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# An Introduction To Charak Samhitokta Rishi Agasti and Evaluation of His Contribution To Ayurveda

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# **Abstract**

Sage Agasti is considered as one of the *sapta Rishis* (the seven great sages) mentioned in the Indian *vedic* and pauranic literature. He was famous for observing the hardest penance. He was son of Varun Bramha and mother Urvashi. Sage Vasishtha was his brother. He was instrumental in restoring the crown of Indra. He helped the cause of Gods by drying the ocean and bringing the demons into spotlight through the power of his penance. He loved to reside in the ancient city Kashi (Modern day Varanasi) but had to migrate to south India for the cause of Gods. He is mentioned in both great Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. Rishi Agasti was present in the conclave of rishis conducted beneath the mountains of Himalayas held some 5000 years ago to discuss the impact of diseases on human health. We find the reference of medicinal preparations made by sage Agasti in famous Ayurvedic book 'Vangasen Samita'. Hence, it is necessary to explore the rishi Agasti and his contribution to Ayurveda. Exploration to Agasti in Indological literature reveals that sage Agasti was multitalented, highly knowledgeable and powerful scholar who had done extraordinary works for the cause of Gods through the power of his Tapa. He had also contributed richly in the Ayurvedic literature by giving the detail account of many medicinal preparations as mentioned in Vangasena Samhita.

Keywords - Agasti, Lopamudra, Daityas, Agastya Haritaki Rasayan, Agastyavleha

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# **Introduction:**

Sage 'Agasti' was an illustrious ancient Indian rishi who is largely known for his unimaginable activities like drying the ocean and taking the pride of Vindhya Mountain. His father was Varun Bramha and mother was nymph Urvashi. His younger brother was sage Vasishtha. His wife's name was 'Lopamudra' who was the princess of Vidarbha King. Sage Agasti killed the Daityas called 'Elvil' and 'Vatapi. He successfully located the poison called 'Kalkoota' into the tress evolved during the process of 'Samudra Manthana (churning of sea). He wrote the medical book called 'Agasti Samhita' which was later revised by Vangsena to come to know as 'Vangasen Samhita. He use to observe very strict penance. He performed penance by 'Vaikhanas' method i.e. in the forest and living on the forest food and air. Maharishi Agasti was present in the conclave of rishis conducted beneath the mountains of Himalayas, some 5000 years ago.<sup>[1]</sup>

## **Material And Method:**

Literary method of research is followed in this article. All the available Ayurvedic and Indological literature is explored to find the maximum information about the sage Agasti.

# Review of literature:

# Birth of Agasti Rishi:

His mother was 'Urwashi' Apsara. She uses to please both Varuna (Bramha) and Mitra (Surya). She had sex with both on the same day. Later she delivered twin babies in the form of Agasti and Vasistha at a place near Himalayas. [2] [3]

# Marriage With Lopamudra:

Once sage Agasti saw his ancestors in upside down position in the pit. On asking the reason, they said that as you are not married yet and don't have son, we are in this position. Learning this sage Agasti decided to marry and he approached the Vidarbha King and sought his daughter Lopamudra for marriage. King was reluctant to give his beautiful daughter to the aged rishi but feared the curse of Rishi. But the girl intervened and herself agreed to marry the Agasti rishi.[4]

# Life With Lopamudra:

After marriage, Rishi asked Lopamudra to give up the royal clothes and observe penance with him. She obeyed the order of rishi and started observing the penance. Once sage Agasti saw Lopamudra in tempting state and asked her to cohabit with him. But she said that as she is princess, he needs to be like king. Then and then only she can have a sex with him. [5]

# **Bringing The Wealth For Lopamudra:**

To get the wealth rishi Agasti went to many reputed kings including the *Trasdasyu* of Ayodhya but all disappointed him giving the reason of empty account. The helpless kings suggested him to visit the then ruling rich Daitya king, the Elval. Accordingly, sage Agasti approached demon king Ilavil. Elval greeted him and gave him the gold coins, cows and golden chariot. Agasti gave this wealth to his wife Lopamudra. [6] Pleased with this she accepted the invitation of Agasti for sex. From this union they had a noble child called 'Drudhasyu'. With the birth of this grandson the ancestors of Agasti moved for swarga. This place of Agasti on the bank of river Ganga at Kashi came to know as 'Agasti Ashram' which proved to be

very sacred.

