

## DEFINITION AND PROPERTIES OF MARMA: A REVIEW ARTICLE

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## ABSTRACT

In the vast sea of the knowledge of Ayurveda, Marma is one of the extremely important topics. Marma points have been unanimously accepted as the 'seats of life' (Prana - the vital life force). If these locations are injured, then it may lead to severe pain, disability, loss of function, loss of sensation, or death. Therefore, the ancient scriptures have strictly directed that these vital locations should not be injured, and due care should be taken in this regard even while doing surgeries. However, recent researches indicate that if there is inflammation or pain at any Marma point, then stimulating its nearby Marma points can help in alleviating this pain. This Marma Therapy has been used in treating various physical and mental disorders, with encouraging results. In view of the importance of Marma Science mentioned in scriptures and with regards to surgeries, as well as the encouraging outcomes of Marma Therapy in recent times, the present study was undertaken for an in-depth study of the Science of Marma.

**KEYWORDS:** Ayurveda, Marma Science, Marma Therapy, Marma Classification, Marmaghata.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the vast sea of the knowledge of Ayurveda, Marma is one of the extremely important topics. Marma point is defined as anatomical site where muscles, veins, ligaments, bones and joints meet together (Sushruta Samhita Sharira Sthana 6/16). According to Acharya Sushruta there are 107 marmas in human body (Sushruta Samhita Sharira Sthana 6/3). These are very important vital places, which are the 'seats of life' (Prana - the vital life force) (Ashtanga Hridaya Sharira Sthana 4/2). Any injury to these parts may lead to severe pain, disability, loss of function, loss of sensation, or death. It plays an important role in surgery; therefore, it is called 'Shalya Vishayardha' (half of the entire science of surgery) (Sushruta Samhita Sharira Sthana 6/35). Acharya Sushruta states that Marma sthan, a very vital point, should not be injured and should be kept intact even while doing surgeries (Sushruta Samhita Sharira Sthana 6/21). However, recent researches indicate that if any Marma point is inflamed or painful, then stimulating its nearby Marma points can help in alleviating this pain. Several studies and texts have reported the therapeutic benefits of Marma Therapy in treating various physical and mental disorders. Looking at the importance of the Marma Science with regards to surgeries, as well as their recent use and future possibilities as an effective therapeutic procedure, the present study has been undertaken for an in-depth study of the Science of

Marma. An account of various ancient / classical Indian scriptures, including the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Samhitas, etc. that mention different aspects of the Science of Marma, was given in Part-1 of this study.

## 2. Derivation of the word 'marma'

The origin of word 'Marma' can be traced in various texts as follows:

## 2.1 Amarakosha

Amarakosha explains that the word marma is derived from the sanskrit term 'mri- manin' or 'mri- pranatyage'. It means that which causes death or death like miseries.

## 2.2 Shabdakalpadruma

Mentions that the word marma is derived from 'mri' dhatu. Its meaning is explained as sandhistanam (i.e. joining point of various structures) or jeevasthanam (seats of life).

## 2.3 Raj Nighantu

Raj Nighantukara opines that the word marma is derived from 'mri - manin', which means seat of life (jeevasthana) or conglomeration of many important structures (sandhi sthana). Thus, based on the above descriptions, Marma is derived from the root word 'mri' with suffix 'manin'. The word 'Marman' is the singular form, which means jeevasthanam (seat of life) or

sandhistanam (meeting place). Etymologically each letter of word marma has got specific meaning - 'Ma' means prana or vayu, Repha denotes house or seat. Therefore, 'Marma' means seat of Prana or Vayu, where Prana is the vital life force that governs all the physical and subtle processes of a living being.

### 3. Definitions of 'marma'

#### 3.1 According to Acharya Sushruta

Marma (fatal spots) are confluence of muscles, veins, ligaments, bones and joints. These are the places where the Prana (vital life force) resides naturally.

#### 3.2 According to Ashtanga Sangraha

Marmas are the sites where muscles, veins, ligaments, bones and joints meet. If they get traumatized, Prana gets destroyed.

#### 3.3 According to Ashtanga Hridaya

Marmas are the sites where muscles, bones, ligaments, artery, veins and joints meet each other. Prana is especially located there, and if they get afflicted, it may lead to death.

#### 3.4 According to Acharya Chakrapani

The meeting point of muscle, vein, ligament, bone and joint is called Marma, which are dependent on these components.

#### 3.5 According to Acharya Aruna Dutta

The meeting point of vein, ligament, joint, muscle and bone is called Marma point. Prana especially resides in these points.

#### 3.6 According to Acharya Bhava Prakash

The meeting point of vein, ligament, joint, muscle and bone is called Marma point. Prana especially resides in these points.

### 4. Lakshanas (Nature / Signs) Of Marma

#### 4.1 According to Acharya Sushruta

Marma (fatal spots) are confluence of muscles, veins, ligaments, bones and joints. Prana (vital life force) especially resides in these locations; hence if the Marmas are injured, they produce their respective effect.

#### 4.2 According to Acharya Dalhana

Any injury to marma points may lead to death.

#### 4.3 According to Acharya Vagabhatta

That part of the body is Marma, where, on giving extreme (extraordinary) spandan (vibration) or on pressing, there is extraordinary pain.

#### 4.4 According to Acharya Charaka

In case of affliction in any marma point, there is more pain (excruciating type) than any other part of the body, because of the specific attachment of chetana (consciousness) to these spots.

### 4.5 According to Acharya Sharangadhara

The Marma points in the body are mostly the foundational locations of life - this has been told by the ancient sages. Prana especially resides in the Marma locations.

