

4. Philosophical foundations: Trigunas (Sattva, Rajas, Tamas)

Philosophical Foundations of Kalari Healing

Understanding the Trigunas - *Sattva, Rajas, Tamas*

1. Why the Trigunas Matter

Ancient Indian knowledge systems—Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Āyurveda, and Siddha—describe all phenomena as a blend of three fundamental qualities, the **Trigunas**.

- **Sattva** represents clarity and balance. It makes the mind luminous, the senses sharp, and the body agile.
- **Rajas** embodies energy and movement. It drives ambition and change, but when unchecked turns into agitation.
- **Tamas** supplies density and rest. It provides stability and recuperation, yet sinks into inertia when excessive.

Kalari Uzhichil relies on these principles in two ways:

1. **Assessment** - A therapist observes which guna predominates in the client's body-mind state.
2. **Intervention** - Choice of oil, temperature, pressure, and stroke cadence is designed to reduce the excess guna and restore harmony among the three.

2. The Three Gunas in Everyday Language

Sattva is the clear morning sky; Rajas, the blazing midday sun; Tamas, the stillness of night. None is "good" or "bad" in itself. A sprinter needs Rajas before a race, a convalescent needs Tamas to rebuild tissue, and everyone benefits from Sattva when learning new skills. Kalari practice therefore works like a dimmer switch, not an on-off button—guiding intensity, not erasing it.

3. How Each Guna Appears in Kalari Uzhichil

Therapist's inner state

- A *sattvic* therapist works with effortless concentration, sensing subtle tissue changes.
- A *rajasic* therapist applies vigorous strokes useful for deep myofascial release but must guard against roughness.
- A *tamasic* therapist may begin slowly (helpful for grounding anxious clients) yet should avoid lethargic hands and dull perception.

Client presentation

- Sattvic clients arrive calm, muscles relaxed, breath steady; they benefit from gentle lymph-moving strokes and cooling oils.
- Rajasic clients talk rapidly, show tight fascia and heat; deep, rhythmic Uzhichil with mildly cooling oils settles them.
- Tamasic clients complain of heaviness, cold limbs, sluggish circulation; dry-friction followed by warm sesame-based oils awakens and warms tissue.

4. Practical Guna Modulation

A typical therapeutic goal is to **lift an excess of Tamas** through measured Rajas into a Sattva plateau. For instance, after an ankle sprain has healed (Tamas helpful during immobilisation), gentle mobilising strokes (moderate Rajas) restore movement, and slow finishing strokes (Sattva) refine proprioception. Likewise, an over-stimulated athlete (high Rajas)

receives cooling oils and slower strokes to descend into Sattva for recovery.

5. Cultivating Sattva in the Practitioner

Kalari lineage insists that technique alone is insufficient; the therapist's consciousness is the real medicine. Daily **dinacharya**—tongue cleansing, nasya, light āsanas—removes accumulated Tamas. Five minutes of **Bhrāmarī** or **Nādī-śodhana** quiets excess Rajas before the first session. A diet of fresh, lightly spiced foods and regular reflection on **ahimsā** (non-harm) and **satya** (honesty) keeps Sattva robust, ensuring each touch carries clarity and compassion.

Summary Tables

Guna	Core Quality	Typical Signs in Client	Therapeutic Aim	Suitable Oils	Stroke Cadence
Sattva	Balance, clarity	Steady breath, relaxed tissue	Preserve harmony	Cooling, nourishing oils (e.g., Bala-Aśvagandhā)	Slow, wave-like, breath-synchronised
Rajas	Activity, heat	Restlessness, muscle tension	Channel & cool	Moderate-warming oils (e.g., Kottam-Chukkādi)	Rhythmic, deep, rope-assisted if needed
Tamas	Density, coldness	Heaviness, sluggish circulation	Warm & activate	Penetrative sesame with camphor; dry-rub pre-oil	Short spirals, friction, progressing to deeper strokes

Observation	Indicative Guna Imbalance	First Response	Follow-up Strategy
Cold, clammy skin	Tamas ↑	3 min brisk dry-rub	Warm oil Chavitti Uzhichil
Rapid speech, dilated pupils	Rajas ↑	Cooling Kai Uzhichil	Finish with still-holds and head massage
Calm gaze, even breath	Balanced Sattva	Maintain gentle marma work	Integrate breath-synchronised strokes

Key Take-aways

- Balance over suppression** – the goal is not to eliminate Rajas or Tamas but to keep all three in functional proportion.
- Multiple levers** – oil temperature, stroke depth, therapist breathing, and session sequencing are practical tools to modulate guna expression.
- Self-reflection** – brief journaling after each treatment helps both student and practitioner recognise personal guna shifts and refine technique.

Adopt these principles and Kalari Uzhichil becomes a full spectrum practice—one that restores muscular health while gently tuning mind and spirit toward enduring equilibrium.