

***Kalarippayattu* and Its Medicinal Benefits: Exploring the Healing Art of Kerala**

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ABSTRACT

In India one can find so many traditions, *Kalarippayattu* is one such tradition. It is a martial art which originated in South India. Once it had an active role in the society, especially in the medieval period. Then its importance declined due to several reasons. Now it is reviving and gradually regains the lost status. The evolution of Indian martial arts begins from the *Dhanurvedic* tradition. *Dhanurveda* is an ancient book which deals with martial arts. *Kalarippayattu* is more systematic and advanced form of martial art. *Silambam and dandi* (north Indian stick fighting) are also other types of Indian martial arts. The styles and techniques of *Kalarippayattu* grew up through the observation of animals. So it is clear that the ancient masters had at deep communication with the nature. *Kalarippayattu* is not only a martial art. Above all it is a way of life. It inevitably leads to purity of the body and mind. It is not easy to learn. The way to learn *Kalarippayattu* is tough and it demand good practice, hard work and patience. This ancient art form is not just about combat. *Kalarippayattu* is also a centre for moral lessons. The master taught moral aspects like respect, politeness, self-control, humanity, patience, obedience, non-violence, etc along with *Kalarippayattu*. The *Kalarippayattu* practitioners must be an example for the society and they must come to help others. This ancient art form is not just about combat; it also incorporates elements of healing and medicinal practices.

KEYWORDS: *Kalarippayattu, Kalari, Ayurveda, Marma Chikithsa, Uzhichil, Marma massage.*

INTRODUCTION

Kalarippayattu is a ritualistic heritage existed in Kerala from 12th Century AD which contributed to Martial Arts and Treatment. It has historical importance. It is one of the ancient martial arts in the world. It is not only a martial art. It is a part of the society. The place of martial training is known as a *Kalari*. As a body practice cultivated through tradition, the Mother of Martial Art *Kalarippayattu* has a universal application in many fields. North *Kalari* concentrates on Martial arts whereas South *Kalari* gives importance to *kalari* treatment. In Kerala, *Kalaris* are more ritualistic. They worship *Shiva-sakthi* inside the '*kalari*'. *Shiva* is the creator of the universe and *Shakti* is the power of the God (as per Hindu mythology). The *Kalari* is a centre for training and healing in villages or with royal households, and also serves as a temple where the guardian deity was *Siva/Sakthi*. *Siva-Shakti* is a big power worshipped inside the *Kalari* to make the students focused and serious.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Ayurveda is the traditional Indian medical system. It is India's indigenous medical method to heal diseases. The ancient time Indians believed that illness and healing were the work of God. So in order to heal diseases, they used prayers and magical formulas along with the medicines. But in due course this thought was declined. *Ayurveda* developed as a systematic branch of knowledge from the ancient time. The methods and medicines of *Ayurveda* treatment is closely related with the environment. *Kalarippayattu* has an active role in the field of healing and it is related with *Ayurveda*. Normally the techniques of *Kalarippayattu*

itself have healing powers. Through this a person can maintain his/her physical and mental health. The exercises of *Kalaripayattu* awake all the cells in the human body and maintain the blood circulation. The normal blood circulation helps to provide oxygen to all the cells and organs in the body. It helps the functioning of body. Through this the health and immunity of the body increase. The immunity of the healthy body is very high compared to an unhealthy body. So *Kalaripayattu* itself is a medicine. *Kalaripayattu* exercises and body mastery attained through daily practice has an active role in traditional *ayurvedic* medicine, which is practiced in Kerala. In fact this combination of *Ayurveda* and *Kalaripayattu* is unique in the world. Through many years of practice a *kalari Gurukkal* attain the status of a healer too. Originating in Kerala in South India, *Kalari Chikitsa* is an ancient system of musculoskeletal treatments developed to benefit the warriors of *Kalaripayattu*. This is a combination of *ayurveda* and *Kalaripayattu*. *Kalari chikitsa* is now very popular among the people. This treatment method mainly specializes in orthopedic injuries and nervous disorders.¹ At the time of *kalari* practice injuries are very common. So it is clear that the relationship between *Kalaripayattu* and medicine begins from the early times of *Kalaripayattu*. *Ayurveda* is knowledge of which life can be prolonged. Principles of *Ayurveda* inform the martial practitioners to understand his/her body, and about the therapies which are part of their martial practice.² The main principle of Indian traditional medical system is a good doctor must pay particular attention to the external signs that rejects the internal problems of human body.

