Practical 3: Advanced Marma Therapy on Back and Spine

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Objective: Confidently map key back-related marmas, apply safe pressure and advanced strokes along the paraspinals, use distal marma anchors for regulation, integrate warm towels, and titrate depth from client feedback.

Quick note on names: **Kṣipra marma** is a *distal* point (hand/foot web) used to modulate spinal tone; it is included here as a powerful **anchor** for back work. **Pṛṣṭha (back) marmas** are the paraspinal fields on the thoracic-lumbar corridor (e.g., **Vṛhati** mid-thoracic, **Kaṭikā-tāruṇa** over the sacroiliac rings).

A. Materials & Room Setup (5 min)

- Stable table, face cradle, non-slip mat.
- 2 warm **moist towels** (or hydrocollator packs wrapped in towels), dry towel.
- Base oil (sesame for cool/stiff; coconut/Pinda for hot/reactive) in water-bath (~38-40 °C).
- Skin-safe pencil or cosmetic pencil for light landmark dots (optional).
- Timer; tissues; waste bag; documentation sheet + pen.

Environment: Warm, indirect light, steady low sound; good ventilation.

B. Safety & Consent (2 min)

Screen fast: fever, acute hot swelling, rash/open wounds, new numbness/weakness, spinal trauma, severe osteoporosis, kidney infection/UTI, pregnancy (avoid prone; choose side-lying). If **yes** → **modify or defer**.

Consent script (10 s): "We'll use warm towels, slow oil strokes, and light marma holds near the spine. Tell me 'pause' anytime to change depth or stop. Okay to proceed?"

Global rules today:

- No **vertical pressure** on spinous processes.
- **Kidney zone** (roughly T12-L3, 3-5 cm lateral) = **broad/feather only**; **no percussion** or deep kneading.
- Never stack **heat** + **pressure** over vital fields (precordium/umbilicus/pelvis/crown).

C. Landmarking & Marma Map (3-4 min)

Client prone, ankles bolstered; face cradle neutral. With clean, warm hands:

- 1. **Midline & rails:** Palpate spinous processes (midline). The "rails" for work are **1-2 finger-breadths** lateral (laminar groove).
- 2. **Thoracic field** *Vṛhati*: Mid-thoracic, between scapulae (approx. T4-T6), **paraspinal field**; mark **two small dots** each side where muscle is responsive (optional).
- 3. **Costovertebral rings** *Pārśva-sandhi*: Along rib-spine junctions. Treat as **rings**, not poking points.
- 4. Lumbosacral field Kaţikā-tāruṇa: Over SI joint rims; feel bony edges; mark broad C-shaped ring each side.
- 5. Kidney caution zone: T12-L3, just lateral to erectors—outline lightly in your mind (do not draw).
- 6. **Distal anchor Kṣipra**: Web between **thumb-index** (hand) and **1st-2nd toes** (foot). We'll use this **during** back work to down-shift tone.

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Dose for marma holds: feather → light, **2-5 exhales** each; **oblique** vector; never jab.

D. Warm Towel Integration (pre/post) (3-5 min)

Pre-massage (optional, cool/stiff backs):

- Wring towel to **no drip**; temp target at skin \approx **40-45** °C. Test on your wrist first.
- Lay from mid-back to sacrum (avoid direct heat on kidney zone if client is heat-sensitive).
- Cover with dry towel for 60-90 s; ask: "Comfortable warmth?" Remove; pat dry; begin oiling.

Post-massage (tight thoracolumbar fascia):

• Re-apply **30-60 s** to consolidate; follow with two long calming glides.

E. Advanced Stroke Set — Paraspinal Corridor (15-20 min)

Oil film: thin, even layer over back. Work distal → proximal segments and outside → inside toward the laminar groove.

- 1. **Long Thirumu (3-4 passes):** Ulnar **forearm** from sacrum → mid-back → shoulders; tempo **8-10 s** per pass; pressure **3-4/10** (lighten to **2-3/10** over thin frames).
- 2. Laminar-groove glides (2-3 passes/side): Soft knuckle/palm heel, 1-2 finger-breadths off midline; *oblique* into muscle, **not** vertical on spinous processes.
- 3. **Circular melts (thoracic) (60-90 s/side):** Small **clockwise/anti-clockwise** circles over **Vṛhati** field; keep tissue under your hand—not sliding over skin.
- 4. Costovertebral ring work (60 s/side): Gentle ring-wise kneads at Pārśva-sandhi; avoid sharp rib pokes.
- Lumbosacral traction (Kaţikā-tāruṇa) (90 s): Heel of hand at SI rim → oblique inward & caudal on exhale; release on inhale. No vertical sacral press.
- 6. **Distal anchor (live):** With non-working hand, hold **Kṣipra** (client's palm or sole) **feather-light** for **2-3 breaths** while your working hand performs a thoracic or SI hold. Swap sides.

