

# Synthetic Salts in Siddha; Pidalavalam – A Research Perspective

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“Soil itself is the medicine for Farm Livestock” is a proverb in Siddha medicine. Siddha medicine which has the capacity to convert even soil into medicine, takes into possession four types of chemistry (Thathu) such as Metals (Ulogangal), Arsenicals (Padanam), Mixed sources (Uparasam) and Salts (Karasaram).

Out of the four above said classifications, Karasaram belongs to the family of salts. Bhogar, one among the famous eighteen Siddhars, divides karasaram into two major types namely Natural and Synthetic (artificial) salts. It is further numbered as 25 types (Natural 10 and synthetic 25). Pidalavanam is one among the 15 types of Synthetic salts.

Dr. R. Thiagarajan in his book, “Gunapadam – Thathu Jeeva Vaguppu” (Materia Medica – Metal, Mineral & Animal kingdoms) describes about Pidalavanam and finally states that through this salt, Zinc (Naagam) is reduced from its original form to calx. ***The object of the present study is to find out whether Pidalavalam reduces Zinc or not as stated in the text.***

In Ayurveda, a salt named ‘*Krishnalavanam*’ is being mentioned. It is nothing but Pidalavanam in Siddha medicine. But there is lot of difference in the preparation of Krishnalavanam mentioned by the authors of Ayurveda and the Pidalavanam mentioned in the Siddha literatures.

At present, Pidalavanam is commercially available in the market as ‘Black salt’. It is prepared in the following manner. 1575 grams of Common salt (Sodium Chloride) is

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powdered and mixed with 43.75 grams of powdered nelli Indian gooseberry (*Emblica officinalis* – Nelli in Tamil). This preparation is made into four parts and the first part is put into a bowl and heated, then over which the second part is put and heated and similarly the third and fourth parts are also heated like this. Finally it is cooled and collected. The end product is black in colour and hence the name ‘Black salt’ (Krishnalavanam).

But the method of preparation of Pidalavanam mentioned in Siddha literature is entirely different from the above said process. It is being prepared as follows: 3500 grams of Potassium nitrate (Vediuppu in Siddha) is subjected to roasting in fire and when the salt melts, 1750 grams of sieved powder of Buffalo horn is added gradually. The contents of the horn powder are absorbed by the salt which is then powdered and collected. Then it is mixed with four parts of water and mixed up with 525 grams of Alum, heated and filtered. When dried up, it acquires crystal form of salt and this end product is known as Pidalavanam.

At this stage, *we can conclude that the process mentioned in the preparation of Pidalavanam in Ayurveda text differs from that of the Siddha texts.*

When it comes to the therapeutic properties of Pidalavanam, it is said that it cures indigestion, Hepato-spleno megaly (enlargement of Liver and Spleen), constipation and gastric pain and upsets.

With this information about the therapeutic properties of Pidalavanam, the question whether it reduces (kills) Zinc from its original form aroused.

Accordingly, as per the text, common salt and Indian gooseberry were mixed and ‘Krishnalavanam (Test drug I)’ was prepared. Simultaneously, ‘Pidalavanam (Test drug II)’ was also prepared according to the text ‘Boghar’. Zinc was melted and processed with Test drugs I and II. Zinc transformed itself like popcorn and then became fine powder when it was processed with Test drug II, Pidalavanam.

When Zinc was treated with the Test drug I, after a very long time only, it reduced to powder form.

According to the author's *observation*, when *Zinc was treated with Pidalavanam (Test drug II)*, it was not reduced to calx form but further became '*Chunnam*' (one of the 32 internal drug forms in Siddha medicine, which is considered superior to the Calx – *parpam form*).

Further studies are to be conducted to evaluate the Therapeutic efficacy of the drug 'Pidalavanam' clinically.