

Lesson 22: Advanced Oils & Herbal Formulations (Mahanarayana Thailam, Kuzhambu oils)

This lesson is focused on Mahanarayana Thailam, Kuzhambu oils, and their relevance in Kalari Uzhichil. This will include classical Ayurvedic references, comparison tables, therapeutic actions, and practical application techniques.



Mahanarayana Thailam

Mahanarayana Thailam is a renowned Ayurvedic oil noted for its deeply nourishing, analgesic, and rejuvenating properties. It is described in classical texts such as *Sahasrayogam* (a famous Kerala Ayurvedic formulary) in the context of *Vatavyadhi* (disorders caused by deranged Vata dosha). Some sources also attribute it to the *Ashtanga Hridaya*, indicating its longstanding use in Ayurvedic tradition for Vata disorders. Prepared traditionally by simmering a **sesame oil** base with a decoction of medicinal herbs (and often milk), this oil contains dozens of ingredients including **Bala** (*Sida cordifolia*), **Ashwagandha** (*Withania somnifera*), **Shatavari** (*Asparagus racemosus*), **Dashamoola** (the ten root group), **Prasarini** (*Paederia foetida*), and more. In fact, classical preparation methods mention the use of *Shatavari juice* and *cow's milk* along with about 30 herbs to concoct Mahanarayana Thailam. The oil is cooked until all water content is evaporated and the herbal essences fully infuse into the oil (a process known as *sneha paka*). This yields a potent medicated oil with both lipid-soluble and water-soluble phytoactives.

Doshic Action: Mahanarayana Thailam is prized for pacifying **Vata dosha** and is also supportive in Vata-pitta ailments. It has a warming virya (potency) and is considered balancing for all doshas, especially Vata. The heavy, unctuous nature of its sesame oil base and nourishing herbs makes it an excellent Vata-hara (Vata-reducing) formulation, helping to alleviate dryness, rigidity and pain. It is gentle enough that, in chronic conditions, it can even be taken internally in small doses (as *snehapanam* or enema) under supervision, though its primary use is external abhyanga (massage).

Therapeutic Uses: This oil has broad applications in musculoskeletal and neuromuscular complaints. It is traditionally indicated for **joint pain, arthritis (osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis)**, and related inflammatory conditions. By nourishing the muscles and nerves, it helps relieve stiffness, swelling, and pain in conditions like frozen shoulder, sciatica,



spondylitis, and neuralgia. The classical texts note that regular massage with Mahanarayana Thailam strengthens bones, joints, and ligaments, restoring mobility and function to weakened limbs. It is also described as a **Rasayana** (rejuvenative) for the neuromuscular system – supporting nerve health and easing neuropathic pains. For example, it can be beneficial in paralysis or palsy rehabilitation due to its nerve-stimulating and Vata-calming effects. Additionally, it is known to help in **chronic headaches** of Vata origin and to shorten recovery time from injuries or physical strain. In practice, therapists often warm Mahanarayana oil and perform gentle to deep tissue massage; the warmth and the oil's potency allow it to penetrate deeply into tissues, soothing sore areas and enhancing circulation to the joints and muscles. Overall, this “great Narayana oil” lives up to its name as an all-purpose Vata-balancing oil that comforts the body and supports **comfortable movement** and flexibility 【50†】.

Kuzhambu Oils: Kerala's Herbal Oil Blends

What is a “Kuzhambu”? In the Kerala Ayurveda tradition, *Kuzhambu* refers to a special class of medicated oil formulations unique to that region. Unlike regular *thailam* (oil), a kuzhambu uses a **blend of three fats** – typically **gingelly (sesame) oil, ghee (clarified butter), and castor oil** – as the base, instead of a single oil. This tri-fat combination (known classically as *Trivrit sneha*, Malayalam: *Mukkutt*) gives kuzhambu oils a **thicker, more viscous consistency**, almost like a liniment. They are prepared via the same process as other *sneha kalpana* (oil preparations) by boiling the oils with herbal pastes (*kalka*) and decoctions (*kaashaya*), usually cooked to a slightly thicker endpoint (*khara paka*). Kuzhambu oils are used **exclusively for external application** and have a potent action on **Vata disorders**, especially those with a secondary Pitta involvement. They are highly nourishing (*Bala vardhaka*) and strengthening (*Pushtikara*), often employed in chronic or severe neuromuscular conditions in Kerala's kalari and Ayurvedic practice.

