil Nadu. This area contains several important natural habitats and conservation of biological diversity, including endangered forests and many useful forests.

**KEYWORDS :** Agasthya, silambam, Kalaripayattu, varmakalai, Nadi jyotish, kani tribes, tiger reserve, medicinal plants.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Mount Agasthiyar, also known as the Pothigai Hills, is 1,866 meters (6,122 ft) high in the southern part of the Western Ghats or Sahyadri Range in South India. The upper part is in the Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu, near the Kerala border. The Agasthyamalai or Ashambu Hills are south of the Western Ghats. This area has 26 peaks with an average height of 1600 meters. The highest peak is also called Pothigai or Agasthyakoodam. Mount Agasthyamalai has a conical shape that can be seen from the aspect of Tirunelveli and Nagercoil and is different from the mountain steps in other cases. This mountain is the guardian of the monsoon rains. This mountain is full of medicinal plants and more than 2000 species found in this landscape are used for Ayurvedic and Siddha medicine. In addition, the sand and forest around the site are rich in wildlife. The fauna include Bengal Tiger, Indian Elephant, Gaur, Vulture, Malabar Spiny Dormouse, Lion-tailed Macaques, Nilgiri Tahrs, Palma Civets, Gray Slender Loris, King Cobras and Malabar Trogon among other find in it

Several types of tribal people live in these mountains and are engaged in hunting small animals, collecting firewood from the forest and promoting ornaments.

### **2. HOLY PLACE**

Agastyaarkoodam is a pilgrimage center for devotees of the Hindu sage Agastya, who is considered one of the seven rishis (Saptarishi) of the Hindu Purana. There are ancient languages, Sanskrit and Tamil, which can be the language of God. In the Tamil tradition, Agastya is considered the father of the Tamil language and the compiler of the first Tamil grammar known as Agattiyam or Akattiyam. Contribution to Tamil life and Tamil literature. Agasthiyar Temple is a famous Hindu temple in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu, dedicated to sage Agasthiyar, this temple is located on top of Agasthiyar Malai (Agasthiyar Hill), which is considered a holy place for Hindus. This temple is known for its magnificent architecture, stunning views and rich inscriptions.

Agasthiyar Temple and its surroundings offer several attractions and activities to explore. Whether you are interested in spirituality and religion, nature and the outdoors, or scriptures and lifestyle, this vibrant and vibrant region of Tamil Nadu has something to appeal to everyone. Agastya is considered a writer in history. A large number of Sanskrit texts include the Agastya Gita as defined in the Varaha Purana, the Agastya Samhita as defined in the Skanda Purana, and the Dwaidha-Nirmaya Tantra text.

Agastya Muni has a unique significance in Tamil life. He is considered a cultural hero and a pioneer in Tamil literature. The Agasthya Hills

(Agasthyamalai) in the Western Ghats are named after him. Similarly, he was involved in bringing and spreading the Tamil language in the southern region of India.

---

### 3. WATER RESOURCE : RIVER THAMIRABARANI

Thamirabarani river is the delight of Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi district. Tamiraparani flows for about 120 kilometers and passes through forests, beautiful rice fields and the towns of Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi before joining the Gulf of Bangladesh.

The river meanders through the landscape in its course, a tangle of flora and fauna, and a relaxing heaven to host cultural services. Thamirabarani habitat has a variety of flora and fauna. In addition, the abundant river water supports a variety of aquatic life. Fishermen cast their nets in Thamirabarani with the hope of sustaining a large catch of fresh fish, this river is completely built for life. The river is a breeding ground for grass and a large number of turtles, resulting in continued existence. The presence of this amazing creature in the Thamirabarani habitat shows the important role of the river in support Biodiversity. Thamirabarani or Tamraparni or Porunai is a perennial river that originates in the Agastyarkoodam hills in the Pothigai Hills.

The significance of Thamirabarani exceeds its ecological significance. It serves as a lifeline for agronomists, providing water for irrigation and allowing the cultivation of crops such as sugarcane, bananas, etc. River water is also used to generate hydroelectricity, contributing to the region's electricity needs. In addition, the cultural and spiritual value of Thamirabarani cannot be overestimated because it is considered sacred by using local people who perform rituals and ceremonies on their shores.

---

### 4. Biodiversity of agasthiyar hills

Agasthiar Hills is famous for its rich biodiversity, boasting a variety of flora and fauna. In the botanical gardens, you will find rare medicinal plants, endemic orchids and many species of trees including tea, rosewood and bamboo. The mountains are also home to a rich fauna with many endemic species including the Agasthya Malai tree frog and the Agasthya Malai brown frog. Other amazing fauna include elephants, tigers, leopards, many species of birds, butterflies and reptiles. Exploring the Agasthiar Hills provides a wonderful opportunity to witness and learn about the ecological range of the Western Ghats.

