



Review Article

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EXPLORING THE CLINICAL IMPACT OF MARMA CHIKITSA: A FOCUS ON SHIRA MARMA IN MANAGING URDHVAJATRUGATA VYADHI

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ABSTRACT

Marma Chikitsa is an important principle of Ayurveda, based on the manipulation of 107 sensitive points called Marmas, as mentioned in the ancient books Charak Samhita and Sushrut Samhita. This review focuses on the Shira Marma and its specific use in treating urdhvajatrugata vyadhi, which includes headaches, migraines, and cervical pain. The Shira Marma is vital in controlling Prana, the human physiological vigor, and balancing the autonomic and endocrine systems. Understanding how to activate Shira Marma can help alleviate symptoms, improve patient well-being, and prevent the progression of diseases into chronic conditions. This review also highlights the general use of Marma therapy for a wide range of physical, mental, and spiritual ailments. Integrating traditional Ayurvedic principles with modern clinical practices, Marma chikitsa offers an effective approach to health and healing, emphasizing the importance of Shira Marma in managing challenging head and neck conditions.

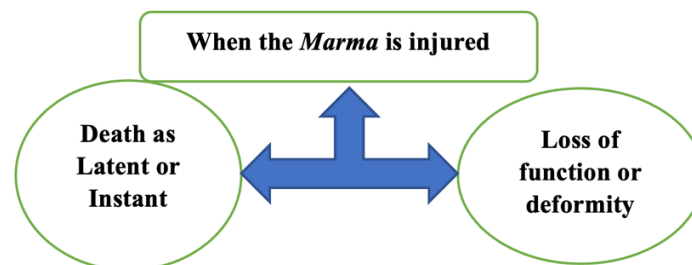
Keywords: Marma (vital points), Ayurveda, Prana (Life force or vital energy), Marma chikitsa, Holistic healing

INTRODUCTION

The concept of Marma (vital points), which are vital points of the body, is unique to Ayurveda and has been described in different treatises such as Charak Samhita, Sushrut Samhita and Ashtanga. In the Sharirasthan, while describing Sharir Rachana, different Acharyas have provided information about the concept of Marma (Vital Points).¹ These "Marma" points (Vital Points) help to harmonize the nervous and endocrine systems, and they

normalize different body pathologies through vital power with proper stimulation or manipulation. This technique is known as Marma Chikitsa and is based on the action of 107 Marma (Vital Points) points in the body, which help to access the body and mind. It helps practitioners regulate the flow of Prana (Life force or vital energy) through the physical and subtle bodies to restore the patient's health and serenity. The concept and practice of Marma (Vital Points) were highly esteemed from the Vedic period for achieving the maximum effect.²

Importance of Marma in the preservation of health and prevention of disease



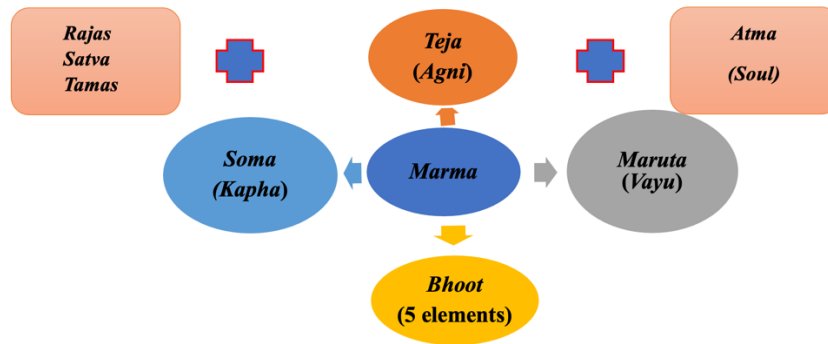
Flow Chart 1: Effects of Marma Injury

Marma (vital points), as described in ancient Ayurvedic texts such as Sushrut Samhita, is considered an important part of Shalya Tantra (Surgical branch of Ayurveda) and holds immense significance in surgical and clinical practices.