# Killing of Elval & Vatapi Daityas:

Once upon a time there existed two danava brothers called Elval and Vatapi. They were sons of Viprachiti Danava (Kashyapa's son from Danu) & mother Sinhika (daughter of Hiranyakashyapu) and brothers of Danav Senapati Rahu. Elval asked Bramhanas to grant them the son like Indra. But they refused. Angered with this, Elval Daitya made his brother Vatapi as lamb and asked the Bramhanas to come for the meal of Shraddhas. After eating is over Elval use to call his brother to come out of tummy of Bramhanas. Thus, they killed lacs of Bramhanas. Bramhnas complained it to the rishi Agasti. Next time Agasti himself attended the Shraddha function hosted by Elval and ate the Vatapi and digested him so that when Elval called, he could not come out. Instead, Agasti ate Eval also. And made the society free from their trouble.[7][8]

## Residence at Kashi & journey towards south:

Sage Agasti started observing penance at Kashi with Shata-*rudra sukta* after knowing the importance of Kashi as *Avimukta Kshetra*. People of Vindhya region (South) outclassed north region with their overall performance in all areas of life. [Vindhya mountain story is *Rupaka* used to narrate]. Having jealous with this; all Gods approached lord Bramha and requested him to find the solution. Bramha asked them to approach Agasti rishi for the same.<sup>[9]</sup>

#### **Ensuring the downfall of Nahusha (Indra):**

Having killed the *Vrutrasura* by betrayal, Indra had to left the throne. In the absence of Indra, Gods requested king Nahusha (Yayati's father) of Prayag (modern day Prayagraj) to take the charge of

Indrapada. Accordingly, he took over and started ruling in the noble way initially. Later, being Indra, the king of Gods, he developed a desire to possess the queen 'Shachi'. But trap was set by the ousted *Purandara* Indra to dethrone the Nahusha. As per the idea given by teacher f Gods, the Brihaspati, King Nahusha asked the 7 prominent rishis to carry his palanquin towards the mansion of Shachi. To hasten the palanquin, he shouted 'serpa' 'serpa' (move on). In the process to hasten the things, he hit the leg to the Agasti's head. Angered with this disrespect, sage Agasti cursed King Nahusha to fall from the heaven and become 'Serpent' till he met Yudhishthira. [10]

Later in the *Dwapar* Yuga, when Pandavas was in exile, Nahusha in his serpent form tried to eat the Bhima. While searching the Bhima, Yudhishthira came there and saw Bhima engulfed by the serpent. As soon as serpent see Yudhishthira, became free from the curse and taught him few things of wisdom.

### Re-coronation of Purandar Indra:

After the downfall of Nahusha, sages re-coronated the *Purandara* as 'Indra' of swarga.

Thus, with the help of sage Agasti, *Purandra* got his Kingdom back again. [11]

## Journey towards south & Advise to Vindhya:

All gods along with Indra and Brihaspati requested the Agasti rishi to teach the lesson to the Vindhya Mountain. To accomplish the task given by Gods, Sage Agasti left the Kashi city with heavy heart as he was reluctant to leave the Kashi. *Vindhyagiri* frightened to see the Tapasvi Agasti rishi and with fear of getting cursed bowed down. And worshipped rishi along with wife. Agasti asked Vindhya to remain in same position till he returns.

Neither rishi Agasti returned nor Vindhya grew till date.<sup>[12]</sup> He preached sage '*Aapstambha*' at Nasik on his way to south.

## Boon From Mahalaxmi of Kolhapura:

Sage Agasti settled on the bank of river 'Godavari' but was very much upset to leave Kashi city. He went to Kolhapur for the Darshan of Mahalaxmi. There he pleased the goddess with special worship. Having pleased the goddess rishi Agasti asked the boon to get return to the Kashi. Goddess Mahalaxmi granted the boon saying that he will be able to return to the Kashi in 29<sup>th</sup> *Dwapara* and will occupy the post of Vyas. Till then goddess asked him to visit Shree *Shailam muntain* and Kumar Kartikeya. [13]