Below we overview a few important Kerala Kuzhambu oils – their classical sources, composition, and unique therapeutic actions:

Murivenna Kuzhambu (Murivenna Oil)

Definition & Etymology: *Murivenna* literally means “oil for wounds” in Malayalam, indicating its famed use in injury care. This formulation was developed in Kerala and is referenced in regional texts (e.g., a *Yogagrantham* of Kerala). Murivenna is **coconut-oil based** – a standout among Ayurvedic oils, which more commonly use sesame. It is prepared by infusing coconut oil (*Kerataila*) with the juices of specific fresh herbs and a herbal paste.

Composition: Major ingredients of Murivenna include healing herbs such as **Karanja (Pongamia glabra)** – useful for wound healing and anti-inflammatory action, **Kumari (Aloe vera)** – famed for soothing burns and regenerating skin, **Shigru (Moringa oleifera)** leaves – anti-inflammatory and analgesic, **Tambula (betel leaf)** – stimulant and anti-infective, **Paribhadra (Erythrina variegata)** – helps in healing tissues, **Palandu (Allium cepa, onion)** – known to reduce swelling and draw out fluids, and **Shatavari (Asparagus racemosus)** – a nourishing tonic, among others. These are processed in a *Tandulodaka* (rice water) or fermented herbal liquid base (*kanjika*) along with coconut oil. The result is a cooling, pale-colored oil enriched with both water-soluble and oil-soluble herbal compounds.

Therapeutic Actions: Murivenna is **celebrated for injury management**. It is applied on **fresh wounds, cuts, and non-healing ulcers** to promote quick healing of the skin and underlying tissues. The presence of Aloe vera and coconut oil provides a cooling, soothing touch that reduces inflammation and burning in acute injuries. This oil also excels in treating **sprains, strains, fractures and contusions** – it reduces pain, swelling and helps repair damaged tissues. Traditional practitioners use Murivenna as a first line oil for **sports injuries, traumatic swelling, ligament tears, bursitis, and joint dislocations**, often in the Kalari context where such injuries are common. Uniquely, Murivenna can be used as a **poultice or bandage oil**: cotton cloth soaked in warm Murivenna is applied (a technique called *Pichu*) to sprained joints or fractures to provide continuous nourishment and pain relief. It quickens the granulation in wounds and even finds use in chronic ulcers like diabetic foot ulcers (often as a gentle *dhara* or pouring of the oil on the wound). Because of its predominantly cooling and Vata-Pitta balancing nature, Murivenna is ideal for injuries that are red, hot, or inflamed while also painful. It calms the Pitta (inflammation) and Vata (pain) simultaneously. Clinically, it's also been used for conditions like **osteoarthritis, gout, cervical spondylosis, low backache, and muscle cramps** – essentially wherever there is tissue damage and inflammation coupled with pain.

Classical Source: Murivenna is a regional recipe not described in the older pan-Indian classics, but it is documented in Kerala's traditional formulary texts (e.g., *Chikitsamanjari* or other *Yogagranthas*) and passed down through practice. The



Ayurvedinfo reference notes its source as “Yogagrantham”. Its efficacy in wound healing has also made it a subject of modern research and it remains a staple in Kerala households for first aid.

Karpooradi Kuzhambu (Karpooradi Thailam)

Definition: *Karpooradi* oil is an aromatic therapeutic oil named after **Karpooora** (camphor), its primary active ingredient. Classical references list it in the *Sahasrayogam* (Tala Yoga Prakarana) formulations. In practice, it is a simple yet potent preparation valued for rapid pain relief and its counter-irritant effects. Karpooradi Kuzhambu is prepared in a base of either **sesame oil or coconut oil**, dissolved with natural camphor crystals (*Cinnamomum camphora*). The Kerala tradition often prefers coconut oil for cooling effect, but sesame oil base is used when a warming, penetrating action is desired.

Composition: The formula is straightforward: **Camphor** is the chief ingredient, infused into the oil base. Some traditional recipes might include a few auxiliary herbs or spices, but most commonly it is just camphor and oil. The camphor readily dissolves in warm oil, yielding a fragrant liniment. The final product has the familiar mentholated, piercing smell of camphor.