These vital body points, where anatomical structures converge, are crucial due to their association with life energy Prana (Life force or vital energy) and potentially severe consequences if injured.^{3,4} Understanding the exact locations of Marma points and

their susceptibilities is crucial for preventing life-threatening situations and guiding surgical interventions effectively. Injuries to these points can result in various symptoms such as confusion, weakness, pain, and loss of consciousness, underscoring the vital role of these points in healthcare practices.^{5,6} The concept of Marma (vital points) is historically significant and holds relevance in modern medical science, emphasizing its enduring importance in ensuring holistic well-being and successful surgical outcomes.

Composition of Marma



Flow Chart 2: Marma's Composition according Dwadash Prana (12 point of vital energy)⁷

The components that make up a Marma (vital points) are referred to as Prana (vital energy), or life elements. When any of the Marmas are harmed, some or all of these Prana (Life force or vital energy) will become afflicted, potentially resulting in deformity or death. Additionally, it has been established that the structural components of Marmas (vital points) are mamsa (muscle), sira (vein), snayu (ligament), asthi (bone), and sandhi (joint).⁸

Distribution and description of Marma in body

As per Sushrut Samhita, 107 Marma (vital points) are present in body. They are composed of all five components and based on prognosis;

Table 1: Classification of Marma Based on predominance of elements and effect of Injury⁸

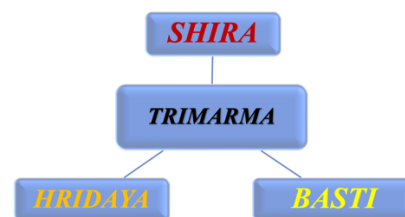
Type of Marma	No.	Panchabhautikatwa	Prognosis
Sadhya Pranahara	19	Agneya	Death within 7 days
Kalantara Pranahara	33	Agneya +Saumya	Death within 15 days
Visalayakhna	03	Vayu	Death after Salyanirharan (foreign body exertion)
Vaikalyakara	44	Saumya	Cause Deformities
Rujakara	08	Agni+Vayu	painful but no deformities

Table 2: Classification of Marma according to their region, structure and dimation⁸

Sr.no	Division	Sub-division	No.
1.	Anga Bheda (Regional classification)	Sakha (Temoral)	44
		Kostha (Abdoman)	03
		Prustha (Back)	14
		Urah (Thorax)	09
		Urdhwanga (Head and neck)	37
2.	Nivesha Bheda (Structural Classification)	Mamsa (Muscle)	11
		Shira (vein)	41
		Snayu(ligament)	27
		Asthi(bone)	08
		Sandhi(joint)	20
3.	Maan Bheda (Dimension Classification)	Ardhaangula	56
		Ekangula (1 finger breadth)	12
		Dvyangula (2 finger breadth)	06
		Triangula (3 finger breadth)	04
		Panithala (Palm)	29
4.	Sankya Bheda (Numerical Classification)	Ekangula	06
		Dvyangula	52
		Chaturangula	36
		Panchangula	05
		Ashtasankhya	08

Acharya Charak accepts the existence of 107 Marma (vital points) but is devoid of description (location, structure etc.) in detail of each. He emphasizes “Tri-Marma” (Hridaya, Basti and Shira) which holds an important structure of the body among all Marma (vital points).⁹

- Hridaya (heart): Having conjugation of all the 10 large vessels in it
- Shira (head): Uttamanga and site of all the sense organs of the body
- Basti (bladder): Guda marga awayava as whole for excretion of mala



Flow Chart 3: Tri-Marma

Fundamentals of Marma science and therapy

According to the saying "Yat Pinde Tat Brahmande," all the properties of the cosmos are inherent in the human body. Acharya has demonstrated the inherent powers of self-healing as Marma science. Ayurvedic science aims to promote health and cure the diseased person.¹⁰

Marma Chikitsa: It contributes to increasing or recharging physical, mental, and spiritual energies. On the physical level, it helps to revitalize the dhatu (bodily tissues) at the sukshma level (cellular level) and improves vital functions like digestion, respiration, blood circulation, and excretion. Psychologically, it enhances mental faculties by directing them in a positive direction.¹¹