# Narration to Lopamudra And Meeting with Kumar Kartikeya:

Till Agasti reach the *shailam*, he narrated his wife Lopamudra as to how to undertake the pilgrimage and dos and don'ts for pilgrims. Later he narrated about the different lokas of the universe like Indra loka, Agni Loka, Budha loka, Mangal Loka, Guru loka, Shukra loka, Shani loka, Dhruva loka, Sapatarshi loka, Mahar loka, Bramha loka, Tapo loka, Vaikuntha loka, Kailash loka etc to her. While travelling in south India, Sage 'Agasti' reached the Lohita Mountain near Shreeshailam (Modern day Telangana state). There he met the Kumar Kartikeya (Shanmukha). After offering the salutations to the lord Kartikeya, sage Agasti sat before him and listened the importance of Kashi city and the story of Danda-nayak Harikesha from him. Agasti also listened the importance of river Ganga from him and the Gangasahastra Nam Strotra.[14]

# Importance of Kashi *Vishweshwara &* Gyan Vapi Teertha:

Sage Agasti also listened the importance of *Gyanod* Teertha (Gyan Vapi) and the story of Sushila/*Kalvati* and *Malyawan* from him. *Kalavti* and *Malywan* bathed in the Gyan Vapi and lord Mahadeva came to bless them there. The importance of Gyan Vapi *teertha* grew from that incident. Agasti also listened the importance of good noble conduct (*Sadachara*) and 4 *Ashramas*, 5 *Yagyas*, 16 *Samskaras* from Kumar Kartikeya. Agasti also listened the importance of different *tirthas* (holy sites) from Kartikeya.

# Creation of Suvarnmukhi river by Agastya:

While travelling in south India, Sage Agasti reached the Eastern Ghats, near Pakala village in the Tirupati district (formerly part of Chittoor) and climbed the mountain there. Agasti saw one lake there which was full of lotus with a pleasant atmosphere. Hence, he decided to stay there and created the hermitage/ Ashrama which came to know as 'Agasti Shailam'. After sometime people in the region complained about the scarcity of water and requested Agastya to bring the river. Rishi Agastya started observing the hard penance. Lord Bramha got pleased and granted the boon to sage Agastya to fulfill the need of the people in the region the form of appearance 'Suvarnamukhi' river.[16] It originates in the Eastern Ghats near Pakala village in Chittoor district, and flows for approximately 130 km before emptying into the Bay of Bengal.

# Darshan of Lord Vishnu To Agastya & Shankha At Venkatachalam :

In the *Haihay* lineage there was a king called Shruta. His son was Shankha. He observed great penance for the Darshan of lord Vishnu. But He failed. And so does sage Agasti. A messenger from lord Bramha came and told them to observe penance at Venkatachalam Mountain to get the Darshana of Lord Vishnu. Accordingly, they did and lord Vishnu obliged. Both of them praised lord Vishnu lot. Sage Agasti demanded a boon that who so ever bath in *Suvarnamukhi* river and take the Darshana of lord Vishnu idol on *Venakatachalam* mountain should get the *Bhoga* and *Moksha* both. [17]

# Creation of Agastya Teertha by Agasti:

From Venkatachalam, sage Agasti went to Shri kalhasteeshwar mountain and took Darshana of lord Shiva. He worshipped there. Later, while travelling in south India, Sage 'Agasti' reached the Gandhamadan Mountain near Dhanushkoti – Rameshwaram (Present day Tamilnadu state in India). There he created the virtuous 'Agasti Teertha'. It is said that who so ever take bath in that teertha, never get rebirth. [18]

## **Agasti Mountain:**

Agathiyar Malai (or Agathiyarkoodam) is one of the peaks in the Western Ghats that lies between Tirunelveli District of Tamilnadu and Thiruvananthapuram District of Kerala near the Tamil Nadu border. It is 1,868-metres (6,129 ft) tall. The perennial river 'Thamirabarani' originates from the eastern side of the range and flows into the Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu. The rivers flowing west towards through the district of Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala are the Karamana

River and the *Neyyar* river

## Drying the sea & ensuring death of Asuras:

Once upon a time in the Satyayuga, the Kalekay daityas under the leadership of Vrutrasura, troubled the gods lot. When gods approached Bramha for the help, he suggested to create the Vajra Astra from the bones of the Dadhichi rishi. Accordingly, Indra prepared it and killed the Vrutrasura. After eliminating the Vrutrasura, he started killing the Kalekaya daityas. Due to the onslaught of Indra Kalekaya daityas entered the sea. On learning that the tapas of the rishis protect the people, they use to come out of the sea in the night and eliminate the rishis. [19] On learning that daityas eliminated the rishis from the earth, Indra approached the Narayana and asked him to protect. Narayana suggested them to take the help of Agasti rishi to dry up the sea first as he only could do that. That time rishi Agasti was observing Penance at Malayagiri (TN-Kerala border) sea by Vaikhanas Method of Tapas. Gods approached sage Agasti and praised his past deeds like dethroning the Nahusha from seat of Indra, taking away the pride of Vindhya etc. To oblige the gods, Sage Agasti dried the entire sea with his Tapas. Gods killed the daityas exposed to sunlight. But in the process sea was dried by the Tapas power of sage Agasti. They requested to fill it again to Agasti, but he showed his inability. Then lord Bramha assured that king Bhagirath will bring ganga down in the future and will fill the dried sea with the water. [20] Because of this win over daityas, Gods got pleased and offered boon to Agasti.[21]

