

## MARMA THERAPY: AN INTEGRATIVE AYURVEDIC APPROACH TO HEALTH AND DISEASE MANAGEMENT

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### ABSTRACT

*Marma Chikitsa* is an ancient Ayurvedic healing science based on the stimulation of vital points of the body known as *Marma*. Since the Vedic period, it has been used for the prevention and management of various diseases without the need for sophisticated medical instruments or drugs. Ancient physicians widely practiced this *Chikitsa* for maintaining health, relieving pain, and restoring physiological balance. Although modern medical science has advanced significantly, limitations such as high treatment costs, side effects of drugs, and lack of accessibility in remote areas still exist. In this context, *Marma Chikitsa* offers a safe, economical, non-invasive, and tool-free therapeutic approach. However, the knowledge and clinical importance of this *Chikitsa* have gradually declined, resulting in reduced acceptance in mainstream healthcare. The present study aims to explore the therapeutic significance, scientific basis, and clinical applications of *Marma Chikitsa* in modern healthcare. It also attempts to emphasize the role of *Marma*

*Chikitsa* in achieving the fundamental objectives of Ayurveda, namely “*Swasthasya Swasthya Rakshanam*” (maintenance of health in healthy individuals) and “*Aturasya Vikara Prashamanam*” (alleviation of diseases in diseased individuals). By reviewing classical Ayurvedic literature and contemporary scientific perspectives, this study seeks to establish Marma Chikitsa as an effective holistic approach for preventive and curative healthcare.

**KEYWORDS:** Ayurved, *Marma*, *Marma Chikitsa*.

## INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda has given many principles for the maintenance of health and treatment of diseases. The concept of *Marma* has a special place among these principles. *Marma Chikitsa* which is practiced from ancient time. The practice of this *Chikitsa* was not main but subsidiary and as a helping tool in the treatment procedures to save the life of the patients. Initially the *Marma* points were used for the protection of life of the patient during the surgical operations and also for the protection of life by external injuries during accidents and in battle field.

*Marma Chikitsa* depends on the action of 107 *Marmas* points in the body to access the body as well as mind.<sup>[1]</sup> *Marma*'s knowledge guides clinicians to control the flow of *Prana* through the coarse and subtle bodies in order to restore the patient's health and serenity.<sup>[2]</sup> The concept of *Marma* has been described elaborately by Acharya Sushruta in the Sushruta Samhita. Even a slight injury to a *Marma* point causes severe pain and suffering. Similarly, diseases affecting or located in *Marma* regions produce significant distress and are often difficult to treat, even with careful and diligent medical management.<sup>[3]</sup> Therefore, knowledge of *Marma* is of great importance for every physician.

It plays an important role in surgery; therefore, it is called ‘*Shalya Vishayardha*’ (fifty percent of the entire science of surgery).<sup>[4]</sup> Acharya Sushruta states that *Marmasthana*, a very vital point, should not be injured and should be kept intact even while doing surgeries.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Historical Background<sup>[6]</sup>

The concept of *Marma* is widely mentioned in different ancient Sanskrit scriptures other than the classical Ayurvedic texts. References to *Marma* are available in *Vedas* (*Rigveda*, *Atharvaveda*), *Grihyasutras* (*Baudhayana Grihyasutra*), *Upanishads* (*Garbhopanishad*), *Smritis* (*Yajnavalkya Smriti*), *Itihasas* (*Mahabharata and Ramayana*) and many *Puranas* like *Bhagavata Purana*, *Kurma Purana*, *Linga Purana*, *Matsya Purana*, *Vishnu Purana* and

*Garuda Purana*. The term is also found in famous Sanskrit literature such as *Kiratarjuniya*, *Arthashastra*, *Kamasutra* and *Kathasaritsagara*.

- **Rig-Veda**
- The word Marma is found in 1st, 3rd, 5th, 6th, 8th and 10th Mandalas of Rigveda.
- Exhibits the antiquity of the concept of Marma in Vedic literature.
- Rigveda (6,75,18.1) Found in the hymn related to warfare and protective armour.
- Combines the words Marma (vital points) and Varma (armor).
- Emphasizes the need to protect key parts of the body in warfare.
  