Role of Marma chikitsa

- Clears blockages in energy channels.
- Balances the doshas (fundamental bodily bio-elements), bringing them back to a normal state. Especially Vyana Vayu (A specific type of Vayu controlling the autonomic nervous system)
- Creates physical, mental, and emotional flexibility.
- Creates an opportunity to undergo powerful and dynamic transformation at physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual levels by establishing a positive connection with the unconscious mind.⁸

Common symptoms due to injury to marma

Heaviness, drowsiness, dizziness, syncope, cold extremities, perspiration, vomiting, and dyspnea are common symptoms due to Marma's (vital points) infliction. Giddiness, delirium, falling, confusion, loss of movement, seizures, fever, laxity in body parts, fainting, dyspnea, severe pain caused by Vata, bleeding that appears like meat wash (Mamsa dhavana) and loss of sensory perception are the general symptoms of injury to vital part ^{8,10}.

Scope of Marma therapy

The practice of "Marma chikitsa" originating in Southern India encompasses a wide range of research. It can be used to manage

or treat certain contributory orthopedic, muscular, or neurological disorders; provide anesthesia for minor surgical procedures; and improve the function of body organs by achieving homeostasis. Additionally, it can also be employed to treat and prevent lifestyle disorders such as hypertension, diabetes, and thyroid dysfunction. This is achieved through gentle movements, clenching the Marma point (vital points), mild tapping, gentle stroking, and pressing points with a single finger. This therapy can potentially help individuals avoid surgery and its associated complications.^{8,11}

Methods in Marma Chikitsa- Urdhwanga Marma for Urdhvajatrujata vyadhi

Indication

For all types of headaches, including tension, stress, postural, and cluster headaches. In cases of Ardhavbhedaka (Migraine), this can be caused by refractive errors, recurrent rhinitis, anosmia (loss of sense of smell), and diseases related to the ear, nose, tongue, and throat. Additionally, neck stiffness and cervical pain can also be contributing factors.^{12,13}

Preparatory measure



Screening the patient eligibility for Marma chikitsa begins with abhyanga (oil massage) and swedana (inducing sweating) in sevana. treat the affected area for 15-20 minutes, avoiding direct heat application to the Hridaya, Basti, and Shira pradesh.¹⁴

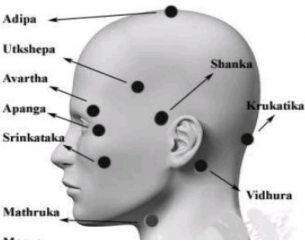



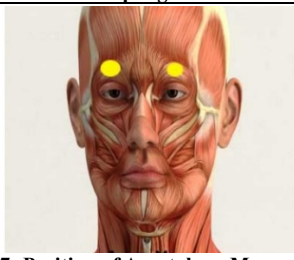
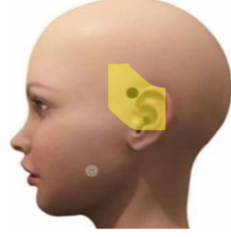
- To accelerate blood circulation and relieve local pain and inflammation.
- Promotes the functional ability of the affected area's nerves, muscles and tendons.
- Open up the blockage of srotas (channels)


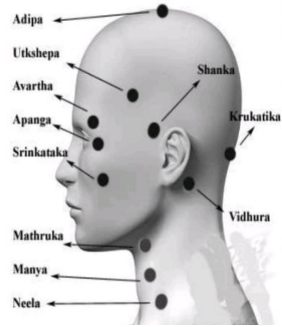


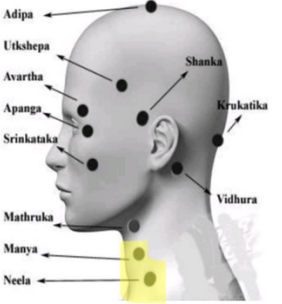
Main procedure

After properly screening the patient and the affected area where the procedure is to be performed, Marma chikitsa should be carried out carefully. Experts should use their fingertips to apply direct pressure or vibration to the Marma points (vital points) on both sides of the body twice a day. Deep breathing with an open mouth should also be encouraged during the procedure:¹⁴

Table 3: The location, symptoms and structural anatomy Urdhva Jatru Marmani (Head and neck)⁸ Urdhva Jatru Marmani- 37

