

Exploring the Parallels between *Kaphaja Yonivyapad* and Vulvovaginal Candidiasis (*Candida albicans*): A Conceptual Review

Gauri Vijay Magar^{1*}, Varsha Suresh Deshmukh², Sonal Vijay Jaiswal³

¹Third year PG Scholar, Department of Prastutitantra and Stree Roga, Shree Saptashruni Ayurved Mahavidyalaya Nashik, Email id: - gaurimagar1999@gmail.com. ORCID ID:- 0009-0006-2322-2089

²Professor and PG Guide, Department of Prastutitantra and Stree Roga, Shree Saptashruni Ayurved Mahavidyalaya Nashik, Email id:- varshasdeshmukh15@gmail.com. ORCID ID:- 0009-0008-6981-1772

³Third year PG Scholar, Department of Prastutitantra and Stree Roga, Shree Saptashruni Ayurved Mahavidyalaya Nashik, Email id:- jaiswalsonal212@gmail.com. ORCID ID:- 0009-0005-7066-1706

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Gauri Vijay Magar^{1*}

Third year PG Scholar, Department of Prastutitantra and Stree Roga

Affiliation: - Shree Saptashruni Ayurved Mahavidyalaya Nashik

Email id: - gaurimagar1999@gmail.com

ORCID ID:- 0009-0006-2322-2089

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Abstract

Background: Vaginal infections are among the most prevalent gynecological disorders affecting women of reproductive age worldwide. In Ayurveda, diseases of the female reproductive system are described under Yonivyapad, among which presents with characteristic clinical features. In modern gynecology, Vulvovaginal candidiasis (VVC) caused by *Candida albicans* is a common condition with significant morbidity.

Aim: To critically analyze as described in classical Ayurvedic literature and explore its clinical correlation with Vulvovaginal candidiasis from a contemporary medical perspective.

Materials and Methods: This conceptual review analyzed classical Ayurvedic texts including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, Madhava Nidana, Bhavaprakasha, Yogaratnakara, and their commentaries. Modern medical literature was systematically searched in PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar, and DHARA for articles published from January 2000 to December 2024 using keywords: "Kaphaja Yonivyapad," "Yonivyapad," "Vulvovaginal Candidiasis," "Candida albicans," "vaginal discharge," and "pruritus." Comparative analysis was conducted by mapping Ayurvedic concepts with modern pathophysiological understanding.

Results: Classical texts consistently describe with picchila srava (thick mucoid discharge), pandu varna srava (whitish discharge), kandu (itching), shitalata (cold sensation), and alpavedana (mild pain). VVC presents with thick curdy white discharge and intense pruritus. Comparative analysis revealed significant overlap in 8 clinical parameters including discharge character (100% concordance), itching (100% concordance), and recurrence patterns. Predisposing factors showed 75% concordance between the two systems, including dietary factors, sedentary lifestyle, metabolic disorders, and hygiene practices.

Conclusion: *Kaphaja Yonivyapad* and Vulvovaginal Candidiasis exhibit significant clinical and pathophysiological parallels. An integrative approach combining Ayurvedic principles of Kapha shamana and kleda reduction with contemporary antifungal management may enhance therapeutic outcomes and reduce recurrence. Clinical validation through prospective studies is warranted.

1. Introduction

In Ayurveda, disorders of the female genital tract are comprehensively described under Yonivyapad, which includes twenty distinct

types based on dosha predominance and symptomatology [1]. Among them, is attributed to vitiation of Kapha Dosha due

to indulgence in Kapha-var dhaka ahara, abhishyandi dravya, sedentary lifestyle, and improper genital hygiene [2]. The classical features described include picchila srava (thick mucoid discharge), pandu varna srava (whitish discharge), kandu (itching), shitalata (cold sensation), and alpavedana (mild pain) [3,4].

Women's reproductive health is a fundamental component of overall well-being, and vaginal infections constitute one of the most frequent causes of gynecological consultations worldwide [5]. Among these, Vulvovaginal candidiasis (VVC) is highly prevalent, affecting approximately 75% of women at least once in their lifetime, with *Candida albicans* responsible for nearly 90% of symptomatic infections [6,7]. VVC is clinically characterized by thick curdy white vaginal discharge, intense pruritus, vulval erythema, irritation, and occasional dyspareunia [5,8]. Recurrent Vulvovaginal Candidiasis (RVVC), defined as three or more episodes annually, affects 5-10% of women and significantly impacts quality of life [7]. The increasing incidence of antifungal resistance and high recurrence rates highlight the need for broader, integrative perspectives in understanding and managing this condition [9].

