



KALARIPPAYATTU

THE MARTIAL AND HEALING ART OF KERALA

SHAJI K JOHN

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Published by the Author
Koovackal
Kappumthala PO
Muttuchira, Kottayam
Kerala 686 613
shaji_kalaripayattu@yahoo.com

WITH DUE RESPECTS TO
MY GURU



Shri. E.P. VASUDEVAN GURUKKAL



DEDICATED TO
CHANDRALEKHA

കളരി

“കളരി ശരീരവും കളരിവിദ്യാർത്ഥി കളരിയുടെ ആത്മാവും ആകുന്നു!”
വസുദേവ ഗുരുക്കൾ

“Kalari is the body and the disciple of Kalari its soul!”
Vasudeva Gurukkal

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PREFACE



*K*alaripayattu is the indigenous martial art of Kerala and is known to be in practice for more than five hundred years. It has been preserved for many centuries following the tradition of *guru-śiṣya paramparā*. True to the tradition, the generations of *Gurus* are worshipped symbolized by the *pādukā* placed at the *Guruthara* in every *Kalari*. *Kalaripayattu* is a wholistic art that not only knows how to hurt the other but also knows how to heal. This unique combination makes it a complete science and hence it is regarded as the ‘mother of all martial arts’. The martial training aims at the overall development of an individual beginning from physical strength, mental balance and progressing to spiritual upliftment. It forms, as it were, a path guided by the tradition to lead a complete life.

The practice of *Kalaripayattu* in cities and its partial application in visual arts has often led to the notion that it is not more than a physical fitness workout and worse, it is often classified as a performing art.

Observing these aberrations, I felt it is imperative to explain the true depth of *Kalaripayattu* as found even today in traditional training centres in Kerala. I carry forward that tradition with the same spirit in my teaching in Chennai.

This book attempts to provide a general outline of the teaching and learning of this martial art, specifically to the students of *Kalaripayattu*. It is presented in thirteen chapters supported by photographs taken during various occasions from 1994 to 2011 by different photographers. The first three chapters are more of an introduction to the martial form tracing it from the *Purāṇas*, the legend of Paraśurāma, whose life is commonly associated with the origin of Kerala state and very importantly with the origin of *Kalaripayattu*. The second chapter deals with a historical account of warfare extending to an introduction to the Northern Style *Kalaripayattu* in the third chapter. The chapters four to six deal with the principles of construction of a *Kalari* and the eligibility criteria of a *Kalari* student. The actual sequential *Kalari*

training is discussed in chapters seven to ten. The eleventh chapter endeavours to capture the elevation as it were, for a *Kalari* student who graduates into the secret knowledge of *Kalarippayattu*. It deals with the importance of meditation or *upāsanā*. The twelfth chapter deals with the Science of *Marma*, the central principle of *Kalarippayattu*, followed by *Marma Vidyā* or *Kalari* Treatment in the last chapter. Thus, it is a concise presentation of the tradition of *Kalarippayattu*.

The terms in Sanskrit and Malayalam are given in *italics* with diacritical marks. A key to transliteration and pronunciation is provided in the beginning as found in the publications of Ramakrishna Mutt. The words in Malayalam with the vowels *i* (e) and *u* that are long are written as ‘ee’ and ‘oo’ respectively to facilitate pronunciation. The Glossary at the end provides meaning for some of the important words used in *Kalari* training which are in Malayalam. Select Bibliography gives a list of books consulted for shaping the present book.

I take this opportunity to pay my respects to my revered Guru Shri E.P. Vasudevan Gurukkal, Kaduthuruthy, Kerala. He is a teacher par excellence who always insisted that one should discriminate - question - and examine (*samshayikkiya - chodyam cheiyuka - parikshikya*) throughout the learning process of this martial art. His quest and commitment in this martial art has motivated many young minds in the villages of Kerala and I happen to be one among them. He directed me to Chandralekha, Dancer-Choreographer to be part of her creative productions in Chennai. She communicated her deep love towards this ancient martial and healing art form through her innovations. Imbued with an intense desire for the spread of *Kalarippayattu* she encouraged me to impart this knowledge in her premises. Here, I remember Chandra through the words of my Guru, “Chandra, thus attained ‘gurusthanam’ in kalari and will be acknowledged as one of its revered mothers.”

Shaji K John

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Editorial Consultant

Padmamalini. S

Research Co-ordinator

S. Bhuvaneshwari

Photographers

Simon Richardson (England)

(Late) Ann (Auroville)

Leslie

Biju

Joel

In Photo Session

Shaji K. John

P A Binoy

Pramod Yadav

D.T. Vijay

Jayakumar

Rajesh

Kalyani (Auroville)

Information Centres

Adyar Theosophical Research Library

DakshinaChitra Library

Government Oriental Manuscript Library

Tamilnadu Archives

Design

Rhoda Alex

Layout

Chandra Kumar S

Printer

Joh Graphics

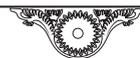
1/116, Madharasha Street,

Sheik Abdulla Nagar,

Alwarthiru Nagar,

Chennai - 600 087

KEY TO TRANSLITERATION AND PRONUNCIATION



SOUNDS AS IN

अ	അ	a	o in <i>son</i>
आ	ആ	ā	ah!
इ	ഇ	i	e
ई	ഈ	ī	ee
उ	ഉ	u	u in <i>full</i>
ऊ	ഊ	ū	oo in <i>boot</i>
ऋ	ഋ	ṛ	ri
ए	ഈ	e	e in <i>bed</i>
ऐ	ഈ	ai	y in <i>my</i>
ओ	ഈ	o	oh
औ	ഈ	au	ow in <i>now</i>
क	ക	ka	k
ख	ഖ	kha	ckh in <i>blockhead</i>
ग	ഗ	ga	g
घ	ഘ	gha	gh in <i>log-hut</i>
ङ	ങ	ṅ	ng
च	ച	ca	ch (not k)
छ	ഛ	cha	chh in <i>catch him</i>
ज	ജ	ja	j
झ	ഝ	jha	dgeh in <i>hedgehog</i>
ञ	ഞ	ñ	n (somewhat)
ट	ട	ṭ	t
ठ	ഠ	ṭha	th in <i>ant-hill</i>

SOUNDS AS IN

ड	ഡ	ḍ	d
ढ	ഢ	ḍha	dh in <i>godhead</i>
ण	ണ	ṇ	n
त	ത	ta	French t
थ	ഥ	tha	th in <i>thumb</i>
द	ദ	da	th in <i>then</i>
ध	ധ	dha	theh in <i>breathe here</i>
न	ന	n	n
प	പ	pa	p
फ	ഫ	pha	ph in <i>loop-hole</i>
ब	ബ	ba	b
भ	ഭ	bha	bh in <i>abhor</i>
म	മ	m	m
य	യ	y	y
र	ര	r	r
ल	ല	l	l
व	വ	v	w
श	ശ	ś	sh
ष	ഷ	ṣ	shh (almost)
स	സ	s	s
ह	ഹ	h	h
·		m̄	ng
:		ḥ	half h

The Legend of Paraśurāma



...मुनिं दीप्ततपोधनम् ।
 अंसावसक्तपरशुं जटावल्कलधारिणम् ॥
 गौरमग्निशिखाकारं तेजसा भास्करोपमम् ।
 क्षत्रान्तकरमक्षोभ्यं वपुष्मन्तमिवार्णवम् ॥
 न्यस्तसंकुचिताधानं काले हुतहुताशनम् ।
 क्लिन्नं त्रिषवणाम्भोभिराद्यं देवगुरुं यथा ॥
 सवत्सां धेनुकां श्वेतां होमधुक् कामदोहनाम् ।
 क्षीरारणिं कर्षमाणं महेन्द्रगिरिगोचरम् ॥
 ...भार्गवं राममासीनं मन्दरस्थं यथा रविम् ॥

Harivaṁśa (Viṣṇu Parva), 39, 21-25

Paraśurāma, the sixth incarnation of Viṣṇu, descended on the request of Mother Earth who appeared before him in the form of a cow bemoaning the atrocities of the wicked *kṣatriya* kings, says the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*.¹ According to the *Nṛsimha Purāṇa*, Viṣṇu lying on the milk-ocean was eulogized by the sages to relieve them from the cruel *kṣatriyas* on earth.² The purpose of this incarnation is also described in the *Vanaparva* of the *Mahābhārata*. The *kṣatriya* king Kārtavīryārjuna endowed with great power

1 See *Purāṇic Encyclopaedia* of Vettam Mani, p.568

2 पुरा देवगणैर्विष्णुः स्तुतः क्षीरोदधौ नृप ।
Nṛsimhapurāṇa, 46.2
 परशुराम इति ख्यातः सर्वलोकेषु स प्रभुः । दुष्टानां निग्रहं
 कर्तुमवतीर्णो महीतले ॥ *Nṛsimhapurāṇa*, 46.3

and wealth, was creating havoc for *devas, yakṣas* and *ṛṣis*.³ The afflicted *devas* and *ṛṣis* approached Viṣṇu for protection⁴ and pleaded with him to vanquish Kārtavīrya for the benefit of all beings.⁵ Viṣṇu consulted Indra for the course of action to destroy Kārtavīrya.⁶ Viṣṇu as (Paraśu) Rāma was born to Jamadagni (and Reṇukā) as their fifth son.⁷

Once Kārtavīrya, the son of Kṛtavīrya who became a great emperor by the grace of Dattātreya,⁸ visited the hermitage of Jamadagni.⁹ Astonished by the hospitality shown by Jamadagni towards him and his army, Kārtavīrya's minister discovered that it was possible because of the greatness of the divine cow. He then wanted to seize it. The minister forcibly took away the cow from Jamadagni.¹⁰ When

3 ममर्द देवान् यक्षांश्च ऋषींश्चैव समन्ततः । भूतांश्चैव स सर्वास्तु पीडयामास सर्वतः ॥
Mahābhārata, Vanaparva, 115.14

4 ततो देवाः समेत्याहुर्ऋषयश्च महाव्रताः । देवदेवं सुरारिघ्नं विष्णुं सत्यपराक्रमम् ॥
Mahābhārata, Vanaparva, 115.15

5 भगवन् भूतरक्षार्थमर्जुनं जहि वै प्रभो । *Mahābhārata, Vanaparva, 115.16*

6 ततस्तु भगवान् देवः शक्रेण सहितस्तदा । कार्तवीर्यविनाशार्थं मन्त्रयामास भारत ॥
Mahābhārata, Vanaparva, 115.17

7 जमदग्नेः सुतोऽभवत् । *Nṛsimhapurāṇa, 46.2*;
..... जज्ञिरे रामपञ्चमाः । *Mahābhārata, Vanaparva, 116.4*

8 कृतवीर्यसुतः श्रीमान् कार्तवीर्योऽभवत् पुरा । दत्तात्रेयं समाराध्य चक्रवर्तित्वमाप्तवान् ॥
Nṛsimhapurāṇa, 46.4

9 स कदाचिन्महाभागो जमदग्न्याश्रमं ययौ । *Nṛsimhapurāṇa, 46.5*

10 तां बलाद्धृत्वा नेतुं मन्त्री प्रचक्रमे ॥ *Nṛsimhapurāṇa, 46.26*

he was stopped by Jamadagni and Reṇukā, the minister killed the sage.¹¹ Hearing the lamentation of his mother, Paraśurāma entered the hermitage.¹² Consoling her, he took a vow that he shall kill the wicked Kārtavīrya and his minister.¹³ Further he proclaimed that since his mother wept beating her chest twenty-one times he would go around the world twenty-one times to get rid of the *kṣatriyas*.¹⁴

Paraśurāma undertook severe penance in order to obtain the powers to fulfill his vow. Śiva being pleased by the devotion of Paraśurāma promised to give what he desired.¹⁵ He received the brilliant axe from Śiva.¹⁶ *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* further gives a list of weapons received by Paraśurāma from Śiva.¹⁷

11 पुनः सभार्यः स मुनिर्वारियामास सा गता । ततो मन्त्री सुदुष्टात्मा मुनिं हत्वा तु तं नृप ॥
Nṛsimhapurāṇa, 46.27

12 तच्छृण्वन्नागतो रामो गृहीतपरशुस्तदा । *Nṛsimhapurāṇa, 46.30*

13 हनिष्यामि दुराचारमर्जुनं दुष्टमन्त्रिणम् । *Nṛsimhapurāṇa, 46.31*

14 त्वयैकविंशवारेण यस्मात्कुक्षिश्च ताडिता । त्रिस्सप्तकृत्वस्तस्मात्तु हनिष्ये भुवि पार्थिवान् ॥
Nṛsimhapurāṇa, 46.32

15 तव भक्तिभावतः प्रीतः प्रदद्यां भवतो मनोगतम् ।
Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa, Madhyama Bhāga, 158.35

16 तोषयतिवा महादेवं पवते गन्धमादने । अस्त्राणि वरयामास परशुं चातितेजसम् ॥
Mahābhārata, Śāntiparva, 49.33

