

## A CRITICAL REVIEW ON MARMA SHARIR

Hemant Laxman Shinde<sup>1\*</sup> and Shalini Bhagyawan Khobragade<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Professor & HOD Rachana Sharir Department, Sau. Surekhatai Prakash Kolpe College of Ayurveda & Research Center, At Post-Kolpewadi, Tal-Kopargaon, Dist-Ahmednagar, Maharashtra.

<sup>2</sup>Professor & HOD Rachana Sharir Department, AMS Ayurved Medical College & Hospital, Sayne Khurd, Tal-Malegaon, Dist-Nashik, Maharashtra.

Article Received on  
04 April 2024,

Revised on 24 April 2024,  
Accepted on 14 May 2024

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr202410-32405



**\*Corresponding Author**

**Dr. Hemant Laxman  
Shinde**

Professor & HOD Rachana  
Sharir Department, Sau.  
Surekhatai Prakash Kolpe  
College of Ayurveda &  
Research Center, At Post-  
Kolpewadi, Tal-Kopargaon,  
Dist-Ahmednagar,  
Maharashtra.

## ABSTRACT

Ayurveda indeed delves deeply into the understanding of human anatomy through the branch known as Sharira Rachana, which translates to the structural aspect of the human body. "Sharir" meaning body and "Rachana" referring to structure encapsulate the essence of this branch, which provides detailed insights into the anatomical structures of the human body. Among the intricate components explored within Ayurveda, Marma holds a significant place. Marma can be defined as vital points on the body's surface, each holding critical importance, particularly in relation to traumatic effects. Injuries to these Marma points can lead to various degrees of disability, dysfunction or even fatality. Traditionally, Ayurvedic texts, particularly the "Trimarmiya Siddhi," elaborate on Marma, covering their definitions, types, symptoms ensuing from injuries to these points, and their respective treatments. The knowledge of Marma Vigyan or the science of Marma, is a valuable contribution from the ancient Acharyas (teachers) of Ayurveda. However, it's noteworthy that the understanding of Marma is not extensively developed in modern scientific discourse. The human body is said to contain 107

Marmas, distributed across the limbs, trunk, head and neck regions. These vital spots are comprised of five essential anatomical structures: Mamsa (muscles), Sira (veins), Snayu (ligaments), Asthi (bones), and Sandhi (joints).<sup>[1]</sup> Moreover, Marmas are not merely anatomical landmarks but are also regarded as sites where the Tridoshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha)

manifest in their subtle forms—Prana, Ojasa (Soma) and Tejas (Agni). Furthermore, Marmas are believed to harbor the three Gunas—Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas—representing mental contents (Manas), along with the soul or life force (Bhutatma). This holistic understanding of Marma underscores its significance not only in anatomical terms but also in the broader context of holistic health and well-being within Ayurveda.

**KEYWORD:** Ayurveda, Sushruta Samhita, Rachana sharir, Marma Vigyan, Vital points.

## INTRODUCTION

The concept of Marmas indeed holds a pivotal place in the realm of Sharira (anatomy) within Ayurveda. The "Marma Sharira" chapter of the Sushruta Samhita, an ancient Ayurvedic manuscript, provides elaborate details regarding Marmas. These details encompass the body organs or structures involved, the consequences of trauma over time, the area and sizes of Marmas, as well as their sites and locations on the body. Within the Ayurvedic understanding, there are 107 vital points distributed across various parts of the body.<sup>[2]</sup> These points are considered crucial and are to be carefully handled during surgical procedures, always safeguarded from injury, as they are believed to be where the essence of life (Prana) resides. While modern science has yet to fully grasp the perception of Marma, the science of Marmavignyanam (Knowledge of Marmas) is emphasized in Ayurvedic Samhitas, particularly in the Sharirsthana (Section dedicated to anatomy) of various Samhitas.<sup>[3]</sup> This highlights the importance and depth of understanding associated with Marmas within the Ayurvedic tradition, underscoring their significance not only in medical practices but also in the broader context of preserving life and well-being.

### Marma sharir<sup>[4]</sup>

The etymology of the word "Marma" indeed stems from the Sanskrit root "mri" which means death. Marma points are regarded as vital areas of the body due to their critical nature. Injuries to these points can lead to severe consequences, including death or fetal complications, hence the name Marma. A Marma is a specific anatomical location where five essential structures of the human body—Mamsa (Muscles), Sira (Vessels), Snayu (Ligaments), Asthi (Bones) and Sandhi (Joints)—converge or fuse together at one point. This convergence makes these points particularly vulnerable and significant in the context of health and well-being. According to Acharya Vagbhata, in addition to their anatomical significance, Marma points can also be identified by their sensitivity to pressure and abnormal pulsations. These criteria further emphasize the importance of identifying and

understanding Marma points within the framework of Ayurveda and traditional medical practices.