Therapeutic Actions: Karpooradi oil is primarily used for **quick relief of musculo-skeletal pains**. Thanks to camphor's rubefacient (counter-irritant) property, when the oil is applied and gently massaged, it causes a warming sensation that increases local blood circulation and eases muscle or joint pain. It is excellent for **muscle cramps, spasms, and stiffness** – for example, a pulled calf muscle or a stiff neck can respond very well to Karpooradi thailam application. Traditional texts mention its utility in **rheumatic complaints, arthritis, and back/neck pains**. The oil's penetrating action helps relieve **numbness and pain in neuropathies** too. In Kerala, it's a common remedy for everyday aches – a few drops rubbed on the temples for a tension headache, or on sore legs after a long day. Karpooradi Kuzhambu is also unique in that it doubles as a decongestant: applying it to the chest or throat and inhaling its vapors can help clear congestion, ease breathing in a cold, and relieve chest tightness. (Camphor's vapors act similar to a vapor rub, clearing nasal passages). Thus it is used in **cold and allergic rhinitis** – a couple of drops on a cloth can be inhaled to relieve a stuffy nose.

Despite camphor being cooling in Ayurvedic energetics, the oil's effect is observed as warming on the skin – it “opens” channels and alleviates Kapha stagnation and Vata coldness in the joints. It is **especially useful in damp, cold climates or seasons** to warm up the body. For instance, therapists might use it at the start of a massage in winter to lightly irritate and awaken the muscles. Often Karpooradi is combined with other oils; an Ayurvedic practitioner might mix 1 part Karpooradi with 4 parts of a base oil like Pinda Thailam (a cooling, anti-inflammatory oil) to get a balanced effect for **pitta-aggravated arthritis**, achieving pain relief without excessive heat.

Classical Source: While several proprietary versions exist, classical formulation is attributed to *Sahasrayogam*. (Notably, one reference suggests this attribution comes from manufacturers' claims and that the actual classical reference might be obscure, but regardless, it has been part of Kerala Ayurvedic practice for generations.)

Dhanwantharam Kuzhambu (Dhanwantharam Thailam)

Definition: *Dhanwantharam* oil is a famous Ayurvedic medicated oil named after Lord Dhanwantari (the deity of Ayurveda). It is a comprehensive formulation used especially for **Vata disorders** and is integral in **post-natal care**. The oil exists in classical texts (for example, *Sahasrayogam* and *Ashtanga Hridaya*) as *Dhanwanthara Taila*, and in Kerala it's often prepared in the Kuzhambu style (with the trifold oil base) for external therapy. This is a large formula with many ingredients and even has variants (like *Dhanwantharam 101 avartti* which is processed 101 times). We will discuss the standard version used in massage.

Composition: Dhanwantharam thailam is based on a **sesame oil** (tila) base, sometimes augmented with ghee and castor oil in the Kuzhambu form. It is an extravagant poly-herbal recipe. The primary ingredient is **Bala** (*Sida cordifolia* root) – used in high proportion as a decoction and paste for its strength-giving, Vata-calming properties. The formula also includes the renowned **Dashamoola** (10 roots group: Bilva, Agnimantha, Shyonaka, Patala, Gambhari, Bruhati, Kantakari, Gokshura, Shalaparni, Prishnaparni) which targets deep-seated Vata in the nerves and bones. Other ingredients are a who's-who of Ayurvedic herbs: **Ashwagandha, Shatavari, Yava (barley), Kola (jujube), Kulattha (horse gram)**, heartwood of **Cedrus deodara, punarnava, manjistha**, aromatic spices like cardamom, cinnamon, etc., and even *Ksheera* (cow's milk) is added in the cooking process to enrich its nourishing quality. (The inclusion of milk in the decoction is one reason it's beloved for mother & child care – it's strengthening and gentle.) The full ingredient list is extensive –



over two dozen herbs – making it a true *samastha* (comprehensive) oil.

