



Review Article

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AN OBSERVATIONAL ANALYSIS ON MARMA SHARIR (VITAL POINTS) AND ITS CLINICAL APPLICATION

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ABSTRACT

Background: Marma Sharir, a significant concept in Ayurveda, refers to vital anatomical sites on the human body where the convergence of muscles, veins, ligaments, bones, and joints occur. These points are pivotal in Ayurvedic medicine and surgery due to their association with Prana (vital energy). Understanding Marma Sharir is crucial for the effective practice of Ayurvedic therapies, including massage, acupressure, and surgical procedures. **Objective:** To provide a comprehensive overview of Marma Sharir, including its classification, anatomical significance, therapeutic applications, and its role in Ayurvedic practice. **Methods:** A thorough review of classical Ayurvedic texts such as Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya was conducted. Additional insights were gathered from contemporary research studies and articles that analyse the physiological and therapeutic aspects of Marma points. **Results:** Marma points are classified into 107 sites based on their location and the structures involved. They are divided into five categories: Mamsa (muscle), Sira (vein), Snayu (ligament), Asthi (bone), and Sandhi (joint). Each Marma point has a specific dimension, and injury to these points can lead to severe consequences, including pain, loss of function, or even death. Therapeutically, Marma points are manipulated to restore balance and promote healing. Techniques such as Marma Chikitsa (Marma therapy) involve precise application of pressure, massage, or needling to these points, influencing the flow of Prana and enhancing physiological functions. **Conclusion:** Marma Sharir holds a profound place in Ayurvedic medicine, bridging the gap between physical anatomy and the energetic body. The precise understanding and application of Marma points are essential for practitioners to effectively utilize this knowledge for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes. Future research and clinical studies are necessary to further elucidate the mechanisms and benefits of Marma therapy in modern medical practice.

Keywords: Marma Sharir, Ayurveda, Prana, Marma therapy, Ayurvedic anatomy, Marma points, therapeutic applications.

INTRODUCTION

Marma Sharir is a cornerstone of Ayurvedic anatomy and physiology, emphasizing the interconnectedness of the human body and its vital energy centres. The term "Marma" originates from the Sanskrit root "mri," meaning "to kill," reflecting the potential lethality of these points if injured.[1] These vital points are junctions where muscles, veins, ligaments, bones, and joints intersect, and are believed to be reservoirs of Prana, the vital life force.[2] In classical Ayurvedic texts, Marma points are meticulously described and classified into 107 anatomical locations across the human body.[3] These points are not only anatomical landmarks but also functional entities that play a crucial role in maintaining health and wellbeing. The knowledge of Marma is essential for both preventive and therapeutic purposes in Ayurveda.[4]

Marma therapy, an ancient practice, involves the stimulation or gentle manipulation of these points to balance the body's energy, alleviate pain, and promote healing. This therapeutic application is akin to acupuncture and acupressure in traditional Chinese medicine, highlighting the universal recognition of energy points in various healing traditions.[5] Marma points are strategically located and categorized into five types based on the predominant tissue: Mamsa (muscle), Sira (vein), Snayu (ligament), Asthi (bone), and Sandhi (joint). Each point has specific dimensions and characteristics, with precise knowledge required to avoid adverse effects and harness their therapeutic potential.[6]

Understanding Marma Sharir is fundamental for Ayurvedic practitioners, as it informs a wide range of treatments, from Panchakarma (detoxification therapies) to surgical procedures described in ancient texts. The manipulation of Marma points can influence the flow of Prana, thereby affecting physiological and psychological states. This intricate system underscores the holistic nature of Ayurveda, where the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of health are inextricably linked.[7]

In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in Marma therapy, both within and outside of India, as researchers and practitioners seek to integrate traditional wisdom with contemporary medical practices.[8] The exploration of Marma Sharir offers profound insights into the body's subtle energies and provides a comprehensive framework for promoting health, preventing disease, and enhancing the quality of life.

AIM AND OBJECTIVE

Aim: To explore and elucidate the concept, classification, and therapeutic applications of Marma Sharir in Ayurveda.

