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A Historical review on Marma-A vital anatomical structures in the human body.

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ABSTRACT

In Atharvaveda, Upanishada, Mahabharat we get reference that the marma if injured can cause death. *Marma* its definition, types of *Marmas*, symptoms produced after injuries to these *Marmas*, and their treatment are described by all Ayurvedic texts, especially "*Trimarmiya Siddhi*." There are one hundred and seven (107) *marmas* (vital spots) are present in human body. *Marma* is the part of body, if any injury occurs to any *Marma* it results into death or fetal complications hence called as *Marma*. Any injury, trauma or disease affecting *marma* will cause death or miseries equivalent to death. Critical study of various *Marmas* and its applied anatomical features can be studied in order to get its clinical advantage in various disease conditions.

Keywords: *Marma*, *veda*, Upanishada, *Mamsa*, *Asthi*, *Sira* etc.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is India's traditional healing system, it's system of mind-body medicine and natural living.¹ Ayurveda deals with scientific study of the subject Shareera Rachana (Human anatomy) in Bruhatrayee. "Sharir" means human body and "Rachana" means structure. Sharirasthan is illustrated in various parts starting from Emryo developments for human anatomy. Knowledge of human body is the very primary step in the world of medical science. Sharir Rachana is the branch of Ayurveda which having detailed description of the structures in human body. *Marma* its definition, types of *Marmas*, symptoms produced after injuries to these *Marmas*, and their treatment are described by all Ayurvedic texts, especially "*Trimarmiya Siddhi*".² There are one hundred and seven (107) *marmas* (vital spots) are present in human body, out of which 11 each limbs, 26 in trunk (3 in abdomen, 9 in thorax, 14 in the back) and 37 in head neck

region.^{3,4} In Atharvaveda, we get reference that the *marma* if injured can cause death. Also, we find the reference of the term *kavacha* or breast plate for protection. In Rig veda we get the reference regarding *marma*. Also, there is mentioning of words like *varman*, *drapi*, which is body armor or corselet to protect the body from assault of enemies' weapons. The kings of those times had been advised to keep their vital parts covered with *kavacha* a kind of protector. The concept of *Marmas* is one of the important part of Shareera according to the Ayurveda. Modern science has not realized the perception of *Marma* yet, but the science of *Marmavignyanam* is an essential part mentioned in Ayurvedic *samhitas* in Sharirsthana of various *Samhitas*.

Objectives

1. To review the *Marmasharir* and its historical evidences for description.

METHODOLOGY

Literary and conceptual review done from the brihatrayees, laghutrayees and other classical ayurveda books, presented papers, previous work done on marma.

Marmashareer

The word 'marma' comes from sanskrit origin word 'mri' meaning death. Marma are the vital areas of the body. Marma is the part of body, if any injury occurs to any marma it results into death or fetal complications hence called as marma. Marma is a specific anatomical location where five structures of human body viz. Mamsa, (muscles), sira (vessels), snayu (ligaments), asthi (bones) and sandhi (joints) fusion together at one point.⁵ Acharya vagbhata says that those sites which are painful on application of pressure and shows abnormal pulsation should also be considered as marmas. There are total 107 vital marmas presents in our body.⁶

Concept of Marma

The term marma means prana, jiva or life of an individuals. Marma are involved essentially in five anatomical structures: - i.e. Mamsa, sira, snayu, asthi, sandhi. All main ayurvedic texts refer to the total number of primary marma as 107. Acharya vagbhata defines that, marma is the meeting point of mamsa, asthi, sira, snayu, dhamni and sandhi and is where the prana is present is called as marma.⁷

Historical review

Vedic kala⁸

Vishwakarma sharpened ayudh for indra which was known as vajra to be used. God indra tormented vratra (demon) with the help of same by attacking on marmasthanas. During vedic period plastic surgery was performed due to frequent wars. Ashwiny performed plastic surgery on shyava at three cut place and made him to move. Vishpala was rehabilitated by ashwini kumaras by providing artificial iron legs. Fire (agni) was used as the greatest weapon to injure the marmasthanas in wars. The original description about of marma is found in the rugveda where indradev is said to have defeated vritra by attacking his marma with a vajra in between shoulders. In similarly in atharvaveda some references about marma are also found, with numerous other scattered references in vedic and epic sources. The great indian epic mahabharata and bhagavata gita, elephants, horses and soldiers wore varma to protect marma. Arjuna and karna were only vulnerable to be killed through marma exposure. Ravana and krishna are said to be have died due to injury on nabhi and kshipramarma respectively.

