Science of Marma
(In Ayurvedic Diagnosis & Treatment)

- Dr. S. H. Acharyo
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(In Ayurvedic Diagnosis and Treatment)

Second Revised Edition

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Foreword (First edition)

Ancient Rishis who had lived in the Indian subcontinent in the era before Christ have contributed to the knowledge of Marma. Even though this science has been developed as part of diagnosis, prognosis and therapeutic measures, it was also extensively used in the military training programmes. Due to historical reasons the practice of Marma gradually faded, especially in the northern parts of the subcontinent, but has been particularly preserved by the southerners. It is well known in South India and some parts of Sri Lanka as Marma Chikitsa. It is very effective in many disease conditions especially in cases of dislocations and fractures of joints and bones, as well as injuries to other body tissues. Unfortunately, no due place has been given to this science in the training courses in traditional medicine. No standard books are also available. In this context, Dr. Acharya's effort to bring out a standard book on this subject is to be highly appreciated. The author has given detailed descriptions of various aspects of Marma. His scholarly exposition of medical aspects makes this work very valuable. I am sure this publication will be very useful not only for students and practitioners but also to research worker.

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Contents

Chapter 1  Context of Prana  11
- Nadi and Chakra in Yoga and Tantra Shastra
- Nadi Vijnan in Ayurveda
- Tradition of Acupuncture

Chapter 2  Marma  41
- Classification of Marma
- Marma found on Extremities
- Marma found on Abdomen, Chest & Back
- Marma found on Head & Neck

Chapter 3  Surgical Importance of Marma  101
- Injuries to Marma

Chapter 4  Marma Nidana & Chikitsa  113
- Marma Nidana (Pathognomy)
- Clinical Applications of Marma
- Marma Chikitsa (Care of Marma)
- Preventive Aspect
- Treating Diseases of Marma
Chapter 1

Context of Prana

The word Prani is used in ancient Indian literatures and also in Ayurveda sometimes addressing human beings including animals. This apparently mean to say that they possess Prana or they live with Prana. The Prana facilitates living or is an utmost necessity to sustain life. However, Prana is not a synonym of life (Ayu). Chakrapani Datta the commentator of Charaka Samhita clearly differentiates ‘life’ with that of ‘Prana’. Prana is not a synonym of life where life is defined as the communion of body, mind & the sense and the soul (Charaka Samhita Sutra Sthana. 29/1).

न प्राणाय जीविताय ध्वस्तमाय शारीरिकमाय त्वमाय शरीराय एव परमाय
(चर्क सहिता - सूत्रस्थानम् २९.१-२)

Commentaries of Chakrapani on Charaka Samhita. Sutra Sthana. 29/1-2

Prana does not exist in dead tissues as there is no life in them. The manifestation of Prana in the body seems ubiquitous as no element of living body can be devoid of Prana, with the exception of nails and hairs which are devoid of Chetana (consciousness). A special emphasis has been attached with ‘Vata’, one of the three basic elements (Tridosha) of living body. The Vata responsible for all activities of the body is itself Prana of Prani i.e., living being (Charaka Samhita. Sutra Sthana. 17/118). At some instances Prana is also correlated with breath - mechanism of respiration. One of the five types of Vata is also called as Prana Vayu. The intricacy in the concepts related to Prana and Vata necessitates here to discuss a brief account of Vata Dosha explained in Ayurveda books.

सब्बो द्वे चेष्टा वानन स प्राण: प्राणिनां मृत: 
तेनेक रोगा जाप्ने तेन चेष्टायमाभ्य: 
(चर्क सहिता सूत्रस्थानम् १७७/१८)
JANU MARMA / KURPARA MARMA - These are the Janu Marma referring the Knee and Elbow joints respectively. It is 3 fingers width in length which is about 3-4 cms. This is situated in the regions at the union of thigh and knee, also arm and the elbow in case of Kurpara Marma. It is a Sandhi Marma.