17 तथेत्युत्तवा ततः शंभुः अस्त्रशस्त्राण्यशेषतः । ददौ रामाय सुप्रीतः समन्त्राणि क्रमान्नृप ॥
सप्रयोगम् संहारमस्त्रग्रामं चतुर्विधम् । प्रसादाभिमुखो रामं ग्राहयामास शंकरः ॥
असंगवेगं शूभ्राश्रं सुध्वजं च रथोत्तमम् । इषुधी चाक्षयशरौ ददौ रामाय शंकरः ॥
अभेद्यमजरं दिव्यं दृढज्यं विजयं धनुः । सर्वशस्त्रसहं चित्रं कवचं च महाधनम् ॥
अजेयत्वं च युद्धेषु शौर्यं चाप्रतिमं भुवि । स्वेच्छया धारणे शक्तिं प्राणानां च नराधिप ॥

Paraśurāma, the master of *Dhanurveda* was brilliant like fire with divine weapons.¹⁸ He went around the world twenty-one times destroying the *kṣatriyas* and he collected their blood in *Samantapañcaka* lake.¹⁹ He offered the blood collected in these five lakes, called *Samantapañcaka* to his fore-fathers.²⁰ The five lakes were also known as ‘lake of (*Paraśu*) Rāma’.²¹ Ṛcika, the fore-father appeared and said that the *pitṛs* were pleased and granted a boon to Paraśurāma.²² Paraśurāma asked himself to be released from the sins incurred by the destruction of the *kṣatriyas* and requested that the five pools of blood be declared as holy.²³ He then performed the *aśvamedha yāga* and at the end of the

yāga gave away everything as part of *dakṣiṇā*.²⁴ He gave away all the land that he acquired in the battle against the *kṣatriyas*. The land to the eastern direction was given to the *Hotṛs*, the land to the south was given to *Brahmā*, the land to the west was given to the *Adhvaryus* and to that of north to the *Udgāṭṛs*. All the other land in between was given away to Sage Kaśyapa.²⁵ He was then directed by Kaśyapa to move to the south. A land emerged from the ocean which was known as *Sūrpāraka* which was known as another world.²⁶ The text *Harivaṁśa* says, with the speed of the bow he pushed the ocean behind and the extent to which the arrow fell, to that extent the land emerged which was established as *Sūrpāraka* city.²⁷

ख्यातिं च वीजमन्त्रेण तन्नाम्ना सर्वलौकिकीम् । तपःप्रभावं च महत्प्रददौ भार्गवाय सः ॥
Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, (*Madhyama bhāga*), 25.36 and 38 to 43.

- 18 सर्वविद्यान्तगं श्रेष्ठं धनुर्वेदस्य पारगम् । रामं क्षत्रियहन्तारं प्रदीप्तमिव पावकम् ॥
Mahābhārata, *Sāntiparva*, 49.32
स रामस्य धनुर्वेदं दिव्यान्यस्त्राणि चैव ह । *Mahābhārata*, *Ādiparva*, 129.52
- 19 त्रिःसप्तकृत्वः पृथिवीं कृत्वा निःक्षत्रियां प्रभुः । स्यमन्तपञ्चके चक्रे शोणितोदान्हदान्नव ॥
Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa, 9.16.19
- 20 स तेषु रुधिराम्भःसु हृदेषु क्रोधमूर्छितः । पितॄन् संतर्पयामास रुधिरणेति नः श्रुतम् ॥
Mahābhārata *Ādiparva*, 2.5
- 21 अमी रामहृदाः पञ्च दृश्यन्ते पार्थ दूरतः । *Mahābhārata*, *Sāntiparva*, 48.8
- 22 अथर्चीकादयोऽभ्येत्य पितरो राममब्रुवन् । राम राम महाभाग प्रीताः स्म तव भार्गव ॥
अनया पितृभक्त्या च विक्रमेण तव प्रभो । वरं वृणीष्व भद्रं ते यमिच्छसि महाद्युते ॥
Mahābhārata, *Ādiparva*, 2.6-7
- 23 यदि मे पितरः प्रीता यद्यनुग्राह्यता मयि । यच्च रोषाभिभूतेन क्षत्रमुत्सादितं मया ॥
अतश्च पापान्मुच्येऽहमेष मे प्रार्थितो वरः । हृदाश्च तीर्थभूता मे भवेयुर्भुवि विश्रुताः ॥
Mahābhārata, *Ādiparva*, 2.8-9

Purāṇic lore, the local legends and chronicles of Kerala²⁸ describe the emergence of land from the waters. It is believed that Paraśurāma, the

24 दक्षिणामश्वमेधान्ते *Mahābhārata*, *Sāntiparva*, 49.64

25 ददौ प्राचीं दिशं होत्रे ब्रह्मणे दक्षिणां दिशम् । अध्वयवे प्रतीचीं वै उद्गात्रे उत्तरां दिशम् ॥
अन्येभ्योऽवान्तरदिशः कश्यपाय च मध्यतः । *Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa*, 9.16.21-22
हिरण्यं मम यच्चान्यद् वसु किञ्चिदिह स्थितम् । ब्राह्मणेभ्यो मया दत्तं सर्वमेतत् तपोधन ॥
तथैवेयं धरा देवी सागरान्ता सपत्तना । कश्यपाय मया दत्ता कृत्स्ना नगरमालिनी ॥
Mahābhārata, *Ādiparva*, 129.61-62

26 गच्छ तीरं समुद्रस्य दक्षिणस्य महामुने । *Mahābhārata*, *Sāntiparva*, 49.65
ततः शूर्पारकं देशं सागरस्तस्य निममे । सहसा जामदग्न्यस्य सोऽपरान्तमहीतलम् ॥
Mahābhārata, *Sāntiparva*, 49.66-67

27 त्वया सायकवेगेन क्षितो भार्गव सागरः । इषुपातेन नगरं कृतं शूर्पारकं त्वया ॥
Harivaṁśa, 39.29

28 See *Keralolpatti: The Origin of Malabar*, Published by Pfeleiderer & Riehm, Mangalore, 1868.

master of *Dhanurveda*, taught the martial art to the people of this land for self-protection. Thus, *Kalaripayattu*, the ingenious martial art form of Kerala traces its divine origin to Paraśurāma. There is a song in Malayalam that eulogises the glory of Paraśurāma and his feats, it describes the divine origin of the land, the establishment of 108 *kalaris* and his instruction to twenty-one gurus on the art of destruction of enemies.

“പല്ലോ പരശുരാമഹർഷി
 നൂറ്റിഅറുപത്തിയാറുകാതം-
 ഭൂമിയും കടലോടും വാങ്ങിയാറും,
 നൂറ്റിഎട്ടു പ്രതിഷ്ഠയുംചെയ്തു
 പൊന്നും കലശംവെച്ചു ഭൂമിതൻ-
 ഇളക്കം തീർത്തു,
 ശത്രു സംഹാരത്തിനായ് നാല്പത്തി-
 രോളം കളരിയും വെച്ച്-
 നല്ലാവശ്യരക്കൊവന്നു കളരി-
 യിൽ പുജാദികൾ ചെയ്യിച്ചു
 പ്രതിഷ്ഠയും കഴിപ്പിച്ചു-
 മുവേഴുതുരുപത്തിന്നു
 ഗുരുകൻമാർക്കായി-
 ശത്രുസംഹാരവിദ്യകൾ-
 ഉപദേശിച്ചു
 അനുഗ്രഹിച്ചൊരു സമ്പ്രദായത്തെ-
 ചൊല്ലുന്നുവഴിപോലെ”

*paṇḍallo paraśurāma maharishi
 nootiaruvattiārukādam
 bhoomiyum kaḍaloḍuvāṅgiyām
 nootiyettu pratiṣṭhayum cheidu
 ponnum kalasam vecchu bhūmidan-
 ilakkam teerthu
 śātrusamhāratināyin nālpatti-
 rendolam kalariyum vecchu-
 nallathire koḍuvandu
 kalariyil poojādigaḷ cheiyyicchu
 pratiṣṭhayum kazhippicchu-
 moovezhu irupattionnu gurukanmārkāyi-
 śātrusamhāra vidyakal-
 upadesicchu
 anugrahicchoru sampradāyatte
 chollunnu vazhipole.²⁹*

29 Mullassery, Prassannan G., *Kalaripayattum Kaiyāmkaliyum*, (Malayalam), Kodungallur, 1965. p.43

A Historical Account

The earliest history of warfare is found recorded in the *Dhanurveda*, an *Upaveda* to the *Yajurveda*. The works on *Dhanurveda* such as *Vāsiṣṭha Dhanurveda*, *Viśvāmitra Dhanurveda*, *Jāmadagni Dhanurveda*, *Vaiśampāyana Dhanurveda*, *Sadāśiva Dhanurveda* etc., are available. Other related works on warfare available are *Śukranīti*, *Nītiprakāśikā*, *Yuktikalpataru* etc.

In *Vāsiṣṭhīya Dhanurveda Samhitā*, the science of warfare is taught by Vasiṣṭha to Viśvāmitra, where Vasiṣṭha recalls the secret teaching of *Dhanurvedyā* as given by Sadāśiva to Paraśurāma.³⁰ According to *Nītiprakāśikā*,

30 यां सरहस्यधनुर्विद्यां भगवान्सदाशिवः परशुरामायोवाच

Brahmā composed *Dhanurveda* with 1,00,000 chapters.³¹ Vaiśampāyana presents the same subject briefly in eight chapters in his *Nītiprakāśikā*.

The local legendary poems of Kerala popularly known as *Vaḍakkan Pāṭṭugal* that has come down in the form of oral tradition describes the deeds of warriors indicating the practice of *Kalarippayattu*.

तामेव सरहस्यां वच्मि.....

Vāsiṣṭhīya Dhanurveda Samhitā, Benedictory Verse.

31 लक्षाध्यायां जगौ ब्रह्मा राजशास्त्रे महामतिः ।
Nītiprakāśikā, I.23

Most of the songs in this category are in praise of the members of two families in north Kerala namely 'Puthuram Vidu' and 'Tacholi Manikkottu Vidu' of which the former belonged to Tiya and the latter to Nayar sub-castes of the Hindus. In one of the songs on the story of Aromal Chevakar it is stated thus:

*"Our grand uncles of the by gone ages
Had spent their days in martial exploits,
And since then three hundred and sixty-eight years
Have passed up till now...."*

These ballads of Kerala, which belongs to the 16th century A.D. portray a social system which demands every youth to undergo martial training.³²

There are descriptions of martial exploits like those by Aringoder, Chandu, Unniarcha, Taccholi Otena Kurup, Katirur Gurukkal, Mathilur Gurukkal, Meppayil Taccholi Kunhi Otena and others. Again, among those who revolted against the British rule in 18th-19th centuries are well-known warriors trained in *Kalaripayattu*. The most remembered names are Raja of Pazhassi of the Kottayam royal family who openly challenged British authority in 1795. The revolt of Velu Tampi is heroic and tragic. He was the minister of Travancore and wanted to resist the imperialist power. The combined forces of Tampi and Paliath Achan (Kochi) stormed the British Residency in 1808.³³

32 Panikkar, Kavalam Narayana, *Folklore of Kerala*, National Book Trust, India, 1991, p.108.

33 See *Kerala* of Krishna Chaitanya, National Book Trust, India, 1994.

In spite of situational 'proclamations'³⁴ regarding ban on the possession of arms, the weapon-training in *Kalaripayattu* was nurtured by various *Kalari* Gurukkals. It is because of their dedication and zeal it has survived till date. Some of the Gurukkals who are remembered here with reverence and gratitude are Kottakkal Kanaran Gurukkal, Tallaserry Kunhanbu Gurukkal, Chemburi Kunhikannan Gurukkal, C.V. Narayanan Nair Gurukkal, Mohammad Unni Gurukkal, P.K. Madhava Panicker Gurukkal and others.

34 "The worshipful, the Chief and Factors, therefore now order that in future no Moor appear armed with a sword, musket, lance, knife, or any other weapon...." - 9th July 1765.

"Every inhabitant of whatsoever caste is hereby ordered to deliver up his arms, such as muskets and swords on or before the 30th of the present month...." - 27th April 1801.

"The Inhabitants are in like manner ... cautioned against keeping fire-arms in their possession..." - 4th August 1801.

"The manufacture of arms is prohibited and if any strictly (Sic) is detected in making or repairing arms in opposition to orders is to be confined and tried for his life." - 30th Jan 1802.

"... to try by summary process and punish with death all persons who shall be found opposing in arms the authority of the British Government, or aiding and assisting the cause of the rebels." - 19th Jan 1803.

For details refer to *A Collection of Treatises, Engagements and other papers of importance relating to British Affairs in Malabar*, Edited with Notes by W. Logan, Second Edition, Madras, 1951.