Objectives:

1. Classify and describe the 107 Marma points based on their anatomical location and tissue involvement.
2. Analyze classical Ayurvedic texts for descriptions and significance of Marma points.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Materials-

Classical Ayurvedic Texts: Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, Kashyapa Samhita

Modern Anatomical References: Standard anatomy textbooks (e.g., Gray's Anatomy), Anatomical atlases and charts

Methods

Literature Review: Extensive review of classical Ayurvedic texts to gather information about Marma points, including their locations, classifications, and clinical significance. Comparative analysis with modern anatomical knowledge to correlate Ayurvedic descriptions with contemporary anatomical structures.

Identification and Classification of Marma Points: Marma points are identified and classified based on their location, depth, and physiological impact. Sushruta Samhita classifies Marmas into five types: Sadhya Pranhara Marma, Kalantara, Pranhara Marma, Vishalyaghna Marma, Vaikalyakara Marma, Rujakara Marma, and their Anatomical Study.

Data Analysis: Compilation and analysis of data from literature review, anatomical studies, and clinical evaluations.

CONCEPT OF MARMA

Classification of Marma

Marma points in Ayurveda are classified based on the main body organs and structures involved at their sites, which include Mamsa (muscles), Sira (blood vessels), Snayu (nerves, tendons, or ligaments), Asthi (bones), and Sandhi (joints).[9]

Mamsa Marma:[10]

- **Main Structures Involved:** Muscles

- **Impact of Manipulation:** Can improve muscle tone, alleviate muscle tension, and enhance muscular strength and coordination.
- **Clinical Applications:** Used in therapies for muscular injuries, weakness, and rehabilitation.

Sira Marma:[11]

- **Main Structures Involved:** Veins and blood vessels
- **Impact of Manipulation:** Can enhance blood circulation, improve lymphatic drainage, and regulate the movement of vital fluids.
- **Clinical Applications:** Used in treatments for circulatory disorders, fluid retention, and detoxification.

Snayu Marma:[12]

- **Main Structures Involved:** Tendons, ligaments, and nerves
- **Impact of Manipulation:** Can improve joint mobility, support connective tissue health, and optimize neuromuscular function.
- **Clinical Applications:** Used in managing joint disorders, connective tissue injuries, and neuromuscular dysfunctions.

Asthi Marma: [13]

- **Main Structures Involved:** Bones
- **Impact of Manipulation:** Can support bone health, enhance skeletal stability, and promote structural integrity.
- **Clinical Applications:** Used in treating bone fractures, osteoporosis, and other skeletal issues.

Sandhi Marma: [14]

- **Main Structures Involved:** Joints
- **Impact of Manipulation:** Can enhance joint flexibility, reduce stiffness, and promote overall joint health.
- **Clinical Applications:** Used in managing arthritis, joint pain, and improving mobility.

Table 1: Name, number, and classification of Marma. [15]