Marma in upanishad⁹

References in Upanishads which may be accounted to marma and its associated subjects are –

- Description of vessels and blood circulation.
- Vascular injuries
- Characteristics of sira and dhamani
- Physio-anatomy of hrudaya
- Marma and kavacha
- Marma
- Dhamani
- 107 marma described in Garbhpanishad
- 18 marma described in Yogopanishad.

Samhita kala

The description about various Marmas located in urdhwasaakha and structures involved there along with detailed explanation of Viddhalakshana, and diseases has been explained in almost all the classical texts written during Samhita kala. All Acharyas accepted total number of Marmas as 107.

Charaka samhita¹⁰

Acharya Charaka gave much importance to the Trimarmas. These are Shira, Hridaya and Basti by keeping physician in mind. He also mentioned that according to the surgeon point of view, total numbers of Marmas are 107 in Siddhi sthana 9th chapter 18 as well as in Sareerasthana 7th chapter. Acharya Charaka explains about Sandhi's in Charaka Vimana 8th chapter.

Sushruta samhita¹¹

Acharya Sushruta gave much importance to Marma, he gave detailed description on Marma, their types, numbers, locations, symptoms if they injured in Shareerasthana 6thchapter of Sharirsthan.

Ashtanga sangraha and ashtanga hrudaya¹²

The reference of Marma is available in Ashtanghruday and Ashtangasangraha mentioning about the Marma in 7th chapter and laghuvagbhata in 4th chapter of shareerasthana respectively.

Kashyapa samhita¹³

Acharya Kashyapa accepted Trimarma-Shira, Hrudaya and Basti as the view of Acharya Charaka and told these three Marma are Mahamarma in Shareerasthana 4th chapter.

Bhavaprakasha¹⁴

Bhavaprakasha mentioned detailed description regarding Marmas similar to Sushruta in purva khanda garbhaprakaranaaadhyaya.

DISCUSSION

The origin of the word Marma can be traced in various texts. In Amarakosha, it is mentioned that the word Marma is derived from Sanskrit term 'mrunj-maranne' or 'mrupranathyage.' It means that which causes death or death like miseries.¹⁵ According to Vachaspathya, it is said that the word 'marman' is taking origin from 'mru' dhatu, adding maneen prathyam Mru + Maneen=Maruman, Marman. Etymologically each letter of the word marmahas gotten specific meaning. Ma-means prana or vayu, Repha denotes house or seat.

Acharya Sushruta defines 'marma' as the anatomical site where Mamsa, Sira, Snayu, Sandhi and Asthi meet. Some experts opine that it does not mean that all the structures must be collectively present at the site. Prana resides at these sites and so they are important.¹⁶ Dalhana, the redactor of Sushruta Samhita has opined that marma is the one which causes death. The vital spots if injured can cause death. Acharya Charaka has opined that it is the site of Chetana, hence the sensation of pain will be more in this region compared to other parts of the body.¹⁷ Ashtanga Hrudayakara has defined marma as the site where Mamsa, Sira, Snayu, Asthi, Sandhi and Dhamani

confluence. He has also said that the sites which are painful, tender and show unbearable throbbing after getting afflicted with an injury should also be considered as Marmasthana. Arunadatta, the redactor of Ashtanga Hrudaya explains that it is called as marma because injury to that part brings out miseries equivalent to death. Bhavaprakasha has defined marma as the meeting place of Mamsa, Sira, Snayu, Asthi and Sandhi where Prana or life resides. His description of marma is like that of Acharya Sushruta. From all the above definitions we can understand the importance and vitality of the marmasthanas. Any injury, trauma or disease affecting marma will cause death or miseries equivalent to death.

CONCLUSION

The concept of Marmas is one of the important a part of Shareera according to the Ayurveda. Marma' as the anatomical site where Mamsa, Sira, Snayu, Sandhi and Asthi meet. Most of All Acharya has described about 107 total numbers of Marmas in the human body. The knowledge of Marma were since vedic period. As these marmas are based in the various part of body and its applied anatomical features can be studied further to use its clinical advantage in various health conditions in humans.

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