Northern Style Kalarippayattu

Now, moving away from history we commence the core subject with a brief account of the emergence of various styles of *Kalarippayattu* in Kerala. According to the tradition, there existed three styles of *Kalari* based on the region such as Northern, Central and Southern, of which the Northern and Southern styles are very popular. While the Northern style is believed to have originated from Paraśurāma, the Southern style is traced back to Sage Agastya. Again, in Northern Kerala style too, there are two main divisions based on the mode, one is *Kālyartippayattu* where the use of leg is predominant and the other is *Kaikuttippayattu* in which the use of hand is dominant. The

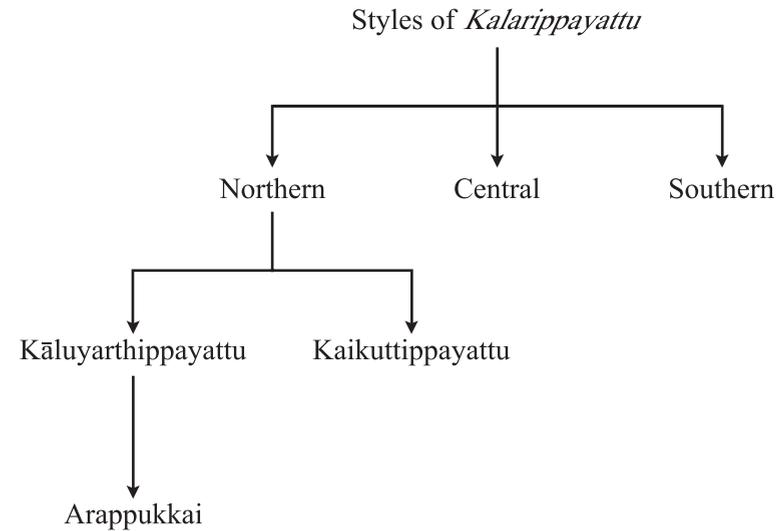
sub-division like *Arappukkai* also known as *Tulunāḍan* comes under *Kālyartippayattu*. There are further divisions based on regional variations like *Vaṭṭayanthirippu*, *Droṇampalli* etc. *Vaṭṭayanthirippu* is a combination of *meivazhakku* or physical exercise and entertainment. Its influence is found in regional forms like *Paricchakali*, *Kolkali*, *Mārgamkali*, *Kambukali* etc. *Droṇampalli* is a Northern style which was practised in South Kerala by the Chembakassery kings. The Gurukkal who belonged to *Droṇampalli* family developed this style.

Some common features of the Northern and Southern styles are the *vazhi* that of

Hanumān, *Bāli*, *Bhīman* etc. *Hanumān vazhi* is a form that gives more importance to speed with technical application. It includes many tricks to outwit the opponent. In *Bāli vazhi*, as the name suggests, it is to divert the opponent's technical application such that it becomes dangerous for the opponent himself. In *Bhīman vazhi*, the physical strength is predominant.

Besides these, there are regional styles known as *Chāvakāḍan*, *Kozhikodan*, *Kaḍathunāḍan*, *Valluvanāḍan* etc. The regional variations are basically due to different life-style, cultural background, geographical changes, availability of weapons that brings about different movements and variant techniques. Also, the Gurukkals who followed the tradition contributed to it by way of their experience and reasoning. These contributions, over a period of time came to be identified as distinct styles. However, the basic core of all the *Kalaris* are common. It includes high jumps, low stances, steady eyes, mental strength, quick and efficient movements etc.

The Northern style is popular for its visual treat with various combinations of *aḍavus* and use of different kinds of weapons. Particularly the *Arappukkai* style consists of more technical applications. Here, we shall deal with the *Arappukkai* form of Northern *Kalari* style as I learnt in Kaduthurthy *Kalari* trained by Vasudevan Gurukkal.



Kuzhi Kalari

The word ‘*Kalari*’ refers to the place of practice and ‘*payattu*’ means practice. *Kalari* is considered as a temple. The construction of *Kalari* is taken up on an auspicious day in an ‘appropriate’ place. There are different types of *Kalari* with varied purposes based on which the measurement also varies.

- a) *Neḍung Kalari* or *Aṅga Kalari* is 52x26 feet. The *Kalari* is also named indicating the measurement. It is known as *Ambattīraḍi*. It is generally used for conducting competitions or *aṅgam*.
- b) *Kuzhi Kalari* is 42x21 feet, known as

Nālppattīraḍi. This is mostly used by the martial practitioners for regular training and practice.

- c) *Kol Kalari* or *Taravāṭṭu Kalari* is 32x16 feet, known as *Muppattīraḍi*. It is meant for the practice of family members of the warrior class.
- d) *Kuruṅ Kalari* or *Pratiṣṭhā Kalari* is 18x9 feet also known as *Padinettīraḍi*. This is meant for *upāsana* or *dhyāna* and basic exercise for Gurukkals who have handed over the responsibility of *Kalari* training to the next generation of *śiṣyas*.

Kuzhi Kalari used for regular practice mostly by the practitioners of the Northern Style is in the form of a *kuzhi* or pit. The location for the construction of *Kalari* is chosen based on the *Vāstu Śāstra*. The mud is dug out for about four feet below and is used for the four walls. The ground of the pit is made of red sand mixed with various herbs which itself forms part of treatment of small wounds that one may encounter during the practice session. The entrance of the *Kalari* faces east. To the west is placed the *Poothara*, *Gaṇapatithara* and *Guruthara*.



Poothara is a seven-step raised platform with a lotus-shaped *kumbha* placed in its apex. It represents the *annamaya kośa* or the physical body with seven *dhātus*, viz., *rasa*, *raktam*, *māmsam*, *medaḥ*, *asthiḥ*, *majjā* and *śukram*. The lotus bud shaped *kumbha* at the apex is said to represent the presence of *Bhagavatī*. It is also likened to the heart of an individual, where the subtle light of consciousness is present.

Gaṇapatithara and *Guruthara* are the places where one worships *Gaṇapati*, remover of all obstacles and the Guru who represents the tradition of the lineage of Gurukkals who protected and taught *Kalari* to the next generation. The *oṭṭa* or tusk shaped wooden stick is placed at the *Gaṇapatithara*, where *Gaṇapati* is invoked symbolically. The *pādukā* or the foot-wear placed at *Guruthara*, symbolises the life of a Gurukkal. The *Kalari* is protected by various other deities referred to as *Kalari devatās*. *Brahmā* is invoked in the centre of the *Kalari* and in different directions are invoked the presiding deities of the eight directions or the *aṣṭadikpālakas*. The *Kalari dvārapālakas* are believed to protect the entrance of the *Kalari*.

The *Kalari* Gurukkal and the students observe certain rituals everyday and also during certain occasions. The lamp near the *Poothara*, *Gaṇapatithara* and *Guruthara* are lit everyday both in the mornings and in the evenings. *Tulasi* leaves and hibiscus are offered in the *tharas*. The Guru and the students worship these three *tharas* by touching the lamp. The obeisance is signified by placing the hand on the head and the heart revealing their respect and gratitude. On occasions like *Durgāṣṭami*, *Mahānavami* and *Vijayadaśami*, special rituals are conducted. The weapons are ritualistically worshipped on these days. Rituals like *Gaṇapati homa*, *Bhagavatī sevā* are performed along with *Kalari pūjā*. The *Kalari paradevatās* are invoked by reciting the following mantra.

*vighneśa caṇḍikā viṣṇu vaḍakacca thatā guru
kāli vagastu puruṣo saptaita paradevatā*



Kalari Niyama

Tradition gives importance to the ethical and moral discipline of a student of *Kalari*. Following the traditional *Gurukula sampradāya*, the *Kalari* training focuses on the development of a holistic personality. Though the system of *Gurukula sampradāya* is not followed in its entirety, the *niyama* or disciplines found in the *sampradāya* are still followed in the *Kalari* centres.

The moral development is to be observed at three levels, viz.,

- as an individual person,
- during the training session and
- as a student of *Kalarippayattu*.

Firstly, as an individual commencing the training of *Kalari* one is required to commit oneself to a high degree of observance of *brahmacarya* or disciplines of a student life. The *niyamas* or regulations pertain to avoidance of unhealthy habits like consumption of alcohol, smoking etc. The regular activities of a day are also to be monitored. The instructions include not sleeping during day time and taking complete rest during night, avoidance of bad company etc. In short, the *yamas* and *niyamas* as found in the *Aṣṭāṅgayoga* of Patañjali Maḥarṣi are followed and form the basic foundation of personality development for a *Kalari* practitioner.

The *Kalari* Gurukkals in the tradition also adhere to the disciplines as found prescribed in the *Śukranīti*. Śukrācārya enjoins certain general rules of morality like giving up of ten kinds of negative practices that mars the personal development. It includes avoidance at the physical, verbal and mental levels the following - violence, non-stealing, indulging in prohibited desires, malignance, harshness, untruthfulness, divulgence of secrets, evil design, atheism and perverseness.³⁵ The importance of sensory mastery and its relation to the mental discipline are well-known and thus it is prescribed that one should neither repress the senses nor indulge them excessively in the external or internal world of sensory objects since the sense organs are very powerful that they can take away the mind from the set goal.³⁶ An alert living is recommended which can be achieved by avoiding six vices like (excessive) sleep, sluggishness, fear, anger, laziness and procrastination as doubtlessly these are obstacles to any kind of activity.³⁷

Secondly, as a *Kalari* student one is expected to follow certain rules during the training sessions.

35 हिंसास्तेयान्यथाकाम पैशुन्यं परुषानृतम् । सम्भिन्नालापव्यापादममिथ्याहृग्विपर्ययम् ॥
पापकर्मैति दशधा काय-वाक्-मनसैस्त्यजेत् । *Śukranīti*, 3.7-8

36 न पीडयेदिन्द्रियाणि न चैतान्यतिलालयेत् । इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं मनः ॥
Śukranīti, 3.16

37 षड्दोषाः पुरुषेणेह हातव्या भूतिमिच्छता । निद्रा तन्द्रा भयं क्रोध आलस्यं दीर्घसूत्रता ॥
प्रभवन्ति विघाताय कार्यस्यैते न संशयः । *Śukranīti*, 3.56-57

- *Kalari* is to be considered as a Temple
- One should enter bare-foot placing right leg first into the *Kalari*
- One should worship the *Poothara*, *Gaṇapatithara* and *Guruthara*.
- Generally, the practice begins by touching the feet of the Guru
- The students should respect each other
- Any kind of unnecessary discussion, use of abusive language, boisterous laughter, and sluggish behavior is to be avoided.
- The lamp is to be lit both in the mornings and in the evenings every day
- Flowers are to be offered in the *Poothara*, *Gaṇapatithara* and *Guruthara*
- Specific rituals are to be performed during auspicious days
- At the end of the *Kalari* session, one should worship the *Poothara*, *Gaṇapatithara* and *Guruthara* and move backwards up to the entrance.



Further, the tradition of *Kalari* prescribes norms for both the trainer and the pupil. During practice sessions, while the Guru instructs through *vāithāri* or verbal command, he is supposed to remain in a place with hands dropped down and eyes focused in front and the students are to follow the instruction carefully. In the weapon training sessions, the learners are to maintain eye contact and if a weapon falls, it can be taken back only with the permission of the Guru. At times, when the weapon falls behind without leaving the focus of vision in front, the student is to move backwards and pick up the weapon. At no time, should the weapons be wielded either as a challenge or out of hatred.

Thirdly, as a student of *Kalarippayattu*, the tradition prescribes certain norms like,

- Suitable time for practice of *Kalari* is said to be between 6 to 9 am and or 5 to 8 pm.
- There is a graded range of practice sessions in keeping with the change of seasons
- The practice is to be continued for five days in a week followed by two days of light exercise
- Prolonged practice or prolonged rest are to be avoided and one should develop the quality of *kṣamā* or endurance at the physical and mental levels.