### **Concept of marma<sup>[5]</sup>**

The term "Marma" indeed carries profound significance within Ayurveda, denoting the essence of life itself—Prana, Jiva, or the life force of an individual. These vital points are intricately involved with five fundamental anatomical structures: Mamsa (Muscles), Sira (Vessels), Snayu (Ligaments), Asthi (bones) and Sandhi (Joints). Across various Ayurvedic texts, the total number of primary Marma points is consistently cited as 107. According to Acharya Vagbhata, a Marma is where Mamsa, Asthi, Sira, Snayu, Dhamni (Vessels), and Sandhi converge, and it is where Prana is believed to reside. Vagbhata further elaborates that Marma points exhibit characteristics such as tenderness upon pressure application and abnormal pulsations. This highlights their significance not only anatomically but also in terms of sensitivity and vulnerability. While the concept of Marma was first mentioned by Acharya Charak, it was Acharya Sushrut and Acharya Vagbhata who provided detailed descriptions of Marma in their respective Sharir Sthanas (Sections dedicated to anatomy). In linguistic terms, dictionaries define the word "Marma" as "Marman," signifying a mortal point, a sensitive point or a weak and vulnerable point. This definition encapsulates the critical nature of Marma points within the context of health, well-being, and medical intervention in Ayurveda.

The perspective on Marma provided by Acharya Dalhan and Arundatta further underscores the critical nature of these points within Ayurveda. Acharya Dalhan defines Marma as "Maryanti iti Marmani," meaning it is a spot on the body's surface where any injury or trauma can lead to sudden death. Therefore, it is imperative to protect these points from any form of injury or harm. Arundatta elaborates on Marma as vital points where injury can result in Marana or Maranasagrishya Dukh, indicating death or severe pain respectively. Marma is considered the seat of Prana or life force, which is constituted by the convergence of Mamsa (Muscle), Sira (Vein), Snayu (Ligament), Asthi (Bone), and Sandhi (Joint). This perspective underscores the profound importance of safeguarding Marma points and highlights their critical role not only in physical health but also in preserving life itself within the Ayurvedic tradition.

### **Classification of marma<sup>[6]</sup>**

The total 107 Marma have been classified under five different groups

1. Structural classification (Asraya Bhedena)
2. Regional classification (Shadanga Bhedena/Avayava Bhedena)
3. Prognostic classification/Traumatological classification (Vepath Bhedena)
4. Dimensional classification (Mana Bhedena)
5. Numerical classification (Sankhya Bhedena)

### Prognostic classification

Sushruta and Vagbhata indeed classified Marma into five types based on the prognosis of Marmabhighata or injuries to Marma points. These classifications help in understanding the severity and consequences of injuries to different Marma points.<sup>[7]</sup>

Sr. No.	Prognostic Classification	Doshic Predominance	Total Number
1	Sadhyo Pranhara (threat to life within 7 days of injury)	Agneya	19
2	Kalantara Pranhara (threat to life within 15 days of injury)	Agneya, Soumya	33
3	Vishalyagna (fatal after removing the foreign body)	Vayavya	3
4	Vaikalyakara (structural deformity)	Soumya	44
5	Rujakara (extremely painful)	Soumya, Agneya, Vayavya	8
		Total	107

The classification of individual Marmas into different groups based on their size or extent of area further enriches our understanding of these vital points within Ayurveda.

### According to this classification<sup>[8]</sup>

- Urvi, Kurcha Sira, Vitapa, and Kakshadhara Marmas are each measured as one finger in size.
- Sthanamula, Manibandha, and Gulpha Marmas are each measured as two fingers in size.
- Two Kurpara and two Janu Marmas are each measured as three fingers in size.
- Hridaya, Vasti, Kurcha, Guda, Nabhi, and the four Marmas of the head (Sringataka), as well as the five Simantas and twelve Marmas of the neck (Including two Nila, two Manya, and eight Matrika), are each measured as the size of a closed fist, which is four fingers each.
- The remaining Marmas are believed to measure half a finger only.

This classification provides a tangible way to conceptualize the size and significance of individual Marma points within the body.

Additionally, Sushruta organized the distribution of the 107 Marma points based on the Shadanga, or six parts of the body. He outlined five regions where Marma points are distributed.<sup>[9]</sup>

1. The head and neck
2. The chest
3. The abdomen
4. The back
5. The extremities (Superior & Inferior)

He specified the number of Marma points in each region, with 37 in the head and neck, 12 in the abdomen and chest regions, 14 in the back, and 11 in each of the extremities. This structured approach helps in understanding the distribution and significance of Marma points throughout the body according to Ayurvedic principles.

