



# Trigeminal Neuralgia Management with *Varmam* Therapy and *Siddha* Medicine – A Case Report

C. Kalaiarasi<sup>1\*</sup>, R. Keerthika<sup>2</sup>, D. Periyasami<sup>2</sup> and N. J. Muthukumar<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Varma Maruthuvam, National Institute of Siddha, Chennai - 600047, Tamil Nadu, India; sirayalaikacs@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Department of Pura Maruthuvam, National Institute of Siddha, Chennai - 600047, Tamil Nadu, India

## Abstract

A 48 year old female staff nurse from Chennai consulted in the Varma Maruthuvam Outpatient Department of APH-NIS, Chennai presented with complaints of sudden and severe stabbing pain with burning sensation at the left half of the maxillary and mandibular region for one year. After her MRI scan was done, she was diagnosed with trigeminal neuralgia due to vascular compression. The patient had consulted an allopathic hospital and used carbamazepine for the long term. She experienced some temporary relief, but the episodes occurred for a short while, and she felt drowsy. For further improvement, she came for *Varmam* treatment. The present study is a case report of typical Trigeminal Neuralgia (TN) that was treated with *Siddha Varmam* therapy along with *Amukkarachooranam*, *Arumugachenduram* and *Arakku thailam* for two months. This case report showed a promising reduction in pain episodes and recurrence following treatment, as measured by the Visual Analogue Scale (VAS) score. This study sheds light on the fact that *Varmam* therapy with concomitant medicines has a promising effect in the management of trigeminal neuralgia.

**Keywords:** *Siddha*, Trigeminal Neuralgia, *Varmam* Therapy, Vascular Compression

## 1. Introduction

Trigeminal Neuralgia (TN), also known as Tic Douloureux, is a persistent pain disorder that affects the trigeminal nerve, one of the head's most widely dispersed nerves. The incidence of new cases is approximately 12 per 1,00,000 people per year, the disorder is more common in women than in men<sup>1</sup>. Trigeminal symptoms can occur in 1-5 % of Multiple Sclerosis patients and are evident in 2-4 % of those people. Classical TN is often detected in elderly people, with a peak incidence between the ages of 50 and 60<sup>2</sup>. Treatment options in allopathy include medicines anticonvulsants and several neurosurgical procedures. Surgery is often only advised if other treatments have failed or if the side effects of medicines are unacceptable<sup>3</sup>. Additionally, there is a considerable risk of adverse reactions such as facial numbness following surgery. The evidence for surgical therapy is poor.

According to *Siddha*, TN may be correlated with *Kabala vatham*, which is one of the 84 *vatha* diseases mentioned in the text *Vatha noi nithanam-800*. It has symptoms of headache, facial pain, sleeplessness, hair loss, and loss of complexion in the body. *Varmam* therapy is one of the special treatments that is found to be effective in neurological and musculoskeletal disorders. So, taking this into consideration, this study was carried out to assess the effectiveness of *Varmam* therapy in the treatment of TN.

## 2. Case Description

A 48 year old staff nurse came to Varma Maruthuvam OPD, Ayothidoss Pandithar Hospital, and the National Institute of *Siddha*, Chennai, with complaints of sudden and severe stabbing pain with a burning sensation on the left side of the maxillary and mandibular regions. The pain would get triggered while chewing, brushing

\*Author for correspondence

teeth and washing the face. It would aggravate in the early morning, particularly with exposure to cold air. The jaw movements were restricted due to pain. The pain had been intermittent and had affected daily activities. The patient had been suffering from these symptoms for a year. She visited an allopathic hospital and found some relief from *Carbamazepine*. However, she experienced a painful attack and drowsiness while taking the medicine and she did not get significant relief. The patient arrived at our hospital seeking better management. There was no past history of other diseases and no positive family history. She had been taking modern medicine for hypothyroidism for the past 15 years. On a detailed neurological examination, motor and sensory functions were normal. All cranial nerves were also normal.

### 3. Diagnostic Assessment

The patient had a clear history of unilateral, sudden and severe stabbing attacks with recurrent episodes of pain in the distributed branches region of TN. On neurosensory physical examination facial muscle strength and sensation were intact. Her magnetic

resonance image revealed an indentation of the left trigeminal root by the superior cerebellar artery. From the above details, it was diagnosed as trigeminal neuralgia.