# Agasti Tara Udaya:

Agasti asked gods to grant him such a boon that he stays on the aero plane to the south of India for

indefinite period. And whenever his plane becomes visible, and those who so ever worship him at that time should become the king of seven *lokas*. Hence one should always give 'Arghya' to the Agasti on its rise till seven nights by facing the south direction. One should make the idol of Agasti rishi made up silver with long hands and long abdomen and keep it in Arghya Kalasha and donate it to the deserving *Bramhanas* at that time. <sup>[22]</sup> When Son's 5°22 remains in Virgo, that day Agasti star rise in east. <sup>[23]</sup>

# **Agasti Ashram in the south:**

It was full of fig trees with different flowering and fruit trees. It was full of lakes with birds like swan, karanda, *chakrawak* in it. The black mountains all around. Animals like rabbit elephant, monkeys, deer were all around. Company of *siddhas*, *Nagas*, *Yasha*, *Deavs*, *Gandharvas* around. Flying Birds everywhere. Fragrance of flowers was making the atmosphere pleasant. [24]

# Agasti's Meeting with Rama:

Rama entered the Ashrama of Agasti near river Godavari. Agasti greeted Rama, *Laxmana* and Sita with great pleasure. Agasti offered them fruits and water. Agasti told them that near from his place, on the bank of river Godavari, there is a place called 'Panchavati' (near modern day Nashik city) which is very delightful and full of joy. He asked Rama to take Sita there. She will like that place very much. On his guidance, Rama took Sita there and built the hermitage and started enjoying life there. [25]

### **Agasti's Contribution To Ayurveda:**

There are references to following medicinal preparations made by sage Agasti in *Vangasena* Samita.

- Agastya Haritaki Rasayana [26]
- Agastyavleha [27]
- Agasti Sutraj Rasa [28]
- Avipattikar Churna [29]
- Dashmuladya Ghrita <sup>[30]</sup>
- Agasti Modaka [31]

# **Observation:**

Thorough exploration of classical Ayurvedic literature reveals many references of ancient 'Agasti Samhita' written by sage Agasti. In fact, it is mentioned by acharya *Vangasena* that the Samhita written by him is actually the modified 'Agasti Samhita'.

# Discussion:

Exploration to life events of sage Agasti shows that he not only took care of his wife Lopamudra but also fulfilled her desire in every best possible way. He also kept her on noble path by narrating her about the different galaxies, noble code of conduct, life journey etc. Thus, he proved to be the noble husband. When he fulfilled the desire of his ancestors, he appears to be the obedient descendent having deep respect for ancestors. He observed great penance and gained yogic power which he utilized for the cause of Gods. He was instrumental in eliminating the evil demons and restoring the peace on planet. He saved Bramhanas from getting killed at the hands of demons. Thus, sage Agasti appears to be great social servant who always help others. He learnt Ayurveda from sage Bhardwaja, He applied Ayurveda in the form of Siddha medicine in south India.

# **Summary & Conclusion:**

Rishi Agasti is one of the most revered sages in ancient Indian tradition of rishis who not only

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contributed in enriching the Ayurvedic literature but also the Astrological and chemical literature. His life story gives idea about his dynamic multitalented personality. In him we not only find the typical penance observing sage but a philosopher, a consultant, a teacher, a thinker and a scientist who always helped the Gods when they were in need. As he was present among the assembly of ancient rishis to discuss the impact of diseases on human beings, and subsequently got the knowledge of Ayurveda from *Bhardwaja*, it is very likely that his treatise 'Agastya Samhita' on Ayurveda existed till the medieval period. Moreover, it is thought that the 'Vangasena Samhita' which is available today is nothing but the modified ancient 'Agastya Samhita'.

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**Conflict of Interest:** None

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