

7. Doshas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha) in Kalari-based massage interpretation

Dosha Theory in Kalari Uzhichil

Interpreting Vāta, Pitta, and Kapha for Tailored Massage

1 • Understanding Dosha Dynamics

Āyurveda describes three organising principles—**Vāta** (movement), **Pitta** (transformation), and **Kapha** (structure). Kalari Uzhichil applies this lens clinically:

- **Vāta** governs nerve impulses, joint mobility, and breath rhythm. When agitated it produces pain that shifts location, spasms, dryness, and a sense of fear or restlessness.
- **Pitta** rules metabolic heat, muscle tone, and focused intellect. Excess shows as burning pain, local warmth, redness, irritability, and a “sharp” pulse.
- **Kapha** supplies lubrication, stamina, and immune resilience. When excessive it gives heaviness, oedema, coldness, sluggish movement, and mental lethargy.

A practitioner first identifies the **prakṛti** (constitutional baseline) and then the **vikṛti** (present imbalance). Technique, oil, and session flow are adjusted to pacify the aggravated dosha without destabilising the others.

2 • Dosha-Specific Massage Logic

Vāta-Pacifying Approach

- **Medium & Temperature** - Generous application of warm, viscous sesame-based oils such as *Dhanvantaram* or *Murivenna*; warmth calms cold, dry tissues.
- **Stroke Quality** - Slow, steady pressure with long glides; sustained holds over joints to reassure the nervous system.
- **Adjuncts** - Herbal steam (*nadi sveda*) after massage; gentle abdominal wrapping to anchor core *prāṇa*.

Pitta-Cooling Approach

- **Medium & Temperature** - Slightly cooler, coconut-ghee or bala-aśvagandhā oils infused with sandalwood or vetiver.
- **Stroke Quality** - Moderate depth, rhythmically even; avoid excessive friction that generates heat.
- **Adjuncts** - Brief cold-water compress over the liver area; end session with a calm head-and-face massage.

Kapha-Mobilising Approach

- **Medium & Temperature** - Light, warming oils cut with ginger or trikatu; in some cases begin with dry friction (*garshana*) before oiling.
- **Stroke Quality** - Vigorous, brisk movements, especially upward strokes along limbs and circular kneading around joints to move lymph.
- **Adjuncts** - Rope-supported foot work (*Chavitti*) to generate internal heat; seated steam inhalation with eucalyptus.

3 • Assessment Markers for the Practitioner

- **Pulse**
 - Vāta: irregular, snake-like; • Pitta: sharp, hammer-like; • Kapha: slow, frog-like.

**• Skin & Muscle Tone**

• Vāta: cool, dry, rough, thin muscles; • Pitta: warm, moist, moderate build; • Kapha: cold, oily, thick musculature.

• Verbal & Emotional Cues

• Vāta: rapid speech, anxiety; • Pitta: precise words, impatience; • Kapha: few words, content or dull affect.

Observations during intake guide immediate choices—oil placed on tongue tip for Pitta will feel pungent, whereas Vāta clients often sigh audibly when warm oil touches skin.

4 • Balancing Without Over-Correcting

If a predominantly Vāta client also shows secondary Kapha congestion (e.g., cold, heavy legs), therapy begins with brief Kapha-mobilising strokes to unlock stagnation, then shifts to Vāta-soothing long glides. Continual palpatory feedback ensures that pressure and tempo remain therapeutic, not provocative.

Summary Tables

Dosha Imbalance	Key Signs (Body & Mind)	Primary Massage Goal	Ideal Oils & Add-Ons	Stroke Tempo & Depth
Vāta ↑	Variable pain, cracking joints, cold, anxiety, insomnia	Warm, steady, grounding	Sesame + ashwagandhā oil; post-massage steam	Slow, continuous, moderate-deep
Pitta ↑	Burning pain, redness, irritability, thirst, heat	Cool, soothe, disperse heat	Coconut-ghee oil with vetiver; cool compress over liver	Moderate speed, even depth
Kapha ↑	Heaviness, stiffness, oedema, sluggish thoughts	Heat, mobilise, stimulate	Light mustard/ginger oil; pre-oil dry brushing	Fast, vigorous, lighter oil quantity

Common Scenarios	Dominant Dosha	Technique Focus	Observable Positive Shift
Desk-worker with stiff, cold lower back	Vāta	Warm oil Chavitti, long lumbar glides	Lumbar warmth, slower breathing
Athlete with acute shoulder tendonitis	Pitta	Cooling Kai strokes, minimal friction	Reduced heat, easier ROM
Office fatigue with ankle swelling	Kapha	Dry garshana → warm upward strokes	Lightness in legs, clearer alertness

Key Take-aways for Self-Study

- Oil is Medicine** - Its base, temperature, and dose are matched to dosha condition, not chosen at random.
- Stroke Speaks Dosha** - Long, slow waves pacify Vāta; rhythmic neutrality cools Pitta; brisk lifts awaken Kapha.
- Watch the Pulse, Hear the Voice** - Simple sensory cues direct real-time adjustments more reliably than rigid protocols.
- Balance, Not Suppression** - Aim to restore functional harmony; each dosha has a necessary role when kept proportionate.

With these guidelines, Kalari Uzhichil becomes a precision instrument—tuning muscular, circulatory, and nervous systems in language each dosha understands.