Sr. no.	Classification	Number	Marma and its number
1	Regional classification		
	1 Adho Shakha (Marma of lower extremities)	11x2=22	Kshipra, Talahridaya, Kurcha, Kurchashira, Gulpha, Indrabasti, Janu, Aani, Lohitaksha, Urvi, Vitapa
	2 Urdhva Shakha (Marma of upper extremities)	11x2=22	Kshipra, Talahridaya, Kurcha, Kurchashira, Manibandha, Indrabasti, Kurpar, Aani, Lohitaksha, Bahavi, Kakshadhar
	3 Ura & Udara (Marma related with thorax & abdomen)	12	Apastambha 2, Apalapa 2, Stanamula 2, Stanarohita 2, Hridaya 01, Guda 01, Basti 01, Nabhi 01
	4 Prushtha Marmani (Marmas of back)	14	Katikataruna 2, Kukundara 2, Nitamba 2, Parshvasandhi 2, Bruhati 2, Ansaphalak 2, Ansa 2.
	5 Urdhva Jatru Marmani (Head & neck region)	37	Nila 2, Manya 2, Matraka 8, Krukatika 2, Vidhur 2, Fana 2, Apanga 2, Avarta 2, Utkshepa 2, Shankh 2, Sthapani 1, Simanta 5, Shrungatak 4, Adhipati 1.
2	Acc. to structural components (Sushruta Samhita)		
	1 Mamsa marma (dominancy of fleshy structure)	11	Talahridaya 4, Indrabasti 4, Guda 1, Stanarohita 2,
	2 Sira marma (dominancy of vascular structure)	41	Nila 2, Manya 2, Matraka (Kanthasira) 8 Shrungatak 4, Apanga 2, Sthapani 1, Fana 2, Stanamula 2, Apalapa 2, Apastambha 2, Hrudaya 1, Nabhi 1, Parshvasandhi 2, Bruhati 2, Lohitaksha 4, Urvi 4.
	3 Snayu marma (dominancy of ligaments)	27	Aani 4, Vitapa 2, Kakshadhar 2, Kurcha 4, Kurchashira 4, Basti 1, Kshipra 4, Ansa 2, Vidhur 2, Utkshepa 2
	4 Asthi marma (dominancy of bony structure)	8	Katikataruna 2, Nitamba 2, Ansafalak 2, Shankha 2.
	5 Sandhi marma (at the region of articulation)	20	Janu 2, Kurpar 2, Simanta 5, Adhipati 1, Gulpha 2, Manibandha 2, Kukundar 2, Avarta 2, Krukatika 2.
	Ashtanga Hridaya		

	1 Mamsa marma (dominancy of fleshy structure)	10	Talahriday 4, Indrabasti 4, Stanarohita 2.
	2 Sira marma (dominancy of vascular structure)	37	Nila 2, Matraka (Kanthasira) 8, Sthapani 1, Fana 2, Stanamula 2, Apalapa 2, Hridaya 1, Nabhi 1, Parshvasandhi 2, Bruhati 2, Lohitaksha 4, Urvi 4. Manya 2, Kakshadhara 2, Vitap 2
	3 Snayu marma (dominancy of ligaments)	23	Aani 4, Kurcha 4, Kurchashira 4, Basti 1, Kshipra 4, Ansa 2, Utkshepa 2, Apanga 2
	4 Asthi marma (dominancy of bony structure)	8	Katikataruna 2, Nitamba 2, Ansaphalak 2, Shankh 2.
	5 Sandhi marma (at the region of articulation)	20	Janu 2, Kurpar 2, Simanta 5, Adhipati 1, Gulpha 2, Manibandha 2, Kukundar 2, Avarta 2, Krukatika 2.
	6 Dhamni marma (dominancy of certain tubular or cord like structure)	09	Guda 1, Shrungatak 4, Vidhura 2, Apastambha 2.
3	Acc. to prognosis		
	1 Sadya Pranahara marma (leads to immediate death)	19	Shrungatak 4, Adhipati 1, Shankha 2, Kanthasira 8, Guda 1, Hridaya 1, Basti 1 Nabhi 1.
	2 Kalantara pranahara Marma (Death after few days)	33	Vakshamarma 8 (Stanamula 2, Stanarohita 2, Apalapa 2, Apastambha 2), Simanta 5, Talahriday 4, Kshipra 4, Indrabasti 4, Katikatarun 2, Parshvasandhi 2, Bruhati 2, Nitamba 2.
	3 Vishalyaghna marma (person may die if the foreign body removed soon after penetration)	03	Utkshepa 2, Sthapani 1.
	4 Vaikalyakara marma (injury causes permanent disability)	44	Lohitaksha 4, Aani 4, Janu 2, Urvi 4 (Bahavi 2), Kurcha 4, Vitapa 2, Kurpar 2, Kukundhar 2, Kakshadhar 2, Vidhur 2, Krukatika 2, Ansa 2, Ansaphalaha 2, Apanga 2, Nila 2, Manya 2, Fana 2, Avarta 2.

