



CONCEPT OF MARMA THERAPY IN MANAGEMENT OF PAIN

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ABSTRACT

The health of the people reflects the social welfare parameters of any civilized area. It is the key component of social values and indication of concern for the welfare of the society. In thousands of years of the history of India from *Vedas* to the present times, Indian society has proved that the *Vedic* system can develop and provide a truly humane and efficient health service. Pain is one of the most common features of variety of diseases and understanding of its nature and properties is important for its successful management. In *Ayurvedic* Medicinal therapy, this is only lacuna that is the immediate management of pain. *Marma* science and therapy has an answer to this and hence if we incorporate *Marma* science in broad field of *Ayurvedic* therapy, we can overcome this lacuna. Therefore further development and expansion of such a viable *Vedic* Medical system in terms of *Marma* science is highly humane and widely accessible in all aspects for all. Forming a bridge across time, people became involved in the fight against pain with *Marma* therapy. Being an untouched method of pain management, more and more working hands are needed to spread the knowledge and benefit of this science. This article serves to throw light on the potentials of *Marma* Therapy that can be used in the perspective of different physiological stages of pain to promote health.

KEYWORDS: Pain, Health, Marma.

INTRODUCTION

Man is the best creation of God. In process of modernization and rapid urbanization human beings are falling prey to various disorders leading to pain due to changing lifestyle and inappropriate relationship of the person with their surroundings. Currently our society faces a multitude of health problems, which ultimately results in pain. Prevention of pain for health promotion is a great personal treasure for any individual. In this way its management in society becomes the National treasure. We have inherited a very old, in fact the oldest *Vedic* Medicinal system in our country. World history does not show such a viable and existing medicinal system like India's anywhere across the globe.

Ayurveda aims at prevention of diseases and maintenance of health.^[1] The human body is made up of five basic elements and soul. In spite of this quality the human body is the subject of all activities (*Dharma, Artha, Karma and Moksha*).^[2] According to *Charak Samhita* persons living away to nature using *gramya ahara* suffers from the diseases.^[3] Changing lifestyles and food habits are responsible for the manifestation of different physical and mental ailments leading to pain.

For achieving good health it is necessary to lead life according to the natural laws without disturbing any natural *doshas* as according to *Sushruta Samhita* main causative factor of pain is *Vata* which is also called as *rogasamuharata*^[4] means any alteration in *Vata dosha* natural occupancy will harm the body both physically and mentally as the seat of pain is *Mana* (psyche) and *Sharira* (body).^[5]

Pain is a psychial response of an imperative protective reflex. It is produced by stimuli exceeding the intensity threshold for sensory nerve endings. The International Association for the study of Pain (IASP) defines pain as "An unpleasant sensory and emotional experience that is associated with actual or potential tissue damage".^[6] In *Sushruta Samhita, Maharshi Sushruta* has mentioned that the commonest feature of wound is pain. Wound and pain are both coexisting features of trauma. Pain is a feeling of uneasiness. In *Ayurveda, Vedana, dukha, pida, sula, ruk, ruja, bheda, sadana, avasada* are words used for pain.

One of the most significant achievements of ancient Indian surgery lies in the fact that surgery was elevated

from a manual art to an academic discipline and a superior area of expertise amongst eight disciplines of *Ayurveda*. *Marma Chikitsa* is the oldest treasure of Indian surgery from the *Vedic* period. *Sushruta* mentioned the condition of attaining the position of *Visharada* only after one attains thorough knowledge of the human body anatomy. According to medical definition, the specific parts of the body, which are very vulnerable to trauma is known as *Marma*.^[7] *Marmas* are not superficial landmarks on the body surface but these are deep seated important physio-anatomical structures. The knowledge of *Marma* is the oldest hidden treasure of *Vedic* surgical skills. *Marma* Therapy is an untouched chapter of Indian surgery. With the exploration of *Marma* the whole scenario of Indian surgery may change in multidimensional approaches.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the purpose of this study, first of all the concepts of *Marma* and its various types was studied and thereafter a comprehensive study of different relevant literatures was done in order to search for *Marma* Therapy that can be used in specificity with pain management for promotion of health.

DISCUSSION

Concept of Marma Therapy in Ayurvedic Texts

The term *Marma* is derived from the *Sanskrit dhatu 'Mri'-marma*, that means which causes death or disability.^[8] According to *Ayurvedic* definition the points which are very vulnerable to injuries and may lead to complications or death are considered as *Marmas*.^[9] It is apparent that there are certain important vital points (places) in the human body, which have hidden, secret and significant energy.

Marma science is discussed in *Sushruta-samhita*.^[10] in reference to anatomical consideration of the body parts. These vital points (*Marmas*) are the source of energy so they should be protected very well during any surgical intervention or procedure. According to *Sushruta*, there are 107 vital points which are the *Marmas*.^[11] The *Marmas* are divided into five categories, pertaining to different body tissues like *Mamsa*, *Sira*, *Snayu*, *Asthi* and *Sandhi*.^[12] It is also known as *prana ashryata*.^[13] This concept of *Marma* is the basis of all martial arts and acupuncture. According to *Sushruta Samhita* due to injury of *Mamsa Marma*, there may be loss of touch sensation. By using this information local anaesthesia can be produced by irritating the *Mamsa Marma*.

