

KANDARA UPADHATU IN AYURVEDA - A CRITICAL REVIEW

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Article Received on 16 Sept 2026,
Article Revised on 06 Oct. 2026,
Article Published on 16 Oct. 2026

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23366536>

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How to cite this Article: Dr. Yashawanth Y. K.* (2026). Kandara Upadhatu In Ayurveda - A Critical Review. World Journal of Pharmaceutical Research, 15(20), 218-225.
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ABSTRACT

Ayurvedic anatomy describes the human body through an integrated structural and functional framework comprising *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, *Mala*, *Upadhatu*, *Sira*, *Snayu*, *Sandhi*, *Peshi* and other anatomical entities. Among the *Upadhatu*s, *Kandara* occupies an important position because of its close association with *Snayu*, movement, stability and the integrity of the musculoskeletal system. Classical descriptions identify *Kandara* as a large *Snayu*-like structure and describe its distribution in the limbs, neck and back. The present review examines the concept of *Kandara Upadhatu* with emphasis on its *Nirukti*, definitions, textual references, origin, number, anatomical distribution, relation with *Rakta Dhatu*, *Snayu* and *Vata*, involvement in *Madhyama Rogamarga* and its clinical significance. Classical references concerning *Gridhrasi*,

Aksepeka, *Vishvachi*, *Khanja* and *Pangu* are also reviewed. The review highlights that *Kandara* is best understood as a classical functional-anatomical concept rather than being equated uncritically with a single modern tissue.

KEYWORDS: *Kandara*, *Upadhatu*, *Ayurveda*, *Rachana Sharira*, *Snayu*, *Madhyama Rogamarga*, *Vata*, Musculoskeletal anatomy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda presents anatomy as an integrated description of the body in which structural components are understood in relation to their origin, function, nourishment and pathological involvement. The concept of *Upadhatu* represents one such important anatomical category.

Kandara is one of the important structures discussed in this context. Kandara is in relation to large, substantial and rounded Snayu and reports that several classical commentators have interpreted it as Mahasnayu or Sthula Snayu. Because Kandara is repeatedly mentioned in relation to movement, binding, stability and diseases affecting locomotion, its study is particularly relevant to Rachana Shareera. The concept also provides an interesting field for comparative study between Ayurvedic structural terminology and modern anatomy.

The present work is a narrative textual review where Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, Bhela Samhita and commentarial literature is taken for the study.

CONCEPT OF UPADHATU

It is also explained in Dhatu metabolism in terms of Prasada and Kitta portions and states that Upadhatus may be nourished from the Prasada portion.

3.1 Classical definition of Kandara

Bhavaprakasha Purva Khanda 2/312

Sushruta Samhita, Sharira Sthana 5/39

The above description emphasizes the rounded or cord-like character attributed to Kandara. Together, these references establish morphology as an important component of the classical description.

- Mahasnayu – large Snayu
- Sthula Snayu – thick/substantial Snayu
- Sthula Sira – a term used in one commentarial interpretation
- Kandara – the principal classical term

3.3. Kandara as an upadhatu of rakta

Charaka Samhita, Chikitsa Sthana 15/17

3.4. Number of kandara

Sushruta Samhita, Sharira Sthana 5/6

Bhavaprakasha Purva Khanda 2/312

Sushruta and Bhavaprakasha describes sixteen Kandas.

The diagram consists of two horizontal rows of small squares, each containing a number from 1 to 60. The top row contains numbers 1 through 30, and the bottom row contains numbers 31 through 60. Some squares are shaded gray, while others are white. In the top row, squares 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, and 30 are shaded gray. In the bottom row, squares 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, and 60 are shaded gray.

Bhavaprakasha Purva Khanda 2/313

The classical distribution consists of four Kandaras in each of the upper and lower limbs, four in the neck and four associated with the back, giving a total of sixteen.

This systematic distribution indicates that Kandara is a generalized anatomical concept extending across both axial and appendicular regions.

3.10 Dushti lakshana of kandara

The source explains that when Snayu, Sira and Kandara are affected by Dosha vitiation, manifestations such as stiffness, contraction, pain, spasm, nodular or abnormal sensations and numbness may occur.

CLINICAL SIGNIFICANCE

3.11 Gridhrasi

Kandara around the heel and toes are in relation to Gridhrasi and explains that Vata involvement can restrict extension of the lower limb. Treatment references involving the region between Kandara and Gulpha are also discussed.

3.12 Aksepaka

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The classical description involves repeated contraction or stretching of the limbs and includes Sira, Snayu and Kandara among the affected structures in case of aksepaka.

3.13 Vishvachi

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Association of Vishvachi with Kandara extending from the arm region towards the fingers and with impairment of upper-limb movement is explained here.

[illegible]

Khanja and Pangu are in relation to involvement of Kandara and other locomotor structures, producing difficulty or loss of normal locomotion.

Nasya nourishes and strengthens structures of the head including Sira, Sandhi, Snayu and Kandara. This reference is significant because it shows the therapeutic relevance attributed to Kandara in classical Ayurvedic practice.

Modern anatomical terminology classifies the locomotor system into distinct structures such as muscles, tendons, ligaments, fasciae, joints, and other associated connective tissues. However, *Kandara* cannot be considered to correspond precisely to any single modern anatomical structure. The classical descriptions of *Kandara* primarily emphasize its gross morphological characteristics, including size, shape, continuity, binding function, and its role in movement, rather than microscopic tissue composition or histological classification.

Therefore, the correlation of *Kandara* with modern anatomical structures should be approached cautiously. From a functional and anatomical perspective, *Kandara* may be considered a broader category that, depending upon its location, may overlap with substantial fibrous, cord-like, or connective tissue structures involved in attachment, support, stabilization, and transmission of muscular force. Tendons and ligaments may consequently serve as useful modern anatomical comparators in certain contexts. Nevertheless, such correlations should be regarded as interpretative or functional analogies rather than definitive one-to-one anatomical equivalences.

The concept of Kandara demonstrates the strength of Ayurvedic anatomy in describing structures through both morphology and function. Its characterization as Mahasnayu or Sthula Snayu highlights its substantial nature.

The association of Kandara with Rakta as an Upadhatu is particularly important. However, the literature also demonstrates variation among authorities, with some classical writers not including Kandara under Upadhatu. This variation should be explicitly acknowledged in scholarly writing rather than being hidden.

The clinical descriptions provide an additional dimension. Gridhrasi, Vishvachi, Aksepaka, Khanja and Pangu are described with involvement of Kandara and related structures. The repeated association with Vata suggests that Kandara was considered particularly relevant to disorders of movement, contraction, stiffness and pain along *vata vyadhi*.

5. CONCLUSION

Kandara is an important concept in Ayurvedic anatomy and occupies a significant position in the discussion of Upadhatu, Snayu and the musculoskeletal framework. Classical descriptions characterize Kandara as large, substantial and cord-like structures distributed throughout the limbs, neck and back. Sushruta describes sixteen Kandaras, while Charaka and others associate Kandara with Rakta and discuss its functional and pathological relevance. The close relationship of Kandara with Snayu emphasizes its role in binding, support, stability and movement. Its association with Vata and Madhyama Rogamarga further establishes its clinical significance in disorders such as Gridhrasi, Aksepaka, Vishvachi, Khanja and Pangu. The concept should be correlated with modern anatomy cautiously because the classical category does not necessarily represent a single microscopic tissue.

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