Kalari Vyāyāma

Suśruta defines *vyāyāma* or exercise as that activity which brings about exertion in the body.³⁸ In the context of *dinacaryā* described in *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya* the healthy activities in a day are described, following a particular sequence. First is *abhyaṅga* (oil massage and oil bath) followed by *vyāyama* (physical exercise). After the exercise, there is a session of *mardana* (application of pressure) and *udvartana* (dry massage). The tradition of *Kalari* recognizes the importance of practice of *dinacaryā*. It is said that before taking to physical exercise one should apply oil everyday which will keep old age and

38 शरीरायासजननं कर्म व्यायाम संज्ञितम् ।
Suśruta Samhitā, Cikitsāsthāna, 24.38

tiredness away. It also helps in good vision, nourishment, longevity, glowing skin, and strength.³⁹ If *abhyaṅga* is not undertaken prior to exercise then it may lead to cold or indigestion.⁴⁰ *Vyāyāma* or exercise is done after *abhyaṅga*.⁴¹

Bhāvaprakāśa describes the importance of physical exercise. The author Bhāvamiśra

39 अभ्यङ्गमाचरेन्नित्यं स जराश्रमवातहा ।
दृष्टिप्रसादपुष्ट्यायुःस्वप्नसुत्वत्तवदाढ्यकृत् ॥
Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya, Sūtrasthāna 2.8

40 वर्ज्योऽभ्यङ्गः कफग्रस्तकृतसंशुद्धचर्माभिः ।
Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya, Sūtrasthāna 2.9

41 तच्चाभ्यक्तगात्रैः क्रियते इत्यभ्यङ्गानन्तरमुक्तम् ।
Hemādri's Commentary Āyurveda Rasāyana to
Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya, Sūtrasthāna, 2.10

points to the five basic advantage of exercise. One acquires agility, efficiency in action, well-structured physique, mitigation of *doṣas*, and improved digestive capacity. The efficient functioning of the body of one who does regular exercise is also described. The body becomes tough and strong. One is able to resist all diseases. Even incompatible or improperly cooked food gets digested quickly. One is not easily fatigued. Exercise is especially beneficial when done in spring and winter and in other seasons it is to be done half of one's capacity.⁴²

Bhāvamiśra forbids exercise under certain conditions. One should not exercise soon after taking food or after copulation. One who is suffering from cough, emaciation etc., should restrict exercise.⁴³ Also, the consequence of excessive exercise is mentioned. He says, excess of exercise gives rise to cough, fever, vomiting, debility, fatigue, thirst, consumptive bronchial disease and bleeding diseases.⁴⁴

42 लाघवं कर्मसामर्थ्यं विभक्तघनगात्रता । दोषक्षयोऽग्निवृद्धिश्च व्यायामादुपजायते ॥
व्यायामदृढगात्रस्य व्याधिर्नास्ति कदाचन । विरुद्धं वा विदग्धं वा भुक्तं शीघ्रं विपच्यते ॥
भवन्ति शीघ्रं नैतस्य देहे शिथिलतादयः । न चैवं सहसाऽऽक्रम्य जरा समधिरोहति ॥
न चास्ति सदृशं तेन किञ्चित्स्थौल्यापकर्षकम् । स सदा गुणमाधत्ते वलिनां स्निग्धभोजनाम् ॥
वसन्ते शीतसमये सुतरां स हितो मतः । अन्यदाऽपि च कर्त्तव्यो बलार्थेन यथा बलम् ॥
Bhāvaprakāśa, Dinacaryādi Prakaraṇa, 47-51

43 भुक्तवान्कृतसम्भोगः कासी श्वासी कृशः क्षयी । रक्तपीतो क्षती शोषी न तं कुर्यात्कदाचन ॥
Bhāvaprakāśa, Dinacaryādi Prakaraṇa, 54

44 अतिव्यायामतः कासो ज्वरश्छर्दिः श्रमः क्लमः । तृष्णाक्षयः प्रतमको रक्तपित्तं च जायते ॥
Bhāvaprakāśa, Dinacaryādi Prakaraṇa, 55

Having done the *vyāyāma* then one should take to *mardana* says *Aṣṭāṅgaḥṛdaya*. *Mardana* or application of pressure is considered as a part of *vyāyāma*.⁴⁵ Then follows *udvartana* or dry massage which pacifies *vāta*, dissolves *kapha* and fat, stabilizes body parts and provides brilliance to the skin.⁴⁶ The importance of consuming regulated food is also described. Food nourishes, sustains body and promotes life-span, gives strength, brilliance, energy, memory, and digestive power.⁴⁷ This order of *dinacaryā* is in practice among many of the *Kalari* practitioners. The most important is the *vyāyāma*, with which any *Kalari* session commences.

Prior to physical exercise, a *Kalari* practitioner wears what is called as a *katccha*. It is a piece of cloth of one span width and 24 forearm measure in length. It is worn above the loin cloth tightly as a protection of the genital organ, the navel region and the tail bone. It is believed that *prāṇa śakti* is at the navel region and it needs to be protected. The *katccha* is wound many times around the waist and it helps in acquiring perfection in high jumps, leg exercise, the positions such as *amarndu*,

45 मर्दनविधानं मर्दनस्य व्यायामाङ्गत्वख्यापनार्थम् ।
Hemādri's Commentary *Āyurveda Rasāyana to Aṣṭāṅgaḥṛdaya, Sūtrasthāna, 2.12*

46 उद्धर्तनं कफहरं मेदसः प्रविलायनम् । स्थिरीकरणमङ्गानां त्वक्प्रसादकरं परम् ॥
Aṣṭāṅgaḥṛdaya, Sūtrasthāna, 2.15

47 आहारः प्रीणनः सद्यो बलकृद्देहधारकः । आयुस्तेजः समुत्साहस्मृत्योजोभिर्विवर्धनः ॥
Suśruta Saṁhitā, Cikitsāsthāna 24.68-69

vaḍivus etc. This cloth is handed over by the Guru on an auspicious day following certain rituals.

The basic exercises of *Kalari* are given below :

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. <i>Prārambha vyāyāma</i> | 5. <i>Vaḍivukal</i> |
| 2. <i>Kāllukal</i> | 6. <i>Chāṭṭaṅkal</i> |
| 3. <i>Chuvaḍukal</i> | 7. <i>Karaṅṅkal</i> |
| 4. <i>Amarcha</i> | 8. <i>Aḍavukal</i> |

Prārambha vyāyāma

It is the preparation of the physical body to proceed effectively to different stages of *Kalari* training. Every *Kalari* session begins with certain common exercises as part of warm-up activity of the body. It also helps in conditioning and strengthening the body. It is seen as a sort of preparedness signaled to the mind for higher stages of learning.

The basic exercises include,

1. Five breathing exercises
2. Exercise for every limb of the body
3. Some *Yogāsanas* and *Prāṇāyāma*

Kāllukal

Is the leg exercises that are essential part of *Kalari* practice. The basic

position is raising both hands above the head so that muscles of both sides get stretched and with eyes focused straight. There are twelve different types of exercise for the legs, they are:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Nerkāl</i> | 7. <i>Pagarchakāl</i> |
| 2. <i>Tirucchikāl</i> | 8. <i>Agāṅkāl</i> |
| 3. <i>Veedikāl</i> | 9. <i>Puraṅkāl</i> |
| 4. <i>Konkāl</i> | 10. <i>Perukkakāl (Aṣṭakonakāl)</i> |
| 5. <i>Iruttikāl</i> | 11. <i>Yettakāl</i> |
| 6. <i>Virittikāl</i> | 12. <i>Veeditiricchirithikāl</i> |

Of these, the first five are important mandatory leg-exercises.

Chuvaḍukal

It denotes the position of legs. It is the base for all *payattus*. There are seven divisions:

1. *Aṅga chuvaḍu*
2. *Vāṭṭa chuvaḍu*
3. *Kona chuvaḍu*
4. *Neetṭa chuvaḍu*
5. *Ākkacchuvaḍu*
6. *Chāṭṭachuvaḍu*
7. *Neekka chuvaḍu*



Nerkal



Iruttikal



Kukkuṭa vaḍivu

Amarcha

It is an important position in *Kalari* practice. The body is completely low to the floor. This position of *amarcha* is helpful in moving forward and backward without difficulty during combats. *Amarchas* are found included in the *vaḍivus*. Each *amarcha* has more than one purpose.

Vaḍivukal

Aṣṭavaḍivu also referred to as simply *vaḍivu* is the movement formulated inspired by animals and birds. There are eight such *vaḍivus* wherein the name indicates the *vaḍivu*. They are:

1. *Gaja vaḍivu*
2. *Simha vaḍivu* or *Mārjāra vaḍivu*
3. *Aśva vaḍivu*
4. *Varāha vaḍivu*

5. *Kukkuṭa vaḍivu*
6. *Mayūra vaḍivu*
7. *Sarpa vaḍivu*
8. *Matsya vaḍivu*

The Northern Style adds *vaḍivu* known as *hamṣa vaḍivu*, *kaṛaḍikālpinacchu vaḍivu*, *nila*, *garuḍa nila* etc.

Chāṭṭāṅkal

This is considered important for the Northern style *Kalari*. There are twelve important *chāṭṭāṅkal* -

1. *Oṭṭaḍi poṅgal*
2. *Tiruñjichāṭṭam*
3. *Valampiri-Idampiri*

4. *Vazhivāṅgi kuducchu chāṭṭam*
5. *Chauṭṭi kuducchu chāṭṭam*
6. *Kundacchāṭṭam*
7. *Odaramkaṇḍu chāṭṭam*
8. *Ozhavukaṇḍu chāṭṭam*
9. *Pagiritiruṅju chāṭṭam*
10. *Veedu churukki chāṭṭam*
11. *Chāḍikattal*
12. *Taḍuttupoṅgal*

Karaṇaṅkal

In *Kalari*, certain important jumps and turns like somersaults are termed as *karaṇas*. It is specifically more useful in the session with sword. There are six main *karaṇas* called *Simha*, *Matysa*, *Mārjāra*, *Paśu*, *Sarpa* and *Garuḍa*. Varied opinions prevail with regard to the number and kind of *karaṇas*.

Aḍavukal

An attack or defence technique includes the combination of *nila*, *neekkam* and *prayogam* that is, stance, movement and application (attack or defence) which is known as an *aḍavu*. There are mainly 18 kinds of *aḍavus* prescribed. *Odiram*, *Olavu* and *Kaḍagam* are the three *aḍavus* known to be in practice and others remain just as names and the knowledge of their application has been lost over time.



Tiruṅjichādi - Matysa karaṇa



Meithāri

Meithāri is the foundation to develop skills that are necessary for advanced *Kalari* training. It is popularly known as *Meipayattu* which aims at giving a dual benefit of defensive mechanism and physical strength. Thus, this sequence is referred to as *mei-aḍakkam* or physical discipline. There are 12 important sets of sequences. The sequences are done individually where the fight is with one's own body to develop positive traits like control of the body, developing balance, sense of direction, agility, speed, alertness, tuning every limb so as to achieve the age old Malayalam saying *mei kaṇṇāguga* - i.e., where the body becomes the "eye". Various forms of *aḍavus* combined

with defence, attack and physical exercise are found in *Meipayattu*. The sequences are:

1. 1 to 7 - *Kālyartipayattu*
2. 8 to 10 - *Tanjappayattu*
3. 11 and 12 - *Veṭṭumtanjappayattu*

In *Meipayattu*, the first seven sequences are considered very important. The other sets are generally meant for advance practice. In addition to these there are four types of *Pagarchakāl* and two types of *Yettakāl Meipayattu*.

Here, the movements are based on the *vāithāri* or verbal command. This is unique to the Northern style.



ottaḍiamarndu



chāḍikattī



iḍatuvechu valattuchautti

The *vāithāri* in Malayalam is generally familiar only to the students of *Kalari* and is not understood by others. A sequence of *Meipayattu* consists of sets of *arappu*. An *arappu* can be defined as one unit with types of *chuvadu*, *vaḍivu*, *chāṭṭaṅkal*, *kāl*, *terukkal* etc. Here one gets complete mastery in *vaḍivu*, *chuvadu*, *nila*, *karaṇa* or *chāṭṭaṅkal*. The types of *kāl* or leg movements are also used here. The techniques of various movements of *Meipayattu* are meant for self-protection.

The movements related to salutation of *Kalari devatās* is known as *vandana chuvadu*. It is also known as *Poothara Vandanam* or *Kalari Vandanam*. Generally a new entrant is directed to worship the *Poothara*, *Gaṇapatithara* and *Guruthara* simply by touching the lamp and offering flowers. However, *Kalari* training is supposed to commence with *vandana chuvadu*. This requires a deep understanding of the physical body. One should have developed features like flexibility, suppleness,



control and balance of the body. This is to an extent achieved after undergoing at least four sets of *Meipayattu* after which *vandana chuvadū* is taught. It is the invocation of the *Kalari devatās* for the blessing and protection of oneself and also to refine the thoughts enabling one to make a spiritual progress. The movements symbolize the worship of the entire cosmos. Standing directed towards the *Poothara*, it begins with touching the floor of the *Kalari* considered as the feet of the *devatā*, then the leg is raised with a powerful thrust directed towards the *Poothara* indicating an intense desire for a higher journey. The position of *pandi* symbolizes meditation where specific worship is offered to *Vighneśvara* to remove obstacles in this journey of life. The hand is raised to touch the right shoulder, indicating respect to the Guru and the left hand is raised to touch the left shoulder indicating the

Supreme God, the path indicated by the Guru. The individual guided by the Guru and *devatā* then gather the flowers as it were from the ground invoking the *chakras* from *mūlādhāra* to *sahasradhāra*. The flowers symbolically offered above the head are visualized as scattered pervading the entire cosmic universe. The sequence continues moving towards the lighted lamp, marking a journey of a *sādhaka* with a goal to reach a higher awareness beginning from the gross state to the subtler aspect. It is more an inward journey. The *vandana chuvadū* is done in accordance with the *vāithāri*.



Kolthāri

The second part of the *Kalari* training is called *Kolthāri* or wooden weapon training. The word ‘*kolthāri*’ means the practice with *kol* or stick. Generally in practice of *kolthāri* two people are required. One instructs the other through *vāithāri*. Normally, the Guru does the *vāithāri* who is called the *munkol* and the student who wields according to the *vāithāri* is called the *pinkol*. The *vāithāri* or verbal command in Malayalam consists of instructions of the methods in which the weapon is to be wielded.

Paruken

Here, the sequences are done at random where *vāithāri* is not used. There are no specific rules

which mean the *munkol* person can strike without indicating the moves and wields the stick at any place. The *pinkol* person is to be highly alert and defend accordingly. Here, the body becomes the ‘eye’ and such practice makes one attain perfection. This practice of *paruken* is vital and that alone is purposeful in real life and hence it is an important part of the training series.

