

12. Classification: Sthula (gross), Sukshma (subtle), Agni (vital) marmas

Classification of Marmas in Kalari & Ayurveda

Sthūla (Gross) · Sūkṣma (Subtle) · Agni (Vital)

1. Overview of the Three-Tier Model

Early Kerala gurukkals grouped the classical list of 107 marmas into three functional bands so therapists could **match stroke depth and caution to the tissue environment**:

Band	Literal Sense	Dominant Tissue Matrix	Primary Function	Consequence of Trauma	Stroke Philosophy
Sthūla	“Large, gross, obvious”	Bone, cartilage, capsule, thick ligaments	Structural integrity & load transfer	Deformity, swelling, joint laxity; rarely fatal	Firm, broad pressure to mobilise or stabilise
Sūkṣma	“Fine, subtle, delicate”	Nerve trunks, vessels, thin fascia	Sensorimotor relay & vascular flow	Radiating pain, numbness, vascular spasm	Moderate, precisely angled thumb or knuckle work
Agni	“Fire, vital spark”	Organ beds, endocrine nodes, metabolic plexus	Life-sustaining heat (<i>jāṭharāgni</i>) & prāṇa hub	Rapid collapse, systemic shock, high fatality risk	Gentle indirect sweeps; avoid deep compression

2. Sthūla Marmas - The Structural Gatekeepers

Sthūla points occupy **high-stress joints and bony ridges**.

Examples: **Kūrpara** (elbow), **Jānu** (knee), **Gulpha** (ankle), **Kukundara** (hip crest).

Kalari relevance - Deep heel glides along hamstring and calf traverse Kūrpara → Urvi → Gulpha in one sweep, releasing fascial drag and restoring spring-load to kicks. Therapists finish with a *kriyā-sthiti* still-hold that lets proprioceptors recalibrate, preventing post-massage wobble.

3. Sūkṣma Marmas - The Neural & Vascular Switches

Sūkṣma points sit where **nerve-vessel bundles surface** before diving deep.

Examples: **Sthapani** (between brows), **Ani** (axilla), **Indrabasti** (forearm), **Talahridaya** (sole centre).

Kalari relevance - Thumb spirals on Ani release brachial plexus tension that limits sword grip. Because vessels are close, strokes stay **oblique and rhythmic** to milk venous return without bruising.

4. Agni Marmas - The Vital Forges

Agni points guard organs that generate heat, digestion, and systemic rhythm.

Examples: **Hridaya** (cardiac plexus), **Nābhi** (navel hub), **Basti** (bladder base), **Adhipati/Brahmarandhra** (crown).

Kalari relevance - Therapists approach Agni sites **indirectly**: three broad palm sweeps across the sternum timed to the client’s exhale calm cardiac overdrive; direct deep pressure is avoided to respect their life-spark status.



5. Practical Mapping for Session Design

Step	Energetic Rationale	Marma Band Targeted	Typical Medium & Tool	Expected Client Feedback
Warm-up glides foot → crown	Wake central axis	Sthūla along spine, hips, knees	Warm sesame + heel sweep	“Back feels longer; joints click open.”
Focused neural release	Free sensory flow	Sūkṣma at Ani, Indrabasti, Talahridaya	Thumb spiral, moderate oil	Tingling subsides, limbs grow light
Metabolic harmonising	Settle autonomics	Agni at Hṛidaya, Nābhi	Broad palm, gentle depth, cooler oil for Pitta	Heart rate drops, warmth spreads evenly
Lock-in stillness	Anchor prāṇa	Crown Agni point	Feather-touch hold	Quiet mind, deep sigh, eyes soften

6. Safety Matrix for Students

Red-Flag Sensation Under Thumb Likely Band

Red-Flag Sensation Under Thumb Likely Band	Immediate Action
Sharp “electric” zap	Sūkṣma Soften angle, use broader surface
Deep dull ache + joint wobble	Sthūla Pause, support joint, resume lighter
Sudden nausea / cold sweat	Agni Lift pressure, place palm lightly, cue slow breath

7. Key Learning Points

- One map, three resolutions** - Think of the marma grid like a topographic chart: Sthūla show the mountain ranges, Sūkṣma the rivers, Agni the volcanic cores.
- Depth matches density** - Dense tissues invite depth; delicate pathways demand finesse; vital cores require reverence.
- Sequence from gross to subtle** - Open Sthūla scaffolding first, clear Sūkṣma channels next, finish by soothing Agni hearths; this mirrors the body’s own healing cascade.
- Observe & adapt** - Skin colour change, pulse shift, or breath catch are real-time guides to the layer you are touching.

Master this tripartite lens and your Kalari Uzhichil treatments will move with anatomical confidence **and** energetic intuition—unlocking joints, brightening nerves, and guarding the client’s inner flame all in one coherent flow.