



J Ayu Med Sci | 2019 | Vol 4 | Issue 1 (Jan – Mar)

J Ayu Med Sci

Quarterly Journal
for Rapid
Publication
of Researches
in Ayurveda
and Other
Traditional
Medicines

Sponsored by

**Ayushpathi
International**

Journal of Ayurveda Medical Sciences

ISSN 2456-4990

www.jayumedsci.com
©Journal of Ayurveda Medical Sciences

Application of *Varmam* (Physical Manipulation Therapy of Traditional Siddha Medicine) for Contemporary Health Issues: An Update

G Senthilvel^{1,2}, Arul Amuthan^{3,*}

¹Research Officer (Siddha) CCRS, Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India, AYUSH Bhawan, INA, New Delhi, INDIA.

²Siddha Practitioner Cum Varmam Expert, Hospital Sungai Buloh, MALAYSIA.

³Department of Pharmacology, Melaka Manipal Medical College, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal, Karnataka, INDIA.

ABSTRACT

Traditional Siddha medical system, *Yoga* and *Varmam* are having a common root of origin from Lord Shiva and share common basic principles. Human body has 12 energy channels with 108 energy enriched (*varmam*) points along the channels. Any disturbances in the energy flow leads to *varmam* diseases which can be treated by physical manipulation techniques. There are more than 300 Siddha literature that describes *varmam* in detail. For this non-invasive non-pharmacological therapy, few treatment guidelines are available. With the available literature, therapy guidelines and qualified Siddha physicians, the *varmam* therapy centers could be established all over the world.

KEYWORDS

CAM, Marma chikitsa, Massage, Siddha Ayurveda, trauma.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 27.11.2020; Revised: 04.12.2020; Accepted: 08.12.2020

CORRESPONDENCE

Dr. Arul Amuthan MD (Siddha), MSc. Medical Pharmacology, Team Leader, Division of Siddha, Center for Integrative Medicine and Research, Department of Pharmacology, Melaka Manipal Medical College, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal-576104, Karnataka, INDIA. Email id: dramuthanmd@gmail.com

CITE THIS RESEARCH AS

Senthilvel G, Amuthan A. Application of *Varmam* (Physical Manipulation Therapy of Traditional Siddha Medicine) for Contemporary Health Issues: A Review Based on our Experience. J Ayu Med Sci. 2019;4(1):471-4.

DOI

10.5530/jams.2019.4.5

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional Siddha medical system is one of the ancient Indian system has its own understanding about body function. Accordingly, the human energy physiology has been well explained through 96 basic principles. There are 108 energy enriched (*varmam* points) points along the energy channels which are related to *varmam* therapy.^[1] Through *varmam* therapy, we can passively activate the *varmam* points, whereas through yoga therapy, one can self-activate the *varmam* points. Hence, *Siddha*, *Varmam* and *Yoga* share a common energy physiology, which are well explained in many *varmam* literature.

2. TRAUMA TO GET *VARMAM*

Varmam or *vanmam* is a Tamil term that literally means 'consequence' or 'revenge' occurs after any stimulus to specific parts or trigger points in human body. Ancient days the stimulus might be during physical injuries such as fall from tree, bull tame (a type of game with bull practiced in Tamil Nadu, India), war injury, etc. It is hypothesized that the body has 12 energy channels (like meridian channel in acupuncture) with 108 energy enriched (*varmam* points) points along the channels.^[2] Any disturbances in the energy flow leads to clinical symptoms and correction of energy flow is done using the energy enriched (vital) points by physical manipulation

techniques. All the traumatic complications right from the skin aberration to bone fracture, muscle injury, nerve injury to spinal injury had been treated using *varmam*. Untreated trauma leads to many complications such as bronchial asthma, rheumatism, bone degenerations, muscular atrophy, diabetes, infertility, chronic pain, etc.^[3] On the other hand, many times the Siddha physician seek for any traumatic history while taking medical history in all patients. Apart from the history taking, the radial artery pulse examination is an important tool to diagnose the *varmam* complications. If the bronchial asthma has a clear history of trauma to specific *varmam* points, then the treatment protocol should include *varmam* techniques. There are more than 300 literatures exclusively for *varmam* therapy, that indicates the extensive usage and detailed knowledge about *varmam* in Siddha history.

3. *VARMAM* THERAPY

Whenever the *varmam* damage had happened, it is treated by *varmam* massage, dietary practices, external herbal applications and oral medications.

