



Therapeutic Importance of Marma Chikitsa in Pain Management: A Review

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Abstract

Marma Chikitsa is a traditional Ayurvedic therapeutic approach which involves the stimulation of specific vital points called Marma. These points are considered to be the centers of Prana (vital energy) and are anatomically related to muscles, blood vessels, ligaments, bones, joints, and nerves. In Ayurveda, pain (Vedana or Shoola) is primarily associated with the aggravation of Vata Dosha. Marma therapy aims to restore the balance of doshas, improve circulation, regulate nervous system activity, and reduce pain. Recent studies and reviews suggest that Marma Chikitsa may be beneficial in the musculoskeletal disorders, neurological pain, joint diseases, and stress-related conditions. This review discusses the concept of Marma, mechanisms involved in pain relief, therapeutic applications, advantages, limitations, and available scientific evidence its role in pain management.

Keywords: Ayurvedic, Marma, Pain, Therapy, Vedana, Prana.

Introduction

The word "Marma" comes from Sanskrit starting place "Mra" manner area of Prana (vital power). Any trauma to these sites may be fatal or can result in disability of the person. These Marmas point harmonize the apprehensive and endocrine glands and normalize exclusive pathology in the frame through crucial energy itself, with right stimulations/Manipulation. This approach is called Marma Chikitsa. Marma Chikitsa is an ancient Indian exercise whose purpose is stimulations/manipulation of crucial strength (Prana) in the body for enhancing the restoration procedure. Marma Chikitsa is based on the movement of 107 Marma points inside the body to get admission to the frame and mind. Marma's knowledge allows the clinicians to regulate the glide of Prana through the coarse and diffused bodies in order to restore the patient's health and serenity. Marma Chikitsa is the oldest treasure of Indian surgical treatment from the Vedic duration. For the duration of the Vedic generation the expertise of Marma was regarded to the emperors and warriors. The concept and practice of Marma was very famous in those days to reap the maximum effect when contending with the enemies ^[1].

Acharya Sushruta defines Marma as the junction or confluence of five vital structural components of the body-Mamsa (muscles), Sira (blood vessels), Snayu (ligaments, tendons, nerves), Asthi (bones), and Sandhi (joints). These are

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In recent years, Marma Chikitsa has attracted growing attention within integrative and preventive medicine for its potential role in managing orthopedic, muscular, and neurological disorders.

Clinical observations suggest that it relieves pain, stiffness, and spasms; enhances circulation, metabolism, digestion, and immunity; and helps rebuild hormonal balance. Additionally, it has been shown to reduce stress, anxiety, and fatigue while improving focus and sleep quality. Marma Chikitsa also offers preventive and adjunctive support in lifestyle-related disorders such as hypertension, diabetes, and thyroid dysfunction, and may even serve as a non-invasive alternative that minimizes the need for surgical interventions ^[3, 4, 5].

Concept of Marma in Ayurveda

The concept of Marma has been mentioned since the Vedic period and further evolved through the Epics and Samhita periods, reflecting its gradual development from protective and martial applications to clinical and therapeutic relevance. The word "Marma" originates from the Sanskrit root Mri,

meaning “vital” or “hidden”. Marma points are junctions where:

- Muscles (Mamsa)
- Veins/Vessels (Sira)
- Ligaments/Tendons (Snayu)
- Bones (Asthi)
- Joints (Sandhi)

Meet together. Trauma to these points may produce severe pain, disability, or even death [6]. Acharya Sushruta defines Marma as the junction or confluence of five vital structural components of the body- Mamsa (muscles), Sira (blood

vessels), Snayu (ligaments, tendons, nerves), Asthi (bones), and Sandhi (joints). These are the locations where the vital life energy resides. There are 107 major Marma points distributed throughout the human body, and any injury to these points may lead to Moha (confusion or unconsciousness), Bala-hani (loss of strength), Ruja (pain), or even Murchha (loss of consciousness), depending on the type and severity of trauma [7, 8]. To provide a clearer understanding of the historical evolution of Marma science, scattered references from classical Ayurvedic and Vedic literature have been systematically compiled and presented in a Table 1 for easier interpretation and comparative analysis

