



MARMA CHIKITSA – A CLINICO ANATOMICAL APPROACH FOR PROMOTION OF HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Marma Chikitsa is an untouched chapter of Indian system. In *Vedas* and literatures of *ayurveda*, the concept of *marma* was limited to war, and were mainly considered as only fatal points. Trauma to them leads to deformity or even death. Different authorities of *ayurveda* mentioned 107 *Marma* points based on anatomical positions and different structures around them. *Marma* are seats of *Prana* (Vital points), they effect physical, mental, social, spiritual and health conditions of human beings. The flow of *Prana* or vital energy in the body maintains different physiological, mental and spiritual activities. If the flow of *Prana* or vital energy gets obstructed or blocked, the physiology is disturbed and pathology start developing. *Marma* points are stimulated by different techniques or methods, so by stimulations, *Marma* may be directed to remove blockages and stimulate *Prana* or energy flow thus resulting in a state of healthy body, mind and spirit. *Marma Chikitsa* is an instant, permanent, natural and non-invasive way of healing in present scenario. *Marma Chikitsa* had emerged as new dimensions in non-pharmacological treatment of *Ayurveda*. The health of the people reflects the social welfare parameters of any civilized state. So, knowledge of *Marma* and *Marma Chikitsa* will be beneficial in maintenance of health and prevention from diseases. It is said that there was nectar in the umbilicus of Ravana. Lord Rama fired an arrow into the umbilicus of Ravana causing his death. Lord Krishna was killed by the injury of an arrow, on the sole of his foot, thrown by a bird killer. As we know that Bhishma Pitamaha (of *Mahabharata*) was injured by a number of arrows pierced in his body but he lived with arrows for six months. It was only due to the safety of the vital *Marma* points.

KEYWORDS: *Marma, Marma Chikitsa, Prana.*

INTRODUCTION

Different Ayurvedic classics have dedicated a separate "Sthan" (A groups of chapters related to same topic) for the literature of *Sharir Rachna*. It is called "Sharir Sthan". While describing *Sharir Rachna* different *Acharya* has described about *Marma* or vital regions of the body. The concept of *Marma* is one such imperative and unique principle of *Ayurved*. *Marma Vijyaniam* was developed as science of war. Knowledge of *Marma* exists from ancient period of *Vedas*, which dates back 4000BC. *Marma* has been described in all three-great treatise- *Charak Samhita*, *Sushrut Samhita* and *Ashtang*. The word "*Marma*" comes from Sanskrit origin "*Mra*" means place of *Prana* (life). Any direct or indirect trauma to these sites may be fatal or can result in disability of the person. These *Marmas* point harmonize the nervous and endocrine system and normalize different pathology in the body through vital power itself, with proper stimulations/Manipulation. This technique is known as *Marma Chikitsa*.

Marma Chikitsa is an ancient Indian practice whose purpose is stimulations / manipulation of *Prana* (vital energy) in the body for enhancing the healing process. *Marma Chikitsa* is based on the action of 107 *Marmas* points in the body to access the body and mind. *Marma's* knowledge helps the clinicians to regulate the flow of *Prana* through the coarse and subtle bodies in order to restore the patient's health and serenity.

Marma Chikitsa is the oldest treasure of Indian surgery from the Vedic period. During the Vedic era the knowledge of *Marma* was known to the emperors and warriors. The concept and practice of *Marma* was very popular in those days to achieve the maximum effect when contending with the enemies.^[1]

Importance of marmas

मर्माणि शल्यविषयार्थमुदाहरन्ति यस्माच्च मर्मसु हता न भवन्ति सदयः ॥ ३३ ॥

जीवन्ति तत्र यदि वैद्यगुणेन केचित्ते प्राप्नुवन्ति विकलत्वमसंशयं हि । (सु. शा. 6/33,34)

The medical authorities have described the Marmas to have covered half in the scope of Salya Tantra (surgery), as a person hurt in any of the Marmas dies presently (i. e., within seven days of the injury). A deformity of the organ is sure to result from an injury of these Marmas, even if death be avoided by a course of judicious and skillful medical treatment.