Marma are the seat of *soma*, *vayu*, *teja*, *sattva*, *rajas*, *tama* and *jivatma*. When these places that is the *Marma* points gets injured there can be a fatal response. Keeping this concept in mind one should try to apply *Marma Chikitsa* to provide the cure for different body ailments leading to pain.

The basic principles behind *Ayurveda* and *Marma* Therapy are same as both depends upon *Pancha Mahabhuta* Principle, *Tridosha* Theory and *Prana* etc. *Marma* is related to *Prana*. *Prana* is the main seat of *Vata Dosha*. In *Ayurveda* *Vata Vyadhi* is a separate entity. *Marma* Therapy deals with *Vata Dosha* in a subtle manner-how *Vata* acts in the body causing pain, how it is anatomically arranged, how it acts, and etc. aspects are explained in detail.

Examples of significance of Marma knowledge from ancient India, in the times of Ramayana and Mahabharata

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 in the sole of his foot, thrown by a bird killer. *Bhisma Pitamaha* (*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. The site of injury was not having any vital points. With these examples it is apparent that any injury of vital points may lead to death. A tree does not die when the flowers, fruits and leaves are picked but when the root is severed the tree dies immediately. The same thing is applicable to *Marma* science. Any injury to the *Marma* may be fatal. In another example Jesus Christ was nailed in a cross by putting nails in the palms and soles containing important vital points. So the protection, stimulation and nutrition to these points may help in physiological functioning of the body.^[14]

Sites of pain commonly treated with Marma Therapy

Marma therapy mainly concentrates on pain pertaining to *Mamsa* (muscles), *sira* (blood vessels), *Snayu* (muscle tendons), *Sandhi* (bone joints) and *asthi* (bones). Along with pain, if the injury to *Mamsa*, *Sira*, *Snayu*, *asthi* and *Sandhi* leads to symptoms like fever, skin disease mental disorders (as in PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) etc. then *Marma* therapy is used.

Basically, disease pertaining to Neuromuscular, low motor system, nervous system and blood circulation are well treated with *Marma* therapy.

Mechanism of Marma Therapy

Marma therapy converts the total negative energy of the body into positive energy. Due to injury, this process becomes obliterated and acts against the body physiology. All the stimulations from the body to brain carry negative energy. With the effect of this negative energy the sense organs cannot engage in their subjects properly. So this feeling becomes painful. In this condition *Marma* Therapy can convert the feeling of illness into a feeling of joy. *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. It also offers a way to treat many psychosomatic ailments without any drugs. It harmonizes the functioning of nervous and endocrine systems to control psychological disorders. On the spiritual level, reasoning of mind, regulation and transformation of thoughts in positive direction helps to concentrate towards the ultimate goals of life. As a preventive measure it helps to cope with situations arising from different diseases.

Treatment Plan in Marma Therapy

In Marma clinical practice, basically there are two types of cases -

- (A) **Acute cases** → like sudden injury (if the blunt injury is minor) then external stimulation is given on pressure points.
- (B) **Chronic cases** → like neuromuscular disorders and other such diseases like sciatica, frozen shoulder, tennis elbow, cervical spondylitis, carpal tunnel syndrome etc. In these disorders apart from the site of disease, the other places of origin of disease are also looked into. For example, in cervical spondylitis, the patients may have just hand pain, but the cause of disease lies at the level of neck.

To a great extent *Marma* therapy depends upon applying pressure with adequate skill to specific *Marma* points. With the use of thumb, five types of pressures can be applied like:

- pressing deeply with the tip of thumb
- sliding movement with thumb along with palm
- kneading with the white surface of the thumb
- using sides of the thumb tips
- Vertical pushing with the thumb etc.

These pressure techniques are used to stimulate *Marma* points. Even the position of patient is also very important. For example, when treating *marma* of right arm the right elbow should be fixed and right palm should rest on the left shoulder.

When a particular *marma* is stimulated with pressure techniques, there will be disarrangement of *Prana* from that position. The *Prana* may travel to next point, (say, from wrist of the hand to the elbow joint and further to shoulder joint and so on). This path of displacement of *Prana* is called Meridian of Path. So, whenever a *marma* is stimulated, other *marmas* lying in the same path should also be taken in consideration.

So, after correction of one *marma* point, its pathway is corrected by techniques like pulling, kneading etc. This helps in restoration of *Prana* Movement.

Management of pain

Instant pain relief is the motive of *Marma* Therapy. Stimulation of *marma* can produce analgesia by secreting a number of prostaglandin inhibitors, endorphins,

interferon and other opoid-like substance which are hundred times more potent than opium. Instant pain relief by *Marma* Therapy is possible within no time.^[15] Before managing the pain it is important to know the nature of pain as in *Ayurveda*, management of pain depends upon the causative factors or *doshika predominance*.