1) Pandirujān or Pandirān

It is a wooden stick measuring twelve spans as the name *pandirujān* indicates. The stick is held in the centre and rotated, and this movement is called *vaḍi veeshal*. This is to

be done individually after receiving instructions from the Guru. The rotation of the stick can be done either remaining in a place or by moving in small steps, forward and backward. The purpose of this practice is to gain flexibility and strength of the hand. There are ten kinds of sequences in *pandirān veeshal*. It can be practiced either by using one hand, both hands sequentially and both hands simultaneously. *Pandirān* is used mostly to strike prime places like the head, forehead, chin, rib and leg.

2) Ārujān or Keṭṭukārippayattu



The next wooden stick introduced is the stick that measures six spans as indicated by the name ‘Ārujān’. It is three inches thick. It is also known as *Keṭṭukāri* which

refers to the position of the stick held as though covering the entire body before advancing towards the opponent. The word ‘*keṭṭu*’ means to protect oneself and ‘*kāri*’ is to advance. Generally, canes are used to make *ārujān* sticks. Here, certain rules are prescribed regarding the

position of the body and the stick since the condition of the body, the stance and movements and the use of stick are all interconnected. In this stage one learns the importance of *nila* - stance; *chuvadu* - leg movements; *vadi* - use of stick and *prayogam* - application. There are twelve sets of sequences of which the first eight are very important. *Keṭṭukārippayattu* forms the basic foundation of *Kolthāri* training. The predominant stances found are *vattakāl* (low stance with feet parallel) and *valiñjunnu* (long stance). By regular practice one gains control of the movement of stick and the application of strength while attacking. Such a practice also helps to develop sharp focus of vision. In the beginning, the stick is held horizontally. The distance between the two hands is equal to the distance between one’s shoulders or vertically from head to abdomen. The training begins ritualistically with *chuvadus* holding the stick performing salutations to Gaṇapati. Important features of *Keṭṭukārippayattu* are jump and hit, jump with block and kick, rotate and block, rotate and discharge of stick from the opponent etc. The prime applications found in *Keṭṭukāri* are *amaram*, *muna*, *nerodiram*, *kaḍagam*, *marukaḍagam*, *oḍakku*, *vāri*, *maruvāri*, *neeṭtu* and *thallu*.

3) Mucchān

The third important wooden weapon training is *Mucchān* and as the name suggests it is a small stick measuring three spans in length. It is

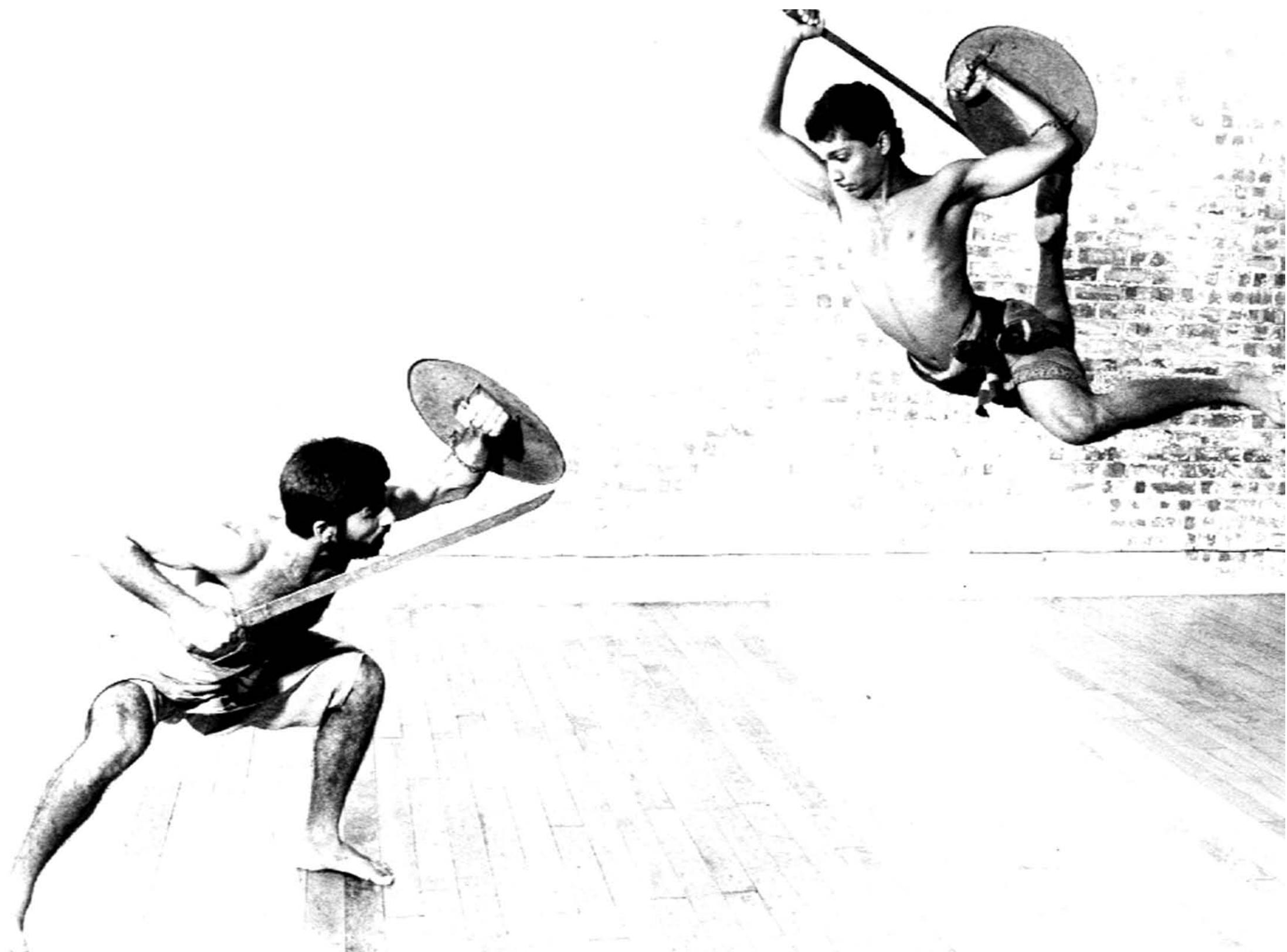


also known as *Kuruvaḍi*. It has a round shape where the diameter at one end is 4 ½ inches tapering to the other end with a diameter of 2 or 2 ½ inches.

The broad diameter side is known as *amaram* and the tapering lower part is known as *muna*. *Mucchān* is practiced holding the *amaram* part. The branches of trees like Tamarind, Forest Lime, Guava and Coffee are used to make *Mucchān*. Even though in early stage of practice one may experience pain in the fingers, by constant practice one develops firm grip in the hand and also by this time one learns to overcome fear from attack. *Mucchān* also is commenced ritualistically with salutations to Gaṇapati. There are twelve sets of sequences where one develops accuracy of the eye, speed of the hand and firm stances. The sequences here consist of quick changes in steps and advanced defence techniques, all performed in a minute. The techniques of *Mucchān* are generally applied in attack or defence at very close quarters.

4) *Oṭṭā* or *Oṭṭapayattu*

In the Northern *Kalari* Style, the most important part of training is *Oṭṭā*. This wooden weapon consists of three curves because of which it is also known as *Muppiri*. The stick is about 18 inches long excluding the handle part or it is to be as long as the breadth of the practitioner's chest. *Oṭṭā* is unique for its *aḍavu* techniques, tricky movements and strikes aiming at *marma points*. Thus, in its training and application, *Oṭṭā* stands out as a unique weapon. It consists of very fast movements of advance and retreat including special forms of *vaḍivus*, *karaṇas*, jumps, locks, throws which are unique to *Oṭṭā*. The *chuvadus* and *aḍavus* that are found in advance stages of training like *Verumkai* are included in *Oṭṭā* training. There are 18 sequences of which the most important are first, second, fourth and seventh. Other sequences are learnt by advanced students or those who aspire to become a Gurukkal. Before commencing the *Oṭṭā* training rituals are conducted to worship Gaṇapati and *Kalari Paradevatās* and is begun with salutations.



Āngathāri

Āngathāri is the use of sharp and lethal metal weapons. The classification and use of weapons are found in works like *Dhanurveda*, *Agnipurāṇa*, *Br̥hat Saṁhitā*, *Śukranīti*, and *Nītiprakāśikā*. The *Vāsiṣṭhīya Dhanurveda* classifies weapons into four types based on the mode of employment and they are known as *muktam* (weapons released from hand), *amuktam* (weapons used without releasing from hand), *muktāmuktam* (weapons released but tied to a rope or another instrument that is drawn back) and *yantramuktam* (weapons released through a machine).⁴⁸ *Nītiprakāśikā* agrees with *Dhanurveda* in the enumeration of the first three but identifies the fourth

48 चतुर्विधमायुधम् । मुक्तममुक्तं मुक्तामुक्तं यन्त्रमुक्तं चेति ॥
Vāsiṣṭhīya Dhanurveda Saṁhitā, 1.4

class as *mantramuktam* (weapons aided by *mantras*).⁴⁹ *Agnipurāṇa* classifies into five as *yantramuktam*, *pāṇimuktam* (weapons released from the hand), *muktasandhāritam* (released and drawn back), *amuktam* and *bāhuyuddham* (bare-hand fight).⁵⁰ *Śukranīti* classifies weapons broadly into two as *astra* and *śastra*. *Astra* is that which is thrown or cast down by means of *mantra*, machines or fire. *Śastra* is any other weapon like sword, dagger, spear etc.⁵¹

49 मुक्तं चैव ह्यमुक्तं च मुक्तामुक्तमतः परं । मन्त्रमुक्तं च चत्वारि.....*Nītiprakāśika*, II.11

50 यन्त्रमुक्तं पाणिमुक्तं मुक्तसन्धारितं तथा । अमुक्तं बाह्युद्धं च पञ्चधा तत्प्रकीर्तितम् ॥ *Agnipurāṇa*, 249.1-2

51 अस्यते क्षिप्यते यत्तु मन्त्रयन्त्राग्निभिश्च तत् । अस्त्रं तदन्यतः शस्त्रमसिकुन्तादिकं च यत् ॥ *Śukranīti*, 4.7.190-191

Dhanurveda lays down the rule for selecting students to whom the knowledge of weapon wielding is to be imparted. It says, a Guru can impart this knowledge of wielding weapons after testing the disciple and should not train one who is greedy, cunning, ungrateful or foolish.⁵² The text also instructs the kind of weapon like bow, sword, spear and mace for a particular group of people to be trained suitably.⁵³ It prohibits the use of weapon against one who is sleeping, in deep sleep, intoxicated, undressed, without weapon, a child, a woman, one who speaks lowly and one who flees from the battlefield.⁵⁴ The benefit of the knowledge gained from *Dhanurvedyā* is specifically mentioned as protecting the noble ones from the wicked. It is generally meant for the protection of the common people.⁵⁵ It says, if there is one well trained warrior in a village, there the enemies will never enter. It is like the den of a lion into which no other animals of the forest enter.⁵⁶

52 आचार्येण धनुर्देयं ब्राह्मणो सुपरीक्षिते । लुब्धे धूर्ते कृतघ्ने च मन्दबुद्धौ न दापयेत् ॥
Vāsiṣṭhīya Dhanurveda Saṁhitā, 1.7

53 ब्राह्मणाय धनुर्देयं खड्गं वै क्षत्रियाय च । वैश्याय दापयेत्कुन्तं गदां शूद्राय दापयेत् ॥
Vāsiṣṭhīya Dhanurveda Saṁhitā, 1.8

54 सुप्तं प्रसुप्तमुन्मत्तं ह्यकच्छं शस्त्रवर्जितम् । बालं स्त्रियं दीनवाक्यं धावन्तं नैव घातयेत् ॥
Vāsiṣṭhīya Dhanurveda Saṁhitā, 4.69

55 दुष्टदस्युचौरादिभ्यः साधुसंरक्षणं धर्मतः । प्रजापालनं धनुर्वेदस्य प्रयोजनम् ॥
Vāsiṣṭhīya Dhanurveda Saṁhitā, 1.5

56 एकोऽपि यत्र नगरे प्रसिद्धः स्याद्धनुर्धरः । ततो यान्तरयो दूरान्मृगाः सिंहगृहादिव ॥
Vāsiṣṭhīya Dhanurveda Saṁhitā, 1.6

Agnipurāṇa provides the secret of winning by following *karma yoga*, the prescribed rules, with mental restraint, and steady eyes.⁵⁷ Seven kinds of war are identified by *Dhanurveda* and they are fight with bow, wheel or disc, spear, sword, knife, mace and dual-combat.⁵⁸ According to *Sūkrānīṭī*, the war is of four kinds, viz., *uttama*, *madhyama*, *adhama* and *adhamādhama*. The war with weapons aided by *mantra* is said to be *uttama*, with tubular mechanical weapons (*nālikam*) it is said to be *madhyama*, war with weapons categorized under *śāstra* is said to be *adhama* kind and the combat with bare-hand is classified as *adhamādhama*.⁵⁹ But in *Kalarippayattu*, among the metal weapons, the sword and shield is considered the predominant one and the bare-hand combat without weapons is seen as the most advanced and technical part of the martial form. In the sequence of *Aṅgathāri* training, the lethal weapons are graded and gradually introduced with advanced techniques in each level.

