



MARMA CHIKITSA: A NON-INVASIVE HEALING THERAPY IN AYURVEDA

Amrit Godbole*¹, Sweta², Abhinav³, O. P. Singh⁴ and J. S. Tripathi⁵

¹Junior Resident 3rd Year, Department of Kayachikitsa, FOA, IMS, BHU.

²Junior Resident 3rd Year, Department of Rachana Sharir, FOA, IMS, BHU.

³Assistant Professor (Panchakarma), Department of Kayachikitsa, FOA, IMS, BHU.

⁴Professor, Department of Kayachikitsa, FOA, IMS, BHU.

⁵Professor and Head Department of Kayachikitsa, FOA, IMS, BHU.

***Corresponding Author: Dr. Amrit Godbole**

Junior Resident 3rd year, Department of Kayachikitsa, FOA, IMS, BHU.

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ABSTRACT

Marma is the vital areas of the body. The word *Marma* comes from *Sanskrit* origin word 'Mri' meaning death. The *Sanskrit* phrase, 'Marayanti Iti Marmani', also means death or serious damage to body or health after infliction to the point of their situation. Hence these areas are called *Marma*. Due to foreign rule in India for plenty of time, the medical science of the level could not progress therefore development of *Marma Vigyan* also suffered. There was discriminative treatment to Indian medical science so far as the development is concerned. However it can be pleased that *Marma Vigyan* is collection of fundamental of knowledge of *Marma*. *Marma* therapy focuses on energizing the body to relieve occupational illness and stress related diseases. Hence the complete knowledge of the basic principles of *Marma* and its clinical application can play a important role in treatment modalities.

KEYWORDS: *Marma*, Fundamentals, Illness.

INTRODUCTION

Marma is very important and unique concept of *Ayurvedic Sharir*. First & foremost literature of *Marma* is seen in *Brihatrayee* which is described in the sixth *Adhyaya* of *Sharirsthana Sushruta Samhita*.^[1] *Marma* means the most vulnerable spots in our body.^[2] In ancient *Vedic* times, *Marma* points were called *Bindu* – a dot, secret dot or mystic point.^[3] By definition, a *Marma* point is a junction on body where two or more types of tissue meet, such as muscles, veins, ligaments, bones or joints. During ancient times, knowledge of *Marma* was known to kings and warriors. It was applied in battle fields to hit and achieve maximum lethal effect on enemies. This science was used both in warfare and surgery. From common ailments to serious neuromuscular diseases, all can be treated by *Marma* therapy. Common ailments like headache, bodyache, faulty spinal alignment, pain in the joints can be rejuvenated through *Marma Chikitsa*.^[4] There are 108 *Marma* points in our body. Energy and intelligence are generated from *Marma* points. Application of pressure to these *Marmas* induces the flow of energy through a complex of systems called *Nadis*.^[2]

Newer techniques of investigations and management have changed the scenario of acutely injured patients but the anatomical importance of the structure and tissues still holds the importance. *Marma* of *Sushruta* and even before that period is in very precise form.^[5] *Marma*

Chikitsa is a significant aspect of the *Ayurvedic* treatments where specific points are present on the body where the application of pressure induces the flow of vital energy (*Prana*) along a complex system of subtle channels called (*Nadis*). *Ayurveda* recognizes about 107 therapeutic *Marma* points. The injury to some of these lethal *Marma* points can lead to instant death. The word *Marma* literally means a tender full vital point, which is a conjugation of muscle, nerve, joint, bone, tendon, artery and vein either in combination of two, three etc. or all the above structures. The healing through *Marma Abhyanga* affects the *Cakras*, Physical health and the *Doshas*. The purpose of a *Marma Abhyanga* is to stimulate the various body organs and systems. The actions of *Marma* are controlled by the *Pranic Vayu* (cosmic energy principle in human body). This *Prana Vayu* is essential to maintain the life or longevity of a person. *Marma* therapy focuses on energizing the body to relieve occupational illness and stress related diseases.

