WHERE CLASSICAL WISDOM MEETS INTELLIGENT LEARNING

Unit 4: Herbal Bolus and Poultices (Kizhi)

PAPER 7 — Herbal Preparations & Oils

Unit 4: Herbal Bolus and Poultices (Kizhi)

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

What is Kizhi (Pinda/Śańkara 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 (śuṇṭhī), 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.

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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:

- Nāḍi 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**.

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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 \rightarrow switch to oil glides \rightarrow short marma holds (**Aṃsa, Aṃsa-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

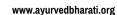
Type	Core content	Tissue feel it targets	Typical uses	Avoid on
Podi	Dry powders (ginger, kottam, vacha, pulses, salt)	Boggy, heavy, sticky (Kapha)	Primer before mobilization, chronic adhesions	Hot/inflamed joints; very dry skin
Ela	Sautéed medicinal leaves + spices/salt	ctiffnocc	Sub-acute sprain/strain; 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

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MediumUse withNotesDaśamūla/kottam-chukkādi decoctionPodi/ElaWarming; maintain 42-45 °CBala-milk decoctionNavaraNourishing; 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)

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.

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