

POINTS OF POWER: MARMA

Accessing the Ayurvedic Acupressure Points of Marma

BY JEFF PERLMAN

Currents of subtle energy course through the body and connect the different aspects of our selves. Marma is an ancient Indian practice that connects what are described as 107 vital energy points in the body. These points conduct the subtle energy (prana), and access the body's inner pharmacy (chakras) supporting the healing process at all levels of awareness: physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

When discussing Marma, it is essential to remember that the foundation of this practice is in the two sister sciences of Ayurveda and Yoga, first mentioned in the Vedas (original documents of India) over 5,000 years ago. Yoga is described as the "union" of body, mind, and spirit. Although yoga tones the body and cleans the blood, it can also benefit the fluctuations of the consciousness (chitta). Ayurveda is one of India's holistic medical systems, which brings balance and health through the five senses and their therapies.

Ayurveda and Yoga stem from two of the six classical systems of philosophy (Shad Dharshana) in India: Samkhya and Yoga. Although separate philosophies, these are almost identical in belief and are both understood by Samkhya philosophy, which explains our existence. Ayurveda and Yoga are its vehicles in which we achieve balance and harmony.

EXPLAINING THE ENERGETIC WORLD IN SAMKHYA

Samkhya Philosophy is understood by 24 tattvas (principles) that explain all existence.

Purusha: Pure Consciousness

Prakriti: Nature

Gunas (Qualities of Nature): Sattva (Purity), Rajas (Energy) and Tamas (Ignorance)

Chitta: Manos (Mind), Buddhi (Intelligence) and Ahmakara (Ego)

Mahabhutas (Elements): Ether, Air, Fire, Water, and Earth

Tanmatras (Subtle Essences): Smell, Taste, Shape, Touch, and Sound

Jnaendriyas (Perception Organs): Ears, Nose, Tongue, Eyes, and Skin

Karmendriyas (Organs of Action): Arms, legs, vocal cords, genital organs, and organs of excretion.

HISTORY OF UNDERSTANDING MARMA

The practice of Marma originated in the south of India around 1,500 BC. Its name comes from the Sanskrit word "mri" which means death. In ancient Vedic times, the marma points were referred to as bindu (a dot or mystic point) and were used in a type of martial art using hand-to-hand combat to disable, confuse, incapacitate, paralyze, or even kill an opponent. Marma masters (Marmani) would sometimes get wounded, which resulted in the experience of how to cause injury as well as how to use the education and awareness for healing.

Vaidya Sushruta recorded the locations of the marma points and how they influence prana in the sixth century BC. He described 108 major marma points in the body. These correspond to the seven chakras (energy centers) of the body and where minor points radiate out along the trunk and limbs. These marma points cover both the front and back of the body, including 22 on the lower extremities, 22 on the arms, 12 on the chest and stomach, 14 on the back, and 37 on the head and neck. The mind is considered the 108th

THE POWER OF MARMA

The name of each Marma point is based on its anatomical position. These are measured by finger (angula) lengths, which determine their correct locations. One "angula" is the width of one finger. Marmas can vary in size from 1-4 finger lengths or the width of the hand.

Marma points are accessed on the skin's surface connecting through the channels of the body (nadis) to the energy points where the flesh, veins, arteries, tendons, bones, and joints meet. Their energy produces hormones and neurochemicals that unfold changes to one's makeup healing the body, mind, and spirit.

There are similarities between acupuncture and marma therapy by connection locations and both being healing modalities. Acupuncture connects through the Chinese meridian system and marmas connect to the chakra system (energy wheels) through the nadis (prana channels) and the srotas (physical channels). Conversely, marma points connect the junctions where the three doshas (vata, pitta, and kapha) meet and where the three subtle energies (Sattva-Purity, Rajas-Energy, and Tamas-Dullness) also meet.

Marma is directed to the individual's needs. The practice begins with the touch yet energetically penetrates much deeper. Marma connects to thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and emotions, as well as to the fabric of the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual realms.

Marma therapy has been known to alleviate many everyday ailments. The list includes headaches, body joint and muscle pain, spinal alignment, respiratory conditions, digestive and elimination disorders, and can offer relief for low energy, anxiety, depression, stress and mental focus.

POINTS FOR DAILY PRACTICE

Officially Ayurveda documents ten possible applications for applying Marma therapy, including:

The use of medicated or essential oils, application during steam therapy, deep connective tissue massage, using medicated pastes, agitating the surface and binding (grabbing) a specific area, the use applying local heat, the use of puncturing using needles, possible bloodletting, and for this article we are using what is called: Pidna-deep pressure without the use of oils.

Instructions: For the following marma points use the tips or pads of the fingers when applying pressure. The amount of pressure increases slightly coming to what is considered a deep pressure, which is then held for 1-2 minutes and then released.

The following are four accessible marma points that can bring balance in your daily life.