Table 1: Description of Marma and Marma Chikitsa from different Sources

Source	Descriptions
Vedic Period (Rig-Veda, Atharva-Veda)	First references to Marma and Varma (protective covering); prayers and mantras used to protect vital parts. Knowledge of Marma known to kings and warriors through Dhanur Veda (martial science), reflecting its role in energy protection and warfare [9].
Epics – Mahabharata and Ramayana	References describe injuries to vital points in humans and animals (e.g., Lakshmana's unconsciousness, Ravana's wound), showing awareness of fatal effects of Marma trauma in battle [10].
Arthashastra (Kautilya)	References to the use of armor and weapons to protect Marmas, emphasizing physical safeguarding of vital points in warfare [11].
Siddha System	Links Marma points to lunar and planetary influences, integrating the concept with cosmic and astrological factors [12].
Acharya Charaka (Charaka Samhita)	Acharya Charaka emphasized the importance of Marma Vigyan and dedicated a separate chapter to it, introducing the concept of Tri Marma—the tripod of life. According to him, Hridaya-mula-sthito ca nṛṇāṃ prāṇāḥ pratiṣṭhitah Tasmāt teṣāṃ sadā yatnam kurvīta pāripālāne (Charaka Samhita, Siddhi Sthana 9/9), indicating that Marma are the seats of Chetana (consciousness); hence, any trauma or disease affecting these vital centers causes more intense pain and functional disturbance compared to other body parts [13].
Acharya Sushruta (Sushruta Samhita, 400–600 B.C.)	Marmaani maamsa-siraa-snaayvasthi-sandhi-sannipaataah; Teshu svabhaavata eva visheshena praanaah tishthanti; Tasmaan marmasvabhithataah taastaaṅ bhaavaan aapadyante (Su.Sha.6/16) Acharya Sushruta described 107 Marma points in detail, defining them as the junctions of five anatomical structures—Mamsa (muscle), Sira (vessels), Snayu (ligament and nerve), Asthi (bone), and Sandhi (joints)—where Prana resides; stimulation of these points optimizes Prana Vayu and helps maintain the equilibrium of Doshas [14].
Acharya Vagbhata (Ashtanga Sangraha/Hridaya)	Marma are sites where Dhamanis (arteries) converge with Mamsa (muscle), Sira (vessels), Snayu (ligament and nerve), Asthi (bone), and Sandhi (joints) showing pain and abnormal pulsation on pressure or trauma [15]. Ashtanga Hridaya and Ashtanga Sangraha (Shareera Sthana), states that such points indicate pathophysiological disturbances. Api cha maranakaari-tvān marma Vridhdha Vagbhata defines Marma which leads to death.
Etymology – Shabdakalpadruma	mṛ + sarvadhātubhyo 'manin (Śabda Kalpadruma 641) Derived from root Mri-Dhatu, meaning Sandhithana (junction of structures) [16].
Shabdostam	mṛ-manin jīvasthāne, sandhi sthāne, tātparye ca (śabdostama) Defines Marma as Jeevasthanā (seat of life) and Sandhithana.
Halayudha Kosha	mṛ + sarva-dhātubhyo 'manin iti manin sannipātaḥ śrīr-snayu-sandhi-māṃsa-asthi-sambhavaḥ (Halāyudha kośa 518) Junction of Sira, Snayu, Sandhi, Mamsa, and Asthi. Structural seat of life (Prana Sthana).
Amarkosha	mṛ-minini, mṛ + prāṇatyāge (Amarakosha 3/5/30) Derived from Mri-Pranatyage, meaning “that which causes death,” as injury to Marma leads to death or severe damage.
Dalhana	mārayantīti marmāṇi Marma are points on body surface which are life-threatening vital points.
Acharya Arunadatta (Saravanga Sundari)	Derived from Mring - Marma is seat of Prana which is constituted by confluence of Sira, Snayu, Asthi and Sandhi and injury to Marma causes Maranasadrisha Dukha (death-like suffering).
Acharya Narahari (Raja Nighantu)	Defines Marma as Jeevasthanā linked to Chaithanya.
Acharya Bhavaprakasha	Marma is junction of Mamsa, Sira, Snayu, Sandhi, and Asthi where Prana resides.

Classification of Marma

Ayurveda there are total 107 Marma in the body. These are divided into different groups according to the physical matrices and also on the basis of their special features. The

classification according to Sushruta is only five types but according to Vagabhataare six with inclusion of Dhamani Marma. Acharya Sushruta categorizes

i). **According to anatomical structure (Rachna Bheda)**

Types: Mamsa Marma, Sira Marma, Snayu Marma, Asthi Marma, Sandhi Marma, Dhamani Marma.

