

Unit 4: Herbal Bolus and Poultices (Kizhi)

PAPER 7 — Herbal Preparations & Oils

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(*Podi • Ela • Navara • Herb selection & prep • Dipping decoctions • Heat safety • Clinical application*)

What is Kizhi (Pinda/Śaṅkara Sweda)? -

Kizhi is a heat-assisted external therapy in which herbs, grains, or powders are bundled into a cloth **bolus**, heated, and rhythmically applied to the body. It combines **thermal**, **mechanical**, and **herbal** actions to soften fascia, mobilize fluids, and modulate pain. In Kalari Uzhichil, Kizhi is used **after** oiling (abhyanga) to enhance glide, reduce stiffness, and prepare joints for gentle traction—never as a stand-alone “hammer.”

1) Types of Kizhi: Podi, Ela, Navara -

Podi Kizhi (Cūrṇa Pinda) – dry or lightly oiled **powder** bolus.

- **Feel:** drying, lightening, mobilizing.
- **Best for:** Kapha heaviness, boggy edema, chronic adhesions, morning stiffness.
- **Avoid on:** acutely inflamed/hot joints, fragile or very dry skin.

Ela Kizhi (Patra Pinda) – **leaf** bolus sautéed with spices, grated coconut or rock salt, then tied hot.

- **Feel:** warming, penetrating, decongesting.
- **Best for:** cold, sticky stiffness around joints; sub-acute sprain/strain (not hot).
- **Avoid on:** reactive skin, face/neck, inflamed bursae.

Navara Kizhi (Śaṣṭika Śālī Pinda / Navarakizhi) – **medicated red rice** cooked in milk and Bala decoction, made into soft boluses and dipped repeatedly during use.

- **Feel:** nourishing, stabilizing heat without overdrying.
- **Best for:** Vāta dryness, post-illness weakness, chronic muscle spasm with fatigue.
- **Avoid on:** active āma (coated tongue, systemic heaviness), acute dermatitis.

2) Selection and preparation of herbs for various conditions -

Match qualities (guṇa) to tissue state. Choose herbs that bring the **opposite** of what you palpate.

For cold, sticky, Kapha-dominant stiffness (Podi/Ela):

- **Warming aromatics:** dry ginger (śunṭhī), kottam/kuṣṭha (Saussurea), vacha (calamus), moringa leaf (śigru).
- **Additives:** rock salt (draws fluid), roasted sesame or horse gram (adds heat & texture).
- **Why:** increases local circulation, reduces bogginess, improves slide.

For Vāta-dominant dryness/guarding (Navara or mild Ela):

- **Nourishers/soothers:** Bala (Sida cordifolia) decoction in milk; dashamūla roots.
- **Why:** provides unctuous heat that calms twitchy, dehydrated tissue.

For Pitta-irritable, hot states (cooling finish; avoid strong heat):

- **Soothers (around, not on the hotspot):** manjisthā (Rubia), sandalwood, licorice in the **post-kizhi** oiling phase.
- **Why:** settles heat after minimal or no bolus on the region itself.

Basic prep steps (all variants):

1. **Herb prep:** clean, dry; coarse-grind for Podi; chiffonade leaves for Ela; cook red rice to soft paste for Navara.
2. **Roast/sauté (Podi/Ela):** gentle pan heat with a spoon of oil until **aroma lifts**; add salt/coconut if used.
3. **Pack & tie:** divide into 2-4 equal boluses in cotton/muslin; knot firmly with a tail for handling.
4. **Pre-heat:** steam or warm in dipping medium (see §3) before first contact.

3) Steaming techniques and herbal decoctions for kizhi dipping -

Heat delivery options:

- **Nādi sweda (tube/steam hose):** pre-heats tissues regionally.
- **Bāṣpa sweda (steam box):** whole-body priming (not always needed).
- **Kizhi dipping:** keep boluses hot by **dipping** between strokes.

Dipping media (choose by goal):

- **Warming/decongesting:** daśamūla, kottam-chukkādi, rasna-devadāru decoctions; thin sesame-based oils for brief immersion.
- **Nourishing:** Bala-milk decoction (Navara standard).
- **Neutral/skin-friendly:** plain hot water for very sensitive skin, then finish with medicated oil during cool-down.

Temperature & handling guardrails:

- **Target surface temp:** 42-45 °C at the bolus face. Test on your inner wrist before every pass.
- **Rotation:** work with **3 bowls**—hot (heating), warm (in use), used (cooling). Swap boluses frequently to avoid “hot spots.”
- **Contact pattern:** touch-test → brief tap → glide/circle **with the exhale**; keep bolus moving.
- **Duration:** region 8-15 min; full session 15-35 min of bolus time after oiling.

4) Contraindications and safety in heat-based therapies -

Absolute (defer & refer): fever/systemic infection, **hot** acutely swollen joint, suspected DVT/PE, new neurological deficit, open wounds/burns, unstable cardiac or respiratory status.

Relative / modify: pregnancy (no abdominal/leg-deep work; side-lying only), uncontrolled hypertension (avoid steam box; keep cool room, short doses), diabetic neuropathy (reduced heat; frequent skin checks), varicose veins (no direct bolus; work around), severe eczema/dermatitis (avoid Podi/Ela; consider oil-only).

Marma safety: never stack **heat + pressure** over **Hṛdaya, Nābhi, Basti, Ādhipati**; keep contact **broad and brief** near carotid corridors (Mātrikā/Dhamanī).