### 4. Patient Consent

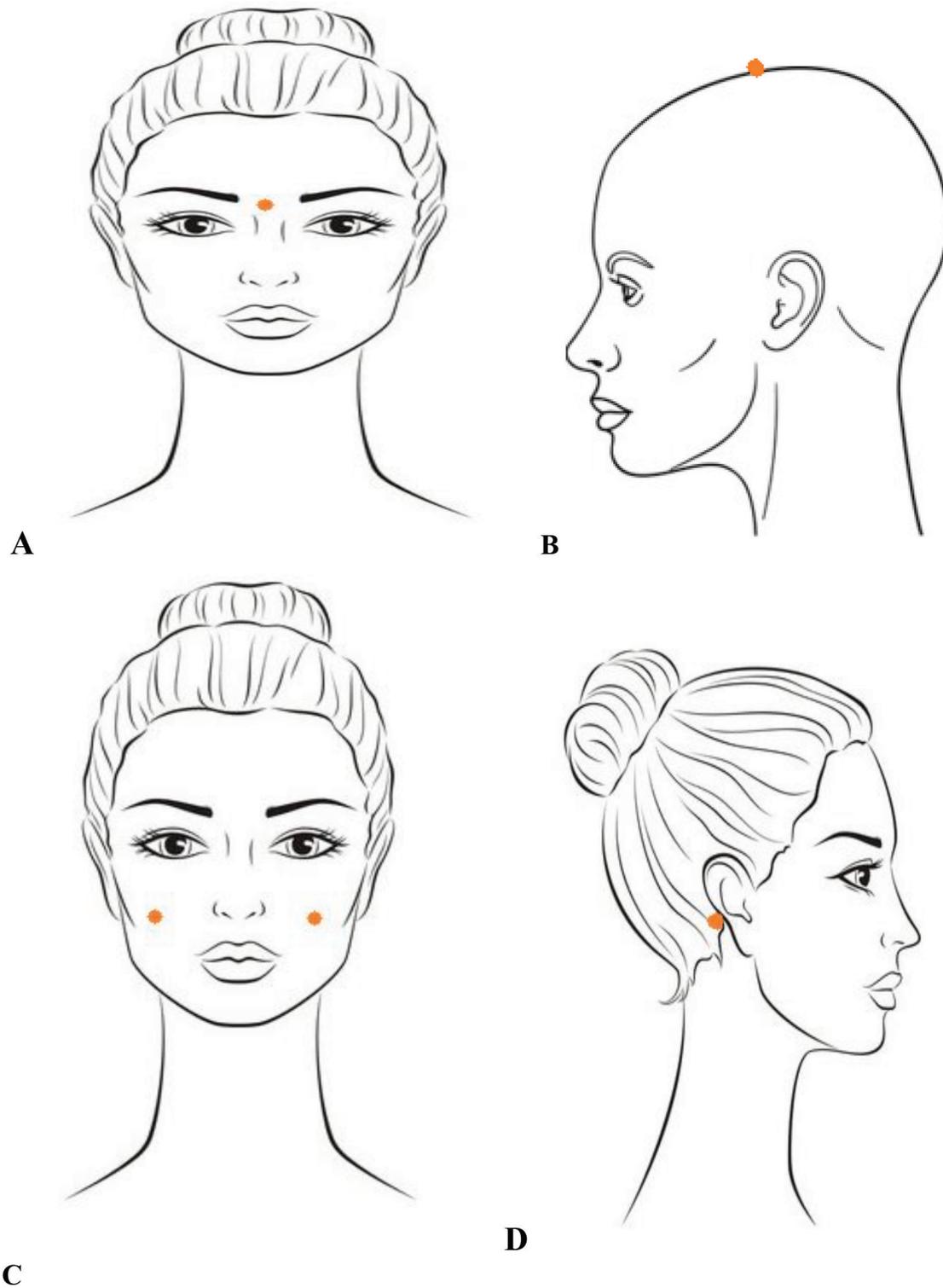
The patient's signed consent was obtained for the publication.