Sr. no.	Name	Type and identity of Marma	Images
A.	Sthapani (1)	Half Angula, Vishalyagna Marma Location: Dip in middle of both the eye brows. Anatomical position: Nasal arche of Frontal veins. If Injured – Death due to removal of Shalya and symptoms accordingly	 Figure 1: Position of Sthapni Marma in the head¹⁵
B.	Simanta (5)	04 Angula, Sandhi Marma, Kalantara Pranahara Marma Location: In the center of skull. (Panch Sandhyo Shirshi Vibhakto) Anatomical position: Junction of Cranial sutures. If Injured – Unmada, Bhaya, Chitnasha and lastly Death.	 Figure 2: Position of Simanta Marma in the head¹⁵

C.	Srungataka (4)	<p>04 Angula, Sira Marma, Sadhya Pranahara Location: In the junction of the vessels emerging from Netra, Nasa, Karna, and Jihva. (Grahan-Srotra-Akshi-Jihwa Santarpani Shiranam Madhye) Anatomical position: Junction of cavernous and inter-cavernous sinuses. If Injured –Death</p>	 <p>Figure 3: Position of Srungataka Marma in the head¹⁶</p>
D.	Adhipati (1)	<p>Half Angula, Sandhi Marma and Sadhya Pranahara Location: at the junction of all the Sira (Vein) in the skull (Mastaka Abhyantaropshite Shirasandhi Roma avarta) Anatomical position: Confluence of sinuses. If Injured – Death</p>	 <p>Figure 4: Position of Adhipati Marma in the head¹⁵</p>
E.	Phana (2)	<p>Half Angula, Sira (Vein) Marma, Vaikalyakara Marma. Location: at the lateral side of nose apex internally. (Grahanmargam ubhayat srotoMarma pratibadhe abhyantara) Anatomical position: Olfactory region of nasal cavity. If Injured - Anosmia</p>	 <p>Figure 5: Position of Phana Marma in the head¹⁵</p>
F.	Apanga (2)	<p>Half Angula, Sira (Vein) Marma, Vaikalyakara Marma. Location: at the lateral side ending of eyebrows. (Bhruvo Pruchaantara) Anatomical position: Involves 6th nerve branches and zygomatic and temporal vessels. If Injured – Blindness or refractive error pathological.</p>	 <p>Figure 6: Position of Apanga Marma in the head¹⁵</p>
G.	Avartaka (2)	<p>Half Angula, Sandhi Marma, Vaikalyakara Marma. Location: Upper or little higher from ending of eyebrows. (Bhruvo Pruchaant Upari) Anatomical position: Junction of frontal and Sphenoid Bones. If Injured – Blindness or refractive error pathological.</p>	 <p>Figure 7: Position of Avartaka Marma in the head¹⁷</p>
H.	Sankha(2)	<p>Half Angula, Asthi Marma, Sadhya Pranahara Location: between the ending of eyebrows and ears. (Bhruvo Pruchaant) Anatomical position: Temporal Bone. If Injured – Death.</p>	 <p>Figure 8: Position of Sankha Marma in the head¹⁵</p>

I.	Utshepaka (2)	Half Angula, Sanyu Marma, Vishalyagna Marma Location: at the end of Hairlines in front of ear. (Sankhaupari Keashante) Anatomical position: Temporal Facia and muscles. If Injured – Death due to removal of Shalya and symptoms accordingly.	 <p>Figure 9: Position of Utshepaka Marma in the head¹⁷</p>
J.	Vidhura (2)	Half Angula, Sanyu Marma, Vaikalyakara Marma Location: Back lower portion of ears. (Karna Pushto Adhah) Anatomical position: Post-Auricular vessels and branches of 6 th cranial nerves. If Injured –Deafness.	 <p>Figure 10: Position of Vidhura Marma in the head¹⁶</p>
K.	Krukatika (2)	Half Angula, Sandhi Marma, Vaikalyakara Marma Location: At the junction of Head and Neck. (Shira-Griva Sandhana) Anatomical position: Atlento-Occipital Joint. If Injured – Tremors (Shiro-Kampa).	 <p>Figure 11: Position of Krukatika Marma in the head¹⁷</p>
L.	Matruka (8)	04 Angula, Sira (Vein) Marma, Sadhya Pranahara Location: lateral side -Nap of Neck. (Grivayamubhayato) Anatomical position: Carotid and Jugular vein passage. If Injured – Death.	 <p>Figure 12: Position of Matruka Marma in the head¹⁷</p>
M.	Neela (2) and Many (2)	04 Angula, Sira (Vein) Marma, Vaikalyakara Marma Location: lateral side of trachea. (Kantha-Nadi Ubhayat) Anatomical position: Network of Superior Laryngeal nerve, Glossopharyngeal, Lingual and Hypoglossal nerve. If Injured –Loss of Taste, Aponia.	 <p>Figure 13: Position of Neela and Many Marma in the head¹⁶</p>