Skin & hygiene: always **patch-test** new mixes; discard boluses after session; single-use or high-temperature laundered cloth only.

Early stop signs: sharp pain, electric “zing,” dizziness/pallor, excessive erythema or blistering—**stop, cool, hydrate, re-assess.**

5) Application methods: chronic pain, stiffness, and injury -

General sequence (repeatable):

1. **Open:** thin warm oil film; clear proximal “gates” (inguinal/axillary).
2. **Mobilize:** long **Thirumu** glides; test range gently.
3. **Kizhi:** apply chosen variant in **short, rhythmic passes**; keep bolus moving; focus on rings **around** joints, along fascial lines.
4. **Regulate:** 3-5 **Marma** holds (broad, breath-timed; no heat stacked).
5. **Integrate:** midline sweep; seated finish; one movement + one breath cue for home.

Condition-specific sketches (examples):

- **Knee OA (cold, puffy; Vāta-Kapha):**

Pick: brief **Podi** primer → warm sesame oil ring-work at **Jānu** (no vertical press) → **Ela** around peri-patellar tissue if still sticky.

Dose: 10-12 min regionally; finish with ankle traction and **Ūrvi** soft holds.

- **Frozen shoulder (non-hot phase):**

Pick: **Ela** to scapular plane and axillary fold, avoiding neurovascular pits → switch to oil glides → short marma holds (**Āmsa, Āmsa-phalaka**).

Dose: 8-10 min bolus; emphasize scapular clocks and seated close.

- **Chronic lumbar stiffness with fatigue (Vāta dryness):**

Pick: **Navara** along paraspinals and sacrum after abhyanga; re-dip in Bala-milk frequently.

Dose: 12-15 min posterior chain; end with sacral rest and foot **Talahridaya** hold.

- **Sub-acute ankle sprain (cool, stiff; not hot):**

Pick: **Ela** circumferential to **Gulpha** (ankle ring), avoiding ligament origin points; finish with light compressive wrap and elevation.

Dose: 6-8 min; test dorsiflexion gently post-therapy.

Summary Tables (LMS quick-reference)

A) Kizhi types at a glance

Type	Core content	Tissue feel it targets	Typical uses	Avoid on
Podi	Dry powders (ginger, kottam, vacha, pulses, salt)	Boggy, heavy, sticky (Kapha)	Primer before mobilization, chronic adhesions	Hot/inflamed joints; very dry skin
Ela	Sautéed medicinal leaves + spices/salt	Cold, bound, peri-joint stiffness	Sub-acute sprain/strain; OA (non-hot)	Reactive skin; face/neck
Navara	Medicated red rice in Bala-milk	Dry, twitchy, depleted (Vāta)	Posterior-chain spasm; convalescence	Active āma; acute skin flare

B) Herb selection guide

Goal	Herb group (examples)	Add-ins	Notes
Decongest & warm	Ginger, kottam, vacha, moringa	Rock salt, roasted pulses	Kapha patterns, morning stiffness
Nourish & steady	Bala, dashamūla (in milk)	Ghee touch in finish (optional)	Vāta depletion, post-illness
Soothe heat	Manjiṣṭhā, sandalwood, licorice	Cool oil finish (coconut)	Use around, not on hot focus

C) Dipping media & temps

Medium	Use with	Notes
Daśamūla/kottam-chukkādi decoction	Podi/Ela	Warming; maintain 42-45 °C
Bala-milk decoction	Navara	Nourishing; stir often to prevent sticking
Plain hot water		Ultra-sensitive skin Add medicated oil during cool-down

D) Contraindications & modifications

Situation	Action
Fever, hot swollen joint, DVT red flags, open wounds	Do not treat — refer
Pregnancy (mid-late)	Side-lying; no abdominal/leg-deep heat
Neuropathy/varicosities	Reduce heat; avoid direct bolus; work around
High BP/heart disease	No steam box; short, cool room sessions

E) Protocol snapshot (by condition)

Condition	Kizhi	Minutes	Key cautions
Knee OA (cold)	Podi → Ela (as needed)	10-12	No deep joint pressure; avoid flare
Frozen shoulder	Ela regional	8-10	Avoid axillary neurovascular pits
Chronic lumbar Vāta	Navara	12-15	Keep heat steady; no percussion
Sub-acute ankle sprain	Ela circumferential	6-8	Avoid ligament origins; elevate after

Practical SOP (clinic checklist)

- **Prep:** consent → intake → skin check → patch-test if new mix.
- **Kit:** 2-4 boluses, 3 bowls (hot/warm/used), thermometer, towels, tongs, waste bag.
- **Sequence:** oil film → long glides → kizhi (rotating, test each pass) → marma (broad, cool hands) → integrate.
- **After-care:** hydrate, light mobility, avoid chill for 2-3 h; teach one breath + one movement.
- **Record:** herbs/formulas, temps, time, client response, any reactions.

Key take-aways

1. **Pick the right variant:** Podi dries & mobilizes; Ela warms & penetrates; Navara nourishes & steadies.
2. **Heat is a drug:** keep 42-45 °C at contact, rotate boluses, never stack heat on high-risk marmas.
3. **Sequence wins:** oil to open, kizhi to change, marma to organize, midline to integrate.
4. **Modify for doṣa & state:** warm-slow for Vāta; cool-even for Pitta; brisk-light for Kapha.
5. **Safety is skill:** clear contraindications, protect skin, and document meticulously.