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MARMA AND MARMA THERAPY: A TRADITIONAL VIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is a standardised science of living being which is in existence since archaic times. In recent year there has been lot of research in Ayurveda but still some of the concepts are left behind just as one of them is *Marma*. A *Marma* point is the coupling place of *Mamsa*, *Sira*, *Snayu*, *Asthi*, *Sandhi*. The detailed knowledge of *Marma* and *Marma* therapy has been mentioned in *Sushruta Samhita* and *Varman Chikitsa* in Siddha medicine respectively. The present article explored its application as a therapeutic procedure (*Marma* Therapy), necessity of *marma* therapy and its importance. Still India has low socio economic population which cannot afford expensive treatment for ailments like headache, backache etc so this therapy has the potential with low cost to fulfil the need.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Marma, Marma therapy, Prana

INTRODUCTION

The vayu (Prana) that travels throughout the body is a vital constituent, which resides in some determined sites of the body such as heart, brain, different joints etc. These lively sites are called Marma [1]. The word Marma is derived from the term “Mri” which means jeevasthanam or Sandhistanam. A Marma points are the coupling place of several dhatus and updhatus such as Muscular tissue that is Mamsa, blood vessel that is Sira, Systema Nervosa that is Snayu, Osseous tissue that is Asthi and Joints that is Sandhi [2]. Acharya Vagbhatt has catalogue Dhamni Marma along with them, he also said that these are the place where “Visham Spandan” and “Peeditae Ruk” is seen [3]. Acharya Charak has said Marma as a site of Chetna so sensation of pain is more in these sites as compared to other sites of the body [4]. Dalhan in “Dalhans” commentary, he mentioned that no other structure is required not even channels (Srotas). He defended it by saying that all injuries to these channel does not lead to fatality so these structures are different in Anatomy and Physiology [5]. Acharya Sushruta has described Marma in detail in his text and has considered its knowledge equal to bisection of the Shalya tantra’s knowledge (i.e Ardhachikitsa) as his text was the Shalya pradhan so during shalya

karma these Marma sites must be kept in intellect to avoid any kind of injury that may lead to dysfunction or death. Marmas are also the site of presence of tridoshas along with Satva, Raja and tama [6].

The conception of Marma can be correlated with Chakras mentioned in Yoga Darshan called as “Shad Chakras” which can be said powerhouse of energy and the Marma is the site on the body where the occlusion of energy is felt. Marmas are imperceptible but could be detected at a point where energy, soul and mind are found together. The concept of Marmas are very similar to concept described in Chinese Medical System where the point seems besides Single Meridian or at the junction of different Meridians.

The treatment by any medical system is to enhance our body to heal itself against disease, so use of Marma points by manipulating or stimulating them in management of ailment is called the Marma Therapy. The detailed knowledge of Marma and Marma therapy has been mentioned in Sushruta Samhita and Siddha System of Medicine.

Classification Of Marma

Classification based on different Tradition [7]

Particulars	No. of Marma
Siddha System of Medicine	8000/108 Varnam Sites
Kalari tradition of Kerala	365 Marma point
Tamil tradition	108 Marma point
Sushruta Samhita	107 Marma point

These Marma can be divided into major and minor Marma sites in which first correspond to Seven Chakras and second to trunk and limb respectively.

Classification based on Location of Marma [8]

Particulars	No. of Marma
Shakha gat Marma	44 Marma point
Madhyam marg Marma	26 Marma point
Jatru dhara Marma	37 Marma point

Body Parts	No. of Marma
Lower Extrimity	22 (11 on each side) Marma point
Arm	22 (11 on each side) Marma point
Chest & Stomach	12 Marma point
Back	14 Marma point
Head & Neck	37 Marma point

Apart from this there are various groups on the basis of physical origin and features
Classification based on Tissue Involved [9]

Particulars	No. of Marma
Mamsa	11 Marma point
Asthi	8 Marma point
Snayu	27 Marma point
Sandhi	20 Marma point
Sira	41 Marma point

Classification based on Therapeutic division of Marma

- Physical (Sthula) Marma and Subtle (Sukshma Marma)

- Lethal or Vulnerable and therapeutic
- External and Internal

Classification based on outcome of Injury of an Area [10]