All the 108 trigger points can be manipulated with specific pressure using specific objects. Among them, 64 are very important, called as *varmam adangal* (energy releasing) points. These points are stimulated using fingers, elbow joints, wooden stick and seeds (black gram, *Abrus precatorius*).^[4] When

more than one points need to be stimulated, then the massage techniques are followed. While doing massage in a specific fashion, the points are being stimulated with specific pressure. Hence *varmam* massage is different from the massages of other traditional medical systems. *Varmam* massage is mostly therapeutic, they are used to cure many diseases.

The *varmam* massage is done in a unique way to stimulate each of the vital points or channel. The vital point stimulation or *varmam* massage could be done with or without applying medicated oils.

There are many herbal dietary practices such as porridge, cake, pancake, juices advised to patients. Medicated oil, herbal juices, herbal smoke, nasal drop and collyrium are applied externally. Medicated paste is applied on the affected area and scalp to control clinical symptoms. The medicated oil is dropped on the *varmam* points to give soft stimulation and the procedure is known as *dhaara* and *dhumalai*. Herbs are added in the water to be boiled which is used for bathing. Herbal juice, decoction, powder, *legium* (sugar based), medicated ghee, distilled volatile oil and tablets are used as oral medications.

The physical manipulation technique alone can offer 60 to 70 % clinical improvement, whereas addition of other oral as well as external medications would extend the therapeutic benefit. The physical manipulation techniques (*Varmam* therapy) could be a best complementary therapy for many conditions.

4. SIDDHA VARMAM LITERATURE

The *varmam* therapy is one of the best documented field in Siddha system compared to any other medical therapies. There are more than 300 palm manuscripts literature currently available and few of them are printed as books. Many are still preserved in the form of palm manuscripts in libraries, museum, Siddha Medical Colleges and traditional Siddha Physicians' (*vaidyar*) home. These literatures describe the human energy physiology, human energy pathophysiology, trauma and its complications, fracture management, bandage and fracture reduction methods,^[5] muscle and nerve injury management,^[6] locating *varmam* points along the energy channels, clinical features from trauma on each *varmam* points and their specific therapy, formulary of *varmam* drugs, massage methods and manipulation techniques, etc.

Few of the published classical *varmam* literature are as follows;^[7] *Varma gnana odivu murivu sarasoothiram*, *Varma odivu murivu sara soothiram*, *Varma odivu murivu saari*, *Varma soodamani – pancheekarana pinnal*, *Varma villuvaisai*, *Sarvaanga adangal thiravukol*, *Tboduv varma nidhanam*, *Thattuvarmathirattu*, *Urpatthi parambarai*, *Adu varma soothiram*, *Varma kannadi*, *Varma nidhanam*, *Varma laada soothiram*, *Varma nidhanam*, *Villisaikavalliyam*, *Sikitchai murivu saari*, *Varma thiravukol*, *Varma saari*, *Varma kodaari*, *Varma aani*, *Varmaani*, *Varma anithiravukol*, *Varma soodamani*, *Varma noolalavunool*, *Varma viralalavu nool*, *Varmaaninaalumaathirai*, *Varma beerangi*, *Varma beerangi thiravukol*, *Varma narambarai soothiram*, *Varma soothiram*, *Paduvarmanidhanam*, *Naalumaa thiraitthiravukol*, *Varmrasara soothira thiravukol*, *Varma theerpu*, *Vaagadanidhanam*, *Varma*

vilakkam, *Piraanaadakkam*, *Sadumani soothiram*, *Laada soothiram*, *Varmanigandu*, *Villuvaisai soothiram*, *kumbamuninarambarai*, *varma guru naadisasthiram*, *karunaadisasthiram*, *Odivumurivukandasari*, *kattumuraisaari*, *Odivumurisaari*, *Odimurivusara soothiram*, *poosi thiravukol*, *Vamaani thiravukol*, *Agastyar thiravukol*, *Kumbamui thiravukol*, *kaimaathirai thiravugal*, *Adagal*, *Naalumaathirai*, *Varma ilagaadangal*.

