



Review Article

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CONCEPT OF MARMA AND ITS IMPORTANCE: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda is one of the most reliable ancient medical science and marma is specialty of ayurvedic system of medicine. The ayurvedic science of marma is itself a treatise on surgico-anatomical learning. It is the confluence of five types of tissue, namely mamsa, sira, snayu, asthi, sandhi and prana dwells at these sites. Vaidya's has to deal with various problems at the time of war while treating the injured ones in ancient time. With the invention of new military armaments and heavy road traffic, people are more prone to accidents which cause injury to marma sthana. So, it is essential for surgeon or medical man to have complete acquaintance of marma for the surgical/medical management of the injury at the marma and it should be carefully protected during surgical procedures like ksharkarma, agnikarma etc. Every individual must know about marma point in our body so that they protect them from various injuries.

Keywords: Ayurveda, marma, prana, injury.

INTRODUCTION

The Ayurvedic science is based on the complete knowledge of sharira and the explanation of marma is specialism of Ayurveda such a description is not seen in any of the medical system. Marma sharira is an ancient traumatological anatomy presented by the acharyas. There are so many references from vedas regarding attack on marma sthana of enemies and protecting one's marmas by wearing protectants. In ancient time, vaidya's has to deal with various problems at the time of war while treating the injured ones. It might be the reason why marma was given so much importance in our samhitas. Developing science invents new military armaments increasing severity of injury during war. Even in today's fast life, it is very important to protect our marma sthana because of heavy road traffic which results in accidents causing injury to marma.

Acharya Sushruta has given a great contribution in the field of anatomy as he mentioned mrita samshodhana padhati (cadaveric dissection), division of sharira, classification of sira, dhamani and srotas and 107 marma as the anatomical sites in the body and has laid emphasis on pratyaksha gyana as well as shastra gyana¹. Acharya Sushruta mentioned that marma is the conglomeration of mamsa, sira, snayu, asthi and sandhi². He gives description of 107 marma³ and classified into five varieties on the basis of shadanga sharir, five on the basis of marma vastu, five on the basis of parinama. Acharya Sushruta explained marma by describing their types, numbers, location, pramanas and viddha lakshana in sharira sthana. Acharya sushruta and vagbhata explained the dimensions of all 107 marmas in anguli pramana. This is for the surgeons to get an exact idea of the surface anatomy while performing surgical procedures like shastra karma, ksharakarma and agnikarma which should be avoided at the site of marma.

Importance of Marma Pramana

In ancient time, marma are the anatomical points used to describe surface anatomy which can be done with the help of pramana. so, it is necessary to have the complete knowledge of pramana for accessing the marma sites. Experts say that surgical operations are performed after considering the measurement of the marma's.

Injury on neighboring site of marma may leads to severe hazards, so it should be avoided altogether⁴.

An incision is made one anguli distance from the urvi, kurchashira, vitapa, kaksha, parshva marma and a clear space of two anguli is avoided from its location in making any incision at stanamula, manibandha and gulpha marma. similarly, a space of four anguli should be avoided in respect of the four sringataka, five seemanta and ten marmas in neck like nila etc.; a space of half anguli has to be avoided in the remaining (fifty six). Men, versed in the science of surgery, have laid down the rule that, in a case of surgical operation, the location and dimension of each marma should be first taken into account and then the incision should be made in a way that it prevents the site of marma⁵.

CONCEPT OF MARMA IN AYURVEDA

The concept of marma is accepted by all acharyas who had given total numbers of marma as 107 unanimously. The description about marma location and structures along with detailed explanation of viddha lakshana and diseases has been elucidated in almost all the classical texts written during samhita kala. Brihtrayi's and laghutrayi's are the main treatises of Ayurveda and references of marma are found in these treatises.

Charaka samhita is the first documentation which has mentioned marma in samhita. Acharya Charaka accredited total number of 107 marmas in the body but did not explain them. He gave importance to the trimarmas (shira, hridya and basti) in sharira sthana, chikitsa sthana and siddhi sthana^{6,7,8}. Acharya Charaka has opined that it is the site of chetana, so the sense of pain will be more in this region as compared to other parts of the body⁹.

Acharya Sushruta explained marma by describing their types, numbers, location, pramanas and viddha lakshana in sharira sthana¹⁰. He said that marma is an anatomical site where confluence of mamsa, sira, snayu, sandhi and asthi occurs. Prana dwells at these sites. so, they are important.