Interactive checkpoints (ask one at a time; wait):

- "Pressure 0-10 here?" (Aim 3-4/10; ≤3/10 over thin or irritable zones)
- "Any 'zing' or sharpness?" (If yes → broaden, lighten, change angle)

F. Marma Stimulation — Back & Distal (6-8 min total)

- Vṛhati (mid-thoracic field): broad palm, 2-3 exhales, then stillness.
- Kaţikā-tāruṇa (SI ring): heel of hand, oblique 2 exhales each side; never jam sacrum.
- Kṣipra (hand or foot): feather contact 10-15 s, then still; great for clients who tense with back contact.
- Skip direct holds over: kidney zone, Kukundara (sciatic notch), and any neurovascular pits.

G. Putting It Together — 25-30 min Flow (coachable, repeatable)

- 1. Warm towel $(60-90 \text{ s}) \rightarrow \text{remove, pat dry.}$
- Oil film → Long Thirumu 3-4 passes.
- 3. Laminar-groove glides (midline rails) → Vṛhati circles.
- 4. Costovertebral rings → Kaţikā-tāruṇa traction.

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- 5. **Marma set**: Vṛhati → Kaṭikā-tāruṇa → **Kṣipra** (palm/sole).
- 6. Post warm towel $(30-60 \text{ s}) \rightarrow$ two closing glides.
- 7. **Seated exit** (30-60 s) to avoid lightheadedness.

H. Pressure & Sensitivity Titration

- Scale **0-10**; stay at **3-4/10** for paraspinals, ≤**3/10** near kidney/SLR-irritable zones.
- Red lights: sharp, electric, radiating pain; sudden guarding; dizziness. Stop, broaden, reassess.

I. Client Feedback & Documentation (S.O.A.P. mini)

- S: "Mid-back tight after desk work; low-back ache with standing."
- O: Forward-head & rounded shoulders; thoracic tone high at Vṛhati; SI tenderness with vertical pressure (avoided); responded to oblique traction.
- A: Calmed with 3-4/10 pressure; **Ksipra** anchor reduced guarding.
- P: Next: add side-lying rib work; home—4/6 breathing 5 min, two "wall slides."

Ask (log answers):

- 1. "Where did pressure feel perfect / too much?"
- 2. "Do you feel warmer/looser through mid-back now?"
- 3. "Any spots to avoid next time?"

J. Troubleshooting

- **Tight paraspinals that won't soften:** Slow tempo; add **Kṣipra** anchor; shorten stroke length; return after a brief towel re-warm.
- Kidney discomfort/heat sensitivity: Skip pre-heat; keep contacts broad; shift to side-lying and work lateral ribs.
- Client holds breath: Stop motion; cue 'in soft... longer out...'; resume on their exhale.
- Your thumbs tire: Switch to forearm/palm heel; lower table; step closer; keep wrists neutral.

K. Assessment Rubric (self/peer)

Criterion	Pass	Coach cue if not yet
Landmark accuracy	Midline & laminar rails found; Vṛhati & SI rims locate	d Slow down; palpate bony edges first
Stroke quality	Even tempo, oblique vectors; no spinous pokes	Soften angle; lengthen stroke to 8-10 s
Kidney safety	No deep work/heat stacking in zone	Map T12-L3 mentally; lighten & broaden
Marma dosing	2-5 exhale holds; feather→light; Kṣipra used	Reduce depth; add distal anchor
Client feedback use	e 2 check-ins; pressure adjusted	Ask one Q at a time; re-check after change
Ergonomics	Hip hinge, stacked joints, neutral wrists	Lower table; use forearm; step, don't reach
Documentation	Clear S/O/A/P + next-time plan	Write one mod + one home cue

L. Reflection (3 lines)

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•	One place I needed to lighten & why:
•	One ergonomic change I'll keep next time:

Quick-Reference Card (print/save)

 $\textbf{Flow:} \ \ \text{Warm towel} \ \rightarrow \ \text{Oil} \ \rightarrow \ \text{Long Thirumu} \ \rightarrow \ \text{Laminar glides} \ \rightarrow \ \text{Vṛhati circles} \ \rightarrow \ \text{Pārśva-sandhi rings} \ \rightarrow \ \text{Kaṭikā-tāruṇa traction}$

→ **Kṣipra** anchor → Close towel → Two long glides → Seated exit. **Pressure:** Paraspinals **3-4/10**; kidney/irritable zones \leq **3/10**.

Holds: 2-5 exhales, oblique, broad—never vertical on spinous or kidney field.

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