- **Atharva-Veda**
- Identical verse in Atharvaveda (7,118,1.1)
- Confirms that the knowledge of *Marma* was popular in the Vedic period.
- Suggests practical uses in warfare and in the handling of war injuries.
  
- **Garbhopenishad ("सप्तोत्तरं मर्मशतं" 1.12.4)**
- 107 Marma points.
- The earliest systematic references to the anatomy of Marma.
  
- **Mahabharata (8,11,2.2)**
- Person having called *Marmajna* is expert in knowledge of *Marma*.

### 1.1 Definition of *Marma*

According to Sushruta: The characteristic feature of a *Marma* is the convergence of muscles (*Mamsa*), veins/vessels (*Sira*), ligaments or tendons (*Snayu*), bones (*Asthi*) and joints (*Sandhi*). These important points are the natural homes of *Praṇa*.<sup>[7]</sup>

So, when a *Marma* is injured the perception of sensory objects of sound, touch, form and taste is impaired or lost and the functions of mind and intellect get disturbed.

### 1.2 Classification of *Marma*

#### 1. According to Structure (*Rachana*)

Type of Marma	Number (Sushrut) <sup>[8]</sup>	Number (Vagbhatta) <sup>[9]</sup>
<i>Mansa Marma</i>	11	10
<i>Sira Marma</i>	41	37
<i>Snayu Marma</i>	27	23

<i>Asthi Marma</i>	8	08
<i>Sandhi Marma</i>	20	20
<i>Dhamani Marma</i>	----	09
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>107</b>

## 2. According to Effect of Injury<sup>[10]</sup>

Type	Number	Effect
<i>Sadya Pranahar</i>	19	Immediate death
<i>Kalantara Pranahar</i>	33	Death after some time (1month/15 days)
<i>Vishalyaghna</i>	3	Death on removal of foreign body
<i>Vaikalyakar</i>	44	Deformity or disability
<i>Rujakar</i>	8	Severe pain

## 3. According to Body Region<sup>[11]</sup>

Region	Number
Upper Extremities	22
Lower Extremities	22
Thorax & Abdomen	12
Back	14
Head & Neck	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>

### • AIM AND OBJECTIVES

- 1) To elucidate and explain the concept of *Marma* points stated in the Ayurvedic literature.
- 2) To understand the concept of *Marma Chikitsa* in scientific way.
- 3) Clinical Application of *Marma* in Various Disease.

### • MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. Concept of *Marma* is cleared by classical texts of Ayurveda and Siddha viz. Sushruta Samhita and Astanga Hridaya, Astanga Samgrah and their teekas.
2. Supportive texts of current science, different websites and journals were also used to understand the concept of *Marma Chikitsa*.

### • Anatomical and Physiological Significance

In the Ayurvedic text *Marmas* are defined as the common place where muscles, ligaments, bones, nerves, arteries and veins are forming an anastomosis. *Marma* points are areas of concentration of vital anatomical structures. These are neurovascular junctions, nerve plexuses, joints, endocrine glands and muscular intersections.<sup>[7]</sup>

### Physiological importance

- Regulation of *Prana* (life energy).

- Synthesis of sensory and motor activities.
- Supports blood circulation and nerve transmission.

**Table: Therapeutic Applications of *Marma* Stimulation in Various Disorders.**<sup>[13,14,15,16]</sup>

Sr. no.	Disease/Condition	<i>Marma</i> Points Stimulated	Therapeutic Significance
1.	Vertebral Column and Spinal Cord Disorders	<i>Kshipra, Talahridaya, Kurcha, Kurchashira, Gulpha, Indrabasti, Janu, Urvi, Ani</i>	Stimulation of these <i>Marma</i> points helps improve neuromuscular coordination, circulation, and functional recovery of the spine and spinal cord.
2.	Facial Paralysis ( <i>Ardita</i> )	<i>Dhamani, Sira, Matrika, Krikatika, Vidhura, Apanga, Avarta, Utkshepa, Shankha, Sthapani, Simanta, Adhipati</i>	These <i>Marma</i> points are associated with cranial nerves and facial musculature, aiding in restoration of facial movements and nerve function.
3.	Torti-colitis ( <i>Manyastambha</i> ) and Cervical Spondylosis	<i>Kshipra, Talahridaya, Kurcha, Kurchashira, Manibandha, Indrabasti, Kurpara, Urvi (Bahvi), Ani, Dhamani, Matrika, Krikatika, Ansa, Ansaphalaka</i>	<i>Marma</i> stimulation relieves pain, stiffness, muscle spasm, and improves cervical mobility and posture.
4.	Cerebral Palsy	<i>Marma</i> points of all four limbs along with back and head <i>Marma</i>	Enhances motor function, muscle tone, coordination, and overall neurological rehabilitation.

