



### MARMA VIJNANA: UNIQUENESS OF AYURVEDIC SURGERY

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Dear Sir,

As the knowledge of anatomy and physiology are very essential subjects to become good surgeon or physician. Likewise the marma and sroto vijnana are contemporary.<sup>1</sup> Ancient medicine is the mother of sciences and played a large role in the integration of early culture.<sup>2</sup> Ayurveda the science of life is traced back to vedic time about 5000 BC. Sushrutha of Varanasi, disciple of Dhanwantari (God of Ayurveda) and the author of Sushrutha samhitha is the ancient surgeon and the founder of Ayurvedic surgery. Sushrutha samhitha is the main source of knowledge about Surgery in ancient India where they used to set fractures, performed amputations, excised tumours, repaired hernias and couching the cataract. Charaka, the other most popular name of Ayurveda was a court physician to the Buddhist king kanishka who added to original Agnivesha samhitha.<sup>3</sup>

The surgical experience of the ancient age has been compiled systematically in Sushrutha samhitha, which is the first documentation of its kind. The wounds in ancient time were commonly caused by stabs with sword, arrow, spear etc. The word marma and its application exist from the vedic period in India. No medical history is as old as two centuries namely India and China.<sup>1</sup> The word marma dates back to this period, which is considered to be the oldest one among Vedas where several plants and healthcares have been described.<sup>4</sup>

Acharya Charaka represents the Atreya School of physicians and Acharya Sushrutha represents the Dhanwantari school of Surgeons. Charak also has emphasized more on marma vijnana, where this school sited important consequential marma from physician point of view but acknowledged total number of 107 marmas in the body. He devoted in his treatise, two chapters on Trimarma (Tripods of life) or more important being life threatening organs of the body, hridaya, murdha and vasti. Marmas of trunk are comparatively more important than marmas of shakha (extremities). The concept of trimarma and the importance given by charaka may be analysed even today.<sup>1</sup>

Though charaka has explained marmas, the detailed description has been made available by susrutha and the traumatology appears to be emphasized more. Sushrutha has referred the prohibition of surgical maneuvering such as kshara karma, agni karma and shatra karmas on marmas.<sup>1</sup> Sushrutha believes that marma shareera covers half of the knowledge of surgery and according to him, marma is


constituted by confluence of mamsa (muscle), sira (vessels), snayu (nerves, tendons and ligaments), asthi (bone) and sandhi (joints). It is evident that the surgery is involved in only these five tissues where particular care is mandatory.<sup>5</sup>

Marma is one of the important subjects of Ayurveda. Different schools of thoughts analyzed this subject from different angles and developed their own thought. For instance Acharya Charaka has stressed upon Trimarma (Hridaya, Murdha and Vasti) in Trimarmiya chikitsa adhyaya which appears to be relevant with reference to assessment of clinical health even today we do not have more to go beyond this. Marma vijnana may be taken as synonym of traumatology. In India, the trauma and its management is reported from the vedic period where in ancient wars surgeons frequently had to attend the Aryans chief and soldiers. In Rigveda, the reference of amputated legs and its rehabilitation by substitutes may be traced. Injured eyes were enucleated and arrow shaped objects were extracted from the limbs of the Aryan soldiers. Instruction in the battle field to protect marma asthals (vital parts) and techniques of attacking marma places to inactivate the opponent are available in Vedas.<sup>6</sup>

The word shock was first used medically in 1743 by the unnamed English translator of Henri Francois Ledrn's a trial of reflection drawn from experience with gun shot wounds has been used more than two centuries in all clinical disciplines to describe a progressive but gradual collapse of vital organ function after injury or surgery. Pathological findings failed to supply a reasonable cause of death, but Sushrutha (1000 BC) has clearly explained the post traumatic shock under sadya pranahara marma (instant fatal vital parts).

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