The classification of Marma points based on the consequences of injury highlights the dynamic nature of these vital points within Ayurveda. This classification reflects the vitality of Marma points based on the predominant Dosha involvement and underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing injuries to these points promptly. It's important to note that Marma points aren't rigidly fixed in their categories. Depending on various factors, including therapeutic procedures or neglect, a Marma point classified under one category may transition into another category. This fluidity underscores the importance of proactive care and treatment to maintain the integrity of these vital points. The main body organs and structures involved in the sites of Marma points are Mamsa (Muscles), Sira (Blood vessels), Snayu (Nerves, Tendons, or Ligaments), Asthi (Bones), and Sandhi (Joints). Based on these structures, Marma points are designated as Mamsa Marma, Sira Marma, Snayu Marma, Asthi Marma, and Sandhi Marma.<sup>[10]</sup>

Considering the consequences or prognosis of trauma over Marma points, Sushruta classified them into five groups<sup>[11]</sup>

1. **Sadya pranahara marma:** Injuries to these Marma points result in immediate death.
2. **Kalantara pranahara marma:** Death occurs after some time has passed since the injury.
3. **Vishalyaghna marma:** Death occurs soon after removing the foreign body (Shalya) causing the injury.

4. **Vaikalyakara marma:** Injuries to these Marma points lead to restlessness.
5. **Rujakara marma:** Injuries to these Marma points cause severe pain.

These classifications provide a framework for understanding the severity and implications of trauma to different Marma points, guiding medical practitioners in their diagnosis and treatment approaches.

### **Injury to marma (Marmabhighata)**

Marmabhighata encompasses any injuries to Marma points in the body, whether they result from incisions, stabbings, burns, or external blows, varying in severity from mild to severe. These injuries are likely to produce subjective manifestations, influenced by the extent and nature of the trauma to the Marma points.

Sushruta categorized these manifestations into three broad headings<sup>[12]</sup>

1. **General symptoms:** These include manifestations such as confusion (Bhrama), delirium (Pralapa), weakness (Dourvalya), lack of consciousness (Chittanasha), restlessness (Strastanga), loss of sensation in affected body parts, elevated body temperature, loss of joint function, unconsciousness, shallow breathing, severe pain, bleeding, loss of perception of senses, giddiness, paleness of the body, burning sensation over the cardiac area, and postural instability. These symptoms are commonly observed in cases of Marmabhighata and indicate the overall impact of the injury on the individual's well-being.
2. **Particular symptoms:** These are specific manifestations that may arise based on the consequences precipitating during the course of the trauma. They may vary depending on the individual Marma points affected and the nature of the injury.
3. **Concequential prognosis:** This category deals with the expected outcomes or consequences of the injury to the Marma points, including both immediate and delayed effects on the individual's health and functioning.

Apart from these general symptoms, specific diseases may also manifest in individual Marma points when they are injured. This underscores the intricate relationship between Marma points and overall health within the Ayurvedic framework, emphasizing the importance of understanding and addressing injuries to these vital points with appropriate care and treatment.

**Therapy of marma<sup>[13]</sup>**

Marma therapy is a comprehensive approach that encompasses various techniques and therapies aimed at stimulating vital points within the body to promote health and well-being. It is deeply rooted in the understanding of Prana, particularly its association with Vata Dosha. Since Marma is closely related to Prana, it predominantly deals with Vata Dosha imbalances. The utilization of external stimulation, pulling techniques, Panchakarma (Purification therapies), and massage, along with Abhyanga (Oil massage) and Mardana (Rubbing), are integral components of Marma therapy. These techniques help in clearing the channels (Shrotas), improving circulation, enhancing physical and mental flexibility, removing toxins (Ama), and clinically addressing various diseases, especially those related to the heart. Marma therapy focuses on stimulating vital points to remove blockages from the shrotas, thereby facilitating physical and psychological repose. It primarily targets diseases related to the neuromuscular, nervous, locomotor, and circulatory systems. Specific Marma points are targeted for Vata Vyadhi (Diseases related to Vata Dosha), including Prana Vata, Udana Vata, Vyana Vata, Samana Vata, and Apana Vata. By applying pressure on these Marma points, Marma therapy aims to regulate the flow of positive Prana through various channels, effectively treating conditions such as headaches, joint pain, paralysis, heart diseases, mental stress, and muscular sprains. Traditional Ayurvedic texts recommend various therapies such as Swedana (Sudation), Abhyanga (Oil massage), and Pizhichil (Oil bath) as part of Marma Chikitsa (Marma therapy). For example, Abhyanga, particularly Shirobhyanga (Head massage), is beneficial for conditions like headaches, stiffness of the jaw, stiffness of the neck, and deafness. Overall, Marma therapy offers a holistic approach to healing, addressing both physical and mental aspects of health by targeting vital energy points within the body and promoting balance and harmony.