Therapeutic Actions: Dhanwantharam is a **balya** – strength-promoting oil – excellent for **all types of Vata disorders**. It is commonly used for **joint diseases (arthritis, osteoarthritis), spondylosis (neck/back degeneration), neurological issues like neuralgia, paralysis, facial palsy, sciatica**, and muscle wasting conditions. In any condition where Vata has led to weakness, pain, or loss of function, Dhanwantharam is indicated. A quintessential use is in **postpartum care**: after delivery, daily abdominal and body massage with warm Dhanwantharam thailam helps the mother recover – it strengthens muscles, supports the joints and lower back, and speeds up restoration of the reproductive tissues. It's noted to be “*beneficial in reducing postpartum discomfort*” such as backache and body pain after childbirth. Similarly, it aids elderly or debilitated patients by improving circulation and nerve function. In sports medicine or post-injury rehab, it aids in **quick recovery from trauma and muscle fatigue**.

This oil is often used warm: therapists gently heat it and perform synchronised massage (*Uzhichil*), followed by sudation, so the oil's nutrients penetrate deeply. Dhanwantharam's potency lies in its ability to both **pacify Vata and support Kapha** (body's rebuilding energy) – it's described as Vata-kapha samana, meaning it calms Vata while its nourishing elements can bolster depleted Kapha tissues like muscles and fluids. It is relatively neutral for Pitta; in fact, many of its ingredients like liquorice, asparagus, and bala are cooling or tonifying, so it usually doesn't overheat the system. This makes it a **tridosha-friendly oil**, though primarily aimed at Vata. Dhanwantharam Kuzhambu is extensively used in Kerala's *kalari marma chikitsa* (martial art medicine) to treat combat injuries and nerve damage, given its ability to restore **strength (bala)** and vitality to tissues.

Classical Source: The formula appears in *Sahasrayogam* (Taila section, formula #1) and is also mentioned in the *Ashtanga Hridaya* compendiums. Its enduring presence in Ayurvedic practice speaks to its efficacy as a master oil for Vata ailments.

Comparison of Mahanarayana vs. Kuzhambu Oils

The following table compares **Mahanarayana Thailam** with the above **Kuzhambu oils** (Murivenna, Karpooradi, Dhanwantharam) in terms of ingredients, indications, usage preferences, doshic impact, and absorption:

Oil	Key Ingredients	Primary Indications	Application Temp.	Doshic Impact	Absorption
Mahanarayana Thailam	Sesame oil; <i>Dashamoola</i> ; Bala; Ashwagandha; Milk; >30 herbs.	Joint pain, arthritis, neuralgia; muscle stiffness; general Vata disorders.	Warm – traditionally applied warm to enhance penetration.	Vata-pacifying , also alleviates Pitta to an extent (anti-inflammatory); may be heavy for Kapha if overused.	Moderate-Heavy: rich oil that penetrates deep when warmed, leaving a nourishing film.
Murivenna Kuzhambu	Coconut oil; Aloe vera, Karanja, Moringa leaf, Betel leaf, Onion, Shatavari.	Wounds (cuts, ulcers), fractures, sprains; acute inflammation (swelling, bruising).	Cool or room temp – often used without heating (cooling effect); can be warmed mildly for better absorption.	Vata & Pitta pacifying – calms pain and redness; cooling nature ideal for Pitta injuries. (Can be used on open wounds gently.)	Light-Moderate: coconut oil base is lighter but can form a protective layer; absorbs slowly, especially if used thickly (often left on to let herbs work).

Oil	Key Ingredients	Primary Indications	Application Temp.	Doshic Impact	Absorption
Karpooradi Kuzhambu	Sesame or coconut oil infused with Camphor (Cinnamomum camphora).	Muscular pain, cramps, joint stiffness; cold-induced aches; chest congestion (externally).	Warm – generally applied warm or briskly rubbed in (camphor’s action generates warmth). Also used at room temp for inhalation benefits.	Vata-kapha pacifying , strongly reduces Vata pain by warming & stimulating circulation. <i>Use with caution in high Pitta</i> (camphor can be intense; may irritate sensitive skin).	Fast-Acting: quickly felt due to camphor’s rapid absorption and evaporation; penetrates superficially – gives quick relief but not as deep-nourishing.
Dhanwantharam Kuzhambu	Sesame oil (often with ghee & castor); Bala; Dashamoola; milk; >25 herbs (Ashwagandha, Shatavari, etc.).	Chronic rheumatic disorders (RA, osteoarthritis); spondylosis; neuralgia, neuropathy, paralysis; post-natal massage (strengthening).	Warm – always used warm for massage, often followed by steam or kizhi.	Vata-pacifying (excellent), and nourishes/balances Kapha (restorative); neutral to Pitta (contains cooling elements), so generally tridoshic.	Moderate: a slightly viscous oil that absorbs with massage heat. Leaves skin supple; full absorption may take time, ideal for prolonged therapy.

