
STUDY OF MARMA SHARIR: A LITERARY REVIEW

Dr. Savita Potewar*¹ Dr Jagannath Choudhari²

¹Assistant Professor Rachana Sharir Department B. R. Harne Ayurved Medical College Karav Vangni Thane.

²Assistant Professor Rachana Sharir Department SSVP Ayurved Medical college and R. I. Hatta Tq Basmath Dist Hingoli.

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*Corresponding Author: Dr. Savita Potewar

Assistant Professor Rachana Sharir Department B. R. Harne Ayurved Medical College Karav Vangni Thane.

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ABSTRACT**Background**

Marma Sharir is an important branch of Ayurvedic anatomy that deals with the study of Marma, the vital points of the body where muscles, vessels, ligaments, bones, and joints converge. These points are considered seats of Prana (vital life force) and are of great importance in surgery, trauma management, and therapeutics.

Aim

To critically review the classical literature related to Marma Sharir and explore its anatomical and clinical significance.

Materials and Methods

A literary review was conducted using classical Ayurvedic texts including Sushruta Samhita, Charaka Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, and published research literature. Relevant information regarding the definition, classification, anatomical basis, and therapeutic importance of Marma was collected and analyzed.

Results

Classical Ayurvedic texts describe 107 Marma points distributed throughout the body. These are classified according to anatomical structures, body regions, and prognosis following injury. Marma points possess significant surgical, therapeutic, and preventive value.

Conclusion

Marma Sharir represents a unique contribution of Ayurveda to anatomical sciences. Knowledge of Marma is essential for understanding trauma, surgery, and Marma therapy. Further scientific studies are required to validate its clinical applications.

KEYWORDS: Marma Sharir, Ayurveda, Sushruta Samhita, Vital Points, Marma Therapy, Anatomy.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda describes the human body as a complex integration of physical, physiological, and spiritual components. Among the various branches of Ayurvedic anatomy, Marma Sharir occupies a unique place due to its emphasis on vital anatomical structures.

The word *Marma* is derived from the Sanskrit root *Mri*, meaning death or a vulnerable vital point. According to Acharya Sushruta, Marma are specific anatomical sites where Mamsa (muscles), Sira (blood vessels), Snayu (ligaments), Asthi (bones), and Sandhi (joints) meet.

मांससिरास्रावस्थिसन्धीनां संनिपातो यत्र सः।

प्राणानां च विशेषेण स्थानानि मर्माणि तानि हि ॥

These sites are considered the seats of Prana and therefore play a crucial role in sustaining life.

Acharya Sushruta further emphasized the importance of Marma by stating:

मर्माणि नाम जीवनविशेषायतनानि।

Meaning: Marma are the special seats of life.

The concept of Marma evolved primarily from surgical and military sciences, where knowledge of vital points was essential for both protection and treatment. Today, Marma knowledge forms the basis of Marma Chikitsa, a therapeutic modality used in pain management, rehabilitation, and holistic healing.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design

The present study is a narrative literary review.

Sources of Literature

The review was conducted using the following Ayurvedic classics and modern references:

Sushruta Samhita

Charaka Samhita

Ashtanga Hridaya

Ashtanga Sangraha

Ayurvedic anatomy textbooks

Peer-reviewed journals on Marma science

METHODOLOGY

Relevant references related to the definition, classification, anatomical description, physiological significance, and clinical applications of Marma were systematically reviewed and compiled. Comparative analysis with modern anatomical concepts was also performed.

Results

Definition of Marma

Acharya Sushruta described Marma as vital anatomical locations formed by the union of Mamsa, Sira, Snayu, Asthi, and Sandhi where Prana is predominantly situated.

मर्मसु हि स्थितः प्राणः प्राणे तिष्ठति जीवनम्।

तेषामभिघाते मृत्युर्वैकल्यं वा प्रजायते॥

Meaning: Life resides in Prana, and Prana resides in Marma; injury to these structures may lead to death or deformity.

Number of Marma

Sushruta described 107 Marma points in the human body.