Distribution and Description of marma points in the human body

According to Maharsi Susruta there are 107 *Marmas* in the human body.^[2] These are very important vital places. मर्माभिघातस्तु न कश्चिदस्ति योऽपात्ययो वाऽपि निरत्ययो वा ।

प्रायेण मर्मस्वभिताडितास्तु वैकल्यमृच्छन्त्यथवा म्रियन्ते ।। (सु. शा. 6/43)

Any injury to these parts may lead to severe pain, disability, loss of function, loss of sensation (anesthesia) and death. According to anatomical consideration *Marmas* can be divided into *Mansa-Marma*, *Siramarma*, *Snayu-Marma*, *Sandhi-Marma*, and *Asthi-Marma*^[3] (respectively, *Marma* of muscle, blood vessel, ligament, joint and bone). On the basis of properties, they can be categorized into *Saumya*, *Vayavya*, *Agneya* and *Saumyagneya Marmas*.^[4] According to site, *Marmas* are situated at *Udara* (thorax and abdomen), *Prishtha* (back), *Shakha* (extremities) and *Urdhvajatru* (neck and head) region.

There are eleven *Marma* points in one leg. The same number is present in the other leg. So, these are a total of forty-four *Marma* points including both the upper and lower extremities. There are twelve *Marma* points in the thorax and abdomen. Fourteen *Marma* points are present in the back. Thirty-seven *Marma* points are located above the clavicular region (neck and head).^[5]

Fundamentals of marma Science and Therapy

The human being is a finite creature in an infinite cosmos. According to *Vedanta* principle the absolute cosmos is conceptually limitless. It can be marked as infinite-eternal, eternal-infinite and cannot be assessed in external and absolute. In fact, as per the quotation 'Yat Pinde Tat Brahmande' all properties of the absolute cosmos are inherent in this human body. One aspect of these inherent powers of self-healing is demonstrated by our *Rishis* as *Marma Science*.

Basically, Ayurveda strives to keep the body healthy and prevent illness. Illness is the condition when the body gets tired excessively or weak and this condition affects the normal physiological functions of the body. A number of suitable measures are advocated in Ayurveda to

prevent the illness and to keep the body healthy and fit.^[6]

Marma chikitsa – *Marma Chikitsa* is very popular in many places as a traditional skill. A number of bone-setters and *Nadi Vaidyas* practice by this specialty. But as a traditional skill it has no scientific explanation behind it, and it is limited to some traumatic lesions of muscles and bones. The scientific presentation of *Marma* therapy is the need of the hour. This science is still obscure. In the light of theoretical description available in the old texts and present research and knowledge, *Marma Chikitsa* has been further developed and practiced.^[7]

Marma therapy contributes to increase or recharge physical, mental and spiritual energies. On the physical level it helps to revitalize or reenergize the body tissues; at cellular level, it improves the vital functions like digestion, respiration, blood circulation and excretion. On the psychological level it improves the mental faculty by directing it in the positive direction.^[8]

Marma chikitsa in different diseases^[9]

Marma Chikitsa can be used in the following ways—

- To treat the diseases of nerves and brain.
- In traumatic neurological or neuro surgical lesions, traumatic paraplegia, hemiplegia and monoplegia.
- In orthopaedic lesions, especially prolapsed intervertebral disc etc.
- To reduce the pain of nerves, muscles, ligaments, bones and joints.
- To produce anesthesia during any surgical interference.
- To improve the function of body organs by achieving homeostasis.
- To activate the mal-developed or deformed body parts or musculature etc.
- To prevent and treat the lifestyle disorder. ex, diabetes, hypertension, thyroid disorder etc.