Application Methods in Kalari Uzhichil

In Kalari Uzhichil (the specialized Kalari massage system), these oils are utilized in various methods of application to maximize their therapeutic benefits. Advanced therapists must know how and when to apply oils via different techniques:

Padabhyanga (Foot Massage)

Padabhyanga is the **foot-focused oil massage** often employed in Kalari tradition to ground Vata and relieve fatigue. In this technique, warm oil is generously applied to the feet and lower legs, and massaged using hands – and sometimes the therapist’s feet in Kalari style – with specific pressure on marma points. **Mahanarayana Thailam** or **Dhanwantharam thailam** are excellent choices for Padabhyanga when the goal is to strengthen the lower limbs, improve nerve conduction, and alleviate pain in conditions like sciatica or restless legs. For instance, a martial artist with shin splints or knee pain might receive Padabhyanga with Dhanwantharam oil to accelerate recovery. The oil is usually warmed to a comfortable temperature to aid relaxation and absorption. Padabhyanga helps **improve circulation**, calm the mind, and release tension from the feet upward, benefiting issues from insomnia to neuropathy. In an advanced context, therapists also incorporate tools like a *Kansa vataki* (bronze bowl) to stimulate foot marma points in combination with oil.

Oil Preferences:

- *Mahanarayana Thailam*: for overall strengthening and Vata calming, e.g. an older patient with osteoarthritis foot pain.
- *Karpooradi Thailam*: for a quick invigorating foot rub when there is numbness or coldness in feet; its rubefacient action brings instant warmth (though one must be gentle, as vigorous rubbing with camphor oil can be intense).
- *Dhanwantharam Kuzhambu*: for deep nourishment in cases of leg muscle fatigue, cramps or postpartum foot care, where a longer massage is beneficial.
- *Murivenna*: if there are any sprains or superficial cracks on the feet (it can promote healing of heel fissures or minor cuts, due to its wound-healing herbs).

Padabhyanga is typically done for 15–30 minutes. Therapists ensure the oil covers the soles, heels, ankles, and calves, working it in with both circular motions around joints and long strokes. The session often ends with wiping off excess oil.

Contraindications: One should avoid Padabhyanga on feet with **open wounds or infections**, or in cases of severe varicose veins – in such cases, Murivenna can be applied gently without massage, or the technique skipped until the area heals.



Kizhi (Herbal Poultice Therapy)

Kizhi refers to massage using heated herbal boluses. In Kalari therapy, **Ela Kizhi** (leaf poultice) or **Podi Kizhi** (herbal powder poultice) is frequently combined with medicinal oils for maximum effect. In practice, the body is first massaged with a suitable oil, then pounded and rubbed with the hot boluses. The oil acts as a medium that softens the skin and conducts heat from the kizhi deeper into tissues, while the herbs in the bolus provide additional medicinal action.

For example, **Murivenna** is often used as the base oil for *ila kizhi* when treating joint injuries or swelling. A common Kalari treatment for a knee sprain would be: warm Murivenna oil is applied on the knee, then a kizhi made of anti-inflammatory leaves (e.g. eranda (castor leaves), tamarind leaves, etc.) dipped in hot oil is repeatedly patted and pressed on the area. The Murivenna oil's herbs (aloe, etc.) synergize with the leaf poultice to rapidly reduce swelling and pain. Similarly, in chronic back pain or paralysis, **Dhanwantharam oil** may be applied and then a *Navarakizhi* (bolus of cooked medicated rice) is used to foment and strengthen the area – this is a rejuvenative approach where Dhanwantharam's nutritive qualities augment the nourishing rice bolus.