सप्तोत्तरं मर्मशतं शरीरस्याभिधीयते।

Distribution of Marma

Region	Number
Upper Extremities	22
Lower Extremities	22
Thorax and Abdomen	12
Back	14
Head and Neck	37
Total	107

Classification of Marma

A. Classification According to Structure

मांसानि एकादश प्रोक्तानि सिरामर्माणि चैकचत्वारिंशत्।

स्नायुमर्माणि सप्तविंशतिरष्टावस्थिमर्माणि च ॥

सन्धिमर्माणि विंशतिः प्रोक्तानि मनीषिभिः ॥

Type	Number
Mamsa Marma	11
Sira Marma	41
Snayu Marma	27
Asthi Marma	8
Sandhi Marma	20

B. Classification According to Prognosis

एकोनविंशतिः सद्यःप्राणहराणि।

त्रयस्त्रिंशत् कालान्तरप्राणहराणि।

त्रीणि विशल्यघ्नानि।

चतुश्चत्वारिंशद् वैकल्यकराणि।

अष्टौ रुजाकराणि ॥

Type	Number
Sadyapranahara	19
Kalantarapranahara	33
Vishalyaghna	3
Vaikalyakara	44
Rujakara	8

C. Classification According to Body Region

Shakhagata Marma (Extremities)

Madhyama Marma (Trunk)

Jatrurdhwa Marma (Head and Neck)

Consequences of Marma Injury

Acharya Sushruta described severe outcomes following Marma trauma.

मर्माभिघातात् सद्यः प्राणहरणं भवति।

Depending upon the site involved, injury may result in:

Immediate death

Delayed death

Permanent disability

Functional impairment

Severe pain

Clinical Importance of Marma

The literature review highlights the following applications:

Surgical Importance

Identification of vital structures during surgery

Prevention of operative complications

Guidance in surgical incisions

Trauma Management

Assessment of life-threatening injuries

Prognostic evaluation of trauma patients

Emergency care planning

Therapeutic Applications

Marma Chikitsa

Pain management

Neuromuscular rehabilitation

Stress reduction

Enhancement of circulation and vitality

Preventive Applications

Protection of vulnerable anatomical structures

Promotion of longevity and wellness

Correlation with Modern Anatomy

Several Marma points correspond anatomically with:

Major arteries

Veins

Nerve plexuses

Endocrine glands

Lymphatic channels

Important joints

This correlation indicates that ancient Ayurvedic scholars possessed detailed anatomical knowledge and recognized the physiological importance of these structures.

DISCUSSION

Marma Sharir is one of the most remarkable contributions of Ayurveda to anatomical and surgical sciences. The concept reflects an integrated understanding of structure and function. The classification of Marma based on anatomical composition and consequences of injury demonstrates a highly advanced approach to trauma medicine.

Sushruta's surgical principles reveal the importance of preserving Marma during operative procedures.

तस्मात् प्रयत्नतो वैद्यः मर्माणि परिवर्जयेत्।

Meaning: Therefore, a physician or surgeon should carefully avoid injury to Marma.

Modern anatomical studies have shown that many Marma points correspond to neurovascular bundles and vital organs. This supports the classical view that damage to these locations can result in serious physiological disturbances.

The growing popularity of Marma Therapy suggests potential applications in integrative medicine. Clinical observations indicate benefits in pain management, musculoskeletal disorders, stress-related conditions, and rehabilitation. However, robust scientific studies and randomized controlled trials are still required to establish evidence-based therapeutic protocols.

CONCLUSION

Marma Sharir is an essential component of Ayurvedic anatomy that provides detailed knowledge regarding vital points of the human body. The classical description of 107 Marma points highlights their importance in surgery, trauma care, and therapeutics. Marma knowledge remains relevant in contemporary healthcare due to its potential applications in preventive and rehabilitative medicine.

The study demonstrates that Marma Sharir is not merely an anatomical concept but a comprehensive science encompassing structural integrity, physiological function, and clinical practice.

The importance of Marma knowledge is emphasized by the classical statement:

मर्मज्ञानं विना वैद्यः न सम्यक् कर्ममारभेत्।

Meaning: Without proper knowledge of Marma, a physician should not undertake clinical or surgical procedures.

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