

18. Use of Kizhi (bolus), lepa (paste), and steam in conjunction

Integrating Kizhi (bolus), Lepa (paste) & Steam (Svedana) in Kalari Healing

How three classic heat-modulation tools are layered around an Uzhichil session to deepen tissue release, clear channels and lock-in metabolic change.

1. Therapeutic Logic Behind the Trio

Kalari practice views musculoskeletal pain, sluggish circulation and post-combat swelling as **multi-layer problems**.

- **Uzhichil** mellows superficial fascia and primes marmas.
- **Kizhi** drives *controlled heat + herbal actives* several millimetres deeper, milking stagnation from joints and tendinous sheaths.
- **Lepa** keeps phyto-chemicals in long contact with the target site, extending anti-inflammatory or cooling action after the heat phase subsides.
- **Steam** dilates sweat-glands and lymphatics, completing toxin mobilisation and preventing rebound stiffness.

Applied in sequence, the modalities move tissue from **rigid → pliable → permeable → detoxified** within a single sitting.

2. Kizhi (Bolus) —Mobile Herb Furnace

A **kizhi** is a fist-sized bundle of powdered or whole herbs tied into cotton. Common variants:

Variant (Malayalam)	Core Contents	Primary Action	Dosha Bias
Podi-kizhi	Dry powders of lemon, rock salt, zedoary	Friction + mild heat for myalgia	Kapha ↓, Vāta ↓
Ela-kizhi	Fresh leaves of castor, tamarind, moringa sautéed in sesame oil	Sweating & decongestion around large joints	Kapha ↓
Njavara-kizhi	Cooked red rice, milk, bala decoction	Nourishing heat for muscle wasting or nerve palsy	Vāta ↓, Pitta ↔

Technique Bundles are dipped in medicated oil maintained at 47-50 °C, blotted, then **dab-press-glide** along the oiled tissue until heat fades. Each bolus is reheated for 40 s before the next pass.

3. Lepa (Paste) —Stationary Phytochemical Patch

A **lepa** is a semi-solid mash spread 3-5 mm thick over the treated zone.

- **Suvatā Lepa** (warming): ginger, mustard, ajowan—re-ignites sluggish periferal circulation after Podi-kizhi.
- **Śītala Lepa** (cooling): sandalwood, vetiver, fuller's earth—quells post-traumatic Pitta flare when heat work risks aggravation.
- **Shāka-Lepa** (nutritive): black gram, milk, sesame—feeds atrophied calves or forearms after Njavara-kizhi.

Paste stays 20-30 min under light gauze, then is wiped with lukewarm water; oil film remains to seal pores.

4. Steam (Svedana) —Final Channel Opener

Gentle **nadi-svedana** (steam jet) or **bashpa-svedana** (steam chamber) follows lepa removal.



- Temperature kept **40-44 °C** to avoid protein denaturation.
- Exposure 5-8 min limbs / 3-5 min torso; shorter for Pitta constitutions.
Steam synergises by **re-dilating pores**, amplifying sweat-mediated toxin exit, and preventing late-onset soreness.

5. Session Flow Model

Oil Uzhichil (20 min) → Kizhi (15 min) → Lepa (25 min rest) → Steam (6 min) → Light Oil Re-application & Rest

1. **Oil primes:** joints glide, skin receptive.
2. **Kizhi mobilises:** targeted heat pumps stagnation.
3. **Lepa modulates:** cools or nourishes depending on need.
4. **Steam completes:** opens śrotas, fixes pliability.
5. **Final rest** lets heart-rate normalise and herbs settle.

6. Safety & Practical Notes

- Temperature checks every 2 min; therapist's forearm is the thermometer.
- Avoid Kizhi over acute sprain < 48 h, active dermatitis, varicose zones.
- Use hypo-allergenic cloth; coloured cotton may leach dye under heat.
- In asthmatics, restrict chest steam to diffuse room vapour, not jet.
- Brief pulse and BP reading before steam; abort if systolic > 160 mm Hg.
- Pregnant clients: no abdominal kizhi, lepa or steam; limb-only lukewarm oil permissible.

Summary Tables

Combination Quick-Guide

Muscle spasm + cold limbs → Sesame oil Uzhichil → *Podi-kizhi* → Suvatā lepa → 6 min nadi-steam

Post-sprain edema (sub-acute) → Coconut-Murivena Uzhichil → *Ela-kizhi* → Śītala lepa → 4 min chamber steam

Neuro-muscular wasting → Bala-Ashwagandha oil Uzhichil → *Njavara-kizhi* → Shāka lepa → Gentle warm towel (no steam if Pitta high)

Phase	Tool	Heat Range	Contact Time	Key Effect
1	Oil Uzhichil	38-42 °C	15-25 min	Lubrication, marma priming
2	Kizhi	47-50 °C at cloth	12-18 min	Deep vasodilation, lymph mobilisation
3	Lepa	Skin temp + 2 °C	20-30 min rest	Sustained anti-inflam or nutritive delivery
4	Steam	40-44 °C ambient	5-8 min	Śrotas opening, toxin exit

Risk Flag

Contra-Measure

Excess redness / burning during Kizhi	Switch to alternate bundle, lower oil temp, cool compress 1 min
Dizziness during steam	Seat client, sip warm jaggery water, postpone further heat work
Paste itching	Remove lepa, wash with rice-water; next time add sandal or aloe base

Key Take-aways

1. **Heat layering**—oil → bolus → paste → steam—moves therapy from surface to core without tissue shock.
2. **Herbal intelligence**—choose bolus herbs for mobilisation, paste herbs for modulation.
3. **Dosha precision**—adjust oil base, kizhi variant, paste nature and steam duration to constitution and season.
4. **Safety hinges on temperature control** and vigilant observation; efficacy on seamless sequencing.



Employ this tri-modality wisely and Kalari Uzhichil transcends a single-tool massage, becoming a fully orchestrated program for rapid recovery, high-performance conditioning and long-term constitutional balance.

AYURVEDBHARATI.ORG