Technique: The therapist keeps a small pan of the oil warming, and the boluses are dipped in this warm oil periodically to reheat and saturate them. They are then applied in rhythmic compression along muscles or joints. This combination of oil + heat + herbal compression greatly enhances absorption: the heat of kizhi causes pores to open and boosts circulation, "driving" the oil's active ingredients deeper. According to the Ayurvedic principle, after ~15-20 minutes of such fomentation, the medicated oil can reach the deep muscle layers.

Oil Choices for Kizhi:

- **Karpooradi + Podi Kizhi:** A poultice of dry powders (like ginger, ajwain, etc.) is fried and tied, then dipped in Karpooradi oil – useful for myalgia or stiffness in cold weather. The camphor oil swiftly brings relief while the heat relaxes knots.
- **Mahanarayana + Ela Kizhi:** For osteoarthritis of the shoulder, apply Mahanarayana to lubricate the joint, then use a leaf kizhi (with anti-inflammatory leaves and maybe some garlic) to reduce pain and improve mobility. Mahanarayana's vata-relieving herbs work in concert with the fomentation to ease the crepitus and pain.
- **Dhanwantharam + Navara Kizhi:** Classic in neurological rehab or post-trauma muscle wasting – warm oil massage followed by milk-rice bolus dipped in Dhanwantharam oil helps strengthen nerves and muscles.

After kizhi, usually the remaining oil is left on the body for a while or given a gentle rub so that as the body cools down, it continues to absorb the herbs. The patient may then be wiped down or bathed. This method is integral to Kalari massage, where therapists treat warriors with oil and bolus to address deep injuries.

Lepana (External Herbal Paste Applications)

Lepana means the application of a thick herbal paste on the body. In the context of oils and Kalari therapy, lepana often involves mixing herbal powders or crushed herbs with a small amount of medicated oil to make a paste, which is then applied to a specific area as a pack. The oil in the mix helps to keep the paste in place, enhance penetration, and prevent the paste from drying too quickly, while also lending its medicinal properties.

Therapists use lepana for **localized issues**: for example, a paste of anti-inflammatory herbs like castor root, turmeric, or sandalwood mixed with **Murivenna** can be applied over a swollen injury or a painful joint. Murivenna's wound-healing and cooling action combined with, say, turmeric's anti-inflammatory effect, makes a potent poultice for a fresh sprain or edema – the paste might be kept in place with a bandage and left for a few hours to overnight. This can significantly bring down swelling and pain by the next day.

Another example: in chronic **synovitis of the knee**, a paste of **Kottamchukkadi powder** (a classical combination for swelling) is mixed with warm Dhanwantharam oil and applied around the knee, then covered. The Dhanwantharam oil keeps the paste moist and slowly delivers its vata-calming herbs into the joint, while the herbal powder draws out inflammation (some Kalari experts wrap the knee with leaves and cloth over the lepana, a technique called *bandhanam*).

For **back injuries** or **muscle knots**, a plaster can be made using rock salt, ginger paste and Karpooradi oil – applied warm to tense areas, it relaxes muscle fibers and alleviates pain through sustained heat and counter-irritant action. Similarly, **herbal powders for fractures** (like Laksha – lac powder, sandalwood, etc.) might be mixed with Murivenna



and pasted on a hairline fracture site as an immobilizing and healing pack.

Lepana is a more passive treatment – the patient remains still while the paste does its work. It's often done after an oil massage or kizhi, once the tissues are warmed and receptive. In Kalari tradition, after the acute stage of an injury is managed with Murivenna and rest, a strengthening lepana might be applied to ensure proper healing (for instance, a paste of Moringa leaves and Ashwagandha in Dhanwantharam oil to a recovering ligament injury).

Removal: Once the lepana dries or after a certain duration, it is gently removed and the area cleaned. Oils like Murivenna make removal easier as the paste doesn't harden like a rock. Safety-wise, one must check for any skin reaction (patch test if needed, since these pastes are potent). Generally, lepana is avoided if the skin is broken or infected, unless specifically formulated for wound treatment.