### 4.6 According to Acharya Bhava Prakash

Marma spots are specific location of prana (vital life force).

### 4.7 According to Raj Nighantu

Marmas are seats of life (jeevasthana) and meeting point of many important structures (sandhithana).

All the above lakshanas show the importance and vitality of Marma points. Any injury, trauma or disease affecting Marma will cause death or miseries equal to death.

### 5. Classification of Marmas

In the ancient scriptures, Marmas have been classified in different ways, such as their location in different regions of the body, anatomy, size, effect of trauma on these, etc. This section illustrates the different types of classifications of Marmas.

#### 5.1 Classification of Marmas according to their Location in different Regions of the Body

Gives the classification of Marmas according to their location in different regions of the body, i.e. upper limbs (22), lower limbs (22), abdomen and chest (12), back (14), supra clavicular region (neck and head) (37).

#### 5.2 Anatomical classification of Marmas according to Acharya Sushruta Acharya Sushruta

Has classified Marmas into five types according to the Dhatu from which they are made. These types include Mamsa (Muscle), Asthi (Bone), Snayu (Ligament), Sira (Vessel) and Sandhi (Joint).

#### 5.3 Anatomical Classification of Marmas according to Acharya

Vagbhatta Acharya Vagbhatta has classified Marmas into six types according to the Dhatu bheda. He has added one additional Marma named 'Dhamani Marma'. These types include Mamsa (Muscle), Asthi (Bone), Snayu (Ligament), Dhamani (Artery), Sira (Vein) and Sandhi (Joint).

#### 5.4 Names of Marmas included under different anatomical

Classes gives the Names of Marmas included under different anatomical classes, i.e. Mamsa Marma (11), Sira Marma (41), Snayu Marma (27), Asthi Marma (8), Sandhi Marma (20) and Dhamani Marma (9).

### 6. Nature Of Fatal Spots (Qualities Of Marma Or Correlation With Pancha Mahabhutas)

The nature of Sadyah Pranahara marma is Agneya, i.e. having qualities of fire; therefore, owing to this fire like (sharp) quality, injury to these marma kills the affected

person quickly (Sushruta Sharira 6/16). The fatal time period of Sadyah Pranahara marma is less than seven days (Sushruta Sharira 6/23). These marma are nineteen in number (Sushruta Sharira 6/8). If an injury occurs at the border or nearby area of the location of Sadyah Pranahara marma, the occurrence of death is slightly delayed, i.e. the effect is similar to that of Kalantar Pranahara marma (Sushruta Sharira 6/22).

The nature of Kalantar Pranahara marma is Saumyagnya, i.e. having qualities of both fire and water; therefore, although due to their fire like nature, an injury to these marma kills the affected person quickly, but because of the cold and stable nature of soma (water), the occurrence of death is delayed (Sushruta Sharira 6/16). For Kalantar Pranahara marma, the fatal time period is from fifteen days to one month (Sushruta Sharira 6/23).

These are thirty three in number (Sushruta Sharira 6/8). If an injury occurs at the border or nearby area of the location of Kalantar Pranahara marma, it causes deformity, i.e. the effect is similar to that of Vaikalyakara marma (Sushruta Sharira 6/22). Vishalyaghna marma are Vayavya, i.e. having qualities of air. If these marma are injured by a shalya (foreign body), then because of their Vayavya nature, as long as the air remains obstructed inside (i.e. prevented from coming out) by the mass of the shalya (foreign body), the person stays alive, but as soon as the foreign body is pulled out, the air residing in the fatal spot comes out and the person dies. However, after the injury, if the shalya is not pulled out before the completion of the autohealing process, then it provides protection to the Prana at that location until the wound is healed normally, and the shalya is pulled out along with pus (Sushruta Sharira 6/16). Vishalyaghna marma may also sometimes lead to death if these are heavily injured (Sushruta Sharira 6/23). These are three in number (Sushruta Sharira 6/8). If an injury occurs at the border or nearby area of the location of Vishalyaghna marma, it causes deformity, i.e. the effect is similar to that of Vaikalyakara marma (Sushruta Sharira 6/22).

Vaikalyakara marma are Saumya, i.e. having qualities of moon / water. Because of the stability and cold property of Soma guna, these help in the sustenance of life (Sushruta Sharira 6/16). Vaikalyakara marma may also sometimes lead to death if these are heavily injured (Sushruta Sharira 6/23). These are forty four in number (Sushruta Sharira 6/8). If an injury occurs at the border or nearby area of the location of Vaikalyakara marma, it harms the body after some time and also produces pain, i.e. the effect is similar to that of Rujakara marma (Sushruta Sharira 6/22).

Rujakara marma predominantly have the properties of fire and air, both of which produce pain (Sushruta Sharira 6/16). Although Agni is diminished because of trauma, yet Vayu causes constant pain at the affected

part. These are eight in number (Sushruta Sharira 6/8). If an injury occurs at the border or nearby area of the location of Rujakara marma, it causes severe pain (Sushruta Sharira 6/22).

## 7. CONCLUSION

The present article explored the foundational elements of the Science of Marma with regards to the number of marmas, their location, structures involved, correlation with Panchamahabhutas, classification, as well as a detailed explanation of marmaghata or viddha lakshanas (effect of trauma), as given in classical texts written during Samhita kala. The anatomical correlation with modern science has also been presented. It is observed that the Marmas are of different sizes varying from ardhha-anguli (half finger) to hatheli (palm). If injured, different Marmas lead to different kind of symptoms varying from pain to immediate death. In such a case, several methodologies for the treatment of Marmabhighata have also been suggested in the scriptures. Thus, an in-depth knowledge about the properties of Marmas is available in the scriptures.

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