

MARMA CHIKITSA - A CRITICAL REVIEW OF CLINICAL IMPORTANCE OF APANGA MARMA

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ABSTRACT

Marma Chikitsa, an integral discipline within *Ayurveda*, involves the precise manipulation of vital energy points known as *Marma* points. This critical review explores the clinical significance of *Apanga Marma*, with a specific focus on its therapeutic applications. By synthesizing insights from ancient Ayurvedic texts and contemporary research, this article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of *Apanga Marma* potential in promoting holistic well-being.

KEYWORDS: *Apanga, Ayurveda, Marma, Marma Chikitsa.*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a Science of Life. The knowledge of *Ayurveda* is originated more than 5,000 years ago. The main aim of *Ayurveda* is to maintain the health of a healthy individual and heal the disease of the sick individual. Life (Ayu) is the combination (*Samyoga*) of *Sharir*, *Indriya*, *Satva*, and *Atma*. *Ayurveda* is the most ancient science of life, beneficial to humans both in this world. The knowledge of *Marma* is

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found dispersed throughout the Ayurvedic classics in different context. *Marma* is considered as a unique entity of *Ayurveda*.

The word “*Marma*” comes from Sanskrit origin “*Mra*” means place of Prana (life). *Marma* in Sanskrit means hidden or secret. By definition, a *Marma* point is a junction on body where two or more types of tissue meet, such as *Mamsa*, *Sira*, *Snayu*, *Asthi* and *Sandhi* (Muscles, Veins, Ligaments, Bones or Joints).^[1] *Marma* is defined as vital point of the body. These are special points in human body and any injury to these *Marmas* leads to disability and if not properly treated even fatal condition may develop.^[2] This does not mean that all the structures must be present collectively at the site of *Marma*. According to *Ashtang Hridaya* these are the points where important nerves (*Dhamani*) come together along with other structures like muscles, tendons etc. *Vagbhata* says that those sites which are painful, severe tender and show abnormal pulsation (should also be) considered as *Marma* or vital points. These points are the seats of 'life'.^[3] The *Marmas* are made up of *Soma*, *Maruta*, *Teja*, *Raja*, *Satwa*, *Tama*, and *Bhutatma*.^[4]

Marma or the vital points on the body, are the junction of the body and mind. They are also important pressure points on the body much like the acupuncture points of the Traditional Chinese Medicine. *Basti*, *Hridaya* and *Shira*. The most important difference between acupuncture points and *Marma* is the *Marma* points are measured in *Anguli* or finger unit relative to each individual, and they are larger in size. Also, these points are not related to meridians.^[5]

Marma Chikitsa is the oldest treasure of Indian surgery from the Vedic period. During the Vedic era the knowledge of *Marma* was known to the emperors and warriors. The concept and practice of *Marma* was very popular in those days to achieve the maximum effect when contending with the enemies.^[6]

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.^[7]

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

- To Explore Ancient Ayurvedic Texts- Investigate different ancient ayurvedic literature to elucidate the ancient wisdom surrounding *Apanga Marma* and its therapeutic applications.
- To Review Contemporary Research- Examine recent scientific studies and clinical trials that have explored the physiological and therapeutic aspects of *Apanga Marma* to bridge the ancient wisdom with modern evidence-based practices.
- To Understand Clinical Applications- Analyse the practical implications of *Apanga Marma* in various clinical scenarios, including musculoskeletal disorders, neurological conditions, and psychological well-being.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Distribution and Description of *Marma* Points in the Human Body

According to *Maharsi Susruta* there are 107 *Marmas* in the human body.^[8] These are very important vital places. Any injury to these parts may lead to severe pain, disability, loss of function, loss of sensation (anaesthesia) and death. According to anatomical consideration *Marmas* can be divided into *Mansa-Marma*, *Siramarma*, *Snayu-Marma*, *Sandhi-Marma*, and *Asthi Marma*^[9] (respectively, Marma of muscle, blood vessel, ligament, joint and bone). On the basis of properties, they can be categorized into *Saumya*, *Vayavya*, *Agneya* and *Saumyagneya Marmas*.^[10] According to site, *Marmas* are situated at *Udara* (thorax and abdomen), *Prishtha* (back), *Shakha* (extremities) and *Urdhvajatru* (neck and head) region. There are eleven *Marma* points in one leg. The same number is present in the other leg. So, these are a total of forty-four *Marma* points including both the upper and lower extremities. There are twelve *Marma* points in the thorax and abdomen. Fourteen *Marma* points are present in the back. Thirty-seven *Marma* points are located above the clavicular region (neck and head).^[11]

Apanga Marma

Etymological description of the term *Apanga*

The term *Apanga* is meant for outer corner of eye, a sectorial mark or circlet on the forehead, without limbs or without body. *Apanga Desha* is the place round the outer corner or angle of the eye.^[12]

Description of *Apanga Marma* in ancient literatures

In *Sushruta Samhita*^[13], had mentioned that *Apanga Marma* are of *Ardhangula* in *Praman* and included amongst *Sira Marma* and *Vaikalyakar Marma*. *Ashtanga Sangraha*, and *Bhavprakash Samhita* had followed the belief of *Acharya Sushruta*. It is situated on *Bhrupuchha Adho* (eyebrows below outside the eye), injuries to these *Marma* produces “*Andhata*” (blindness) and “*Drishti Upghata*” (defect of vision). According to *Ashtanga Hridaya*^[14], the *Apanga Marma* are situated at the outer angle of eye, at the tail end of the eyebrows and below them are two *Apanga Marma*, injury to these result in “*Andhata*” (blindness).