4. HERBAL, METALS AND ANIMAL PRODUCTS USE FOR VARMAM MEDICATIONS

Most of the *varmam* medicines are prepared using herbals. Apart from these, many animals or birds have been used to prepare drugs. Few of them are squirrel, tortoise, monitor lizard, chameleon, cuttle fishbone, kadaknath chicken, wild cat, deer horn, musk, wild pig, hoofs of horse, earth worm, coral reef, dried cobra body, subcutaneous fat of python, egg of red ant, rabbit, skin of buffalo, eal fish, etc.^[8]

There are many mineral-metal based drugs being used in the *varmam* medication therapy. Mica, asbestos, yellow arsenic, arsenic disulphide, mercury chloride, mercury sulphide, silver nitrate, sulfur, alum, copper, etc. are few of the inorganics used in *varmam* medicine preparation. From the vast literature, Formulary of Varma Medicine has been released during 2008, which documented more than 500 polyherbal formulations.^[8]

5. INDICATIONS OF VARMAM THERAPY

Currently the *varmam* therapy is used in pain management, neurological disorders (hemiplegia, facial palsy), muscular/tendon disorders, post traumatic rehabilitation, post-surgical rehabilitation, palliative care in cancers, rheumatic diseases, spinal-disc related conditions, joint pain, sports injury, infertility, bronchial asthma and other chronic diseases in which *varmam* therapy is added as a supportive care. The Siddha treatment protocol for COVID-19 released by Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India included *varmam* therapy to modulate immunity status.^[9] Hence, the usage of *varmam* has been explored day by day that need rigorous task force committee to document and disseminate the newer indications of *varmam* based on clinical experience.

6. STRENGTH OF VARMAM AS COMPLEMENTARY THERAPY

The *varmam* point manipulation is a noninvasive therapy, cost effective without any adverse effects, hence easy to adopt by the global community. This therapy center requires minimal infrastructure and doesn't interfere culture or religious sentiment or food habits or local government policies or health regulations. The therapy could be done in the outpatient setup without any patient preparation such as specific dress code or changing of dress or without any religious injustice. Even the male/female therapist could manipulate the vital points to patients of opposite gender. This therapy is not having drug interactions with allopathic medicines/procedures, so can be given together with the standard of care. In disorders of muscle, tendon and nerve, comatose patients, pre-operative and post-operative conditions, the *varmam* therapy could reduce the usage of allopathic drugs.

Few of the point manipulation techniques can be self-practiced by patients after proper instruction that enables continuous therapy even at home level.

When *varmam* therapy is given under the same hospital along with the conventional medication, the clinical improvement would be faster, cure will be achieved relatively earlier. Globally, *varmam* therapy could be a best complementary therapy to be adopted in all the health centers.

7. VARMAM THERAPY PROTOCOLS

The *varmam* oral medications must be prescribed by Siddha doctors, but the manipulation techniques can be applied by any trained therapist. There are many groups of *varmam* experts and institutions who have published *varmam* manipulation protocols for many conditions. Central Council for Research in Siddha (India), Rajendra Siddha Varma Hospital (India), Center for Varma Medicine and Research (India), Government Siddha Medical College, Chennai (India), Thirumoolar Varmam Research and Therapy Centre (India) and Traditional and Complementary Medicine Division – Ministry of Health (Malaysia) are some of the Institutions who published the *varmam* treatment protocol. All these protocols describe the physical manipulation techniques for many clinical conditions that can be easily integrated with the regular medical practice.^[8-15]

8. SCOPE FOR EDUCATION

In India, Central Council of Indian Medicine approved undergraduate Siddha Medicine (BSMS) and post-graduation (MD - Varma maruthuvam) courses deal with all types of *varmam* therapies including herbal/mineral medicine. Diploma in Varma Medical Science (DVMS) by Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, A post graduate degree in (M.Sc. Varma and Thokkanam) by Tamil Nadu Physical Education and Sports University and Varmam Therapist Diploma by University of Trans-Disciplinary Health Sciences and Technology are the courses that train students in the *varmam* physical manipulation therapy alone. Candidates who have completed are working in wellness centers and hospitals where *varmam* therapy is practiced as add-on therapy. There is an urgent need to include *varmam* therapy in Allied health science syllabus and also the *varmam* therapist course should be started in all health universities. The current number of candidates who passed out the Universities are not sufficient to meet the demand. Government of India may encourage Institutions to start *Varmam* therapy training programs for health care providers under skill development program.

9. VARMAM RESEARCH AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

At present, there is no focused Institution to carry out clinical research on *varmam*. Government Siddha Medical Colleges, National Institute of Siddha, Central Council for Research in Siddha are some of the Institution where *varmam* clinical research are carried out. Indian Institute of Technology (Chennai) has been conducting the basic research in their

haptic science laboratory to bring devices for pulse diagnosis, to demonstrate the *varmam* pathophysiology in mannequin, robotic *varmam* applicator for some emergency conditions, etc. So, there is an urgent need to establish National level *Varmam* Institutions across the country.