The *Kalari* tradition points out that if one desires to win over an enemy then one requires the four-fold quality known as *catuspādaniṣṭhā*. They are:

- *Meikaruttu* – discipline at the physical level
- *Manakaruttu* – balance at the mental level

57 कर्मयोगविज्ञानज्ञो ज्ञात्वैवं विधिमाचरेत् । मनसा चक्षुषा दृष्ट्या योगशिक्षुर्मम जयेत् ॥
Agnipurāṇa, 250.19

58 धनुश्चक्रं च कुन्तं च खड्गं च क्षुरिका गदा । सप्तमं बाहुयुद्धं स्यादेवं युद्धानि सप्तथा ॥
Vāsiṣṭhīya Dhanurveda Saṁhitā, 1.9

59 उत्तमं मान्त्रिकास्त्रेण नालिकास्त्रेण मध्यमम् । शस्त्रैः कनिष्ठं युद्धन्तु बाहुयुद्धं ततोऽधमम् ॥
Sūkrānīṭī, IV.VII.334-335



- *Āṅgakaruttu* – accuracy of application of techniques
- *Āyudhakaruttu* – the skill in wielding the weapons

Of these the first is *meikaruttu* also known as *ul-karuttu* that includes physical strength, flexibility, speed, stamina. These can be attained by constant practice of *Meippayattu*. The second discipline called *manakaruttu* is obtaining a balanced mind. One should develop qualities like courage, mastery of mind, unfaltering faith in Guru and *Kalari paradevatās*. This is achieved by prescribed meditations. The third is *āṅgakaruttu* also known as *abhyāsakaruttu*, which refers to the disciplines to be maintained during practice. It calls for mastery of accuracy to aim with appropriate strength while wielding the weapons. This is achieved by constant practice with various kinds of weapons as taught. The *āyudhakaruttu* is the fourth discipline wherein the employment of weapons must be strong and the movements refined.

1) Kaḍāra (Dagger)

It is the first metal weapon introduced as part of *Āṅgathāri* training. The tip of the *Kaḍāra* is either straight or with a slight curve. It has an extended metal piece that covers the forearm partly. It is also known as *Marukaḍāra*. Techniques to hit, stab and block are learnt in this session. The *vāithāri* of *Kaḍāra* does not necessarily correspond to the manner in which it is practically done. There are 18 sets of sequences. Generally in the last sequence, by the application of a technique the *kaḍāra* of the opponent is snatched and the opponent is made weaponless. The attack after this sequence is generally meant to demonstrate the bare-hand technique. However, in the training session, the sequence concludes when the opponent is made weaponless.

2) Vāl Paricha (Sword and Shield)

It is the most important weapon in *Kalari* training. *Nītiprakāśikā* gives an account of the origin of sword. Brahmā narrates to Pṛthu the creation of sword by him long time ago and he declares that sword is the most superior among weapons.⁶⁰



During a certain ritual performed for the benefit of the entire world,⁶¹ there emerged from the fire-altar a demon,⁶² seeing which all the beings,

60 आयुधेभ्यो वरः खड्गस्तस्माल्लोकेषु विश्रुतः । मया सृष्टः पुरा राजन् *Nītiprakāśikā*, III.8

61 यज्ञं ह्यकरवं तत्र सर्वलोकार्थसिद्धये । *Nītiprakāśikā*, III.12

62 भूतमुत्थितं चाग्निकुण्डतः । *Nītiprakāśikā*, III.13

the sages, *devas*, *gandharvas* were frightened.⁶³ Brahmā named this valorous being as *asi* or sword which is to be used for the protection of the world.⁶⁴ With a length of fifty spans and width of four spans, this sword was handed over by Brahmā to Śiva.⁶⁵ Finally it reached the hands of Manu, son of Sūrya as an aid to traverse the bridge of Dharma.⁶⁶ A unique description of star, presiding deity, *gotra* etc. are mentioned with reference to the sword.⁶⁷ *Nītiprakāśikā* provides eight secret names for sword⁶⁸ indicating the superiority of this weapon as held by Vaiśampāyana. There is also a mention of thirty-two *karaṇas* or movements of wielding of the sword.⁶⁹ The *Agnipurāṇa* too, mentions

63 तद्दृष्ट्वा सर्वभूतानि महर्षिसुरगन्धर्वानिब्रुवं भयविह्वलान् । *Nītiprakāśikā*, III.17-18

64 भूतमसिनामैष वीर्यवान् । रक्षणार्थाय लोकस्य *Nītiprakāśikā*, III.18-19

65 पञ्चाशदंगुल्युत्सेधश्चतुरंगुलिविस्तृतः । ततस्त्वृषभकेतोस्स हस्ते दत्तो मया ह्यसिः ॥
Nītiprakāśikā, III.20-21

66 मनवे सूर्यपुत्राय धर्मसेतुमतिक्रान्तान् *Nītiprakāśikā*, III.31-32

67 कृत्तिकास्तस्य नक्षत्रमसेरग्निश्च देवता । रोहिणी गोत्रमप्यस्य रुद्रस्तस्याधिदैवतं ।
Nītiprakāśikā, III.35

68 असेरष्टौ हि नामानि रहस्यानि निबोध मे । असिर्विशसनः खड्गस्तीक्ष्णधर्मा दुरासदः ।
श्रीगर्भो विजयश्चैव धर्ममालस्तथैव च । *Nītiprakāśikā*, III.36-37

69 द्वात्रिंशत् करणानि स्युर्यानि खड्गप्रयोधने ।
चित्रशीघ्रपदं तानि दैत्यसंग्घटे ह्यदर्शयत् । भ्रान्तमुद्भ्रान्तमाविद्धमाल्पुतं विल्युतं सूतं ।
संयान्तं समुदीर्णं च निग्रहप्रग्रहौ तथा । पादावकर्षसन्धाने शिरोभुजपरिभ्रमौ ।
पाशपादविवन्धाश्च भूम्युद्भ्रमणके तथा । गतप्रत्यागताक्षेपाः पातनोत्थानके प्लुतं ।
लाघवं सौष्टवं शोभा स्थिरत्वं दृढमुष्टिता । तिर्यग्धूर्ध्वप्रचरणे द्वात्रिंशत् करणान्यहो ।
Nītiprakāśikā, III.24-28

thirty-two types of movements with the sword.⁷⁰ Varāhamihira in his *Bṛhat Saṁhitā* devotes a chapter (50th) on the characteristics of sword or *khaḍgalakṣaṇa*. He states that a sword of the best type measures fifty *āṅgulas* and that of inferior type measures twenty-five *āṅgulas*.⁷¹ The shape of the sword is described likened to the shape of cow's tongue, blue-lily petal, bamboo-leaf and the *karavīra* leaf is considered to be the best swords as well as those that have a pointed and sharp tip.⁷² Thereafter the methods to strengthen, sharpen and temper the sword are prescribed. It says, an iron weapon treated with a day-old liquid mixture made of the burnt powder of plantains mixed with buttermilk is then to be sharpened properly and this will not break on stones, nor become blunt when struck on other iron instruments.⁷³

In *Kalari* training session, there are 12 sets of sequences of sword and shield. It is also referred to as *murai*, of which the first five consists of important *aḍavus*. The training includes mastery of block and

70 भ्रान्तमुद्गान्तमाविद्धमाप्लुतं विप्लुतं सूतम् । संपातं समुदीर्णं च श्येनपातमथाकुलम् ॥
उद्धतमवधूर्तं च सव्यं दक्षिणमेव च । अनालक्षितविस्फोटो करालेन्द्रमहासखौ ॥
विकौरनिपातो च विभीषणभयानकौ । समग्राद्धतृतीयांशपादपादार्द्धवारिजाः ॥
प्रत्यालीढमथालीढं वराहं लुलितं तथा । इति द्वात्रिंशतो ज्ञेयो खड्गचर्मविधीरणे ॥
Agnipurāṇa, 252.1-4

71 अङ्गुलशतार्धमुत्तम ऊनः स्यात्पञ्चविंशतिः खड्गः । अङ्गुलमानाज्ज्ञेयो*Bṛhat Saṁhitā*, 50.1

72 गोजिह्वासंस्थानो नीलोत्पलवंशपत्रसदृशश्च । करवीरशूलाग्रमण्डलाग्राः प्रशस्ताः स्युः ॥
Bṛhat Saṁhitā, 50.7

73 क्षारे कदल्या मथितेन युक्ते दिनोषिते पायितमायसंयत् । सम्यक् शितं चाश्मनि नैति भङ्गं न
चान्यलोहेष्वपि तस्य कोण्ठयम् ॥ *Bṛhat Saṁhitā*, 50.26

defence with attack. It is done according to the *vāithāri*. The session begins with salutations to Guru both by the *munkol* and *pinkol* person. Remembrance of Gaṇapati prior to the commencement of sword session is called *Gaṇapati āṅga* and invoking the presiding deities of various weapons is known as *Sarasvatī āṅga*. The completion of training is again concluded with special worship. The important part of sword training is the *Puliyāṅga* and *Simhatanja Vālppayattu*. In most of the *Kalaris* there is the practice of *Puliyāṅga* in which there are more jumps. *Simhatanja* has lower stance (*padinju*) kind of movements.

3) Urumi (Spring Sword)



It is a long flexible double-edged sharp sword also known as spring sword. The length of the *urumi* measures from the chin of the practitioner to the floor, including the handle. *Urumi*, normally does



not have a handle guard like that of a sword. It is so flexible that it is wrapped around the waist like a spring and can be drawn out quickly using the hilt, when someone advances suddenly to attack. The attack by *urumi* is defended by a shield. The attack consists mainly of spin and hit. Since the weapon is flexible and sharp, it proves dangerous if one lacks required practice. While in the sword training one requires strength of hand, in *urumi* one requires skilful application of martial techniques. In a situation when one person has to face many opponents, *urumi* is considered the ideal weapon.

Urumi consists of jump, rotation, forward and backward movements.

The *urumi* sequences resemble hand movements like *parakkam vetti*, of the 12th *Meipayattu*. There are many similarities between sword and *urumi* wielding especially those of rotation and strike. Hence, it is considered that if one excels in sword wielding then one can master *urumi* with ease. *Urumi* training does not have any specific *vāithāri*.

4) Kundam (Spear)

It is a long stick with sharp knife attached. It appears as the last part of the *Āngathāri* training course but is felt less necessary in *Kalari* training since its application is minimum, is difficult to handle and



also difficult to train. Also, the techniques of spear are seen included in *vaḍi* like *keṭṭukārippayattu*. The *kunda* is ten cubits flat and has a handle like *śāṅkubudhnaka*.⁷⁴ Generally a spear measuring less than five forearm length is used. It is made of cane or branches of sandal, bamboo etc. The tip is made of hard iron and it is said that soft iron is used in the tapering part. The shape of the sharp tip is likened to that of pineapple leaf or bamboo leaf. Applications like moving forward, backward and in different directions are found in *kundam* practice. There is no specific *vāithāri* here and the wielding of spear by a skilled person can look more attractive. The sequences are of 5 or 6 which consists of locks, throws with mechanism of attack and defence. In the Northern style of *Kalarippayattu*, the combination of sword and shield against spear is a speciality. This is known as *Marapiḍicchukundam*. In this sequence there is *vāithāri* but does not correspond to the practical application.

74 दशहस्तमितः कुन्तः फालाग्रः शङ्कुबुध्नकः । *Sukranīti*, IV.VII.214



Verumkai

In *Kalarippayattu* the most important part is the use of empty-hand. The name *Verumkai* means one without any weapon who faces an opponent who is either empty-handed or carries some weapons. The bare-hand technique sequences include both situations of attack and defence. The moves for attack and defence are complex and can be handled only by the advanced student.

In Northern style, *Verumkai* is introduced only after *Kolthāri* and *Aṅgathāri*. By this time, the students are exposed to various weapons, considerably fear is removed, and the ability to face any situation is acquired. The crucial feature of judging a situation is also achieved. Thus, weapon training precedes *Verumkai*

which helps build confidence. This stage of learning demands focused eye and perfect *chuvadu*s obtained in *kolthāri*, fearlessness acquired in *aṅgathāri* and balanced mind developed from *meippayattu* and Yoga practice. A certain amount of maturity is to be seen in the practitioner at this juncture like control over anger, absence of pride etc. Earlier, the students were put to test by Gurukkal in order to qualify for *Verumkai* training. Some think that because of such rigorous regulations many of the secret *aḍavu*s are lost. But if it was given to an undeserving student who learns and propagates to the next generation, this would have been a greater loss.

The training commences on an auspicious day with special rituals. In this stage of learning, the student is to take up an oath or *satyapratijñā*. Guided by the Guru, the students repeat the pledge. Here priority is given to speed and accuracy for application of techniques and this is achieved by constant practice.