### 5. Therapeutic Intervention

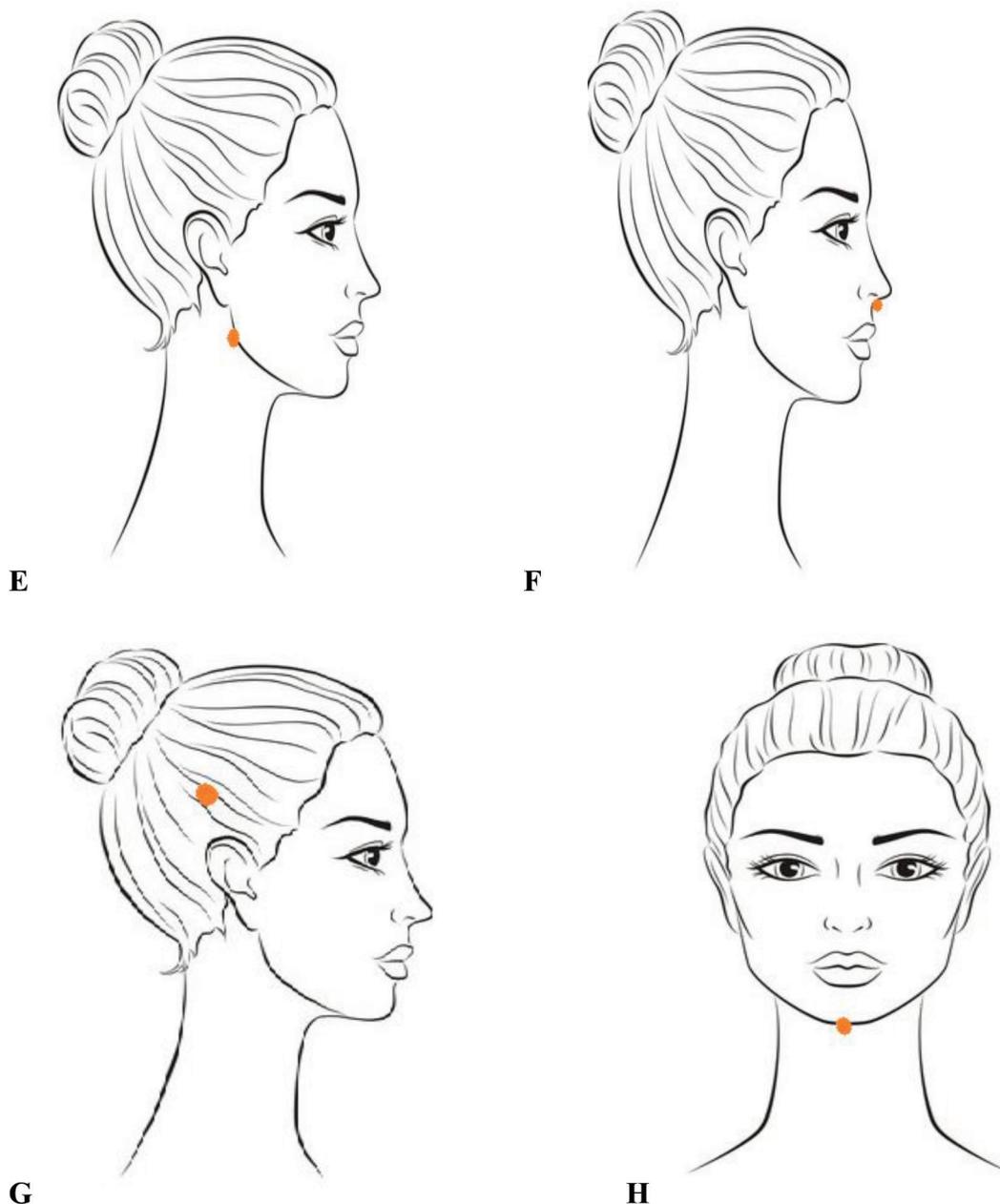
Initially, the treatment was started with purgation. In the early morning, *Meganathakuligai* 130mg with hot water was administered to an empty stomach. The next day, internal medicine tablets *Amukkara chooranam* tablet 2 bd with honey and *Arumugachenduram* 200mg bd with honey after food were given regularly along with *Arakku thailam* oil bath twice in five days. *Varmam* therapy (Table 1) was done once every five days at every OPD visit and continued for 2 months. *Varmam* therapy was given in an erect sitting position. The *Varmam* points are shown in Figure 1.

**Table 1.** Siddha Varmam therapy<sup>4,5</sup>

S. No.	Name of the Varmam Points	Anatomical Location	Procedure	Duration	Pressure Given
1	<i>Thilantha Varmam</i>	Over the nasion, in-between frontal bone and nasal bone.	Intermittent pressure with the middle finger and repeat the same 3 times	30 sec	½ mathirai
2	<i>Uchchi Varmam</i>	Over the bregma of the skull.	Pressing the point with the middle three fingers for 30 seconds and repeat the same 3 times	30 sec	½ mathirai
3	<i>Kambothiri Varmam</i>	In the depression below the zygomatic prominence.	Upward pressure with both middle fingers for 30 seconds and repeat it thrice.	30 sec	½ mathirai
4	<i>Sevikutri Varmam</i>	The pit behind the ear.	Intermittent pressure with the middle finger and repeat the same 3 times	30 sec	½ mathirai
5	<i>Konasanni Varmam</i>	The angle of the mandible.	By using thumb finger pressure and release 3 times.	30 sec	½ mathirai
6	<i>Suzhumunai Varmam</i>	Over the sub-nasal point.	Press and release 3 times with the pulp of the middle finger for 30 seconds.	30 sec	½ mathirai
7	<i>Sunnambu Kalam</i>	3 finger breadth above from the ears.	By using lateral movement of the middle three fingers pulp and repeat thrice.	30 sec	½ mathirai
8	<i>Ottu Varmam</i>	Below the mental protuberance.	Inward pressure 3 times with the middle finger.	30 sec	½ mathirai



**Figure 1.** Locations of Varmam points, (A). *Thilartha Varmam*, (B). *Uchchi Varmam*, (C). *Kambothiri Varmam*, (D). *Sevikutri Varmam*, (E). *Konasanni Varmam*, (F). *Suzhumunai Varmam*, (G). *Sunnambu Kalam*, (H). *Ottu Varmam*.