- ii). **According to region (Sadanga Bheda) Types:** Shakha (Bahu and Sakthi), Udara, Urha, Jatroordhv
- iii). **According to injury result (Parinaama Bheda) Types:** Sadhyapranahara, Kalantarapranahara, Vishalyaghna, Vaikalyakara, Rujakara
- iv). **According to measurement (Pramana Bheda) Types:** One Angula, Two Angula, Three Angula, Four Angula, Half Angula Marmabhighata Lakshana

Shakhamarma ^[17] **Types:**

1. Kshipra

- First Intermetacarpal Ligament
- Loss of Function

2. Talhridya

- Palmer Aponeurosis
- Severe Pain

3. Kurcha

- Carpo-Metacarpal and Intercarpal Ligament
- Disfigurement Of hand

4. Kurchasira

- Lateral ligament Of the wrist joint
- Pain with Inflammation Of wrist

5. Gulfa (Manibandha Upper limb)

- Ankle joint
- Impairment of function with Swelling, Difficulty in Walking

6. Inderavasti

- Calf muscles
- Death due to Severe Bleeding

7. Janu (Kurpar)

- Knee joint
- Gait deformity At knee

8. Aani

- Tendon of Biceps muscles
- Swelling and Paralysis of Forearm

9. Urvi

- Brachial artery And brachial vein
- Paralysis due To excessive Bleeding

10. Lohitaksha

- Axillary vessels
- Paralysis due To excessive Bleeding and Nerve damage

11. Vitap (Kakshadhar)

- Inguinal canal/Ligament
- Infertility and Oligospermia

Prishtha Marma ^[18]

1. Kukunde

- Sacroiliac joint
- Loss of sensation and Paralysis of lower Limb

2. Nitamba

- Ala of the ileum/Ischial tuberosity
- Loss of function due to Wasting of muscles Of lower

limb

3. Parshav A sandhi

- Common iliac vessels/renal angle
- Severe hemorrhage

4. Katikata Runa

- Sciatica notch
- Haemorrhage and Anaemia.

5. Vrihati

- Subscapular and Transverse cervical Arteries
- Death due to Excessive bleeding

6. Ansapha Laka

- Spine of the scapula
- Deformality due to Muscle wasting

7. Amsa

- Coraco-humoral Gleno-humoral Ligaments and Trapezius muscle
- Loss of function of Shoulder joint or Frozen shoulder

Pain

Pain is indispensable for survival. It serves a protective Function by signaling the presence of noxious, tissue-Damaging conditions. From a medical standpoint, the Subjective description and indication of the location of Pain may help pinpoint the underlying cause of the Disease ^[19].

Types of Pain in Wound ^[20, 21]

Vatika Vedana: Todana (pricking pain), Bhedana (cutting/incising Pain), Tadana (pain due to blunt in-jury), Chedana (cutting/excising pain), Ayamana (stretching pain), Manthana (gripping pain), Viksepana (pulling pain), Chumcumayana (tingling sensation), Nirdahana (burning pain), Avabhanjana (breaking pain), Sphotana (bursting pain), Vidarana (perforating pain), Utpatana (tearing pain), Kampana (tremoring pain), Vislesana (dislocating pain), Vikirana (radiating pain), Purana (distending pain), Stambhana (stiffness/ankylosing Pain), Swapana/Swapa (anaesthesia), Akuncana (spasmodic pain), Ankusika (anchoring/hanging pain), Atimatra Vedana (sudden excessive pain), Vividha Shoola (different pain).

Paittika Vedana: Osa (burning pain), Chosa (scalding pain), Paridaha (burning sensation all around), Dhumayana (sensation Of hot smoke), Gatrangarava-kirnamivapacyate (sensation of touch by burning coal), Usmabhivridhi (increased temperature), Kshateksharavasiktavaccha Vedana (caustic application overwound like pain).

Kaphaja Vedana: Alpavedanama (mild pain), Suptatvama (numbness), Avedanam/Aruja (analgesia), Parsvasubheda (pain in Flanks)

Tridosaja/Sannipataja Vedana: Vividha Vedana (different kinds of pain), Sarva Vedana (all kinds of pain).

Management of Pain

The management of pain comprises a multifold Approach. It can be categorized into local management and systemic management. The pain caused by Traumatic lesions can be managed by local Fomentation, irrigation, application of local Medicament and bandaging. In Ayurveda, the term Vedana is more or less used for the feeling. It may be the feeling of wellbeing or the feeling of illness (Sukhatamaka and Dukhatmaka) ^[22]. In Ayurveda, there is no particular uniform

medicine for any kind of pain. Management of pain depends upon the causative Factor or Doshika predominance responsible for the Pain. In conventional (allopathic) pain treatment several analgesics, anti-inflammatory, antipyretic Drugs, chemo trypsin and serratiopeptidase like Chemicals and opioids are used, but there is no Universal drug for all kinds of pain to date [23]. Every Individual response to pain in a different way. In the Same way, every analgesic chemical acts pharmacologically in a different way. Only one Analgesic preparation cannot solve the problem of Pain. So, the management of pain is not so simple and Satisfactory with the aforesaid drugs. Instant pain relief is the motive of Marma therapy. Stimulation of Marma Cans produce analgesia by secreting several Prostaglandin inhibitors, endorphins, interferon and Other opioid like substances which are a hundred times More potent than opium. Instant pain relief by Marma Therapy is possible within no time [24].