In the ancient time there is no diagnosing equipment like X-ray machine, scanner etc. The only way to diagnose the problem is the external signs in the body. The ancient physicians and *kalari Gurukkal* were master's in diagnosing diseases through the external symptoms of the body. The *kalari Gurukkal* is well-known in the villages of Kerala as a *Vaidya* or physician.³ The medicines for diseases were made out of herbs. Each physician has his own way to prepare these medicines. But the aim of those medicines is same. *Ayurvedic* medical system is linked with the nature. The medicine was prepared from plants. These aspects related with pure *Ayurvedic* medical knowledge, not to any martial art. *Kalaripayattu* related with *Ayurveda* in a different way. It is already mentioned that the practice in *kalari* may cause injuries like bone fractures to the practitioners at any time. So they themselves took measures to prevent these injuries and they used *Ayurvedic* medicines to heal. This further leads to the development of *kalari Chikitsa*. This is the main reason why the *Kalari Chikitsa* mainly focused on bone injuries, fractures etc.

Traditional Indian medicine teaches that the human body is composed not merely of physical matter. It also contains a subtle energy known as *Prana*. Within the physical body, fluids travel through the circulatory system and nerve impulses through the nervous system. And within the subtle body, *Prana* travels through the *Nadi* channels and *Chakras* centers. According to traditional Indian medicine the human body is a manifestation of the five basic elements, ether, air, fire, water and earth. These elements come together in certain patterns known as *Doshas*, which literally means "quick to go out of balance." While in a balanced state, *Doshas* are an energy force that cannot be detected visibly. When imbalanced they manifest visibly in the form of wind, bile and mucus. *Ayurveda* refers to three bodily humors.⁴ They are wind (*vatam*), fire (*pitham*), phlegm (*kabham*). It is known as *thridosham*. Each *Dosha* has a primary function in the body: *Vata* – Air and Ether is the moving force within the body. Air moves within spaces inside both the body, such as the lungs and colon, and the subtle channels. *Pitha* – Fire and Water is the force of assimilation in the body. Fire in the body exists in the form of water, which can be found in acidic fluids. The *pitta dosha* is associated with fire or heat. Skin, eyes, brain are the locations where *pitta* works. It provides the structures and the lubrication that the body needs. *Kabha*– Water and Earth is the force of fluidity and stability in the body. Water in the body is contained by boundaries of earth, i.e. skin and tissues. The *Vatadosha* is the most important among the three *dosha*. *Kabha* is the heaviest of the three *dosha*. In order for a person to be in good health these forces must be balanced within his or her body. This principle is seen in the scientific

¹ Patrick Denaud, *Kalaripayattu: The Martial Art Tradition of India*, Toronto, 2009.

² Phillip B Zarrilli, *When the body becomes all eyes*, New Delhi, 2001.

³ Shaji.K.John, *Kalaripayattu the Martial and Healing Art of Kerala*, Published by the Author, Kottayam, 2011.

⁴ Patrick Patrick Denaud, *Kalaripayat: The Martial Art Tradition of India*, Destiny Publication, Toronto, 2009.

concept of home stay is where a system regulates its internal environment in order to maintain a stable and constant condition.

