

## Exploring South Indian *Marma* Science: An Integrative Approach to Traditional Anatomical Knowledge.

Ganesh G. Surve\*<sup>[1]</sup>, Vinod M. Choudhari<sup>[2]</sup>

<sup>[1]</sup> PG Scholar, <sup>[2]</sup> Prof & HOD,

Department of Rachana Sharir, Shri Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur, Maharashtra, India

\*Corresponding author: ggsurve98@gmail.com

### Abstract:

*Dakshin Bharatiya Marma* refers to the traditional knowledge of vital anatomical points described and practiced in the southern Indian systems of medicine, particularly within Siddha and regional Ayurvedic traditions. *Marma* points are considered critical junctions where muscles (*mamsa*), veins (*sira*), ligaments (*snayu*), bones (*asthi*), and joints (*sandhi*) converge, and are believed to be highly sensitive to trauma and therapeutic manipulation. The *Dakshin Bharatiya Marma* system represents a regional interpretation and practical expansion of classical *marma* science, with emphasis on clinical application in diagnosis, prognosis, and therapeutic interventions.

This study aims to explore the anatomical correlation of *Dakshin Bharatiya Marma* points with modern structural components, particularly neurovascular bundles, musculoskeletal junctions, and biomechanical stress areas. The integration of traditional concepts with contemporary anatomy enhances understanding of injury patterns, pain syndromes, and functional impairment associated with *marma* points.

*Dakshin Bharatiya Marma* knowledge is clinically significant in fields such as trauma

management, manual therapy, orthopedics, and rehabilitative medicine. It also provides a framework for understanding vital points in relation to pain referral patterns and functional anatomy. Further research is required to validate these correlations through imaging studies and anatomical dissections to strengthen its scientific foundation and clinical applicability.

**Key words :** *Dakshin Bharatiya Marma* , *mamsa* , *sira* , *snayu* , *asthi*, *sandhi*  
Neurovascular Musculoskeletal

### INTRODUCTION

*Marma* science is an ancient branch of Ayurveda describing vital anatomical points where different tissues such as muscles (*mamsa*), vessels (*sira*), ligaments (*snayu*), bones (*asthi*), and joints (*sandhi*) converge. Injury to these points is believed to produce severe pain, functional impairment, or even life-threatening conditions.

*Dakshin Bharatiya Marma* refers to the regional tradition of *marma* knowledge practiced predominantly in South India, especially within Siddha and Kerala-based Ayurvedic systems. It includes practical clinical interpretations, therapeutic applications, and martial as well as healing perspectives. Despite

its rich traditional background, there is limited structured scientific documentation correlating these *marma* points with modern anatomical structures.

This study aims to bridge the gap between traditional knowledge and modern anatomy by analyzing *Dakshin Bharatiya Marma* in relation to neurovascular and musculoskeletal structures.

## OBJECTIVES

- To study the concept of *Dakshin Bharatiya Marma* in classical South Indian medical traditions.
- To identify and analyze anatomical correlations of *marma* points with modern structures.
- To evaluate clinical significance of *marma* points in pain, trauma, and functional impairment.
- To integrate traditional *marma* concepts with contemporary anatomical and clinical knowledge.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is a descriptive and analytical review based on classical Ayurvedic and Siddha texts, along with modern anatomical references.

### Materials used:

- Classical texts of Ayurveda and Siddha literature describing *marma* points
- Commentaries and regional manuscripts on *Dakshin Bharatiya Marma*
- Modern anatomy textbooks
- Radiological and clinical correlation studies (where applicable)

### Methods:

Compilation and classification of *marma* points described in South Indian tradition

Anatomical mapping of *marma* locations using modern structural references

Comparative analysis between classical descriptions and modern anatomical landmarks

Evaluation of clinical relevance based on documented injury patterns and symptoms

## South Indian Marma Science

In classical texts like *Sushruta Samhita* and *Charaka Samhita*, 107 *marma* points are described. However, in *South Indian Marma Science*, these are explained differently, and a total of 108 *marma* points are described.

These *marma s* are classified into two types:

1. *Padu Marma*
2. *Thodu Marma*

Out of these, 12 are *Padu Marma s* and 96 are *Thodu Marma s*. From the perspective of immediate life-threatening effects (*Sadyah Pranahara*) and surgery, *Padu Marma s* are considered extremely important.