Following Marma points are responsible for the relief of pain in different organs^[10,11,12]

- Shoulder pain - *Kshipra Marma* and *Kurpara Marma*.
- Pain in abdomen - *Kurpara* and *Urvi Marma*.
- Chest Pain - *Kurpara*, *Urvi* and *Ani*.
- Cervical (neck) pain - *Kshipra*, *Kurpara*, and *Ani Marma*
- Leg and knee pain - *Kshipra*, *Gulpha*
- Sciatic pain - *Kshipra*, *Gulpha*
- Cerebral palsy – upper and lower extremities *Marmas*
- Torticolitis and cervical spondylosis- upper and lower extremities *Marmas*, *Dhamni*, *Matrika*, *Krikatika*, *Amsa* and *Amsaphalaka Marma* etc.

Different Procedures / Methods in Marma Chikitsa— Examination of the body surface for the assessment for locating the proper *Marma* point is necessary. Ac-

tually, it is impossible to give the exact location because of individual differences. Before *Marma* therapy one has to determine the actual location of specific *Marma* points. The exact location of *Marma* varies according to an individual according to the measurement of the body and body parts. The site is described in relation to the bony prominences, joints and other body structures. The distance is described in finger measurement of the individual. The extent of each type of *Marma* is also discussed. The location of *Marma* points is described in the text *Susruta Samhita* extensively. The size of the particular *Marma* is also mentioned.^[13]

Procedure

Posture- *Sukhasana*, *Padmasana*, *Vajrasana* Pressure- According to nature of *MARMA* Stimulation time- 0.8 sec./ stimulation Repetition- 15-18 times in single seating Time- three times in a day

Other methods of *MARMA* stimulation^[14]

- ✓ Rubbing
- ✓ Itching
- ✓ Vibration
- ✓ Oil massage
- ✓ Paste application
- ✓ Fomentation

The most common postures for the practice of self-*MARMA* Chikitsa are –

1. Simple cross-legged posture (*Sukhasana*)
2. Lotus posture (*Padmasana*)
3. Half lotus posture (*Ardha Padmasana*)
4. Diamond posture (*Vajrasana*)
5. Sitting posture on chair
6. Standing posture

Examination of the body surface for the assessment for locating the proper *Marma* point is necessary. Actually, it is impossible to give the exact location because of individual differences. Before *Marma* Chikitsa one has to determine the actual location of specific *Marma* points. The exact location of *Marma* varies according to an individual according to the measurement of the body and body parts. The site is described in relation to the bony prominences, joints and other body structures. The distance is described in finger measurement of the individual. The extent of each type of *Marma* is also discussed. The location of *Marma* points is described in the text *Susruta Samhita* extensively. The size of the particular *Marma* is also mentioned.

Pre therapy exercises: - It comprises of the following steps: -

- Total relaxation of body.
- Deep breathing exercise.
- Perception of body as whole.
- Perception of psychic centers.
- Perception of *Marma* points.

- Gentle massage with thumb and fingers over the *Marma* points.

Then comes the actual *Chikitsa* consisting of application of pressure with thumb or fingers over the *Marma* points.

Health promotion by *marma* Therapy and Yogic practices

Man is the best creature of God. The human body is made up of the five basic elements and soul. In spite of this quality the human body is the subject of all activities (*Dharma Artha Kama* and *Moksha*).

In *Charaka Samhita* this *Sada Dhatu Purusa* is known as *Cikitsya Purusa*.^[15] The human body is constituted by different systems: all these systems work together regularly without any hindrance. The human body is made up of seven basic *Dhatu*s i.e. *Rasa*, *Rakta*, *Mansa*, *Meda*, *Asthi*, *Majja* and *Sukra*. A number of changes occur in the human body during the whole life span, the homeostasis of *Doshas* is known as health; imbalance in the *DOSHIC* state may lead to the disease.^[16] *Shariram Vyadhi Mandira* means the body is the seat of diseases.

The aim of *Ayurveda* is to preserve the health of a healthy individual and to cure the diseases of a diseased person.^[17] There is a major role of *Marma* Chikitsa and *Yoga* along with *Ayurveda* to fulfill the above-mentioned goal. The whole world is requiring *Marma* therapy and *YOGA* as a weapon to combat the diseases of modern life. *Marma Chikitsa* and *yoga* is practiced by many people for achieving the healthy state of life. A number of incurable diseases are treated with *Marma* Chikitsa and *Yogic* practices.

