

## A Review on *Attaivaldal* (Leech therapy)

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In Siddha system of medicine, the diseases were treated in many ways like *Mani*, *Manthiram*, *Avizhtham*, *Yogam* and *Varmam*. *Avizhtham* (Medicine) is one way to treat the diseases in Siddha medicine, which is further divided into 32 internal medicine and 32 external medicines. *Attaivaldal* (leech therapy) is an external bloodletting therapy of application of medicinal leech to remove blood from the affected area and give relieve distension, remove pus & slough and drain the discharge. According to *Therayar Tharu*, *Attaivaldal* is placed in twenty seventh place. In Siddha Medicine, leech therapy was described by various Siddhars in their literature, Particularly the *Siddhar Agastiyar* who explained leech therapy elaborately in his text *Agasthiyar erandayiram*, *Agasthiyar ranavaithiyam* and *Agasthiyar nayanavithi*. In Siddha system of medicine, the leech therapy is one of the external therapies which are used as one of the bloodletting techniques to balance the vitiated humours particularly *Pitham* humour. In Ayurveda, leech therapy is classified as bloodletting and was found in the text of *Sushruta samhita* (dating 800 BC), Dhanvantari, the Indian god of Medicine holds a leech in one of his 4 hands. In Unani leeches were used for bloodletting in ancient Egypt before 3500 years ago. *Attai Vidal* (Medicinal leech therapy) is also called as *Hirudo* therapy on the basis of commonly used leech species, *Hirudo medicinalis*. Medicinal leeches are used in the treatment of various diseases such as benign tumors, swelling, *kiranthi*, haemorrhoids, abscess and boils, contusion, varicose ulcer, varicose vein, deep vein thrombosis, skin and musculoskeletal diseases, arthritis, dysmenorrhea, eye diseases, traumatic swelling. Many studies have found that leeches have various bioactive molecules in their secretions. Such as hirudin, hyaluronidase, collagenase, histamin like molecules, anaesthetics, fibrinases, antibacterial, etc. This is concluded that the leech therapy was used in Siddha and other system of medicine for various medical and surgical conditions. The scientific studies on leech saliva were proven and support the leech application in Siddha system of medicine.

**Key Words:** Siddha, *Attaivaldal*, Leech therapy, Hirudin.