	5 Rujakar marma (unbearable pain occurs after infliction)	08	Gulpha 2, Manibandha 2, Kurchashira 4
4	Acc. to dimension		
	1 Eka angula pramanam (one finger in dimension)	12	Urvi 4, Kurchashir 4, Vitapa 2, Kakshadhar 2.
	2 Dvi angula pramanam (two finger in dimension)	6	Stanamula 2, Manibandha 2, Gulpha 2.
	3 Traya angula pramanam (three finger in dimension)	4	Kurpar 2, Janu 2.
	4 Chatwari Angula Pramanam (four finger or size of palm in dimension)	29	Hridaya 1, Basti 1, Kurcha 4, Guda 1, Nabhi 1, Shrungataka 4, Simanta 5, Manya (dhamni) 2, Nila 2, Matraka 8.
	½ ardh anguli parmanam	56	Adhipati 1, Shankha 2, Stanarohita 2, Apalapa 2, Apastambha 2, Talahriday 4, Kshipra 4, Indrabasti 4, Katikatarun 2, Parshvasandhi 2, Bruhati 2, Nitamba 2. Utkshepa 2, Sthapani 1. Lohitaksha 4, Aani 4, Kukundhar 2, Vidhur 2, Krukatika 2, Ansa 2, Ansaphalaha 2, Apanga 2, Fana 2, Avarta 2.

Table 2: The location, symptoms and structural anatomy of individual Marma.

Sr. no.	Marma	Location	Symptoms	Structures
Adha shakha marmani- 11 (lower extremity)				
1	Kshipra	In between Great toe & second toe.	Death due to convulsion	First inter-metatarsal ligament
2	Talahridaya	In the foot just proximal to second toe.	Severe pain & death	Long planter ligament
3	Kurcha	Proximal to Kshipra	Giddiness, syncope	Tarso-metatarsal and inter tarsal ligaments

4	Kurchashira	Below the Ankle joint	Pain & inflammation	Lateral ligament of ankle joint
5	Gulpha	Junction of foot & leg	Pain, immobility & disability	Ankle joint
6	Indrabasti	In the middle of leg	Death due to blood loss	Calf muscle
7	Janu	Junction of leg & thigh.	Disability with leg	Knee joint
8	Aani	Three Angula (fingre) proximal to knee	Inflammation with immobility of leg	Tendon of quadriceps femoris
9	Lohitaksha	Above to Urvi & below the hip joint.	Hemiplegia due to profuse bleeding	Femoral vessels
10	Urvi	In the thigh region.	Muscle atrophy of leg due to bleeding	Femoral vessels
11	Vitapa	In between scrotum & hip.	Impotency & decrease semen quantity.	Inguinal canal
Urdhwa Shakha Marmani- 11 (upper extremity)				
1	Kshipra	In between thumb & index finger.	Death due to convulsion	First inter-metacarpal ligament
2	Talahrudaya	In the palm just proximal to middle finger.	Severe pain & death	Palmer aponeurosis
3	Kurcha	Proximal to Kshipra	Giddiness, syncope	Carmo-metacarpal and intercarpal ligaments
4	Kurchashira	Below the wrist joint	Pain & inflammation	Lateral ligament of wrist joint
5	Manibandha	Junction of palm & forearm.	Pain, immobility & disability	Wrist joint
6	Indrabasti	In the middle of forearm.	Death due to blood loss	Cubital fossa
7	Kurpara	Junction of forearm & arm.	Disability with hand	Elbow joint

8	Aani	Three Angula (fingre) proximal to elbow.	Inflammation with immobility of elbow	Tendon of biceps brachii
9	Lohitaksha	Above to Bahavi & below the shoulder joint.	Hemiplegia due to profuse bleeding	Axillary vessels
10	Urvi (Bahavi)	In the arm region.	Atrophy of arm due to blood loss	Axillary artery & basilic vein
11	Kakshadhara	In between thorax and arm.	Upper limb palsy.	Brachial plexus
Ura & Udar marmani- 12 (Thorax & abdomen)				
1	Apastambha 2	Bilateral tubular structure, carrying air, in the upper part of thorax	Death due to pneumothorax & respiratory distress	Two bronchi
2	Apalapa 2	On the scapular region, below to acromion	Death due to hemothorax Empyema	Lateral thoracic & subscapular vessels
3	Stanamula 2	2 fingers below the mammary gland bilaterally	Death due to Hydrothorax, & respiratory distress	Internal thoracic & intercostal vessels.
4	Stanarohita 2	2 fingers above the nipple, bilaterally	Death due to hemothorax & respiratory distress	Pectoralis major muscle & intercostal vessels
5	Hridaya	Between the breast, site of Satva, Raja and Tama (state of mind)	Immediate death	Cardiac area, heart
6	Guda	Distal part of colon that is for excretion of feceses & flatus.	Immediate death	Anal canal & anus
7	Basti	Reservoir of urine, made up with minimal flesh and blood, lies in the pelvis	Immediate death	Urinary bladder