### Practical Guidelines for *Marma Chikitsa*

#### 1. Position of Patient

The patient should be placed in a comfortable, natural posture, depending on which *Marma* is to be stimulated.

Typical roles include

- Supine position (lying on the back)
- Prone position (lying on the abdomen)
- Sitting position if required

#### 2. Stimulation method

- Always use free finger nails.
- The selected *Marma* points should be treated with exact pressure and lightness.
- The therapist's hands are considered as the main therapeutic tool (*Hasta eva Pradhanatama Yantra*).<sup>[17]</sup>

### 3. *Chikitsa* Frequency

- Outdoor Patients (OPD): 2-3 Days/week.
- Indoor Patients (IPD): 2-4 sessions/day as per disease condition & clinical requirement.

### 4. Pressure Intensity

- The pressure applied should be individualised according to:
- Disease status, Patient age, *Bala* (Physical strength), *Satmya* (Capacity of Tolerance)

## DISCUSSION

In functional terms, *Marma* points can be seen as modulatory centers that affect local and distal physiological functions. *Marma* is believed to control the vitality and functional integrity of specific organs and body systems, much like the function of neural plexuses, ganglia, and endocrine regulatory centers in modern medicine. The disruption of these vital points by trauma, chronic dysfunction or disbalance of *Doshas* may lead to the development of various pathological conditions.

The therapeutic rationale of *Marma Chikitsa* is that every physiological activity needs a suitable stimulus. It is believed that controlled stimulation of certain *Marma* points can restore normal physiological activity and enhance the flow of *Prana* and re-establish functional harmony in the body. It is a try to shed light on the use of *Marma Chikitsa* in local disorders as well as systemic diseases that involve multiple organ systems.

*Marma Chikitsa* seems to have therapeutic effect through modulation of nervous and endocrine systems. When properly stimulated, *Marma* points can activate neural pathways, improve neurotransmitter activity, regulate hormonal secretions and promote tissue healing. The analgesic effect seen in *Marma Chikitsa* could be due to neurophysiological mechanisms that affect the perception of pain and inflammatory mediators. So, *Marma Chikitsa* has been widely used in treating musculoskeletal disorders, neurological conditions and chronic pain syndromes.

*Marma Chikitsa* has been applied clinically in cases of cervical spondylosis, low back pain, sciatica, facial paralysis, hemiplegia, paraplegia, monoplegia, prolapsed intervertebral disc and other neuromuscular disorders. The traditional usage of specific *Marma* points like *Ansaphalaka Marma* is for the management of shoulder pain and limited joint movements.

The Chikitsa has also shown promise in maintaining homeostasis and improving organ function.

Apart from physical disorders, *Marma Chikitsa* has a great role in preventive and promotive health care. According to Ayurveda, *Marma* points are affected by *Tridosha*, *Panchamahabhuta* and *Bhutatma*. Therefore, stimulation of these points can help maintain equilibrium of *Doshas* and *Dhatus* and support mental and emotional well-being. The connection between *Marma* and *Shatchakra* also indicates a connection between the physical, psychological and spiritual aspects of health. This holistic approach to *Marma Chikitsa* can help in reducing stress, improving vitality and also improving the quality of life.

## CONCLUSION

*Marma* is a unique and vital concept of Ayurveda, representing the seats of *Prana* and playing an important role in maintaining health and vitality. *Marma Chikitsa* helps to restore the physiological balance by stimulating specific *Marma* points, reduce pain, improve organ functions and promote self-healing. It is a safe, non-invasive, holistic therapeutic approach with great potential in the management of musculoskeletal, neurological and life style disorders. Further scientific studies are needed to validate its mechanisms and to improve its integration to modern-day health care practices.

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