Their role is explained in the ancient *Ayurveda* text *Sushruta Samhita*. The *Kalari Gurukkal*, in fact uses this concept of *Ayurveda* to cure their patients. According to the popular belief, the daily practice of *Kalaripayattu* can balance the three bodily humors. The practice of massage is also intended to maintain balance among the three humors.⁵ According to *Sushruta* a famous ancient Indian *Ayurvedic* physician “for someone who practice exercise and who is massaged with the feet of amasser, illness will run from him”. It is believed that *Sushruta* lived during 3rd century AD. From his words we can clearly understand that the people of ancient India knew the importance of massaging therapy. When it comes to *Kalaripayattu*, massage is first and foremost science of the circulation of energy and the creation of harmony in body, mind, and spirit. In Kerala this knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation. All massage techniques fall under a general principle; the morning is suitable for unifying, the evening is when you need to sedate and disperse. The treatments are given early in the morning during the monsoon season.⁶ Massage acts on the skin, on the muscles and internal organs by mainly treating pressure points and the vertebra and it goes to deep.

Oil is the essential factor for massaging. The application of oil maintains the elasticity of body tissues. *Sushruta* recommends oil treatment every day in order to maintain good nutrition of tissues, strengthen the body, improve vision and sleep etc. *Mahasneha*, *Kuzhambu* and *Murivenna* are the various forms of oil using for massage.⁷ *Kalari Chikitsa* can be broadly classified into two massage with oil (*uzhichil*) and massage on vital spots of the body (*kalarimarma* massage/therapy).

Uzhichil or Massage with the oil

Kalari uzhichil or *kalarioil* massage is an integral part of the *kalari Chikitsa* system. In the *kalari*, massage shapes the fighter's body. The *Gurukkal* or masseur uses his hand and feet for massaging. According to great *Sushruta* “illness will not come near a body that has been well trained and has then undergone massage using the feet. The main advantage of massage with the feet is that, it focuses on the body as a whole, whereas massage using hand is for just one part of the body”.⁸ As a practical manual therapy, *kalariuzhichil* is a primary element of *kalari Chikitsa*. The massages utilize specialized massage techniques using warm *herbalised* oil. *Kalari chikitsa* follows the same principles of *Uzhichil* as propounded by *Ayurveda*. The mode of treatment is decided upon after taking into consideration the physical condition of the person concerned. Traditional texts recommend moderate *uzhichil* for individuals whose physiology shows a dominant *vata* quality, very mild *uzhichil* for those with *pitha* and rigorous *uzhichil* for those with *kabha*. Old people and children are not subjected to massage at all. If a patient is involved, the most appropriate herbal oil or other oils are chosen after the diagnosis is finalized.

In the field of healing the injuries related to vital spot (*marmam*) and muscles *Kalaripayattu* developed a unique system of massage using the oil called *uzhichil*. This system of *uzhichil* includes blood circulation, energizes glands, activates *prana* etc. and on the whole the biological function is vitalized and it refreshes the mind.⁹ *Uzhichil* or body massage is a staple in *Ayurveda* treatment but it gained popularity largely through the medium of *kalari Chikitsa*. There are three kinds of *uzhichil* also known as *Thirummu* that are done by using oil prepared from special herbs.

- *Katcha Thirummu* is used for developing flexibility and suppleness of the physical body. This is done prior to the training session.
- *Rakshathirummu* is done for the treatment of problems related to nerves, muscles, bones etc.

⁵ Patrick Denaud, *Kalaripayattu*, Marie-Claire Restoux, Madras, 1995

⁶ Luijendik.D.H, *Kalaripayat, The structure and essence of an Indian Martial Art*, Rapboud Repository, Rapboud University, Nijmegen, 2008.

⁷ Chandrasekharan Nair, *Ph.D Thesis on A Historical study of Kalaripayattu in North Malabar*, University of Kannur, 2009.

⁸ Rajeev.R, *Kalariyuzhichilum Marma Chikilsayum*, (Health) D.C.Books, Kottayam, 2002.

⁹ Shaji K John, *Kalaripayattu The Martial and Healing Art of Kerala*, published by the Author, Kottayam, 2011.