TALA HRIDA

Location: On the palm of both hands at the depression between the second and third metacarpals.

Actions: Balances heart and mind, harmonizes emotions and relieves stress.

ANGUSHTHA MULA

Location: At the depression between the first and second metacarpals on each hand, level with the midpoint of the second metacarpal.

Actions: Relieves headaches, calms the mind and balances emotions.

NASA MULA

Location: Between the eyebrows, below Ajna chakra (third eye).

Actions: Relieves headaches, calms the mind, and balances emotions.

KAPOLA MADHYA

Location: The cheeks where the molars meet.

Actions: Regulates digestion, assimilation, and absorption in the colon.

ASANA TO ACCESS MARMA

Marma points are also stimulated when we practice yoga. These three asana illustrate the connections between pose and marma, and their related benefits.

VATA BALANCING

BHUJANGASANA (COBRA POSE)

Marma Points Accessed: Pada Kshipra, Pada Charana, Janu, Sakthi Urvi, Bhaga, Nabhi, Vrukka, Kukundara, Apastambha, Jatru, Griva, Kurpara, Tala Hrida and Manibandha.

Actions: Helps to relieve headaches, shortness of breath and respiratory congestion. Improves the digestive fire, improves constipation and regulates the liver, gallbladder and spleen. Can relieve lower back pain and arthritis in the knees.

PITTA BALANCING

SETUBANDHA SARVANGASANA (BRIDGE POSE)

Marma Points Accessed: Manyamula, Urdhva Skandha, Amsa, Kurpara, Yakrut, Pilha, Nadhi, Vrukka, Trik, Janu, Parshni, Gulpha and Pada Kshipra.

Actions: Improves blood and lymphatic circulation and helps to regulate metabolism. Stimulates digestion and relieves constipation. Relieves lower back pain and pacifies fiery emotions, reducing insomnia and increases prana (life force)

KAPHA BALANCING

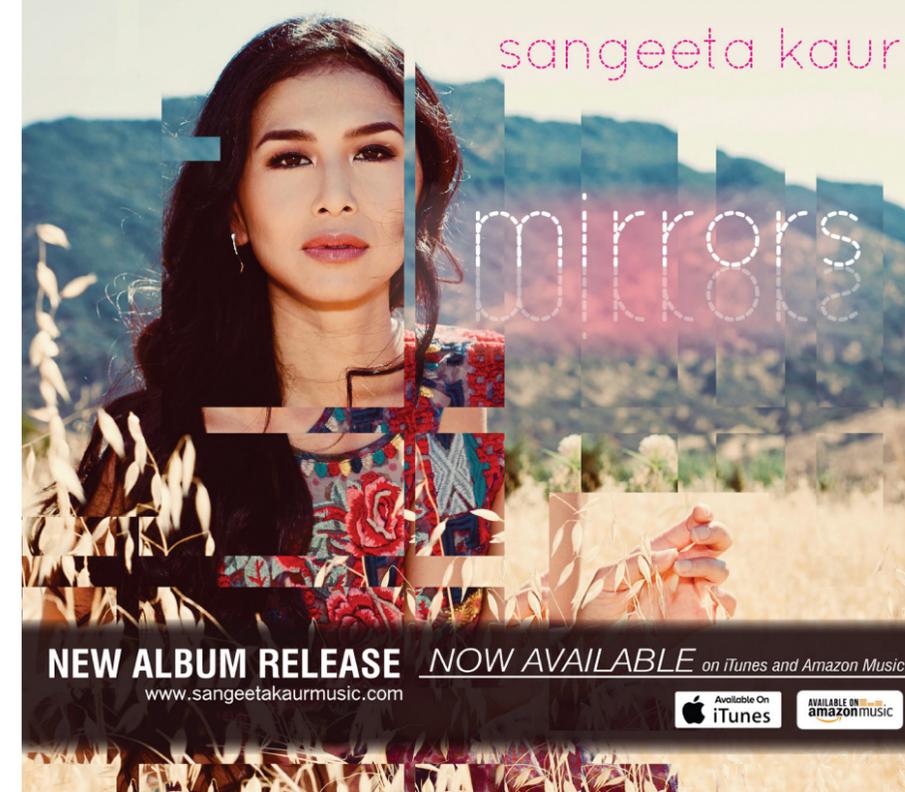
ADHO MUKHA SAVASANA (DOWNWARD FACING DOG)

Marma Points Accessed: Pada Kshipra, Indrabasta, Janu, Uru, Nabhi, Hridayam, Urdhva Skandha, Kaksha, Murdhni and Parshini.

Actions: Regulates cardiac function, improves lymphatic circulation, helps maintain optimal respiratory function and lymphatic circulation. Benefits digestion and assimilation and decreases stomach acidity. Stimulates memory, balances emotions, relieves stress and calms the mind.

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