The complete description of marma is available in ashtang sangraha and ashtang hridya. Vriddha vagbhata listed 7 marma (murdha, jihvabandhan, kantha, hridya, basti, nabhi and guda) as

maha marma^{11,12,13}. Ashtang hridayakara has defined marma as the site where mamsa, sira, snayu, asthi, sandhi and dhamani meet. He has also said that the sites which are painful, tender and shows unbearable throbbing pain after getting afflicted with an injury should also be considered as marma¹⁴.

Acharya madhavkar mentioned that mahahikka has been associated with marma¹⁵. In marmaghatajanya daha, any sort of injury to marma is the main cause and enumerated it as asadhya roga¹⁶. When marma is involved in vatarakta, there is always poor prognosis¹⁷. Prameha pidika with complications, when occur in the region of marma of a person having weak agni, is impossible to cure¹⁸. If shotha occurs due to injury on marma, is incurable¹⁹. Vrana, when occurs in mamsa, sira, snayu, asthi and sandhi marma, it will lead to various consequences²⁰.

The definition of marma was seen in purvakhanda of sharangdhar samhita and appraised marma as vishishta sthana of jeeva²¹.

Bhavamishra documented the definition and 107 marmas with its classification in grabhprakrانا अध्याय of purvakhanda²². He has defined marma as the meeting place of mamsa, sira, snayu, asthi and sandhi where prana or life resides, He supports the opinion of acharya sushruta²³.

IMPORTANCE OF MARMA

The knowledge of marma is very important to do shastra karma. Acharya Sushruta explains that the surgeon should apply the shastra following the direction of hairs avoiding mamsa, sira, snayu, asthi, sandhi and dhamani till the pus is extracted²⁴.

Acharya Sushruta also explains that kshara should not be applied to marma sthana, sira, snayu, sandhi, tarunasthi, sevani, dhamani, greeva, nabhi, nakhant, shishn, srotas, area having alp mamsa, netra disorders except varm roga²⁵.

Generally, soma (kapha), maruta (vayu), tejas (pitta), rajas, sattva and tamasa along with atma stays in marmas, that is why person do not survive if injury takes place on marma. By injury sharirika and manasika dosha gets intensified which destroy body and mind and finally, atma leaves the body²⁶.

The marmas are said to cover half the jurisdiction of surgery because persons die immediately if they get injured. If some of them survive due to surgeon's efficiency, then they definitely become victim of disability²⁷.

Out of 107 marmas, hridaya, basti and nabhi are considered as site of prana. Vata, pitta and kapha cause pain which can lead to death. So, these marmas should be protected²⁸.

Shiras, hridaya and basti are most important marmas, as they are major sites for kapha, pitta and vata respectively. Therefore, they should be eliminated from nearest routes by vaman, virechan and basti²⁹.

Importance of Marmaprahara

According to Acharya Sushruta, there is no injury to the marma which is free from adverse effect or has mild effects. Moreover, those get injured on marmas often get disabled or die. Various disorders which take place in the body making marma as their site are generally most difficult to cure, even if treated cautiously³⁰.

The person, even with torn and mutilated trunk and skull, body parts injured with weapons or leg, arm, foot and hand severed completely, survives if marmas are not inflicted by various injuries³¹.

All the above description shows the importance and vitality of the marma points. Any injury, trauma or disease affecting marma will cause death or miseries equal to death.

DISCUSSION

Ayurveda is a holistic science which provides medical as well as surgical treatment for various diseases. The concept of marma is one important element of the ayurveda and it can be traced back to the vedic period too as its references were found in upanishads, epics like ramayana, mahabharata. The word 'marma' derived from the sanskrit word 'mru' which means death. Acharya Sushruta mentioned that marma is the conglomeration of mamsa, sira, snayu, asthi and sandhi. But in ashtang hridaya, marma is said to be the confluence of sira, snayu, asthi, sandhi and dhamani. It applies to a part or a spot of vital importance in the body, which if get injured results in serious consequences. The understanding of the facts of marma is considered as half the knowledge of surgery. So, it is essential for surgeon or medical man to have complete understanding about marma and its traumatic effects.

CONCLUSION

Marma vigyana is extensively well known since vedic period. Later on, its progression can be observed in the samhita granthas especially in Sushruta samhita. The various classical texts of Ayurveda have defined marma as a reservoir of prana, the seat of tridosha, triguna and atma and a confluence of mamsa, sira, snayu, asthi and sandhi making the place vulnerable to trauma and leading to fatal outcome on getting injured. The knowledge of marma is dependent on the clinical experience and if marma sharira is explored more, there would be likelihood of more success in treatment methods and surgery aside from traumatology.

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