Use of Verumkai

1) Kaiyum-Kaiyum

It is also known as *muṣṭi yuddham* or *kaiyum meiyum* where one faces the other without weapons and defends only by using hand and leg. It has 12 sub-divisions:

- i) *Taḍavugal*
- ii) *Upataḍavugal*
- iii) *Māṭṭaṅgal*
- iv) *Kayaṭṭaṅgal*
- v) *Veṭṭugal*
- vi) *Iḍigal*
- vii) *Chavuṭṭugal*
- viii) *Taṭṭugal*
- ix) *Piḍigalum Pooṭṭugalum*
- x) *Yerugal*
- xi) *Taḍavillākkaigal*
- xii) *Marmakkaigal*

i. Taḍavugal

Here blocks are used when an opponent attacks. There are eight such blocks. 1. *Nilayil Taḍa* 2. *Āyamtalli Taḍa* 3. *Agaṅkai Taḍa* 4. *Puraṅkai Taḍa* 5. *Kaipinacchu Taḍa* 6. *Māṭṭa Taḍa* 7. *Agaṅkāl Taḍa* and 8. *Puraṅkāl Taḍa*.

ii. Upataḍavugal

It is also a kind of block and there are eight such blocks. 1. *Adaṅgal Taḍa* 2. *Marma Taḍa* 3. *Akamveṭṭi Taḍa* 4. *Irrukkai Taḍa* 5. *Varittaḍa* 6. *Amartittaḍa* 7. *Valathupukkutaḍa* and 8. *Iḍattupukkutaḍa*.

iii. Māṭṭaṅgal

This is used when one is unable to judge or defend the opponent's attack. A counter-attack is done which is powerful with turns and twists that confuses the defender. There are six main sub-divisions here. 1. *Taṭṭimāṭṭam* 2. *Chuvaḍumāṭṭam* 3. *Anjumāṭṭam* 4. *Niraṅgimāṭṭam* 5. *Chāḍimāṭṭam* 6. *Uruṇḍamāṭṭam*.

iv. Kayaṭṭaṅgal

The approach is to the right or left side or straight with *veṭṭu* or hit and *iḍi* or punch. There are three different tradition of application. 1. *Anjukayaṭṭam* 2. *Kettikayaṭṭam* 3. *Teriṭṭhukayaṭṭam*. This technique is useful in wielding *kadāra* and *vaḍi*.

v. Veṭṭugal

The hand is directed either upward or downward. In *veṭṭugal* both hands are used. Here, 12 *marma* points are aimed at. The name of the *veṭṭugal* is based on the consequence caused by the damage of the *marma* points, such as *rakktacheetti* (gushing of blood), *kaitalarpam* (paralyzing hand) etc.

vi. Iḍigal



It refers to punch where the fist, elbow, knee, head are used. *Oonal* or fingers kept straight is also used for *iḍi*. Punch is employed when one faces the opponent and the aim is directed at the front part of the opponent.

The *iḍi* is by the elbow if the attack is received from behind and when the opponent is to the side, only *veṭṭu* is used.

vii. Chavuṭṭugal

This refers to the use of feet to hit or push the opponent. The ridge of the foot is used excessively in *Chavuṭṭu*. The sole and the ball of the

foot (area above the sole) are also used to hit and push the opponent. The attack is aimed at the navel, stomach, rib, testicle, knees, thighs, face and chest. Some techniques are known as 1. *Valampiri* and *Iḍampiri* 2. *Nerkana* 3. *Pinchavuṭṭu* 4. *Iritichavuṭṭu* etc.

viii. Taṭṭugal

Taṭṭu means tapping. This technique includes pulling, pushing and throwing. Here the opponent's speed and strength is used against himself. The defender achieves this by using the leg to imbalance and push the opponent to the floor. This is the most dangerous form of *Verumkai* if skillfully applied. The application of this technique is mostly below the knees. Some of the techniques are known as, 1. *Gaṇapatikai* 2. *Valiyagaṇapatikai* 3. *Hanumānkai* 4. *Bhīmankai* 5. *Bālikai* etc.

ix. Piḍigalum-Pooṭṭugalum:

They are two types of locks, producing pain in the body of the opponent. Using one hand is *piḍi* and holding the opponent with both hands is called *pooṭṭu*. The locks produce pain and makes the opponent immobile.

There are many kinds and some that can be easily applied are 1. *Kazhuthpooṭṭi* 2. *Katrikapooṭṭu* 3. *Valam pooṭṭi* *Iḍam pooṭṭi*

4. *Chembaḍakkam* 5. *Mannutappi* 6. *Manamnokki* 7. *Vairam-mariñju-pooṭtu*. If more power is applied in such locks, there are chances of bone breaking or getting dislocated.

x. *Yerugal*

It is the technique of approaching the opponent and ‘throwing’. The approach is either towards the right or left side of the opponent and grasping his shoulder, back or hip and throwing.



There are 12 such divisions here.

1. *Minnikkai*
2. *Valicchuyeru*
3. *Chuṭṭiveeshiyeru*
4. *Hastachakra*
5. *Andamalakkam*
6. *Valampagiritiruccheru*
7. *Idampagiritiruccheru*
8. *Valaveeshiyeru*
9. *Peruntaḍaiyeru*
10. *Kundamchāṭṭi*
11. *Kavaniyeru*
12. *Agamvalicchuyeru*

xi. *Taḍavillākaigal*

Here, the attack by the opponent is rendered useless with an immediate counter-attack which prevents the opponent from applying a defence mechanism.

xii. *Marmakkaigal*

As the name indicates it is employed at *marma* points, which is the most dangerous technique in the *Kalari* course. The teaching is combined with not only the way of damaging the *marma* points but also of how to cure the affected one. The technique of *marmakkaigal* is applied using various parts of the hand, leg, elbow, shoulder, head and knee. Some of the techniques of application with hand are known as *veṭṭikkai*, *āṇikkai*, *kundakkai*, *aravakkai*, *simhakkai*, *muṣṭikkai*, *chuṭṭikkai*, *pārakkai*, *vajrakkai* etc. These are kept as secrets and are taught only to the most eligible students.

The use of small stick for striking the *marma* points is known as *koṭṭu vidyā*. The technique of using it is taught as part of *marmakkaigal*. This stick is also known as *koṭṭukol* or *marmavaḍi*. It is small in size and can be held within the palm. In the hands of a well-trained *Kalari* practitioner, even though small it is known to be the most dangerous ‘weapon’ in *Kalarippayattu*. It is not a straight stick but with curves so that fingers can grip it firmly and it measures up to two *aṅgulam*. When held in the hand, the portion at the thumb is called *amaram*. The other side is called *muna*. The stick is not sharp but has rounded edges. It is



covered completely by the palm as it is only as thick as a finger. It is concealed by the thumb and cannot be seen by the opponent.

2) Kambum-Kaiyum

Bare-hand defence against an opponent who advances with a *vaḍi* or similar kind of weapon is known as *kambum-kaiyum*. There are 12 techniques.

3) Kattiyum-Talayum

Here a rope or cloth is used for defence when an opponent attacks with a knife or any other weapon. The rope or cloth (*tala*) is used to either defend or dodge and move away. A hit from the opponent by a knife or stick can be blocked by using a cloth. Here, there is no particular *vāithāri* or *chuvadu*s. Some of the applications are *Taḍuvutala*, *Ozhuvutala*, *Keṭṭutala*, *Yerutala* etc.

4) Kattiyum-Kaiyum

This bare-hand technique is an application against an opponent who wields a knife. The techniques such as *taḍavu*, *olavu*, *piḍigal* are used. The practice is initially with a blunt knife. There are 8 *taḍavus*. 1. *Odiramtaḍa* 2. *Olavutaḍa* 3. *Vāritaḍa* 4. *Maruvāritaḍa* 5. *Ezhikkukeṭataḍa* 6. *Araikkikeezhataḍa* 7. *Nerodiram* 8. *Oḍakkuneṭṭi*.

Dodging or methods of avoiding strikes from the knife are 1. *Pinmāṭṭam* 2. *Teruttumāṭṭi* 3. *Ozhijñu* 4. *Nilayayil-amarndu-ozhijñu* 5. *Taṭṭiozhijñu*.

Techniques of grabbing the knife from the opponent are 1. *Kattikai* 2. *Kavarankayṭṭi* 3. *Kazhuttukeṭṭi* 4. *Kallankeṭṭi* 5. *Aḍivāri* 6. *Pinvāri* 7. *Minigatiruppu* 8. *Puḍappalaki* 9. *Kaipḍicchu-gaṇapati-taṭṭu* 10. *Ānairutti* etc.

Upāsanā

Meditation is prescribed for a student of *Kalari* who has undertaken the practice of this martial form for a length of time. The emphasis on physical discipline is balanced by an equal emphasis on mental discipline. Physical discipline alone does not suffice. A disciplined mind is equally required to face any situation with power. The Gurukkals of *Kalari* are often inspired by the *Bhagavad Gītā* (especially the sixth chapter) and stressed

upon the importance of mental health. The complementary nature of physical strength and mental balance was well recognized in the *Kalaris*. Each *Kalari* adopted its own method of *upāsanā* which is practiced under the guidance of the Guru. Some of the *upāsanās* commonly undertaken for practice are *iṣṭadevatā dhyāna*, *japa dhyāna*, *prāṇāyāma sahita dhyāna*, *vīramudrā dhyāna* etc.

Marma Vidyā

Marma is the vital points in the human body. Study of *marma* points is the most advanced stage of *Kalari* training course. The most eligible student alone can enter into this stage. The *marma* points are taught through diagrams initially. Sketches of the human body with the *marma* positions marked and numbered are introduced at the first stage. The names of the *marmas* are given in Sanskrit and Malayalam.

The tradition of *Kalari* owes the origin of *marma* study and the method of curing to *Suśruta Saṁhitā* and Vāgbhaṭṭa's *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya* further traced back to *Caraka Saṁhitā*.

In *Caraka Saṁhitā* we find the mention of 107 *marmas*, the most important being those in the *basti* (abdomen), *hṛdaya* (heart) and *śiras* (head).⁷⁵ Caraka points out the position of the *marmas* broadly dividing the physical body as *skandha* and *śākhā*, he then shows the inter-connectedness of all the *marmas*.⁷⁶ The *śākhā* literally meaning a branch includes both arms and thighs consisting

75 सप्तोत्तरं मर्मशतं यदुक्तं शरीरसंख्यामधिकृत्य तेभ्यः ।
मर्माणि बस्तिं हृदयं शिरश्च प्रधानभूतानि वदन्ति तज्ज्ञाः ॥
Caraka Saṁhitā, Cikitsāsthāna 26.3

76 सप्तोत्तरं मर्मशतमस्मिञ्छरीरे स्कन्धशाखासमाश्रितम्
अग्निवेश तेषामन्यतमपीडायां समधिकापीडा भवति
चेतनानिबन्धवैशेष्यात् । तत्र शाखाश्रितेभ्यो मर्मभ्यः
स्कन्धाश्रितानि गरीयांसि शाखानां तदाश्रितत्वात्
स्कन्धाश्रितेभ्योऽपि हृद्वस्तिशिरांसि तन्मूलत्वाच्छरीरस्य ॥
Caraka Saṁhitā, Siddhisthāna 9.3

of forty four *marmas* and the *skandha* is the trunk of the body that includes *hṛdaya*, *basti*, *sīras* consisting of the remaining sixty three *marmas*.⁷⁷ Caraka quotes an earlier idea of the presence of *prāṇa* in *hṛdaya*, *basti* and *sīras* (the predominant position of the *marmas*) and hence one should make effort always to protect these regions.⁷⁸

Marmas	Number
Muscular (<i>māṁsa-marma</i>)	11
Vascular (<i>sirā-marma</i>)	41
Ligamental (<i>snāyū-marma</i>)	27
Bone-related (<i>asthi-marma</i>)	08
Joint-related (<i>sandhi-marma</i>)	20
Total Marmas	107

In *Suśruta Saṁhitā*, the sixth chapter under *Śārīrasthāna* section is devoted to identification of *marma* points, their vitality and the consequences of damaged *marmas*.

The *Kalari* tradition acknowledges the identification of *marmas* as found in *Suśruta Saṁhitā*. Accordingly, it is said that there are 107 *marma* points and they are divided broadly into five categories

77 शाखाशब्देन चेह शाखेव शाखेति कृत्वा बाहुद्वयं जङ्घाद्वयां चोच्यते.... ॥
तत्र शाखाश्रितानि चतुश्चत्वारिंशन्मर्माणि शेषं स्कन्धाश्रितम् । Cakrapāṇi Datta's
Commentary *Āyurveda Dīpikā to Caraka Saṁhitā, Siddhisthāna* 9.3

78 भवन्ति चात्र श्लोकाः - हृदये मूर्ध्नि बस्तौ च नृणां प्राणाः प्रतिष्ठिता । तस्मात्तेषां सदा यत्नं कुर्वीत
परिपालने ॥ *Caraka Saṁhitā, Siddhisthāna* (9).

as *marmas* of the muscular, vascular, ligament, bone and joints.⁷⁹ Suśruta then points out the number of *marmas* under each of these categories.⁸⁰

Suśruta highlights the importance of *marma* by identifying four types of blood vessels (*sirā*) that are generally situated in the *marmas* that maintain the body by nourishing the ligaments, bones, muscles and joints.⁸¹ The vitality of the *marmas* is indicated when Suśruta says that even when a person is mutilated and heavily damaged physically, if the *marmas* are not damaged the person survives.⁸² Suśruta observes that when the *marmas* are injured one does not survive because the *marmas* are those points in the physical body in which reside the vital life principles.⁸³

79 सप्तोत्तरं मर्मशतम् । तानि मर्माणि पञ्चकानि भवन्ति तद्यथा - मांसमर्माणि सिरामर्माणि
स्नायुमर्माणि अस्थिमर्माणि सन्धिमर्माणि चेति । *Suśruta Saṁhitā, Śārīrasthāna* 6.3.

