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Research”**

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Bridging Biodiversity, Siddha Medicine, and Eco-Cultural Wellness: Vedukkunaari Aathi Lingeswarar Temple Hill as a Model for Sustainable Tourism

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Health and Wellness tourism, which integrates travel with preventive and curative medicine, is expanding rapidly worldwide. Traditional systems such as Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, and Yoga play a central role, offering holistic, non-surgical wellness solutions. Sri Lanka, with its rich biodiversity and heritage of ancient medicine, has strong potential to emerge as a leading destination in this sector. The *Vedukkunaari Aathi Lingeswarar* Temple Hill in Northern Sri Lanka represents a unique site where cultural, ecological, and medicinal values converge, making it ideal for ethno-pharmacological research and sustainable wellbeing tourism. This study documented and investigated the medicinal plant flora of Temple Hill, focusing on their botanical identity, morphology, medicinal uses, and relevance to Siddha principles. Ecological surveys were conducted using 20 randomized belt transects (500 m² each) across dry forest, wetland, and agricultural habitats. Data on species identity, abundance, growth form, perennially, ecological status, and folk medicinal uses were collected. Quantitative analyses examined frequency distributions and relative abundances, while Siddha-based assessment evaluated therapeutic properties. Results showed that Malvaceae (12.5%), Euphorbiaceae (9.7%), and Amaranthaceae (8.3%) were the most represented families. Trees and shrub-trees comprised over 60% of species, with perennials dominating (66.67%). Leaves (23.55%) and roots (16.60%) were the most utilized plant parts. Siddha analysis revealed predominance of bitter (36.5%) and astringent (29.9%) tastes, heating potency (61%), and pungent post-absorptive effects (70%), aligning with detoxification and metabolic balance principles. Therapeutically, species were used for gastrointestinal (27.78%), integumentary (13.43%), respiratory (11.11%), nervous (10.65%), and musculoskeletal (10.19%) disorders. *Vedukkunaari Aathi Lingeswarar* Temple Hill exemplifies the integration of biodiversity and traditional medicine, positioning Sri Lanka to promote sustainable wellness tourism while conserving heritage and supporting local livelihoods. Future work should include climate-linked ecological modeling, pharmacological validation, and socio-economic assessments to strengthen connections between biodiversity, traditional medicine, and sustainable development.

Keywords: *Health and wellness tourism, Medicinal plants, Siddha Medicine, Vedukkunaari Aathi Lingeswarar Temple Hill, Biodiversity conservation*