- *Sukhathirummu* is basically for physical rejuvenation and helps to develop the immune system. This keeps diseases at bay.¹⁰

The *Sushruta Samhita* describes the importance of *uzhichil* with oil as a measure to prevent disease. In the system of *kalarithere* are three ways of administering *uzhichil*. The first method is known as *kai uzhichil* or *kai Thirummu*. The neck, face, and head are massaged only using the hands. In this massage is done by using hands. The second method is done by using feet known as *chavutti Thirummu*. The third method is administered by two people known as *suparidhara kriya*. *ChavuttiThirummal* is a form of massage in the *Kalari Chikitsa* system. *Chavutti Thirummal* was traditionally used by the *Kalaripayattu* warriors to increase their flexibility, and to prepare and strengthen their bodies for combat. Combat situations demanded a supple body capable of powerful movements. Today, *ChavuttiThirummal* is still an important part of martial arts training. The martial artists receive this treatment to support the strenuous daily training required to master their art. This treatment is an excellent complement to physical training for greater flexibility and enhanced ease of movement. *Chavutti Thirummal* is a strong full body massage, where the practitioner uses their feet for the main part of the treatment. It takes a very experienced *asan* to do it.¹¹ The practitioner supports themselves by a rope suspended from the ceiling allowing for long continuous massage strokes to be made with, deeper and more thorough pressure. Through this the masseur can control and regulate the pressure of his foot on the student's body and uses his legs to massage the student's body. This type of treatment is given on the basis of the strength and needs of the *Kalaripayattu* practitioner or the patient. Even the smallest mistakes in the treatment can create worse result on the body. So the masseur needs good practice in massage and *marma vidya* and good practice. To perform this massage, a high level of skill, control and coordination is required. At the same time patients also follow some rules in order to complete the treatment. He has very clear awareness about how much pressure he must apply to various parts. The senior students of *Kalaripayattu* are subjected to *Chavuttiuzhichil*.¹²

Some of the guidance to the students is good rest, control the food, sexual abstinence, and protection from over cold and heat during the treatment time. This massage is traditionally given by those who have first mastered the martial art of *Kalaripayattu*. To support the benefits of the massage, this treatment incorporates warm herbal oils, *marma* applications and herbal steam therapy (*Swedana*). Herbal medicine and dietary restrictions may also be prescribed when necessary. It is recommended for athletes Martial artists, dancers, Yoga practitioners, performing artists etc. The benefits include increase in flexibility, agility and strength prepares your body for a strenuous training regime, allows for a deeper release of constricted and tight muscles. Apart from this *uzhichil* treatment also includes *Kizhi*. It means the application of poultice to the affected area with a cloth that is well tied with herbal powders which is dipped into the hot medicated oil. There are different types of *kizhi* like *marmakizhi*, *navarakizhi*, *elakizhi* etc. The benefits of *kizhi* are it brings brilliance, softness, healthy skin, removes tiredness and rectifies dislocated joints. Thus *kalariuzhichil* acts as both prevention and cure and helps in maintaining a healthy body for the students undergoing martial practices.

Kalari Marma massage

Kalari marma massage is a unique system of treatment developed by *Kalari Masters* throughout the centuries. It actually originated as a treatment for students practicing *Kalaripayattu*. Students used to have injuries during their practice sessions which ranged from mild situations like bruises, contusions, sprains and strains, to severe conditions like joint dislocation, fracture and even vertigo and unconsciousness. Whatever be the condition, the students were treated by their Masters. *Kalari Marma Chikitsa* focuses on the ailments related to nerves, muscles, bones and *marmas*.¹³ It is claimed that experienced *Kalari* warriors could disable or kill their opponents by merely striking the correct *marmam* (vital

¹⁰ Shaji K John, *Kalaripayattu The Martial and Healing Art of Kerala*, published by the Author, Kottayam, 2011.

