Martial arts Medicine: Embracing Kalaripayattu as Holistic Health

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**Agasthyam Kalaripayattu**

Do you know that Kalaripayattu has a unique healing or curing system associated with it, setting it apart from other martial arts?

Do you know that Kalaripayattu encompasses both physical training and a healing system, offering a holistic approach to health and well-being?

Yes Kalaripayattu is The holistic path for health and wellness

Notably, Kalaripayattu stands out as the only martial art with an associated healing or treatment system, extending beyond self-defence. It promotes the principle of avoiding unnecessary violence and teaches that one must evade attacks and only respond when necessary.

This healing system also serves as a protection system for the community, where Gurukkals take responsibility for the health and well-being of society. Kalaripayattu has been instrumental in shaping the history of the region, fostering a society of warrior leaders that transcended barriers of sex, religion, caste, or creed.

Historical accounts, such as those by the Portuguese traveler Duarte Barbosa in the 16th century, reveal that children in Kerala begin Kalari training at the age of 7, developing flexibility, strength, and weapon skills over their lifetime. The training involves a gradual progression through various stages, culminating in mastering weapons, pressure points, and even healing techniques.

As Agasthya, the revered Paramaguru of Kalaripayattu, wisely imparts:

"Manamathu semmayanal mandiram japikkavenda

Manamathu semmayanal vayuve uyartha venda

Manamathu semmayanal vasiye nirutha venda

Manamathu semmayanal mandiram semmayame"

In essence, possessing a robust and resolute mind obviates the need for mantras, pranayamas, or meditative sadhanas like Vaasi. A powerful mind, in itself, is the key to acquiring a strong and healthy body.

The wisdom behind these words goes beyond individual well-being; it extends to the broader canvas of society. A strong mind is the cornerstone of a healthy and fearless society. It equips individuals to face life's challenges with resilience and empowers communities to thrive in harmony. As we embrace this age-old wisdom, we are reminded that the journey to health, longevity, and happiness begins with the strength of our minds."

The essence of Kalaripayattu extends beyond combat; it emphasizes the mind's power and its role in both healing and overall well-being. The ancient art recognizes the body's ability to self-heal, with psychosomatic diseases linked to psychological and emotional factors. It underscores the importance of addressing the root causes of illnesses, striving for mental and emotional well-being, and embracing the concept of whole-person healing.

In an era where the future of medicine embraces whole-person healing, Kalaripayattu's holistic approach to mind, body, and spirit becomes increasingly relevant. This ancient martial art continues to inspire and educate, reminding us that true strength lies in the unity of the mind and the body.

Exercise, when done properly, is not just a means to gain physical health and longevity; it is the pathway to happiness and a powerful body. We have come to realize that the foundation of a strong body is, in fact, a strong mind.

In India, every health practice has always been intrinsically linked to the concept of health and a wholesome way of life. This holistic vision was deeply ingrained in the country's cultural fabric and finds expression in various ancient texts.

According to Ayurveda, an ancient Indian system of medicine, it is said:

"Punavritha… punah mitra

Puna bharya puna mihi

Ethath sarva punar labhya

Na sarera punah punah"

This verse suggests that one can potentially regain various aspects of life, such as family, spouse, kingdom, relationships, and wealth. However, when it comes to the loss of one's physical body, it is considered not just challenging but indeed impossible to recover. This reflects the profound value placed on the physical body and the emphasis on maintaining its well-being.

India, historically, was a nation that embraced a vision of health and a wholesome way of life. It was renowned as the birthplace of Ayurveda, Siddha Vaidya, and Kalaripayattu, each of which played a significant role in shaping the lifestyle of its people.

In 1948, the World Health Organization redefined the concept of health, stating that it is "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of diseases." This definition aligns with the holistic perspective on health that India has cherished for centuries.

Ayurveda further elaborates on the concept of health, stating:

"Kshamavan apthopasevi bhaved arogyam,"

which means that when you love and serve others, your health improves. In India, health extends beyond the individual; it encompasses a broader sense of well-being, with a strong focus on unconditional love for society.

Another perspective from Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of physical activity:

"Vyayameth labhathe bhagyam, deerghayushyam, balam, sugham."

This verse underscores the belief that through regular exercise, one attains good fortune, a long and healthy life, strength, and happiness.

These verses and philosophies collectively underscore the profound connection between health and lifestyle in India, emphasizing a holistic approach that extends to physical, mental, and social well-being.

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