		(urinary bladder).		
8	Nabhi	It lies in between rectum and stomach and acts as a origin of veins (umbilicus)	Immediate death	Umbilicus
Prushtha Marmani- 14 (back)				
1	Katikataruna 2	Either side of vertebral Column, on pelvis.	Paleness & fainting due to blood loss & death	Greater sciatic notch
2	Kukundara 2	Either side of vertebral Column, on outer surface of pelvis	Sensory and motor loss in lower extremity	Ischial tuberosity
3	Nitamba 2	Posterior covering part of pelvis below to lumbar region.	Atrophy in lower extremity, weakness and death.	Ala of ileum
4	Parshvasandhi 2	In the lateral of pelvis obliquity upward on hip bone	Death due to internal bleeding (in pelvis)	Common iliac vessels
5	Bruhati 2	Either side of vertebral Column at the level of Stanamoola	Blood loss, fainting and death	Subscapular and transverse cervical arteries
6	Ansaphalak 2	Either side of vertebral Column in the upper part of back (scapular region)	Atrophy of upper limb	Spine of scapula
7	Ansa 2	Proximal to upper limb, in	Frozen shoulder	Coraco-humeral & Gleno-humeral ligaments

		the root of neck near acromion		
Urdhva jatru marmani- 37 (Head & neck)				
1	Dhamani 4	4 tubular structures on either side of trachea	Harshness of voice, loss of taste	Recurrent laryngeal nerve and glossopharyngeal nerve
2	Matruka 8	On either side of neck	Immediate death	Blood vessels of neck
3	Krukatika 2	At the junction of head & neck	Continue movement of head	Atlanto-occipital joint
4	Vidhura 2	Below & behind the ear	Deafness	Posterior auricular vessels
5	Fana 2	Internally on either side of nose near the opening of auditory tube	Loss of olfaction	Olfactory region of nose
6	Apanga 2	Lateral end of eyebrow	Blindness or diminish vision	Zygomatic temporal vessels
7	Avarta 2	Just above the eyebrow	Blindness or diminish vision	Junction of frontal malar and sphenoid bone
8	Utkshepa 2	Above the temporal region at the margin of hairs	Patient dies due to forceful removal of foreign body, if not he may survive. If the foreign body removes automatically after purulence, the person can survive.	Temporalis muscle & fascia
9	Shankha 2	Above the eyebrow in between ear and forehead	Immediate death	Temporal bone
10	Sthapani	In between the eyebrows	Patient dies due to forceful removal of foreign body, if not he may survive. If the foreign body removes	Frontal air sinus

			automatically after purulence, the person can survive.	
11	Simanta 5	Cranial sutures	Mental retardation, fear, fainting	Cranial sutures
12	Shrungataka 4	At the junction of vessels supplying nose, ear, eyes, tongue.	Immediate death	Cavernous sinus or circle of Willis.
13	Adhipati	On the top of head, in the anastomosis of vessels,	Immediate death	Torcular herophilia

[REF- <https://www.carakasamhitaonline.com/index.php/Marma>]

DISCUSSION

The concept of Marma Sharir is a profound aspect of Ayurvedic medicine, emphasizing specific anatomical points known as Marma points.[16] These points are critical for understanding the holistic approach Ayurveda takes towards health and healing. Marma points are not just physical locations but are also vital junctures of physiological, psychological, and energetic aspects of the body.[17]

Historical Evolution and Development [18]

The origins of Marma Sharir can be traced back to ancient Ayurvedic texts, including the Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya. These texts provide detailed descriptions of Marma points, highlighting their significance in the ancient Indian medical system. Sushruta, known as the father of surgery, made significant contributions to the understanding of Marma points, particularly in the context of surgical procedures and trauma management.