---

### 5. Kalakkad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve

It includes part of the Kalakkad and Mundanthurai ranges in Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts, in the Western Ghats of India. Visitors to Agasthiar Hills can explore part of the KMTR and get a chance to see flora and fauna that include tigers, leopards, elephants and a variety of birds and butterflies. It has one hundred and fifty endemic local plants and 33 species of fish. , 37 amphibians, eighty one reptiles, 273 birds and seventy seven mammal species. KMTR also protects the watershed of many rivers that contribute to the agricultural economy in neighboring districts. This amazing reserve and the Tamil Nadu Forest Department has attracted dedicated biologists over the years who have studied the various species of the reserve in detail. KMTR is an excellent example of research and management efforts to achieve conservation goals

---

### 6. ELEPHANT RESERVE

Tamil Nadu gets fifth elephant sanctuary: The Tamil Nadu government has announced the fifth elephant sanctuary in the country at Agathiyamalai in Tirunelveli district. The Agasthiyamalai Elephant Sanctuary is spread over 1,197.48 square kilometers and includes the areas of Kanyakumari and Tirunelveli. Elephants play an important role in the balance of forest ecosystems. Beautiful mammals are natural things that should be preserved in every way.

---

### 7. AGASTHIYAR : MARTIAL ARTS

Maharishi Agastya is regarded as the founder of Silambam, an Indian martial art from Tamil Nadu, and varmakalai an ancient science of healing using varmam points for varied diseases which is also utilized by practitioners of the southern part. form of Kalaripayattu, an Indian martial art from Kerala.

#### 7.1. SILAMBAM :

Silambam is an Indian martial art that originated in Tamil Nadu, South India, in the Indian subcontinent. This style is mentioned in Tamil Sangam literature. Silambam is a martial art based on historical weapons said to come from Agastya, a martial art tool that mainly uses a stick. Historical references to this martial art are found in Sangam literature and are said to have been practiced since the 4th century. Bamboo products are used for this martial art various weapons such as knives, swords, whips, etc. using for this.

Sage Agastya is said to have found the place of Silambam around 1000 AD. In this martial art, the main goal is to protect a person from a large number of armed men. Footwork is important in gymnastics. Silambam is now defined as a holiday homework in CBSE. Silambam players are allowed to go for the national/international Seelambam tournament. On April 14 also known as International Silambam Day.

### 7.2. *Varmakkalai:*

All martial arts are directly or indirectly descended from varmakalai. Tamil Sage Agasthiyar was the founder of varmakalai in southern Tamil Nadu in the southern hills of Pothigai (Kutraalam) ruled by Pandya kings.

Varmakalai is a system that uses knowledge to treat stress factors in a framework, alternative therapies and traditional yoga. If we talk about Varmakalai, Varmakkalai is like more than 108 forms of varmam related to stress factors of our body. Concept Varma is a balance of three doshas Vata, Pitta and Kapha balance is very important for a comfortable life.

### 7.3. *Kalaripayattu:*

The word Kalari means the battlefield and the payattu means martial art. It evolved into a martial art form designed for use on the battlefield. The martial art of Kalari, especially in the southern region, originates from the divine power of Agasthya. Concept, philosophy and historical background of Kalari artwork.

Kalaripayattu is basically originated in Kerala between 3rd century BC and 2nd century AD. It is now used in some parts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Kalari is often played on red sand mixed with herbs that help heal small wounds sustained during education.

Gestures and poses of 8 "fighting" animals: lion, pig, cobra, elephant, tiger, horse, chicken and bull. In addition, practitioners are trained to target tension points in the human body, and karalian healing techniques combine ideas from Ayurveda and yoga.

---

## 8. NADI JYOTISH IN TAMILNADU

Nadi astrology is a historical method to understand the past, gifts and destiny.

Sri Agastya Nadi (Agastya Nadi Jyotish):

The old saints/rishis used to predict and manifest the past, present and future with the blessings of Shiva. Lord Siva blessed his 18 disciples, all 18 were supposed to predict destiny and were the most advanced focus among AGASTYA, Rishi (alkja). This fortune prediction is written with the help of palm leaf sages, which is commonly called Nadi astrology or Nadi jyotish. It reveals past, gifts and destiny, influence of thumb and extensive details of men's life are studied from palm leaves. These are written in Tamil and can be called Nadi Granthas. The granth is a manuscript divided into sixteen chapters or Kandams. Sri Agasthiya Nadi Astrology Center is located inside the sacred temple of Vaitheavaran in Tamil Nadu.

---

## 9. LANDMARKS OF AGASTHIYAR HILLS IN TAMILNADU

### 9.1. *AGASTHIYAR FALLS:*

Agasthiyar Falls (also known as Papanasam Falls) is located near Papanasam in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu, South India. The waterfall is in the Western Ghats and the Thamirabarani river originates from the Papanasam lake, which falls south.

### 9.2. *AGASTHYAMALA:*

Agastyaarkoodam is one of the highest peaks in the Western Ghats in Kerala's Thiruvananthapuram district, close to the Tamil Nadu border in India. This peak is part of the Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve on the border of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Tirunelveli and Thiruvananthapuram Districts, Kerala

### 9.4. *AGASTHYAMALA BIOSPHERE RESERVE :*

The Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve is established in 2001, placed inside the southernmost cusp of the Western Ghats and consists of 3500.36 km<sup>2</sup> (1,351.50 square) of which 1828 km<sup>2</sup> is in Kerala and 1672.36 km<sup>2</sup> is in Tamil Nadu. It encompasses the subsequent flora and fauna sanctuaries: Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary, Peppara Wildlife Sanctuary, Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary, and Kalakkad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve. The Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve incorporates numerous flowers and fauna, rare medicinal flowers, and is thought for its cultural and ecological significance. It is home to Kanikaran tribe, one of the oldest surviving ancient tribes within the globe.