80 तत्रैकादश मांसमर्माणि एकचत्वारिंशत् सिरामर्माणि सप्तविंशतिः स्नायुमर्माणि अष्टावस्थिमर्माणि
विंशतिः सन्धिमर्माणि चेति । तदेतत् सप्तोत्तरं मर्मशतम् ॥ *Suśruta Saṁhitā, Śārīrasthāna*
6.4.

81 चतुर्विधा यास्तु सिराः शरीरे प्रायेण ता मर्मसु सन्निविष्टाः ।
स्नाय्वस्थिमांसानि तथैव सन्धीन् सन्तर्प्य देहं प्रतिपापयन्ति ॥
Suśruta Saṁhitā, Śārīrasthāna 6.18.

82 संभिन्नजर्जरितकोष्ठशिरःकपाला जीवन्ति शस्त्रनिहतैश्च शरीरदेशैः ।
छिन्नैश्च सक्थिभुजपादकरैरशेषैर्येषां न मर्मसु कृता विविधाः प्रहाराः ।
Suśruta Saṁhitā, Śārīrasthāna 6.34.

83 सोममारुततेजांसि रजःसत्त्वरजांसि च । मर्मसु प्रायशः पुंसां भूतात्मा चावतिष्ठते ॥
मर्मस्वभिहतास्तस्मान्न जीवन्ति शरीरिणः । *Suśruta Saṁhitā, Śārīrasthāna* 6.35-36.

Vāgbhaṭṭa following the tradition of Suśruta takes up the discussion of *marmas* in the fourth chapter titled *Marmavibhāga* of *Śārīrasthāna* section in his *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya*. In the Sanskrit commentary to *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya*, titled ‘*Sarvāṅgasundara*’ by Aruṇadatta the word *marma* is derived etymologically as that place when affected (severely) causes death.⁸⁴ Some of the names of *marmas* as found described in *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya* are *kṣipra*, *kūrcaśira*, *gulpha*, *indrabasti*, *jānu*, *āñī*, *urvī*, *lohitākṣa*, *viṭapa*, *guda* etc.

The Northern *Kalari* tradition follows the *marma* based on Suśruta and Vāgbhaṭṭa. However, the names of the *marmas* are given in Malayalam like *chumayan*, *kazhuttukochi*, *kirikoḍam* etc. The names of *marmas* in Malayalam indicate the consequence of the damaged *marmas*. Further, the tradition of *Kalari* has evolved its own independent treatise over a period of time formulated by the experience of *Kalari* Gurukkals.

The *Kalari* tradition identifies 64 *marma* points called *abhyāsa marma*, of which 32 points can be aimed at during a combat and other 32 points can be aimed at when the opponent is immobilized and these points are aimed at unexpectedly. Again, 12 points aimed at by *vaḍi* or *katti* results in death and other 6 points aimed at by hand leads to immediate death.

84 त्रियतेऽस्मिन्नङ्ग उपहत इति मर्म । Aruṇadatta’s Commentary *Sarvāṅgasundara* to *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya*, *Śārīrasthāna*, 4. Introduction.

The student learns to identify the 64 *marma* points. The method of teaching the exact location of the *marma* points in earlier days was different. The student smeared the black soot from the lamp (*nilavelakku kari*) on the palms and knuckles. A mock dual combat is arranged and the student has to attack the *marma* points of the opponent. The points touched by the student with the soot on the opponent’s body help the Guru to teach the student in identifying the exact points. 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 the 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. This is called *Aḍaṅgal* or *Marukkai*. There are about thirteen *aḍaṅgal* like *melthāra aḍaṅgal*, *korivāri aḍaṅgal*, *uyirnila aḍaṅgal*, *piṅgala aḍaṅgal*, *sarvāṅga aḍaṅgal*.

The *Marma Vidyā* and *Aḍaṅgal* are taught only to the most committed student and the practice is always conducted in the presence of the Guru. Thus the training not only focuses on how to damage the *marmas* and the knowledge of their consequences but also includes the science of healing the damaged *marmas*. This is unique to *Kalari* tradition.

Kalari Marma Chikilsā

A *Kalari* Gurukkal is well-known in the villages of Kerala as a *vaidya* or physician. The system of preparation of medicine in *Kalari* evolved as a sub-branch of *Āyurveda*. *Kalari Marma Chikilsā* or treatment focuses on the ailments related to nerves, muscles, bones and *marmas*. In ancient times, a warrior also had to be a physician with the knowledge of treatment. During the martial practice sessions too, one may suffer minor injuries or wounds. Thus, the *Kalari* martial form developed its method of preparation of medicine and evolved ways to avoid fatigue, lethargy etc. There are also methods to prevent diseases. A wholistic system of *uzhichil* or oil massage became an integral part of *Kalari*

tradition. This system of *uzhichil* induces blood circulation, energises glands, activates *prāṇa* etc. and on the whole the biological function is vitalized and it refreshes the mind. There are three kinds of *uzhichil* also known as *Thirummu* that are done by using oil prepared from special herbs.

Katcha Thirummu - is administered for developing flexibility and suppleness of the physical body. This is done prior to the training session.

Raksha Thirummu - it is purely for treatment and deals with problems related to nerves, muscles, bones etc.

Sukha Thirummu - is basically for physical rejuvenation and helps to develop the immune system. This keeps diseases at bay.



Suśruta describes the importance of *uzhichil* with oil as a measure to prevent disease. In *Cikitsāsthāna*, the benefits of *uzhichil* are mentioned. *Uzhichil* with oil softens the body, balances *kapha* and *vāta*, nourishes *dhātus*, cleanses the body, improves the skin and gives strength.⁸⁵ Oil bath removes fatigue, pacifies *vāta*, unites dislocated joints,

alleviates pain of injury, burn and trauma. As sprouts grow in tree on irrigating its root with water, *dhātus* are promoted by oil bath.⁸⁶ *Uzhichil*

85 अभ्यङ्गो मार्दवकरः कफवातनिरोधनः । धातूनां पुष्टिजननो मृजावर्णबलप्रदः ॥
Suśruta Samhitā, Cikitsāsthāna, 24.30

86 सेकः श्रमघ्नोऽनिलहृद्भ्रमसन्धिप्रसाधकः । क्षताग्निदग्धाभिहतविघृष्टानां रुजापहः ।
जलसिक्तस्य वर्धन्ते यथा मूलेऽङ्कुरास्तरोः । तथा धातुविवृद्धिर्ह्यस्नेहसिक्तस्य जायते ॥
Suśruta Samhitā, Cikitsāsthāna, 24.31-32

of the feet brings sleep, is pleasing and wholesome for eyes, removes fatigue and numbness, softens skin (sole) of the feet.⁸⁷

A specially prepared *ghṛta* or ghee infused with herbs is used for *uzhichil* of the face. It removes advanced freckles, bluishness and boils in face and makes it lotus-like, free from wrinkles and becomes charming.⁸⁸ This *ghṛta* is the chief among the remedies for certain skin diseases and cracks in feet.⁸⁹

Suśruta also lays down certain rules to be adhered to in administering *uzhichil*. The factors like constitution, suitability, season, place, *doṣa*, and disease are to be considered prior to *uzhichil*.⁹⁰ *Uzhichil* should not be applied to one with acute fever, indigestion, after purgation etc.

If wrongly applied, it increases the severity of the disease which may then become incurable or it produces diseases reducing the digestive

87 निद्राकरो देहसुखश्चक्षुष्यः भ्रमसुप्तिनुत् । पाद-त्वक्-मृदुकारी च पादाभ्यङ्गः सदा हितः ॥
Suśruta Samhitā, Cikitsāsthāna, 24.70-71

88 वक्राभ्यङ्गे सर्पिरुक्तं प्रधानम् ॥
हन्याद् व्यङ्गं नीलिकां चातिवृद्धां वक्रे जाताः स्फोटिकाश्चापि काश्चित् ॥
पद्माकरं निर्वलीकं च वक्रं कुयदितत् पीनगण्डं मनोज्ञाम् ॥
Suśruta Samhitā, Cikitsāsthāna, 25.40-41

89 कुष्ठं वै सर्पिरितत् प्रधानं येषां पादे सन्ति वैषादिकाश्च ॥
Suśruta Samhitā, Cikitsāsthāna, 25.42

90 तत्र प्रकृतिसात्म्यतुदेशदोषविकारवित् । तैलं घृतं वा मतिमान् युञ्ज्यादभ्यङ्गसेकयोः ॥
Suśruta Samhitā, Cikitsāsthāna, 24.34

power etc. It should not be applied when a person is afflicted by diseases caused due to saturation.⁹¹

In the system of *Kalari*, there are three ways of administering *uzhichil*. The first method is by using the hand known as *kai-thirummu* or *samvāhanam*; the second method is by using feet known as *chauṭṭi-thirummu* or *utsādanam* and the third method is administered by two people known as *suparidhara-kriyā*.

Another important feature is called *Svedakriyā* or *Kizhi*. It is the application of poultice to the affected areas with a cloth that is well tied with herbal powders which is dipped into the hot medicated oil. There are different kinds of *kizhi* like *marma kizhi*, *navara kizhi*, *ela kizhi* etc. The *Kalari uzhichil* is meant as a tool for both prevention and cure. The benefits of *svedakriyā* are said to bring about brilliance, softness, healthy skin, removes tiredness and over-sleep, rectifies dislocated joints.⁹²

A committed *Kalari* practitioner who propitiates the *Kalari devatās* and practices *upāsana* regularly is believed to develop *adrṣṭa* or unseen

91 केवलं सामदोषेषु न कथञ्चन योजयेत् । तरुणज्वर्यजीर्णा च नाभ्यक्तव्यौ कथञ्चन ॥
तथा विरिक्तो वान्तश्च निरूढो यश्च मानवः । पूर्वयोः कृच्छ्रता व्याधेरसाध्यत्वमथापि वा ॥
शेषाणां तदहं प्रोक्ता अग्निमान्द्यादयोः गदाः । सन्तर्पणसमुत्थानां रोगाणां नैव कारयेत् ॥
Suśruta Saṁhitā, Cikitsāsthāna, 24.35-37

92 अग्नेर्दीप्तिं मार्दवं त्वक्प्रसादं भक्तश्रद्धां श्रोतसा निर्मलत्वम् । कुर्यात्स्वेदस्तन्द्रानिद्रे च हन्यात्
सन्धीस्तब्धांश्चेष्टयेदाशुयुक्तः ॥ *Virasimhāvalokana, Svedādhikāra, 5*

positive qualities. Such a one with an intention to cure invokes the presence of God chanting the mantra⁹³ is said to be more effective and the common people revere such a *Kalari Gurukkal*. Thus, a transition, as it were, is seen from a teacher of martial art to a master to cure. Only on attainment of this quality of curing, is he recognized as a *Gurukkal*.

93 अयं मे हस्तो भगवानयं मे भगवत्तरः । अयं मे विश्वभेषजोऽयं शिवाभिमर्शनः ।
Śrī Rudrapraśna, Concluding part.

GLOSSARY



1. *Aḍavu* - a combination of stance, movement and application.
2. *Amarcha* - low-stance
3. *Aṅgathāri* - session on metal weapons
4. *Arappu* - a set of movements
5. *Gurukkal* - the title conferred on one who completes the *Kalari* martial training and *Kalari Chikilsā*
6. *Karaṇa* - different kinds of jumps
7. *Karuttu* - power or strength
8. *Kizhi* - herbal powder or leaf tied in a cloth
9. *Kol* - wooden stick or sometimes refers to a measurement
10. *Kolthāri* - session on wooden weapons
11. *Marma* - vital points of the body
12. *Meithāri* - set of body sequence also known as *Meippayattu*
13. *Murai* - set of sequence mainly in *Aṅgathāri*
14. *Pandi* - a sitting posture
15. *Paradevatā* - presiding deities of *Kalari*
16. *Thara* - ground or floor
17. *Uzhichil* - treatment massage
18. *Vaḍivu* - mainly refers to particular animal posture
19. *Vāithāri* - verbal command
20. *Vazhi* - a particular style

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Shaji K John (b.1970) is a professional Kalarippayattu Instructor. He is a student of Shri E P Vasudevan Gurukkal, Kaduthuruthy, Kerala and has been trained in the Northern Style Kalarippayattu for nearly ten years.

He has won the District Championship (1986 to 1991) and State Championship (1988 and 1989) in Kerala.

Shaji joined the Dancer-Choreographer Chandralekha under the instruction of his Gurukkal. He has performed in all major productions of Chandralekha since 1986 in national and international venues.

Shaji currently conducts regular Kalarippayattu classes in Chennai that is ongoing since 1998.