¹¹ Suchit.C.S , *Marma Sastram*, D.C.Books, Kottayam,2004

¹² www.keralatourism.org/kalaripayattu/kalari-treatment

¹³ E.P.VasuGurukkal, *Kalaripayattu: Keralathinte Thanatu Ayodhana Kala*, D.C. Books, Kottayam, 2000.

point) on their opponent's body. This technique is taught only to the most promising and level-headed students so as to discourage misuse of the technique. *Marmashastram* stresses on the knowledge of *marmam* and is also used for *marma* treatment (*marmachikitsa*). *Marmasoothra* explain the technical sides of *Marmachikitsa*.

This system of *marma* treatment comes under *siddhavidhyam*, attributed to the sage Agastya and his disciples. Critics of *Kalaripayattu* have pointed out that the application of *marmam* techniques against neutral outsiders has not always produced verifiable results. The earliest mention of *marmam* is found in the *Rig Veda*, where *Indra* is said to have defeated *Vritra* by attacking his *marmam* with a *vajra*. References to *marmam* are also found in the *Atharva Veda*. With numerous other scattered references to vital points in *Vedic* and epic sources, it is certain that India's early martial artists knew about and practiced attacking or defending vital points. Sushruta (c. 6th century BC) identified and defined 107 vital points of the human body in his *Sushruta Samhita*. Of these 107 points, 64 were classified as being lethal if properly struck with a fist or stick. Sushruta's work formed the basis of the medical discipline *Ayurveda*, which was taught alongside various Indian martial arts that had an emphasis on vital points, such as *Varma kalai* and *Marma adi (Varma ati)*. *Kalaripayattu* masters possess one or more of three types of texts on the vital spots : (1) *Marmmanidanam* (based on *Sushruta Samhita*) (2) *Granthavarimarmmachikilsa*, which also identify the 107 vital spots and (3) *Marmmayogam* which are the *Kalaripayattu* practitioner's handbook of empty-hand practical fighting applications and emergency revivals for the 64 'most vital' of the spots (*kulabhysamarmam*).

Inside the human body there are 107 *Marma* points, also known as vital or pressure points. These points correspond to the nervous and circulatory systems as well as to anatomically sensitive areas. These points serve as junctions in the subtle energy system of the body. Any obstruction to the free flow of energy creates an imbalance which results in disease and discomfort. *Marma* therapy contributes to increase or recharge physical, mental and spiritual energies. *Marma* can be divided into *Mamsa Marma*, *Asthi Marma*, *Snayu Marma*, *Dhamani Marma*, *Sira Marma* And *Sandhi Marma* according to the place where they are located in the human body.⁶ There are 10 *mamsa* (muscle) *marma*, 8 *Asthimarma* (bones), 23 *snayumarma* (ligament), 9 *dhamanimarma*, 37 *siramarma* (vessel) and 20 *sandhimarma* (joints) in the human body.¹⁴ The 64 practical vital spots (*abhyasamarmamangal*), and how to point at those vital spots with the forefinger while reciting a *mantram* should be learned not only by reading this book but also by obtaining some practical training from an expert master.

Marma therapy contributes to increase or recharge physical, mental and spiritual energies. *Kalari marma* treatment is entirely different from *Ayurveda* and *Panchakarma* treatment. The knowledge about the pressure points or *marmam* is very important in massaging, *Ayurveda* and *Kalaripayattu*. These points indicate the major concentration of veins. Knowledge about these vital spot derived from the observation of the human body. Those who practice *Kalaripayattu* and the masseur must know about these vital points in the body. A blow to these vital parts can be a cause for the death of human. When the masseur massages with his feet or hand he must treat these vital spots in the correct manner. Otherwise it will make worse effects.

In Kerala the *kalari Gurukkal* used this knowledge as a health promoting art. This also leads to the emergence of *Kalari Chikitsa*. The ancient physician Sushruta gives a list of 108 vulnerable body points classified into five categories. They are head and neck, back, thorax, abdomen, upper and lower limbs. Again it is classified on the basis of consequences of hitting these points. They are immediate death, death after a certain time, death after the extraction of the body, paralysis or functional disablement and cause violent pain.

