



A HISTORICAL REVIEW ON LITERATURE OF *MARMA* SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Marma science is as old as acquaintance of *Ayurveda*. *Marma* Science is an art of treating certain vital points for rechanneling the *Prana*. There are several changes in the body's biochemistry and can unfold radical, chemical change in one's makeup after manipulating the *Marma* points. Stimulation of these inner pharmacy pathways indicates the body to produce assured neuro-chemicals that rectifies the body and mind. Vedic literature has few scattered references, which indicate the existence of this science since origin of human civilization. In this article, a humble effort is made to compile the historical details of *Marma* science which can be used to re-explore the new domain of *Ayurveda*.

KEYWORDS: *Marma*, *Marma* therapy, *Varma*, *Prana*.

INTRODUCTION

Marma science is as old as acquaintance of *Ayurveda*. *Marma* is an anatomical area where five structures i.e. *Mamsa*, *Asthi*, *Sira*, *Snayu*, *Dhamani* and *Sandhi* are meeting, collectively present and where *Prana* exists, is *Marma* site.^[1]

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Vedic literature has few scattered references, which indicate the existence of this science since origin of human civilization. The literature of vedic period presents thinking that configuration of *Prana* or vital energy in our body follows the outline of method of nature.

1. Vedic period

Marma science is fragment of vedic science. Knowledge of *Marma* exists from very prehistoric time of *Vedas*, which dates back 4000 BC.

In *Rigveda*, it is described that prayer or *Mantras* are the best protection of these *Marma*, showing a divine view behind the use of *Marma* from the very beginning.^[2]

In *Atharvaveda*, *Marma* are used in the sense of vital parts. If damage occurs on *Marmasthana* then it causes death. The plastic surgery was practice in vedic period due to numerous wars. *Ashwini Kumaras* executed plastic surgery whose leg was cut at three places and thus restored the mobility.

In *Yajurveda*, the soldiers and warriors arrayed in the battlefield were dressed with helmet, arm proof metallic guards etc. so as to shield the vital parts which were otherwise termed as *Marma*.^[3]

In *Ramayana*, lethal injury of *Marmasthana* of *Shravaṇa Kumara* by an arrow prompted accidentally by *Dasaratha*, the father of lord *Rama*. The *Rakshasi* "Simhika" was by slewed *Hanumana* by penetrating the sharp nails in to her *Marmasthana*. *Ravana* knockouts *Marmasthana* of *Lakshmana* and he falls down with pain.

In *Mahabharata*, many loci of *Marma* are found. During the battle in *Mahabharata*, even vital portions of the elephants and horses were also sheltered by the cover shields.^[4]

In *Garbhopaniṣad*, 107 *Marma* have been talked about. In *Yogopaniṣad*, 18 *Marma* of body have been explained on which by application one can practise *Dharaṇa*. In *Agnipurana*, at the phase of death, the vitiated *Vayu* obstruct the heat and all *Dosha* of body and finally abolishes the *Prana* as *Marmasthanas*.^[5]

2. Buddha period^[6]

Ahimsa or nonviolence with nonsurgical magnitude was taught in this period. Exclusively body parts, which are sensitive, are told to be saved. Monks were trained to defend themselves from trauma without using weaponries. They had enormous understanding of use of *Marma* for self-protection and also to overthrow the opponent. Then science of *Marma* was adapted as an art among monks of neighbouring South eastern countries like China, Thailand etc. which was additional spread to Japan, Korea, Burma and other countries, to protect their body parts from external enemies. This becomes the basis for source of Chinese martial arts. There are strong possibilities to believe that Chinese acupressure therapy has been originated on base of knowledge of *Ayurveda Marma* science.

3. Samhita period

Brhatrayi and *Laghutrayi* are the main expositions of *Ayurveda* and references of *Marma* are found in these treatises. According to *Acharya Charaka*, 107 *Marma* are present in our body out of which *Hridaya* (heart) *Basti* and *Shira*(head) are *PradhanaMarma*.^[7,8] *Acharya Sushruta* described 107 *Marma* with the aim of preventing injuring to these vital structures during surgical procedures.^[9]

In *Astanga Samgraha* and *Astanga Hridaya* there is description of *Marma* in *Sharirsthana*.^[10,11] *Acharya Sarngadhara* considered 107 *Marma* as site of *Jiva (Prana)*.^[12] In *Madhava Nidana*, *Marma* are taken into concern while describing various diseases.

4. Siddha system^[13]

All the *Marma* are non-visible but could be outlined or sited at point where body, mind and psychic energies are concerted together. This also highlights the effect of stages of moon (*Tithivarman*) and other planets on the build, especially power of *Marma* in terms of "Varmas". *Marma* are of two types- *Padu Varman* and *Thodu Varman*.

The place where energy is obstructed is called *Padu Varman*. They are 12 in total. Points where this energy has to scrap to get through are called *Thodu Varman*. There are 96 such sites. Each *Padu Varman* is the confluence of 8 *Thodu Varman* sites.

5. Yoga^[14]

Yoga therapy, in particular the discipline of *Chakra*, boosts the *Ayurveda* knowledge of *Marma*. The emergent *Kundilini* gives strength to these vulnerable points. *Marma* connect to the *Nadi* and *Chakras* of the refined body and mind. They oversee the interface between physical and subtle bodies and the interchange of energy and information between them. This means that *Marma* are important for remedial subtle body as well as physical body.

6. Martial arts^[15]

It is a systematized technique of warfare, with proper acquaintance of body anatomy and *Marma* points. It underlined the development of personal energy, courage and self- discipline, which revitalised on knowledge and control of *Prana* for both self- protective and aggressive purposes and its key sites within the body. *Marma* points are categorized in various groups-

- Those which cause immediate death
- Those which cause unconsciousness and
- Those which causes unadorned pain and numbness with deformity of the part.

Kalari Payat and *Kalari Payirchi* are traditional martial skill. The utmost form of martial arts is called *Marma Adi* or *Varma Adi*. From this art of self-protection, *Varma Kalai* or *Varma Chikitsa* originated. There are 64 *Marma* points used in this procedure of warfare.

DISCUSSION

In the era ,where world is again going back to adapt the ancient culture and customs to sustain immunity non-invasive therapy like *Marma* therapy may be made a part of daily routine as self *Marma* therapy.^[16]

Marma therapy can be used as preventive measure to maintain normal physiology of body at the same time this therapy has capability to cure various acute as well as chronic musculoskeletal disorders and other systemic disorders.

It is cost free, non invasive side effect free treatment modality. If explored with proper scientific approach this therapy can become best option of treatment in developing countries as ours and in turn reduce the burden on health budget at individual as well as national level.

CONCLUSION

Marma therapy is time tested therapy of ancient India and should be re-explored to find out solution for endless incurable diseases.

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