Safety Notes and Contraindications

When using these advanced oils and techniques, it is crucial to observe safety guidelines to protect the patient from adverse effects:

- **Do Not Apply on Open Wounds (except indicated oils):** In general, avoid direct massage or vigorous application of oils on open cuts, wounds, or abrasions. Introducing oil into an open wound can sometimes trap heat or moisture and potentially invite infection. *Exception:* Oils formulated for wound-healing like **Murivenna** can be used sparingly on and around wounds – usually by soaking a sterile dressing in the oil rather than vigorous rubbing. Even then, the area should be cleaned properly and the oil **not applied to actively bleeding wounds**. Always ensure cleanliness to prevent contamination. (Padabhyanga and other massages are contraindicated on areas with open wounds; instead, use gentle dabbing if needed.)
- **Caution in High Pitta Conditions:** If a patient shows signs of **high Pitta** – such as acute inflammation, burning sensation in joints, skin rashes, or fever – avoid very **heating oils or hot applications**. For example, **Karpooradi oil**, with its strong rubefacient action, could aggravate a rash or burning joint pain. In such cases, opt for a cooling approach: use **Murivenna** or another cooling oil at room temperature, or even aloe gel, in the acute phase. Once the intense heat subsides, one can gently introduce warming therapies. Likewise, extremely hot oil massages should not be given to someone with fever or heat stroke. Always adjust oil choice and temperature to the patient's current doshic state – e.g. a red, inflamed rheumatoid joint (Pitta) might do better with a cooled paste or oil rather than a steaming kizhi at first.
- **Allergic Reactions and Skin Sensitivity:** These herbal oils contain many ingredients; check for any known allergies (e.g., to peanuts/gingelly oil or to specific herbs). For instance, camphor in Karpooradi can cause skin irritation in some people (a burning or redness). Do a small patch test if the patient has sensitive skin. If any excessive redness, itching, or pain occurs, remove the oil immediately. Diluting an oil (mixing with a neutral base oil) can be done for sensitive individuals. Also be cautious using oils on broken skin – even seemingly mild oils can irritate if the skin barrier is compromised.
- **Avoid on Certain Medical Conditions:** Patients with **high blood pressure, heart conditions, or diabetes** should receive heavy oil massages with care. The absorption of oil and vigorous massage can, in rare cases, stress the circulatory system. (For example, very hot Dhara treatment with oil might cause dizziness in hypertensive patients.) Murivenna taken internally is cautioned in high cholesterol patients due to its coconut oil content. Always consult with a physician if the patient has chronic illnesses. In **pregnancy**, some oils are indicated (Dhanwantharam for massage), but very potent or warming oils should be used only if advised by an Ayurvedic doctor. Karpooradi, for example, should be used minimally in pregnant women (strong smells and counter-irritants are generally avoided in pregnancy). When in doubt, choose a gentler oil like Ksheerabala for prenatal massage and reserve the stronger oils for specific needs.
- **Not After Heavy Meals / During Indigestion:** Avoid conducting an oil massage or *snehana* treatment when the client has a full stomach or is suffering from indigestion/toxicity (*ama*). Ayurveda warns that when *ama* is present, the channels are clogged and oil may not absorb well. This can lead to sluggishness or nausea. It's better to first do some light digestive therapy (like a dry massage or herbal tea to kindle agni) before applying oils. Similarly, after an oil massage, ensure the patient doesn't catch a cold draft or immediately eat a heavy meal – let the body fully assimilate the oil.
- **Post-therapy Care:** Oils make the body surface slippery – help the client off the table to avoid falls. The floor can be slick with oil; have towels ready. Also, advise the client to **wash off** or towel off excess oil after the treatment if needed. In Kalari tradition, often the oil is left for a while to absorb, but leaving certain oils on too long (especially



heating ones like Karpooradi) can cause skin to redden. So tailor to the situation. If any dizziness or discomfort occurs (for instance, from prolonged head-down position during foot massage, or the intensity of a kizhi), stop and let the patient rest and hydrate.

By adhering to these safety guidelines, therapists can ensure that the powerful effects of Mahanarayana, Murivenna, Karpooradi, Dhanwantharam and other oils are harnessed **safely and effectively**, without incident. As always in Ayurveda, treatments are best customized: “Yukti” (wise adaptation) is key – meaning the practitioner must gauge the patient’s condition (roga & rogi bala) and adjust the oil type, temperature, pressure, and duration accordingly for optimal healing.

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