Some of the dangerous pressure points are

1. *Thilaka marmam*— between the eyes, where the eyebrows met
2. *Nakshatra marmam* — Side of the eyes
3. *Surya adangal* — Armpit
4. *Bhujamarmam* — Collarbone
5. *Aadi marmam* — Top of the skull.

¹⁴ Fawcett .F, *Nayars of Madras*, Madras Government Press, Madras, 1915.

Each of these points can lead to serious injuries. But at the same time it can also be used to heal and maintain health. In fact, the man who has studied *marmam* techniques and *Kalaripayattu* is very useful to the society. The *kalari Gurukkal* who are masters in *marmam* techniques and the physicians must not use this knowledge to harm others.¹⁵ They should use this knowledge to help others. This knowledge can only be used at a time when his life is in danger.

A skilled *Marma* therapist will be able to identify and remove these inflammatory blockages and restore the natural equilibrium of the body. Treatments for these blockages include physical manipulation, heat therapy, and traditional herbal medicines. Anatomically speaking, a severe trauma caused by external forces can cause internal bleeding due to rupture of blood vessels which is called hemorrhage. This causes a marked decrease in blood supply to the part affected. As a result, supply of oxygen and necessary nutrients are decreased. This leads to enormous cell death. Accumulation of dead cells can lead to a condition called sepsis. It then spreads along with blood to lungs causing pneumonia, septicemia then to brain, causing meningitis. The *Gurukkal* (*Kalari* master) performs *Marma* treatment with spiritual thoughts, blessings from God and Masters and with mental power.¹⁶ He helps the person to find relief from ailments like severe joint pain, back ache, disc prolapsed and other injuries by manipulating the *Marma* points. A perfect knowledge of the muscle system, nervous and circulatory system and bone structure is necessary for performing *Marma* treatment. While performing *Kalari Marma* Massage, the *Gurukkal* provides deep emphasis on the presence of *Marma* points within the part massaged. *Kalari Marma* massage has its effects on Lymphatic drainage system. Movements to the skeletal muscles cause contractions to the intrinsic muscles of lymph vessels, thereby promoting the flow of lymph. Lymph is the medium of transport for harmful waste products and also the substances that are responsible for immunity. Thus *Kalari Marma* massage helps in fast removal of harmful waste from the body, reduces edemas and also enhances immunity. *Kalari Marma* massage provides a cleansing effect to the body.¹⁷ It purifies blood and also reduces skin diseases. It also helps to improve muscle function, venous drainage, and nervous system of the body. *Kalari Marma* massage influences the breathing pattern, thereby inducing a reliable respiratory mechanism. This in turn imparts its effects in sleep disorders and also in psychotic individuals. Lack of internal medicine is one of the greatest highlights of *Kalari marma* massage. Even though, it helps to improve the immunity, strength, agility and endurance of both external and internal body parts.

Kalari Marma massage enhances the flow of life gas; oxygen, thereby rectifying the irregularities in breathing pattern. By maintaining a healthy blood circulation, it helps to clean the toxic waste products accumulated within the body through outlets like breath, sweat, stool and urine. Even healthy individuals, who are devoid of any potential diseases, can undergo *Kalari Marma* massage as a yearly fitness programme. Since the immunity system is enhanced, it helps to keep one disease free and in a state of positive health. *Kalari Marma* massage has proved to provide an overall relaxation effect and also provides rejuvenation to the cells in the body.¹⁸ *Kalari Marma* massage to whole body is performed, aiming at producing relaxation and rejuvenation to the body. A course of such type of massage, in which a single session lasts for two and a half to three hours, is enough to keep a person healthy and immune for the rest of the year. People find relief from various disorders like sprains, arthritis, back ache, disc prolapsed, cervical spondylitis, neck pain as well as neurological conditions where other systems of treatment like homeopathy and modern medicine could not succeed.