The *Vatika Sula* is characterized by being spasmodic in nature having the periods of exacerbations and remissions repeatedly with the retention of urine, flatus and faeces. It can be identified as pricking or tearing type of pain.^[16]

The *Paittika Sula* is very severe and sudden in onset. The Colicky pain is associated with thirst, fainting, burning sensation and pain in the umbilical region. Excessive perspiration, vertigo are also accompanied by the *Paittika Sula*.^[17]

The *Kaphaja Sula* is low intensity colicky pain in the abdomen. It is associated with nausea, cough, malaise, anorexia, excessive salivation and heaviness of abdomen.^[18] The colicky pain is aggravated after meals and in the early morning.

In *Sannipataja Sula* all three *doshas* gets vitiated.^[19] The clinical presentation may be varied accordingly. All the symptoms may be in aggravated state.

The site of *Kapha Vatika Sula* is urinary bladder (suprapubic region), pericardium, flanks and back. The *Kapha Paittika Sula* occurs in epigastrium, cardiac and mid umbilical regions. The *Vata Paittika Sula* is very severe in nature with burning sensation and fever. However in all these colics there is predominance of *Vayu*.^[20] According to *Sushruta Samhita*; *Marmas* causing pain are predominant in qualities of *Agni* and *Vayu* as they particularly cause pain.^[21]

The management of pain comprises of a multifold approach. It can be categorised into local management and systemic management. In *Ayurveda* the term *Vedana* is more or less used for the feeling. It may be the feeling of well being or feeling of illness (*Sukhatamaka* and *Dukhatmaka*).

The drugs used for conversion of the feelings of illness into the feeling of well being are known as *Vedanasthapana*.^[22] The governances of all kinds of body sensations is the subject of *Vata*. But during the vitiation of *Vata* all these functions get disturbed and the excessive activity of vitiated *Vata* may cause pain sensation. According to *Ayurveda*, all painkillers (*Vedanasthapana*) are *Vatashamaka*. The *Vatashamaka* drugs are mostly *Ushna Virya*.

Every individual response to pain is a different way. In the same way every analgesic chemical acts

pharmacologically in a different way. So the management of pain is not so simple. Following Marma points are mainly responsible for the relief of pain in Shadang Sharir which includes 2 upper limbs, 2 lower limbs, head and neck, thorax and abdomen.^[23]

- 1) **Upper limb** → Kshipra (first inter metacarpal ligament), Kurpara (elbow joint), Ani (tendon of biceps muscles), Urvi (brachial artery/vein), Kakshadhara (brachial plexus), Lohitaksha (Axillary vessels)
- 2) **Lower limb** → Kshipra (first inter Metatarsal ligament), Kurchasira (lateral ligament of the ankle joint), Gulpha (ankle joint), Indravasti (calf muscles), Janu (knee joint), Ani (tendon of quadriceps femoris), Urvi (femoral vessels).
- 3) **Head and Neck Region** → Kshipra (first intermetacarpel ligament), Kurpara (elbow joint), Ani (tendon of biceps muscles), Krikatika (Atlanto-occipital articulation), Nila/Manya (right and left Common Carotid artery or Subclavian Artery and internal Jugular veins, vagus), Matrika (blood vessels of the neck), Vidhura (posterior auricular ligament/vessels), Apanga (Zygomatic-temporal vessels), Avarta (junction of the frontal, molar and sphenoid bone), Utksepa (temporal muscles and fascia), Sankha (temples).
- 4) **Thorax and abdomen and back** → Amsa (coracohumoral, gleno humoral ligament, trapezius muscles), Urvi (brachial artery), Ani (tendon of biceps muscles), Amsaphalaka (scapular spine), Nitamba (Ischial Tuberosity), Kukundara (sacroiliac joints), Katikataruna (sciatic notch), Nabhi (umbilicus).

Pain management aims at minimizing the distress, feeling of unrest and improving the quality of life. A cardinal point in the management of pain is that it should be holistic and patient-centred in its application. This can be fulfilled in the Ayurvedic approach in terms of *Marma Chikitsa*.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that in *Ayurveda* instant emergency management of disease, pain management is not available, but with *marma* therapy we can bridge the gap of this lacuna effectively. *Marma Chikitsa* is safe, medicine less option for conscious relaxation of body and mind. The practice of relaxation results in reduction of skeletal muscles spasm and drastic reduction of metabolic activity. It gives a chance to make the body energy flow in a proper way, uninterruptedly, enhancing the physical health. *Acharya Sushruta* called study of *Marma* as *shalya vishayardha*.^[24] Keeping this fact in view, *Marma* therapy can summarise as a system with the dual advantage of disease control with instant symptomatic response and permanent cure without adverse effect. In this way, with *Marma* Science we can promote health and vitality for daily life and obtain freedom from disease and suffering and disharmony.

Spread and practice of *Marma* science can contribute to more peace in present time.

Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah Sarve Santu Niramyah.
Sarve Bhadrani Pashyantu Ma Kashchid Dukha Bhagbhavet.

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