**Marma help to treat following disease conditions<sup>[14]</sup>**

- Joint pain
- Respiratory obstructions
- Nervous system disorders
- Muscular pain
- Headaches & migraines
- Fatigue
- Mental stress
- Paralysis



- Blood pressure
- Hridaya Roga

## CONCLUSION

Marma points indeed hold a central place in Ayurvedic therapies, ranging from simple self-care practices to complex clinical procedures. These vital points are intricately associated with various organs and nerves in the body, forming critical junctures that regulate physiological functions. Ayurveda extensively describes the use of Marma therapy for treating various diseases and emphasizes the importance of identifying and protecting these points, as injuries to Marma points can have serious harmful effects on health. The concept of Marma points has been integral to Ayurvedic thought and practice since ancient times, with references to them dating back to the Vedic period. Ayurvedic texts, including those authored by renowned Acharyas, have meticulously documented the knowledge of Marma points, with a total of 107 points identified in the human body. At these Marma points, different types of muscles, veins, bones, ligaments, and joints converge, forming physiological junctions that play crucial roles in regulating bodily functions and maintaining overall health. Marma therapy involves stimulating these points through various techniques to restore balance and promote healing. Marma therapy can be seamlessly integrated with other Ayurvedic therapies, including Panchakarma (purification therapies), to enhance their effectiveness. By incorporating Marma therapy into treatment protocols, Ayurvedic practitioners can address a wide range of health conditions holistically, targeting not only symptoms but also underlying imbalances in the body's energy and functioning. In essence, Marma points serve as key landmarks in the body's energetic map, and their therapeutic manipulation forms an essential aspect of Ayurvedic healing modalities, contributing to the restoration and optimization of health and well-being.

## REFERENCES

1. Acharya VS, editor. Vaidya-manoramahindi commentary. Delhi, India: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Publication; Charaka Charaka Samhita, 2003; 1: 945-62.
2. Sushruta. Sushruta Samhita, edited with Ayurvedatatvasandeepika Hindi commentary by Shastri Kaviraj Ambika Dutta. Varanasi, India: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan. ShareeraSthana, 2014; 1, 69: 6-16.



3. Charaka. charaka Samhita of Agnivesh, edited with Charaka Chandrika Hindi commentary by Tripathy Bramhanand. Varanasi, India: Chaukhambha Surbharti Prakashan. Chikitsa Sthana, 1998; 2, 862: 26-3.
4. Sushruta. Sushruta Samhita, edited with Ayurvedatatvasandeeepika Hindi commentary by Shastri Kaviraj Ambika Dutta. Varanasi, India: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan. ShareeraSthana, 2014; 1, 71: 6-3.
5. Vagbhata. Astanga Hridya. English commentary Kanjiv L, editor. New Delhi, India: Chaukhambha Publications. Shareera Sthana, 2017; 3, 428: 4-1.
6. Vagbhata. Astanga Hridya. English commentary Kanjiv L, New Delhi, India: Chaukhambha Publications. Shareera Sthana, 2017; 433: 4-38.
7. Dr. Acharya Privata Sharma, Sushrut Samhita (Sharir Sthan) (Nibandh Sangraha tika by Dalhanacharya), Eights edition, Reprint, Varanasi, Published by Chaukhamba orientela, 2005; 6: 369.
8. Dr. Moreshwarkunte Ashtang Hridya (Sharir Sthan), (Arundatta Tika) Reprint, Varanasi, Published by Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pubication, 1995; 4: 415.
9. Dr. Bhaskar Govind Ghanekar, Sushrut Samhita (Sharir Sthan), Reprint, New Delhi Meharchand Lachhmandas Publication, 1986; 183: 6-22.
10. Ghanekar Bhaskar, Sushruta Samhita Sharir Sthana with Hindi commentary, Chapter Garbha Vyakaranam Sharir, Meharchand Lachamandas Publications, New delhi, 2018; 6: 29-189.
11. Shastri A, Sharira Sthana, Susrut Samhita, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, 1997; 6: 3.
12. Shastri A, Sharira Sthana, Susrut Samhita, Chaukhamba Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, 1997; 6: 4.
13. Sujit Kumar Dalai. The Chapter “Marma Sharira” of Sushruta Is Mirror of Surgery International Journal of Science and Healthcare Research ([www.ijshr.com](http://www.ijshr.com)), April-June 2019; 4(2): 69.
14. Acharya Y T, Acharya N.R, Susrut Samhita, Nibandhasangraha Commentary, Chaukhamba Orientalia, Varanasi, 1997; 6, 370: 8-14.
15. Acharya Y T, Acharya N.R, Susrut Samhita, Nibandhasangraha Commentary, Chaukhamba Orientalia, Varanasi, 1997; 6, 374: 28-29.