A further benefit of *Marma* treatment is the powerful detoxification of the body. In many ways modern life encourages us to live in a 'toxic soup,' constantly surrounded by artificial chemicals. Our body absorbs many of these harmful substances through the food we eat, the air we breathe, and our daily interactions with our environment. These toxins become lodged inside the body and may remain there for many years. *Marma* treatments stimulate the body in a way which releases these toxins and draws them to the surface. After their elimination, the patient feels refreshed and rejuvenated. Traditional medicine making

¹⁵ K Vijayakumar, *Kalaripayattu: KeralathinteShakthiyumSaundaryavum.*; Dept of Cultural Publications, Govt. of Kerala Thiruvananthapuram, 2000.

¹⁶ K Vijayakumar, *Kalaripayattu: KeralathinteShakthiyumSaundaryavum, op.cit.*

¹⁷ Gangadharan K T, *Evolution of Kerala History and Culture*, Calicut University Central Co-operative store Ltd.

¹⁸ Govindan.S.V, *UzhichilinteTatwam (Health Science)*, Current books, Kottayam, 1985.

is one of the most important aspects of *kalari* treatment system. The medicines used at *Kalarishave* been passed down from *Guru* to Disciple from generation to generation. Many of these remedies are unique to *marma Chikitsa*.¹⁹ The medicines are made from pure, natural ingredients, and they are made by hand, using a wood fire. No deviation from the traditional methods is permitted. Since *Kalari Chikitsa* is a divine art, no treatment is begun without first offering prayers.

The prayer is as follows.

Ayam me hastobhagavan {My hand is the lord}

Ayam me bhagavattarah {Boundlessly blissful is my hand}

Ayam me visvabheshajah {This hand holds all healing secrets}

Ayamshivabhimarshanah {Which make whole with its gentle touch}-Rig Veda.²⁰

Knowledge of Amrita Nila (Amrita Nila Ariyunnavane Asanakoo)

Knowledge of *Amrita Nila* is compulsory in Southern *Kalari Marma* Theory. The action and strength of the *Marmas* in the human body differs significantly from a thin crescent to a full moon. According to the *Southern Kalari* system one can become a *Guru* only if he knows *Amrita nila*. It means the status of the *Marma* point under the influence of the moon. According to the waxing and waning of the moon different *Marmas* in the body of a man become more sensitive. For example on a full moon day the centre part of the top of the head is more sensitive than any other part. On the day of the new moon the thumbs of the feet become sensitive. The efficiency of the *marma* of the body changes according to the development of the Moon. So on the Full Moon day, *Amrita* position is at the top of the brain, and it gradually comes down day by day and reaches the thumbs of the feet on the no moon day (*Amavasi*). The person who has mastered in *Amrit* position only is considered a true *Asan* (master) of *marma* treatment. In a fight, in short, the fighter should know which *marma* of the body is more vulnerable. Otherwise he cannot be a good fighter, not to speak of a *Guru*.

Thus the concepts of *marmam* points are an important part of *Kalaripayattu*. This knowledge spread to the other parts of the world through *kalari Chikitsa*. Now it is a popular treatment method and indigenous to Kerala. The importance of *Kalaripayattu* as a medicine is not ending, because *Kalaripayattu* is a life style. This life style helps to increase health, immunity, and strength and concentration of the mind. Internal and external body cleansing are very important and it is found in the *Ayurvedic* medicine practiced in Kerala. *Varisara*, *agnisara*.etc is some form of body cleansing methods.²¹ These body cleansing techniques can be seen in *Kalaripayattu*. The *Kalaripayattu* warriors practice this in order to maintain their body health. *Yoga* and its breathing techniques also related to *Kalaripayattu*. It helps to maintain spiritual stability and blood circulation: So *Kalaripayattu* itself is a medicine to body and mind. It helps the people to follow good health. The science of *marmam* is not a small branch of knowledge. It is an important science related to the human body. It can be used to heal a person and it can be used to kill or paralyse a person.