### 9.5. *AGATHEESWARAR / VAGEESHWARAR TEMPLE :*

The temple as antique as 1300 years exists in a place called Kolapakkam in Chennai, dedicated to Lord Shiva. The temple is dedicated to two sages, Sage Agasthya and sage vageesha. When Agasthya returned Pothigai from Himalaya, he stayed for a short time period and worshipped to God. The temple has 3 yearly festival and Per day perform 6 rituals at different times.

### 9.6. TOURISM POINTS OF AGASTHYA MALA

The hill is located between Kerala and Tamil Nadu there are Neyyar wildlife Sanctuary, Manjulai Hills, tea plantations, Steve Irwin Crocodile Research and rehabilitation center, kalakkad mundathurai wildlife research, Kuthiravetti View Point and Agasthya Muni statue are various tourism places to visit. Trekking begins from Bonacaud forest picket station and covers around 50 km. It is a lovely place to trekking.

---

## 10. TRIBAL PRACTICE IN AGASTHIYAR HILLS

Around 30000 tribal population live here. They are completely dependent on biological resources for their livelihood. It is habitat of different ethnic groups like Kani, Thodar, Peliyar etc. Kani are most primitive people there are 5 tribal settlements as Tirunelveli zone of Servalar, Kanikudiyirippu, Maliyar, Periyamaliyar and Inchikuzhi (Henry et al 1982). In these tribes, men hunted, cultivate and labour in forests and take part in ceremonial procedures. The women of these tribal groups take care of children, home, prepare food. Kanikkara women also participate in financial activities and contribute in income of their families. The Kani people considered forest products as God gift products. So they use these products judiciously. Tribes of Agasthiyar hills has vast knowledge of medicinal plants and herbs and using in healing purpose. They pass their wisdom thorough orally to next generation. Many rituals, festivals, dance performance, music and religious ceremonies plays important role for bonding in community and preserving culture identity.

Tribal communities rely on forests. They engage in non timber forest products, hunting and gathering wild edibles. Skilled people make handicraft from bamboo, pottery, woven textiles. They are showcasing craftsmanship and preserving tribal culture.

---

## 12. CONCLUSION

In Tamil traditions, Agastya is considered as the father of the Tamil language and the compiler of the Tamil grammar. There is a small stone statue of Agasthiyar at the top of the height and the devotees can offer pujas.

The location incorporates numerous critical natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological varieties together with forests containing endangered species of important value of science and conservation.

These hills are noted because the habitat for at the least 2,000 species of medicinal plants, of which at least 50 are uncommon and threatened species.

Tribal groups of here use the medicinal flowers for remedy of various illnesses..

This highest peak has one of the richest concentrations of biodiversity inside the Western Ghats. The region is known for its great views, forests, waterfalls, historical temples, and the river Thamirabarani, the lifeline of this area. Ecotourism is popular in this location.

---

## 12. REFERENCES

1. "Description Western Ghats- Agasthyamalai Sub-Cluster (with Five Site Elements)". Tentative Lists- India. UNESCO World Heritage Centre. 15 March 2006. pp. Western Ghats (sub cluster nomination). Retrieved 11 December
2. "Thenmala, Eco-Tourism". Thiruvananthapuram: Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala. 1998. Archived from the original on 5 December 2009. Retrieved 12 December 2009.
3. Overview of research in KMTR". ATREE. 2005. Archived from the original on 13 May 2008. Retrieved 14 December 2009
6. Raj, J. David Manuel (1977). The Origin and the Historical Development of Silambam Fencing: An Ancient Self-Defence Sport of India. Oregon: College of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, Univ. of Oregon. pp. 44, 50, 83.
7. Balambal, V. (1998). Studies in the History of the Sangam Age. New Delhi: Kalinga Publications. p. 6. ISBN 978-8185163871
8. Ministry of Education (1956). National Plan of Physical Education and Recreation Publication No.237. New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of Education.
9. Tamil Nadu Forest Department (2007) retrieved 2 September 2007 AGASTHIYARMALAI BIOSPHERE RESERVE Archived 2008-12-30 at the Wayback Machine
10. "Rivers of Western Ghats - Origin of Tamiraparani". Centre for Ecological Sciences. Indian Institute of Science. Retrieved 8 March 2012
11. Annamalai R, Tamil Nadu biodiversity strategy and action plan–Forest Biodiversity. Tamil Nadu Forest Department, Government of Tamil Nadu-Chennai. 2004.7.
12. Hendry AN, Chandraboss M, Swaminathan MS, Nair NC, Agasthyamalai and its Environs. A potential area for Biospherereserve. Journal of Bombay natural history society 1982, vol81:282-90.