Study based on the severity of injury to *marma* points is called "*Mannula*." It was written in poetic form as *Mannula Shastra* by *Bhoja*, a disciple of *Agastya*.

Further advanced study after *Mannula Shastra* is known as "*Pinnola*." This includes descriptions of diseases occurring at *marma* points due to both internal (*Nija*) and external (*Agantuja*) causes.

South Indian practitioners developed therapeutic techniques involving pressure application and bandaging on *marma* points to treat diseases. This treatment method is known as "*Marma Chikitsa*" or "*AdankalChikitsa*."

## General Symptoms Caused by External Injury

1. *Vikshepa* - Twitching / involuntary movements
2. *Daurbalya*-Weakness
3. *Sunyata* - Numbness
4. *Bhrama* - Giddiness / dizziness
5. *Vedana*- Pain
6. *Shaithilya* - Flaccidity / loss of tone
7. *Hridaya Daha* - Burning sensation in the heart region
8. *Asthirata* - Instability
9. *Moh* - Fainting / unconsciousness

In the *Marma Shastra* spread by South Indians, '*Padu Marma* 'is particularly important

and has been described in detail. The symptoms given in the above *Padu Marma* indicator table are provoking. Eyeball dilation, hearing loss, etc.

1. *Urdhva Jatru Gata* (Head and Neck region) – 25
2. *From Jatru* (clavicular region) *to Nabhi* (umbilicus) – 45
3. *From Nabhi* (umbilicus) *to Guda* (anus) – 9
4. *Bahu* (Upper limbs) – 14
5. *Sakthi* (Lower limbs) – 15

### ***Keraleeya Marma***

In Tamil language, the terms *Vasi*, *Param*, and *Sira* are used as synonyms for *Marma*. In the state of Kerala, especially in North Kerala, the science of *Marma* has been widely practiced and propagated. The *Marma* concepts followed here differ from classical *Ayurvedic Marma* as well as Tamil *Marma* traditions.

In North Kerala, ancient warrior training centers are known as *Kalari* (often written as *Kaladi* in some texts). The trainer who imparts martial knowledge is called *Gurukkal*. It is considered the primary duty of the *Guru* to impart the knowledge of *Marma* points to the disciple.

The *Guru* teaches how to identify the vital *Marma* points of the enemy and strike them effectively, as well as defensive techniques and therapeutic aspects to manage injuries. This system of *Marma* study is known as *Kulabhyasa Marma*.

### **RESULTS**

The study identifies that *Dakshin Bharatiya Marma* points show strong correlation with key anatomical structures such as neurovascular bundles, muscle junctions, joint spaces, and ligamentous intersections. Many *marma* points correspond to clinically significant regions where injury results in pain, loss of function, or neurological deficits.

It was observed that:

- *Marma* points often coincide with high nerve density areas

- Joint-related *marma* are associated with restricted range of motion when injured
- Vascular *marma* points correspond to regions prone to bleeding or swelling
- Pain referral patterns align with classical *marma* descriptions

### **DISCUSSION**

The findings suggest that *Dakshin Bharatiya Marma* is not merely a theoretical construct but has a strong anatomical and clinical foundation. The overlap between *marma* points and modern anatomical structures supports the hypothesis that ancient physicians had precise knowledge of vital body regions.

The clinical manifestations described in classical texts—such as pain, functional loss, and systemic effects—can be explained through modern concepts of nerve injury, vascular compromise, and musculoskeletal dysfunction. This integration enhances the relevance of *marma* science in modern fields such as orthopedics, pain management, physiotherapy, and rehabilitation medicine.

However, variability in textual descriptions and lack of standardized anatomical mapping remain limitations. Further cadaveric and imaging-based studies are required for validation.

### **CONCLUSION**

*Dakshin Bharatiya Marma* represents a valuable traditional medical knowledge system with significant anatomical and clinical relevance. The correlation between *marma* points and modern anatomical structures highlights its potential application in contemporary medical science. Integration of traditional *marma* concepts with evidence-based anatomy may contribute to improved understanding of trauma, pain mechanisms, and therapeutic approaches. Further systematic research is essential to establish standardized anatomical validation of these vital points.

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