Kalari Chikitsa is a unique system of treatment which developed by *kalarimasters* with the help of *Ayurveda*.²² However *kalari Chikitsa* is different from *Ayurveda*. In *Ayurveda* people get relief from medicines than massage. Medicines made out of herbal plants have the primary importance in case of *Ayurveda*. In case of *kalarichikitsa* people get relief through *uzhichil* and *marma chikitsa*. The *gurukkal* performs *marma* treatment with his knowledge and practice, spiritual thoughts, blessings from the god and masters and mental power. He helps to find relief from ailment by manipulating the *marma* points. Lack of internal medicines is one of the greatest highlights of *kalarichikitsa*. It helps to improve the immunity, strength, agility of human body. *Kalari Chikitsa* gives prime importance to the problems like bruising, bone fracture etc.

As a result of learning about the human body, Indian martial artists became knowledgeable in the fields of traditional medicine and massage. *Kalaripayattu* teachers often provide massages (*uzhichil*)

¹⁹ Kurup, M.B., *Kalari Mura : KadathanadanThallumThadavum*, Shanta Book Stall, Guruvayoor, 1993.

²⁰ George K.M., *YodhakkalNoottandukaliloode*, Kerala Linguistic Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 1972.

²¹ Tilak Moses, *Kalaripayattu and Marma Adi*, Neil Publications, Madras, 1982.

²² Balakrishnan.P, *Kalaripayattu: KeralatillePrachina Ayodhana Mura*, S.N. Process Private Limited, Bangalore, 1994.

with medicinal oils to their students in order to increase their physical flexibility or to treat muscle injuries encountered during practice. Such massages are generally termed *thirumal* and the unique massage given to increase flexibility is known as *katchathirumal*. It is said to be as sophisticated as the *uzhichil* treatment of *Ayurveda*. *Kalarippayattu* has borrowed extensively from *Ayurveda* and equally lends to it. However in today's teaching the method is to simply touch gently the points in one's own body and identify the *marmas* followed by learning through sketches and charts. The student also learns the consequences of damaged *marmas* and the first aid to treat the same without the use of medicine.²³ Today most of the *Gurukkal* or teachers who run *kalari* and *kalari* treatment are not quite professionals and this is one of the reasons for the decline of *kalari*.

They even refuse to teach the *uzhichil*, *marmatantram*, treatments etc. to the fellows who desire to continue *kalarias* their livelihood. If this pathetic situation continues, the *kalarimura* and *kalari* treatment was not too far to disappear. *Kalari gurus* give more importance to *kalari* treatment than *kalari* practice. Even expert gurus reduce the lesson plan in three months which are actually taught in three to four years for acquiring good business. We can see the persons learned like this are running *kalari* without proper knowledge of *uzhichil* and treatment. These types of practice act as a major role for the loss of name and fame of *kalari*. The importance given to *kalari* treatment stood as the main challenge to the *kalari* practice and studies. Today the trainees who got training from the famous *kalaris* in Kerala like C.V.N *Kalari*, Vallabhata*Kalari*, V.K.M *Kalari* started independent *Kalari* are also giving importance to *kalari* treatment.

CONCLUSION

Kalarippayattu plays a prominent role in the history of Kerala. More than a fighting art, it is a part of the culture of Kerala. *Kalari* is a centre of learning and healing. *Ayurveda* is traditional Indian medical system and *Kalarippayattu* is an Indian form of martial art. The relationship between *Ayurveda* and *Kalarippayattu* begins from the origin of *Kalarippayattu*. For those who practice *Kalarippayattu*, injuries are very often. This is the primary reason for the emergence of *kalari Chikitsa*. So they were depended upon the *Ayurvedic* physician. Later they themselves developed a treatment method with the help of *Ayurveda* and *Kalarippayattu*. This led to the emergence of *kalari Chikitsa*. Now *kalari Chikitsa* is very popular and it is a part of tourism. As a part of tourism a large number of foreigners also use *kalari Chikitsa* as a health treatment. Native people also use the *kalari Chikitsa* as a traditional treatment.

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