Following Marma points are responsible for the relief of pain in different organs.

- i). Shoulder pain – Kshipra Marma and Kurpara Marma.
- ii). Pain in abdomen – Kurpara and Urvi Marma.
- iii). Chest Pain – Kurpara, Urvi and Ani.
- iv). Cervical (neck) pain – Kshipra, Kurpara, Ani Marma
- v). Leg and knee pain – Kshipra, Gulpha
- vi). Sciatic pain – Kshipra, Gulpha

Pain management aims at minimizing distress, feeling of unrest, and improving the quality of life. A cardinal Point in the management of pain is that it should be Holistic and patient centered in its application. This can be fulfilled in the Ayurvedic approach only in terms of Marma Chikitsa [25].

Therapeutic Implications of Marma Stimulation/Therapy

Several approaches to Marma stimulation, commonly known as Marma therapy, have been described by modern experts like Frawley D, Lad and Durve, Schrott, S.K. Joshi and Ayurvedic practitioners. These methods focus on activating Marma points to regulate Prana (vital energy), enhance healing, and restore physiological balance.

Agasthya Marma Shastra Tradition (Kalaripayattu)

Kalaripayattu, the ancient martial art of South India, originates from Dhanurveda, the martial Upaveda of the Yajurveda, which includes the science of Marmas (vital points). Traditional texts describe 108 marmas, of which 64 are considered vital or lethal (Vadha Marmas). While these points can be fatal if struck in combat, they are therapeutically used in Marma Chikitsa to restore prana (vital energy), balance neuromuscular function and promote healing transforming martial knowledge into a therapeutic healing system [26].

Schrott's Approach

Schrott *et al.* (2016) stated that Marma points hold vital information related to thoughts, emotions, feelings, and overall health. Stimulation of these Marma points can influence the functioning of internal organs, enhance mind-body coordination, and promote healing in conditions such as impaired eyesight, digestive issues, headaches, stress, and more [27].

Frawley's Approach

Frawley classified Marma techniques into three main groups to stimulate energy flow and promote healing [28].

Joshi's Synchronization Method

This technique involves applying rhythmic pressure synchronization with heart rate and respiratory cycles, optimizing circulatory and nervous system responses. Joshi SK (2010) developed a simple, rhythmic methodology for stimulating Marma points that is based on the body's own rhythms of breath and heart rate. A key aspect is the precise, short duration of pressure applied to a Marma point, which is synchronized with the natural body cycles [29].

Self-marma Therapy

Joshi SK., has also developed a form of self-marma therapy that can be practiced regularly to maintain health and prevent disease. This involves the individual applying the same rhythmic pressure technique to their own Marma points Application of pressure or thumb or fingers over Marma points

- **Pressure:** Depends on the nature of Marma
- **Stimulation Time:** 0.8 sec/stimuli
- **Time:** 3 times/day
- **Repetition:** 15-18 times in single sitting.

Lad and Durve's Techniques

Vasant Lad explained 10 methods to stimulate and activate Marma points for therapeutic benefits [30].

Discussion

Marma Chikitsa is an Important Aspect of Ayurvedic Treatment where the application of pressure or Stimulation on these Marmas points induces the flow Of Prana (vital energy) along a complete system of subtle channels called Nadis. Message is widely applied in the treatment of Marma. Marma Chikitsa is used to treat the disease of nervous System with brain. Marma Chikitsa is beneficial to treat Traumatic neurological or neurosurgical lesion, Traumatic paraplegia, hemiplegia and monoplegia etc. In orthopedic lesions especially prolapsed intervertebral disc etc. It is helpful to reduce the pain of nerves, muscles, ligaments, bones and joints. It is also useful to improve the function of body organs achieving homeostasis. Marma Chikitsa works on the neuro-endocrine system. Actually, due to pressure or stimulation over these Points, certain chemical substance and Neurotransmitters are release like endorphins and Enkephalin which send nerve impulse to brain causing the desired effect. Another theory state that the very Small electrical changes that occur at Marma points is Found to capable of producing effect for in responsible For triggering the desired effect. The gate control Theory of brain is state that nerve and bear are large Bundles of various of various size some of them are Thick & some are thin transmit the sensation of pain While the thick carry the tactile sensation, thus if the Thick impulse is increased the selectively block of the Conduction of thin fibers, this is called the gate control theory.

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