Anatomical and Energetic Significance [19]

Marma points are specific anatomical locations where multiple tissues intersect, including muscles (Mamsa), blood vessels (Sira), ligaments (Snayu), bones (Asthi), and joints (Sandhi). There are 107 Marma points identified in Ayurvedic texts, each with unique characteristics and therapeutic importance.

These points are also considered crucial for the flow of prana, the vital life force in the body. They act as gateways for prana to enter specific body regions, and any disruption or imbalance in these points can lead to various health issues. This energetic perspective emphasizes the importance of maintaining the flow of prana for overall health and well-being.

Clinical and Therapeutic Applications [20]

Marma therapy involves the careful manipulation of these points to restore balance and promote healing. The classification of Marma points into categories based on their anatomical structures (Mamsa, Sira, Snayu, Asthi, Sandhi) provides a structured approach for therapeutic interventions.

- **Mamsa Marma (Muscle Points):** These points are associated with muscle health and can be manipulated to relieve muscular tension, improve tone, and enhance strength.
- **Sira Marma (Blood Vessel Points):** These points influence the circulatory system and can be targeted to improve blood circulation and lymphatic flow.
- **Snayu Marma (Tendon/Ligament Points):** These points are crucial for connective tissue health and joint mobility, helping to manage musculoskeletal disorders.
- **Asthi Marma (Bone Points):** These points support bone health and structural integrity, important in treating skeletal issues.
- **Sandhi Marma (Joint Points):** These points are essential for joint flexibility and health, useful in managing arthritis and other joint-related problems.

Preventive and Holistic Health [21]

The role of Marma points in preventive care is a significant aspect of Ayurveda. Practices like Yoga, Pranayama, and meditation are designed to enhance the flow of prana through these points, supporting overall health and vitality. This preventive approach emphasizes maintaining balance within the body's energetic systems to prevent illness and promote long-term health.

Integration of Body and Mind [22]

Marma Sharir reflects the deep integration of the physical body and mind in Ayurveda. Each Marma point is believed to have connections not only with physical structures but also with emotional and spiritual aspects. Thus, balancing or activating these points can influence physical health, mental clarity, and emotional stability, offering a holistic approach to healing.

Modern Relevance and Research [23]

In contemporary times, the principles of Marma therapy are being integrated into modern wellness practices and holistic health approaches. Research is exploring the correlations between Marma points and acupuncture points, as well as their potential in integrative medicine. Understanding Marma points from a modern anatomical and physiological perspective can enhance their application in both Ayurvedic and integrative healthcare.

CONCLUSION

The concept of Marma is a cornerstone of Ayurvedic medicine, representing a profound understanding of the human body that integrates anatomical, physiological, and energetic dimensions. Marma points are specific anatomical locations where various tissues, including muscles, blood vessels, ligaments, bones, and joints, intersect. These points are not only significant for their physical aspects but also for their role in the flow and regulation of prana, the vital life force in Ayurveda. Marma therapy involves the careful manipulation of these points to restore balance, promote healing, and enhance overall well-being. The classification of Marma points into categories based on their anatomical structures provides a systematic approach for therapeutic interventions, addressing a wide range of health issues, from muscular tension and circulatory problems to skeletal disorders and joint mobility. Marma Sharir also highlights the integration of the physical body and the mind. Each Marma point is believed to have connections not only with physical structures but also with emotional and spiritual aspects. Balancing or activating these points can influence physical health, mental clarity, and emotional stability, offering a holistic approach to healing. The principles of Marma therapy are increasingly being integrated into modern wellness practices and holistic health approaches. Research is exploring the correlations between Marma points and acupuncture points, as well as their potential in integrative

medicine. Understanding Marma points from a modern anatomical and physiological perspective can enhance their application in both Ayurvedic and integrative healthcare.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST -NIL

SOURCE OF SUPPORT- NONE

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