Marma

In *Susruta Samhita* it is apparent that the knowledge of anatomy and physiology is essential for the exact study of surgical problems by *Ayurvedic* surgeons.^[6] It is important to know that injuries on certain parts of the human body need more consideration. Such parts are known as *Marmasthana*. It is also important to note that those *Vaidyas* who are expert in the anatomy and physiology of the different human organs will never

commit mistakes in the management of diseases due to ignorance. *Susruta* mentioned the condition of attaining the position of *Visharada* only after one attains thorough knowledge of the human body anatomy. According to *Dalhana* the vulnerable points are those points on the human body surface on which any kind of trauma or injury may lead to death or symptoms like death. The term *Marma* means *Prana*, *Jiva* or Life. *Acharya Sushruta* has described 107 numbers of *Marma* and described their Anatomical classification. According to *Acharya Sushruta* the five anatomical structures are basically and essentially involved on *Marma* point.^[7] These structures are: 1. Mamsa 2. Sira 3. Snayu 4. Asthi 5. Sandhi

Acharya Sushruta has also classified *Marma* points in to five types depending upon the ultimate results (prognosis) after the trauma inflicted upon these points. These types are: 1. Sadhya Pranhara *Marma* 2. Kalantara Pranhara *Marma* 3. Vishalyghna *Marma* 4. Vaikalyakara *Marma* 5. Rujakara *Marma*

Clinical condition where *Marma Chikitsa* can be applied: Friction between bones, joint pain, less synovial fluid (decreased lubrication between joints). Swelling Oedema seen at joints, crepitation (noise) felt at joints with movements etc, these symptoms are seen in people already suffered from contagious diseases, with low immunity & Resistance power, accidental injuries, wrong & untimely medication, improper daily & seasonal regime, lack of exercises. Due to all these above reasons *Vata*, *Pitta* & *Kapha* the *Tridoshas* get imbalanced in our body later leading to improper blood circulation in every portion-joints, new cells are not produced which can supply better oxygen which further complicates the system with more swelling related muscular-joint pain, lack in flexibility numbness etc.^[8] *Marma* points, considered “doorways” or “entry points” into our body’s inner pathways, when gently pressed on the skin can stimulate a chain of positive events.^[9]

Benefits of *Marma Chikitsa*^[2]

- To provide a pathway for inner healing.
- To remove blocks from energy channels.
- To create an harmony between all vital energies.
- Removes emotional and physical toughness.
- Remove toxins from body Improves digestion.
- Balances body temperature.
- Provides healthy skin.
- Increases immunity.
- Gives us positive energy.
- Provide relief from stress, depression, anger etc.

Mode of Action of *Marma* therapy^[4] - There are four basic purposes of *Marma*:

1. It removes blocks in energy channels called *Srotas*.
2. It pacifies *Vata Dosha*, bringing it to its normal path especially *Vyana Vayu* (a sub-*Dosha* which controls the autonomic nervous system.).

3. It creates physical, mental and emotional flexibility. Because of *Ama* (toxins) and because of *Vata*, human beings after 35 or 40 years of age become rigid and this happens to animals and plants as well. As *Vata* increases in body, it leads to degeneration. This rigidity means becoming fixed in ideas, emotions and physical movements.
4. This gentle treatment creates an opportunity to experience powerful and dynamic transformation at the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual level by building a positive link with the unconscious mind.

Marma Chikitsa* and *Yoga- 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. As previously *Yoga* was the means of achieving spiritual gains, nowadays *Yoga* is a tool for health promotion among the masses. In the same way the implementation of *Marma Chikitsa* may help in different surgical lesions. 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*.

Aims of *Marma Chikitsa*- In *Charaka Samhita* the aim of *Ayurveda* is explained as preservation of health of healthy individual and to treat the ailments of a diseased person. As we know that *Maharshi Susruta* has a different opinion and a little different aim of treatment in comparison to *Charaka Samhita*. He was concerned with the treatment of a diseased person; in another step he was concerned with the health of the person who was treated earlier by operation or other means. With the help of *Marma* therapy we can fulfill the aims of *Charaka Samhita* as well as the motives of *Maharsi Susruta*. As a curative treatment it can be used widely in many diseases and as a supportive treatment it can be used along with any medical science, without hindrance, along with its drugs and procedures. *Marma Chikitsa* is very popular in many places as a traditional skill. A number of bonesetters and *Nadi vaidyas* practice by this speciality. 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 practised.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda details major (*Maha*) and minor *Marma* points.^[6] The major points correspond to the major *Shad Chakras* in the body, while the minor points are found around the torso and limbs. Thus, healing through *Marma Abhyanga* affects the *Chakras*, physical health,

and the *Doshas*. Although the *Marmas* are the junctions of all five principles (i.e., flesh, veins and arteries, tendons, bones, and joints), at each point a predominance of one principle exists. It is at these points where *Marma Chikitsa* can most effectively restructure or rebalance the system to function most healthily. Further, it helps develop the preventive health and longevity of the body and mind by ensuring the proper balance and flow of hormones, fluids, immune factors etc. The purpose of a *Marma Chikitsa* is to stimulate the various bodily organs and systems. Like acupuncture, these points are measured by finger units (*Anguli or Angula*) to detect their correct locations. Many *Marma* points are larger than acupuncture points. Thus, they can be found more easily.

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