Post procedure

- Advise to rest for 10-20 Minutes.
- Suggest light diet after the therapy.
- Should be avoided: Speaking loudly, excessive walking, extreme anger, cold baths, and suppression of natural urges.¹⁴

DISCUSSION

Marma points hold a significant place in Ayurveda, representing intersections where muscles, veins, ligaments, bones, and joints meet. The precise understanding of these points is crucial, as their manipulation through Marma chikitsa can harmonize the body's energy flow, ensuring overall health. Ancient texts like Charak

Samhita and Sushrut Samhita provide detailed descriptions of these points, emphasizing their importance in maintaining physiological balance.

The preservation of health and prevention of disease through Marma therapy is a testament to the foresight of ancient scholars. Marma points (vital points), identified as critical due to their association with Prana (Life force or vital energy), play a pivotal role in surgical interventions. Injuries to these points can result in severe consequences, including death, which highlights the necessity of accurate knowledge and careful handling of these points in medical practices.

The composition of Marma points, integrating physical and metaphysical elements, showcases the holistic approach of Ayurveda. The twelve Pranas (Life force or vital energy), encompassing mental and physical aspects, underline the interconnectedness of body and mind. Structural components like mamsa (muscle) and sira (vein) provide a tangible framework for understanding marma (vital points), while the inclusion of elements like atma (soul) reflects Ayurveda's comprehensive view of health.

Sushruta Samhita's classification of Marma points (vital points) into categories based on elements, regions, structure, dimension, and number offers a systematic approach to understanding these vital points. This classification aids clinicians in identifying and utilizing Marma points (vital points) effectively, tailoring treatments to individual needs. The detailed descriptions ensure a thorough grasp of Marma's anatomical and functional aspects.

The principles of Marma science extend beyond physical health, influencing mental and spiritual well-being. Marma chikitsa's ability to clear energy blockages, balance doshas (fundamental bodily bio-elements), and promote positive mental states underscores its comprehensive benefits. This therapy aligns with Ayurveda's goal of achieving harmony within the body and with the external environment, reflecting the adage "Yat Pinde Tat Brahmande" (as is the human body, so is the cosmos).

Marma therapy's scope in modern medicine is vast, addressing various disorders and preventing lifestyle diseases. Techniques like gentle pressing and tapping of Marma points are non-invasive yet effective, offering an alternative to surgical interventions. By incorporating Marma chikitsa, healthcare practitioners can enhance treatment outcomes, reduce complications, and promote holistic patient care, bridging traditional Ayurvedic knowledge with contemporary medical practices.

CONCLUSION

Marma chikitsa, rooted in the ancient wisdom of Ayurveda, remains a powerful tool in modern healthcare. By understanding and utilizing Marma points, practitioners can harmonize the nervous and endocrine systems, promoting overall well-being. The detailed classifications and comprehensive approach to Marma therapy ensure its relevance and effectiveness in treating various disorders and preventing lifestyle diseases. Marma chikitsa not only revitalizes physical health but also enhances mental and spiritual well-being, embodying Ayurveda's holistic philosophy. This ancient practice, through its systematic application and profound understanding of the body's vital points, bridges traditional knowledge with contemporary medical science, offering a unique and effective approach to comprehensive health care.

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