

## **The Importance of Marma Therapy in Ayurvedic Practice**

Marma therapy is an ancient Indian practice whose focus is the manipulation of subtle energy (prana) in the body for the purposes of supporting the healing process. Marma therapy is based on the utilization of 107 points in the body which are considered to be access points to body, mind and consciousness. Knowledge of Marma allows the practitioner to influence the flow of prana through both the gross and subtle bodies for the purposes of restoring health and peace of mind.

Marma therapy is the original point system of healing in the body. As it spread out of India it influenced the development of Chinese acupuncture and even Kung fu. Its origins are South India within a martial arts tradition known as Kalari Payatu. The art of Kalari was utilized to defend kingdoms during times when expertise in hand-to-hand combat was the mark of a great warrior. These ancient warriors needed to understand subtle energy and they used their knowledge to disable or kill an opponent. "Marma" comes from the Sanskrit "Mru", which means "To Kill". The 107 marma points are categories in terms of their effect on the vitality of the body. Some points, when injured, simply hurt. Others, when injured, become life threatening. While warriors had knowledge of these points for the purposes of defending a kingdom, it was the job of the physicians to utilize these same points for healing. The Marma master, sometimes called an "Aasan" or a "Marmani", would also tend to the wounded. The master had the knowledge both of how to cause injury as well as how to use the knowledge and awareness of prana for healing. The "Aasan" was a rare master who could both kill and heal a person with a touch.

Knowledge of marma was not separate from Ayurveda<sup>[1]</sup>. Discussion of the marma points is found in most of the great texts of Ayurveda but the most famous text to explore the subject is the Sushruta Samhita. Vaidya Sushruta described the locations of the marma points, as well as how they influence prana. He stated that it was important for the surgeon to have knowledge of these points for the purposes of avoiding them, as to cut into them could result in a catastrophic outcome.

An important principle of marma therapy is quite simple. Where a strong blow can cause injury, a mild touch can cause healing. This is the most important principle of Marma massage. When the knowledge of marma is combined with an ability to both perceive and direct the flow of prana, marma chikitsa becomes a powerful tool for influencing the healing of every known condition. While marma therapy is not well known or practiced except by a few practitioners in India, its practice is becoming more popular here in the United States.

I was introduced to the practice of Kalari Payatu and marma therapy in the mountains outside of Cochin, in Kerala in 1999. It was a brief but powerful experience and I have been fascinated with it ever since. My previous training included cultivating the ability to perceive subtle energy and I studied various point systems of the body. This made it easier to grasp. However, my knowledge of Marma came more from re-awakening than from formal teaching. Structure, however, is needed for awareness to flow. Toward the end, I always found Dr. Ranade's and Dr. Frawley's text on Marma to be very illuminating. The illustrations and summations of the knowledge are quite excellent.

The work I do today with marma therapy has its roots in Kalari, was nurtured by Sushruta, was cultivated by Dr. Frawley and Dr. Ranade and ripened by my own awareness and experiences. The six-day Marma Therapy Course and the five-day Advanced Marma Therapy Course I teach at the College are the fruit of this knowledge. During the Basic Marma Therapy Course students learn to identify the 107 points on the body. They also learn to perceive the flow of prana and learn the basic technique for manipulating the flow of prana using awareness, intention, essential oils, light pressure massage and pranic healing. This is then applied to learning a general full body healing protocol and then specific protocols to treat lower back and neck pain as well as shoulder and knee pain.

During the Advanced Marma Training Course students review the Basic Course and then spend several days learning new protocols including the management of the male and female reproductive

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systems, liver and splenic disease, conditions of the nervous system, the management of agni, the management of the heart and much more. The advanced course is more practice than theory.

Every Ayurvedic practitioner would benefit from learning Marma Therapy. It can be practiced on and off the body. It can be practiced with the clothes on or off. It is safe, simple, effective and it supports the counseling work of the practitioner, as well as the hands-on work of the Ayurvedic Massage and Body Therapist.

### **Quotes from Students Who Have Taken the Course**

"I loved this course." — Michelle Magid

"I loved the comprehensiveness, detailed explanations and the responses to questions."— Abiola Ofachte

"It was like a lifetime of knowledge came back in just one course." — Clement Lam (Sankara)

"This training was one of the most complete trainings I have ever taken." — Janice Craig

"One of the best programs I've attended." — Wendy Boerger

"Probably my favorite workshop / class yet in the whole program!" — Jessica Hartley

"I thought it was amazing and grew and learned so much. It was life changing." — Jill Johnson

"I came to learn but had a deep personal transformation." — Eleni Tsikrikas

"It was absolutely beautiful." - Maria Szarfac

"I had no idea that it could work to such a level. It's not the program information, it's the teacher." — Bobby Thakar

"Certainly one of the highlights of my first year at CCA! Wonderful instruction, compassionate teaching." — Heather Anthony

"Wow!! It was my favorite workshop." — Dena Jackson

"The best workshop I've taken at CCA. Dr. Halpern brings 100% expert knowledge into the subject." — Leslie Stewart

"It was fabulous. It was deeply healing and transformative." - Laura Perlin

"A great teacher who knows how to present information in an open and welcoming way using visual, verbal and tactile approaches."— Angela Brown

"The information was well put together, easy to follow and the result was such a positive one. Dr. Halpern is truly what made this course for me. His presence and ability to communicate to all of us was one that is rarely found." — Totiana Lamberti

"I loved it. The material was so magic." — Kara Lukowski

"I was very excited and surprised at how much we focused on energy and pranic healing. This knowledge is necessary and will never be forgotten. The experience was so gratifying and there is nothing else I would rather have been doing." — Jaime Lefcovich

"As a full time bodyworker, I will use this information every day." - Thomas Taylor

"It was perfect!"— Julie Wardell

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“It’s been a while since anyone has been able to enlighten me and I am very excited about it. Marc is the best teacher I have ever worked with.” — Gina Abeyts

“It’s very complete, very well prepared and very important.”— Lucs Tubio

“Dr. Halpern brings out information that cannot be drawn from a book.” — Glen Swindler

“The guided marma meditation was great.” — Bernadette Mansori

“It was an amazing learning and growth experience. I loved it.” — Jen Petullo

“Thank you for teaching by example.” — Becky Frazier

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### **Links:**

[1] <http://www.ayurvedacollege.com/glossary/term/10>