This Janu Marma can be palpated on the median part of the knee joint. It is better felt by firmly moving the thumb in a circular manner below patella preferable knee slightly flexed. Kurpara Marma is easily palpable on the medial wall of the cubital fossa. Beneath this are the articular capsules of the respective joints.

It is found clinically, having significance in degenerative/severed conditions of the concerned joints. It is found clinically that this has significance in differential diagnosis of few clinical conditions like osteoarthrititis, inflammatory and other autoimmune disorders.
Chapter 4

The Marma Nidana & Marma Chikitsa
120 incidences of persons complaining pain in the back or pain in the legs or both are considered for analysis. These patients were considered at random irrespective of age & sex. These patients chiefly involve lumbar degenerative problems like disc prolapse, spondylosis, osteoarthritis etc., with or without the radiating or non radiating pain in legs. However, those patients suffering from arthritis of knee and other joints for prolonged duration are not included in this group.

Out of these 120 cases, 78.33% incidences were of lumbar pain and 65.83% incidences showed tenderness over Indrabasti Marma on clinical examination. 54.17% of the cases complained of different types of pain in leg & 40.83% of the total 120 cases exhibited straight leg raise test positive. Minimum of 22.5% of the total were also having knee joint pain of lesser degree. These are shown in Table no. 1.

Among the 94 lumbar pain conditions, 61 cases showed involvement of Indrabasti Marma from lesser to a greater degree. This group also included those who did not complained of pain in leg. This is notable incidence that pathology resulting in lumbar pain has a high tendency to affect Indrabasti Marma located in the leg.

Among the 65 cases of leg pain with or without lumbar pain, 48 cases (73.85%) showed positive involvement of Indrabasti and this is against
The book theme is on the practice of Ayurveda specialty called as Marma Therapy. Ayurveda being a very ancient practice of medicine in Indian subcontinent does involve different therapeutic specialties/measures. The name of MARMA (vital body points) is almost a forgotten specialty but very helpful for an Ayurveda physician. Based on recitations in few chapters of Ayurveda Samhita (scriptures), the author has built up his clinical experiences and to weave the thread of narration in this book.

A mistaken identity and fusion with allied sciences like Indian traditional martial art (KALARI) and Chinese acupuncture has of late created some confusion. There was a big gap of literary documentation to elaborate on this specialty elsewhere, when this book was first published in 1998, which exclusively narrated on the ancient Ayurveda approach of Marma Therapy. Apparently, differ from fusion with other allied ancient sciences.

First ever in the history this book came with live photographs of examination of Marma with a pure intension to help students & willing practitioners of Ayurveda.

This work profusely contributed to the concept of PRANA which is again not a detailed topic in the ancient scriptures. Relation of Marma with Prana provides enough reasoning and emphasis for Marma therapy in Ayurveda.

The author has convincingly put forth more than 200 patients’ clinical data to support his statements on Marma therapy and diagnostics. New titles in Sanskrit have been introduced in this work viz. Marma Nidana (diagnostics through Marma), Marma Chikitsa (Marma therapy or care) and Marma Pareeksha (Clinical examination of Marma).

Of particular the author has emphatically connects the knowledge of Marma and Marma therapy with the practice of Ayurveda massage and Panchakarma specialty. These exclusive approach and ideology make this work distinct from any other Marma books written so far. Obviously, the book contains the name of few herbs & combinations which are used for the Marma therapy. However, as indicated by the author himself this is not everything on Marma therapy.

The author has been conducting workshops/lectures on Marma and trainings programs in different countries and in India since more than a decade.

The second revised edition incorporates original recitations in Sanskrit language to substantiate the proof of presentation. in addition, this is for the eyes of Ayurveda lovers. However, fearing the small number of Sanskrit readers, the foreign language editions may not contain the Sanskrit recitations. The colored photographs and graphics are the inclusions of second edition.