The *varmam* points mentioned in Siddha literature are renamed in other languages and branded as the part of other traditional medicine. Many authors published unauthorized books on *varmam* in the name of *marmachikitcha* that fade the original origin of this science. There is a threat that the therapeutic *varmam* points might be studied in abroad and could be considered as a new invention, which is against the Intellectual Property Rights. So, the *Varmam* rebranding or conversion into *marmachikita* or patenting of therapeutic points should be carefully monitored and prevented. Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research may take steps to include *varmam* points in their database.

10 VARMAM THERAPY PRACTICE IN MALAYSIA

In the Year of 2016, The Practice Guidelines on *Varmam* therapy has been published by Traditional Complementary Medicine Division, Ministry of Health Malaysia. In continuation of Bilateral Technical Cooperation meeting of both countries held in 2017, Ministry of AYUSH, India has deputed Dr. G. Senthilvel to Hospital Sungai Buloh to study the efficacy of *Varmam* therapy as to complement the treatment of orthopedic patients in the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine and department of Orthopedic and Traumatology in Sungai Buloh Hospital. After obtaining informed consent, Varmam therapy is given to the following four conditions 1. Cervical Spondylosis (Ceganavatham), 2. Adhesive Capsulitis (Frozen shoulder - Kumbavatham), 3. Lumbar Spondylosis (Thandagavatham), 4. Osteoarthritis (Azhhal keel vayu). The allopathic physicians are referring their patients to *Varmam* therapy after confirmation of diagnosis by Orthopedic Department followed by pre assessment and Post assessment done by Rehabilitation Medicine Department. In addition, with support of Indian High Commission, the public awareness talks on *Varmam* is being done in various National seminars, workshop and International Conferences.

11. CONCLUSION

Yoga therapy was the gift from Indian Siddhars (who attained *Attanga Siddhi* through Yoga practice) to the world, which is the drugless therapy. Same way, the *varmam* therapy is another gift by Siddhas, yet to be popularized as a complementary therapy. With the available literature, therapy guidelines and qualified Siddha physicians, the *varmam* therapy centers could be established all over the world for the benefit of patients.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

1. Rajaram TK. Fundamentals of Varma Medicine. ATSVS Siddha Medical College and Hospital, Kanyakumari, India. 2007;33-6.
2. Arjunan S. Dasa Naadigal. Varmaniam Foundation, Kanyakumari, India. 2012;17-8.
3. Shamugam M, Azees NA, Shailaja R, Sugunnthan S. The Foot Prints of Medical Varmalogy. Arts Research Institute, Coimbatore, India. 2012;57.
4. Rajaram TK. Varma Medicine (General). ATSVS Siddha Medical College and Hospital, Kanyakumari, India. 2008;13.
5. Varma Medicine (Special). Rajaram TK. ATSVS Siddha Medical College and Hospital Kanyakumari, India. 2007.
6. Rajaram TK. Traumatology in Varma Medicine Nerve Injuries. Siddha Medical Literature publishers, Kanyakumari, India. 2016;2.
7. Shanmugam N. Vethasathi varmammaruthuvam (kaipaagam-seipaagam). Thirumular Varmology Institute, Coimbatore, India. 2018;58-66.
8. Rajaram TK. Formulary of Varma Medicine. ATSVS Siddha Medical College and Hospital, Kanyakumari, India. 2008.
9. Guidelines for Siddha practitioners for COVID 19. Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India. 2020.
10. Arjunan S. Varmaiam Pothu Thadavval Adangal Murai. Varmaniam Foundation, Kanyakumari, India. 2018.
11. Rajaram K, Moharaj T. Varma Maruthuvam (A Textbook of Varmam). Siddha Medicine Literature Publishers, Kanyakumari, India. 2011.
12. Rajendran T. Handbook of Varma Therapy (2nd edn). Power Publications, Kanyakumari, India. 2012.
13. Ramasamy RS. Guidelines for Practice of Siddha Varmam Therapy. Central Council for Research in Siddha (Ministry of AYUSH, Govt. of India). Chennai, India. 2017.
14. Traditional and Complementary Medicine Practice Guideline on Varmam Therapy. Traditional and Complementary Medicine Division, Ministry of Health, Malaysia. 2016.
15. Clinical Siddha Varmam Training Module. Directorate of Indian Medicine and Homeopathy, Chennai, India.