Particulars	Description
Sadyah pranahara	Injury to this Marma causes death within 7 days
Kalantar pranahara	Injury to this Marma causes death within 15 days (due to gradual loss of life)
Visha Lyaghna Marma	Injury to this Marma , person survive until the foreign body remain at site of Marma
Vaikalyakara	Injury to this Marma, deformity of that part occurs which are dependent on that specific Marma
Rujakara Marma	Injury to this Marma causes only pain

Marma Therapy and its Importance

Marma therapy is a specific technique of touching at precisely right place at a moment of time [11]. Acharya Sushruta has said “Hastameva Pradhaanatanam Yantranam” as efficacy of various action performed by humans depend on the skill of hand [12]. A professional spots marma point and enhance the affected part and surrounding muscles by increasing blood flow.

Acharya Charak has said “Swasthasya Swastha rakshanam aaturasya vikara parshmanam cha” and the Marma therapy fulfils both the creiteria by disease prevention and treatment. This therapy can be used from common disease (headache, body ache to serious neuro muscular disorders) [13].

The application of Marma therapy has been divided into two major categories

Type of Marma Therapy	Example
Marma therapy with medicine	Nasya
	Abhyanga
	Udvaartana
	Lepa
	Avgahana
	Dhara
	Aroma therapy
Marma therapy without medicine	Suchi Vedha
	Mardana
	Shatkarma
	Yogasana
	Pranayama
	Dhyana

In classical texts, the knowledge of Marma has more references in context with the prognosis of disease and anatomy of the body rather than described as a type of treatment.

The importance of Marma in different aspects are as follows:

The knowledge of Marma is used to know the nature of disease as curable or non-curable, As Acharyas has already mentioned that it is difficult to treat disease or untreatable when Marma is affected with Doshas [14].

The Marma points must be saved from any injury or trauma during performing the surgical procedures as it may lead to severe disability or death due to excessive bleeding and pain [15]. This is the reason it is mentioned in detail in Sharir Sthana of Sushruta Samhita.

The Marma points must be kept in mind while performing Panchkarma procedures, During Abhyanga and Mardana the amount of pressure put on these points must be calculated.

How Marma Therapy works ?

The identification and pressure applied on the Marmas are the matter of long term practice and attentiveness so different practitioners adopt slight different method of therapy

Various factors which are affecting the duration on this therapy are:-

- Severity of the disease
- Cause of the disease
- Duration of the disease
- Age and body condition of the patient

Marma therapy works by the basic principle [16]:

It eliminates the blockage of channel thus enhance process of circulation.

It stimulates the flow of prana and pacifies vata dosha, especially vyana vayu which controls autonomic Nervous system.

It builds a positive connection with unconscious mind by transformation done at physical mental & emotional level.

It enhances physical and intellectual flexibility by removing toxins (ama) and vitiated vata.

These Marma points are stimulated 3-4 times / day. The rate and rythum of stimulation is same as rate and rythum of person's respiration [17]. It is done in various Asanas and postures (most commonly in sitting and supine position). In siddhas there is

description of 12 techniques when applicable on single point is capable of curing 48 different diseases.

Advantages of Marma Therapy:

- This therapy is Cost effective
- This therapy can be done with medicine or without medicine
- This therapy is non invasive method
- There are not many dietary restriction for this therapy
- This therapy has no adverse effect unless done carelessly
- This therapy is fast acting in less time

Disadvantages of Marma Therapy:

- This therapy cannot be performed on person with snake bite or poisoning
- This therapy if not performed properly can lead to disability or death or may enhance the symptoms of the disease

Use of Marma therapy in Pathological condition:

The Marma therapy is especially helpful in treating the disease of Nervous system disease, macular pain, joint pain, headache, osteoarthritis, spondylopathis and mental stress.

CONCLUSION

The concept of Marma and Mama therapy is a substantial contribution of classical texts in health sciences which are from ancient time.

As the knowledge of Marma was familiar to sovereign and warriors which uses this in battle field to hit and achieve destructive effect on enemies. From observation it is known that it gives immediate relieve so the therapy can fulfil this lacuna in the field of Ayurveda. Thus it can be concluded that the Marma therapy is effective, cost reliable and non-invasive procedure that hold significant place in health science.

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