

ABOUT KALARIPAYATTU

Meaning: “Practice in the arts of the battlefield”

Like most Indian martial arts, Kalaripayattu contains rituals and philosophies inspired by Hinduism. The art also bases medical treatments upon concepts found in the ancient Indian medical text, the Ayurveda. Practitioners of Kalaripayattu possess intricate knowledge of pressure points on the human body and healing techniques that incorporate the knowledge of Ayurveda and Yoga. Kalaripayattu is taught in accordance with the Indian *guru-shishya* system. Kalaripayattu differs from many other martial arts systems in the world in that weapon based techniques are taught first, and barehanded techniques are taught last.

There are two major styles that are generally acknowledged within traditional Kalaripayattu. They are the Northern style, or *Vadakkan Kalari*, and the Southern style, or *Thekkan Kalari*.

A third style, the Central style, or *Madhya Kalari*, is also practiced, but it is less commonly practiced than its northern and southern counterparts.

A smaller, regional style of Kalaripayattu called *Tulunadan Kalari*, is referenced in texts such as the *vadakkan puttukal*, but it is largely restricted to the Tulu Nadu region in northern Kerala and southern Karnataka. Other smaller, regional styles are also said to exist in isolated regions of Kerala, but these styles are becoming increasingly rare, and difficult to find. Examples include *Dronamballi*, *Odimurassery*, *Tulu Nadan Shaiva Mura*, and *Kayyangali*.

What we learn in this is called Northern style. The Northern style is also known as *Vadakkan Kalari*, and is generally regarded as the “original” form of Kalaripayattu. This system places more emphasis on physical flexibility exercises rooted on the slogan *Meyy kanavanam*, meaning, “Make the body an eye.” These exercises are done individually, as well as in combinations. After that *meypayattu* (a concept similar to kata in Karate) is taught. These are a combination of flexibility exercises with offensive and defensive techniques, however, the actual techniques are taught very much later. Traditionally, the number of *meypayattu* may differ as per the teaching methods of the guru. Training is usually done in four stages, the first stage being *Meipayattu* (training stances), followed by *Kolthari* (practice with wooden weapons), *Angathari* (practice with metal weapons) and finally *Verum kai* (barehanded combat) generally, the majority of the *Kalaris* (schools that teach Kalaripayattu) start training with weapons within 3 to 6 months. Some *Kalaris* only allow one weapon to be learned per year. After long stick and small stick fighting, iron weapons are introduced. Weapons training begin with the dagger and sword, followed by the spear. Not all modern schools use specialized weapons. Traditionally, bows and arrows were commonly used in Kerala and students were trained in these techniques, but are rarely taught today.

BENEFITS OF KALARIPAYATTU

Practicing the martial art not only increases your bodily strength, but also helps you achieve better blood circulation, flexibility, levels of endurance, stamina, concentration, self-control, posture, muscle tone, speed in physical movements and neuro-muscular coordination.

It boosts flexibility

Just like martial art teaches you several flexible moves to protect yourself during a fight, so does Kalaripayattu. This is what makes it better than the other forms of fighting.

It improves the strength in an individual's body

As mentioned earlier, the strength within your body is first focused upon. Kalaripayattu trainers and practitioners believe that you can never call yourself strong, unless you are internally healed, fit and healthy.

It ensures to make you fast

There are a lot of quick moves that you learn while practicing this art. You are required to defend yourself for protection and attack, both within a fraction of the second so that you are saved from getting injured, but are able to hurt the opponent.

It cuts down the “laziness” in your body

If you have been lazy all your life, this is the form of martial art that you have got to learn to get the best out of your body. It takes you to a different zone in life.

Your concentration power increases the more you practice this art

If you want to boost your focus on a specific thing, Kalaripayattu can help you with the same. You learn the true meanings of dedication and determination when you are a Kalaripayattu student.

Your patience is improved with the practice of this art

This form of martial art requires patience because it is not something that you can learn overnight. It teaches you to be calm at the same time.

If you are stressed, the hatha yoga Asanas taught in this art ensure to de-stress you

There are various Yoga asanas taught during the process of kalaripayattu. Thus, if there is any sort of stress in your life, you can get rid of it by learning and practicing this art. It promises to bring a major positive change in your life and improve the way you think about yourself. It also boosts your confidence level.

Your presence of mind is improved as you learn new moves for the battlefield

There are countless moves that you are taught when you are being trained by a Kalaripayattu expert. Also, you develop a few moves on your own after a certain period of time and, that requires a strong presence of mind.

You can survive a real attack as well

If you are attacked for real, you can use your Kalaripayattu techniques to survive the fight and defeat the threat.