In the present era we suffer from a number of ailments. The main cause of such sufferings is stress generated by competitiveness, changing lifestyle and behavior. As a result, the human being suffers from physical and mental illness. *Adhyatmic*, *Adhibhautik*, and *Adhidaivik* are three types of sufferings; these sufferings can be treated with *Mantras*, *Marma* therapy and *Yoga* and *Ayurveda* collectively.

DISCUSSION

The *marma* point harmonize the nervous and endocrine system and normalize different pathology in the body through vital power itself, with proper stimulation, manipulation. These techniques are known as *Marma Chikitsa*.

According to *Acharya Sushruta*, the point where all the vessels, muscles, bones, joints, nerves, ligaments etc. structures meet and is the site of *Prana* (vitality) is nothing but *Marma*.^[18] *Acharya Vagbhata* considered *Marma* as the points where special and unusual pulsation felt. These points are important in human body and injuries to these points lead disability and if not treated properly may become fatal.^[19] *Marma Chikitsa* contributes to increase vital power and

this vital power work in positive direction for maintaining health.

Marma Chikitsa activates our nervous system, when nervous system activates then neurotransmitter, hormones, prostaglandin etc., work in proper manner, therefore *Marma Chikitsa* commonly used it treat nerves and brain (traumatic, neurological or neurosurgical lesions ex-traumatic paraplegia, hemiplegia and monoplegia.). It is used in both upper motor neurons lesion and lower motor neurons lesion, systemic diseases of spinal cord (orthopedic lesion specifically prolapsed inter vertebral disc etc.). it is also used to reduce the pain of nerves, muscles, ligaments, bones and joints as *Marma Chikitsa* work by the reducing the recreation of prostaglandins. Therefore, *Marma Chikitsa* act as inhibitor for prostaglandin secretion. (ex.- *Amsaphalak Marma* used the treatment of shoulder joint pain).

It is used to improve the functions of body organs by achieving homeostasis. It is used to prevent and treat the lifestyle disorder like – diabetes, hypertension, thyroid disorder etc.

Marmas points also made up of *Tridosh* and *Panchmahabhuta*, in *Marma Chikitsa* is a non-invasive technique for balancing the *Doshas* and *Dhatu*s. *Marma* points also site for *Bhutatma* so by the *Marma Chikitsa* also maintain the equilibrium of mental state of human body. Thus, the *Marma Chikitsa* is helpful in the prevention and cure the diseases by the balancing of *Sharirik* and *Manshik Doshas*.

Marma Chikitsa are related to *Shatchakra* also, because *Shatchakra* are also site of different *Marma* points, and *Shatchakra* activates *Marma* points and they work in physical and mental disorders by the maintain the harmony of body.

CONCLUSION

Marmas are vital points, centers for the *Prana*. They can be used specifically for the diagnosis and treatment of disease or generally for promoting health and longevity. *Marmas* are integral to all *Ayurvedic* therapies from simple self-treatments to complex clinical procedures. They form one of the main pillars of *Ayurvedic* thought and practice. *Marma* therapy can be used along with all *Ayurvedic Chikitsa* like *Panchakarma*.

Marma Chikitsa is the best technique to attain the effects of *Yoga* and *Pranayama*.

To advance understanding and treatment of diseases through prevention, education and research, *Marma Chikitsa*, and *Yoga* can offer an effective way of healing.

मर्माण्यधिष्ठाय हि ये विकारा मूर्च्छन्ति काये विविधा नराणाम् । प्रायेण ते कृच्छ्रतमा भवन्ति नरस्य यत्नैरपि

साध्यमानाः । (सु. शा. 6/43)

The diseases which are seated in the *Marmas*, are generally serious, but they may be made to prove amenable with the greatest care and difficulty.

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