**Figure 1.** Continued...

## 6. Outcome Measures and Follow-up

The patient had good relief from all the symptoms by following the *Siddha Varmam* therapy and concomitant medicines with a proper diet. She explained that the stabbing pain and burning sensation over the left side cheek and the intensity of the pain were reduced well. No pain was noticed during jaw movement, and the episodes of pain while chewing and brushing were also completely reduced, which was measured by the

VAS score<sup>6</sup>. Initially, the VAS score was 7 and after the treatment, it was reduced to 2. During the entire period of treatment, there were no adverse reactions noted. The patient followed the above intervention for 2 months.

## 7. Discussion

A frequent and complicated facial pain disease, TN, has an unknown pathophysiology. They may have cognitive abnormalities including anxiety and

depression as a result of the chronic pain, which can significantly lower their quality of life. Consideration must be given to chronic pain as a social, emotional, and psychological condition that requires a personalised and interdisciplinary approach. Microvascular decompression is the first choice surgical treatment for patients with classical TN<sup>7</sup>. Fear of surgery and the side effects of long-term internal medication are the primary reasons to switch to alternative medicine.

In *Siddha* medicine, the term *Varmam* indicates the life energy that remains concentrated in certain specific points in our body. *Varmam* therapy is a manipulation of these points to regulate the life force and thereby treat the diseases by balancing the *Thirithodam* which is the root cause of the disease<sup>8</sup>. The scientific basis for *Varman* therapy is the regulation of neurotransmitter flow, synaptic transmission, and signal pathways for the treatment of neuromusculoskeletal diseases<sup>9</sup>. *Varmam* may be used along with internal medications and external applications as well.

The treatment in *Siddha*, aimed to restore homeostasis of the three humours *Vatham*, *Pitham* and *Kabam*. TN initially occurred from vitiated *vatham*. All functions of *vatham* come under the functions of the nervous system and excess *vatham* affects its natural functions. Pain is caused anywhere in the body due to the imbalance of *vatham*. The treatment began with *Viresanam* (Therapeutic purgation) because it is said to be best for *Vatha* disease - "*Viresanathal vatham thaazhum*"<sup>10</sup>. *Meganathakuligai*<sup>11</sup> was used for purgation. *Viresanam* is one of the therapeutic de-toxification measures. Oral medication administration after bio-purificatory measures exerts better efficacy. *Amukkara chooranam* is indicated for *vatham*, *pitham*, and *Kabam* imbalance conditions and it improves nerve function and enhances fast recovery<sup>12</sup>. *Arumugachenduram* is one of the effective medicines that is indicated for *Kabala noigal* which is a head-related disorder<sup>13</sup>. It pacifies the vitiated *thodam* and subsides the symptoms. A therapeutic oil bath is one of the purifying and revitalising therapies. An oil bath is primarily used for treating neurological illnesses and psychological disorders. The utilization of *Arakku thailam* bath can reduce the *pitham* and *vatham* aggravation and promote good sleep<sup>13</sup>. The above medicines along with *Varmam* therapy regulate the imbalance of *vatham*, *pitham* and *kabam* which is the root cause of the disease.

*Siddha* has a holistic approach that comprehensively promotes mind-body healing. The major goals are not only the treatment but also the prevention of severity and rejuvenation. The patient was encouraged to practice *Pranayamam* once a day, which is one of the finest methods to heal neurological conditions and is referenced in *Sirappu Maruthuvam* literature<sup>14</sup>. It is also one of the best ways to achieve mental equilibrium and relieve stress in nervous disorders. The patient was instructed to stay away from tubers, bitter, astringent, and sour meals, as well as from exposure to cold and strong winds. Dietary restriction was suggested as a way to increase the effectiveness of medicine and reduce the severity of the disease. Hence *Varmam* therapy along with concomitant *Siddha* medication and lifestyle modification aids the patient to recover from TN.

## 8. Conclusion

This case study reveals that management of TN with *Varmam* therapy along with *Siddha* medicines markedly helped the patient get rid of symptoms of TN and improved her work performance by reducing pain, feelings of anxiety, irritation, and a better quality of life. Despite the fact that Trigeminal neuralgia is not always curable, *Siddha* management can be effective in reducing the excruciating pain, discomfort, and relapse. The *Varmam* therapy in *Siddha* needs to be strengthened. Nevertheless, this is only a preliminary study and more clinical trials with large sample sizes need to be investigated.

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