Anatomical structure present under *Apanga Marma*-

Zygomatico-temporal vessels^[15] Anterior Ciliary arteries and veins, Drainage to the superficial parotid lymph glands. Optic and ciliary nerves. Sphenoid, Maxillary and Zygomatic joints.^[16]

Clinical importance of *Apanga Marma*

Application: Eye strain, defective vision, headache resulting from strained eyes, blocked nose.

Significance: The eye *Marmas* provide the visual system with *Prana* and control its energetic functions. Farsightedness is a quality of a free mind which can look into the future and can live and act with foresight. Long-sightedness (hyperopia) prevents us seeing the things that are immediate. Shortsightedness (myopia), in turn, has, as its potential background, the fear of being seen and criticized.

Control function: *Apanga* is a blood vessel *Marma*. It regulates blood flow to the eye and also vision. Its centre is the first point of the energy path of the gall bladder. In addition to *Apanga*, there are other smaller points that strengthen the eyes as well as the paranasal sinuses and digestive organs.

Immediate effect: The treatment clarifies vision, relaxes and refreshes the eyes, calms the mind and relaxes the neck.^[17]

Circling the eye: Sit upright comfortably and keep the eyes closed throughout the treatment. Place the tip of your middle fingers at the corner of the eyes on the *Apanga Marmas* and massage very gently, both simultaneously and slowly on the left and right side around the

inside edge of the eye socket. Stop at each point with a short, light pressure, and then continue. Massage three times to the right and three times to the left.^[18]

Stimulation time: 17-18 times per sitting, 3-4 times per day

DISCUSSION

The discussion of *Apanga Marma* is under the following points.

Conceptual Framework- The exploration of *Apanga Marma* within the context of *Ayurveda* reveals a foundational understanding deeply rooted in ancient wisdom. Traditional texts such as *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita* provide insights into the role of *Apanga Marma* in balancing *Vata*, *Pitta*, and *Kapha Doshas*. This traditional perspective is essential for appreciating the holistic nature of *Apanga Marma* therapy.

Physiological Mechanisms- Examining the physiological mechanisms behind *Apanga Marma* therapeutic effects unveils a complex interplay of neurovascular connections and energy flow. Scientific studies shed light on the intricate network of nerves and blood vessels converging at these peripheral *Marma* points. This understanding contributes to the integration of *Apanga Marma* into evidence-based practices.

Clinical Applications- *Apanga Marma* exhibits diverse clinical applications, making it a versatile therapeutic tool. In musculoskeletal disorders, the targeted manipulation of *Apanga Marma* points has shown promise in alleviating pain and promoting mobility. Neurological rehabilitation benefits from the nuanced approach of *Apanga Marma*, emphasizing its potential in enhancing neural connectivity and facilitating recovery. Additionally, the impact on mental health underscores the holistic nature of *Apanga Marma* therapy, with potential applications in stress management and emotional well-being.

Integration into Modern Healthcare- The amalgamation of ancient Ayurvedic insights with contemporary research is crucial for successfully integrating *Apanga Marma* into modern healthcare. Bridging the gap between traditional knowledge and evidence-based practices enhances the credibility and acceptance of *Apanga Marma* as a viable therapeutic intervention. This discussion advocates for collaborative efforts between Ayurvedic practitioners and modern healthcare professionals to incorporate *Apanga Marma* into holistic patient care.

Future Directions- Despite the progress made in understanding clinical importance of *Apanga Marma*, there remains a need for more further research to explore its potential. Future studies should delve into specific clinical conditions, specific treatment protocols, and long-term outcomes like effect, side effect, adverse effect associated with *Apanga Marma* therapy. Collaborative efforts between Ayurvedic scholars, healthcare practitioners, and researchers can pave the way for evidence-based guidelines, fostering the continued evolution of *Apanga Marma* in contemporary healthcare.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, *Apanga Marma* emerges as a central element in *Marma Chikitsa*, demonstrating substantial clinical importance. The integration of different Ayurvedic concept with modern research highlights the therapeutic potential of *Apanga Marma*. This critical review emphasizes its role in addressing a variety of health concerns and advocates for further exploration and incorporation into contemporary healthcare practices. The insights presented herein contribute to the ongoing evolution of holistic healthcare approaches, fostering a deeper appreciation for the relevance of *Apanga Marma* in the pursuit of overall well-being.

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