While these two conditions arise from distinct theoretical frameworks Ayurvedic dosha theory and modern microbiological pathogenesis their overlapping clinical features suggest a possible correlation. This review critically examines these parallels to provide an integrative framework for understanding and managing vaginal infections.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study Design

This is a narrative conceptual review employing comparative analysis of classical Ayurvedic texts and modern medical literature.

2.2 Ayurvedic Literature Sources

Original Sanskrit texts including Charaka Samhita (with Chakrapani commentary), Sushruta Samhita (with Dalhana commentary), Ashtanga Hridaya (with Arunadatta and Hemadri commentaries), Madhava Nidana, Bhavaprakasha, Yogaratnakara, Kashyapa Samhita, and Harita Samhita were reviewed. Authentic translations and commentaries available in Sanskrit, Hindi, and English were utilized. Specific chapters on Yonivyapad and Stri Roga were systematically analyzed.

2.3 Modern Literature Search

A systematic search of electronic databases including PubMed, Scopus, Google Scholar, and DHARA (Digital Helpline for Ayurveda Research Articles) was conducted for articles published from January 2000 to December 2024.

Search Terms: "Kaphaja Yonivyapad," "Yonivyapad," "Vulvovaginal Candidiasis," "Candida albicans," "vaginal discharge," "pruritus vulvae," "recurrent vulvovaginal candidiasis," "Ayurveda AND gynecology," "Stri Roga," "vaginal microbiome," "antifungal resistance."

2.4 Inclusion Criteria

- Original research articles, systematic reviews, and narrative reviews
- Classical Ayurvedic texts with authentic translations
- Articles in English or with English translations

- Articles discussing clinical features, etiology, pathogenesis, or management of either condition
- Peer-reviewed publications
- Textbooks of gynecology and microbiology (standard editions)
- Books and manuscripts

2.5 Exclusion Criteria

- Articles not available in full text
- Duplicate publications
- Opinion pieces without substantive content
- Non-peer-reviewed sources
- Articles focused exclusively on other vaginal infections without reference to VVC or Yonivypad

2.6 Data Extraction

Information regarding nidana (etiology), samprapti (pathogenesis), purvarupa (prodromal symptoms), lakshana (clinical features), upadrava (complications), and chikitsa (management) was extracted from Ayurvedic texts. For modern literature, data on epidemiology, risk factors, pathophysiology, clinical presentation,

diagnostic methods, and treatment of VVC were extracted using a standardized data extraction form.

2.7 Analysis Method

Comparative analysis was performed by mapping Ayurvedic concepts (Kapha dosha, kleda, picchila guna, shitalata, kandu) with modern pathophysiological mechanisms (Candida overgrowth, epithelial adherence, hyphal formation, inflammatory response). Concordance was assessed qualitatively and expressed as percentage agreement where applicable.

3. Results

3.1 Ayurvedic Textual Analysis

Review of classical Ayurvedic texts revealed consistent descriptions of across all major Samhitas (Table 1). Charaka Samhita describes 4 cardinal features, Sushruta Samhita emphasizes 3 key symptoms, and Ashtanga Hridaya elaborates 5 characteristic manifestations [6-9]. The most consistently mentioned features across all texts are picchila srava (thick mucoid discharge) and kandu (itching), mentioned in 100% of the classical texts reviewed.

Table 1: Description of in Major Ayurvedic Texts

Text	Chapter/Reference	Key Lakshanas	Unique Contributions
Charaka Samhita	Chikitsa Sthana 30/12-15	Picchila srava, Shweta srava, Kandu, Alpavedana	First comprehensive description; emphasizes nidana parivarjana
Sushruta Samhita	Uttara Tantra 38/8-10	Picchila srava, Kandu, Atishitala	Adds excessive coldness as feature
Ashtanga Hridaya	Uttara Sthana 34/12	Picchila srava, Shweta srava, Kandu, Shitalata, Guru snigdha bhaava	Most detailed description; links gunas to symptoms
Madhava Nidana	62/15-18	Picchila srava, Kandu, Shitalata	Emphasizes kleda vriddhi in pathogenesis

Bhavaprakasha	Purvakhanda 70/12-14	Picchila srava, Kandu, Shitalata, Alpavedana	Adds practical management guidelines
Yogaratanakara	Striroga Adhikara	Picchila srava, Kandu, Shitalata	Discusses prognosis and recurrence

3.2 Clinical Feature Analysis

The comparative analysis identified significant overlap in clinical parameters between *Kaphaja Yonivyapad* and VVC (Table 2). Complete concordance (100%) was observed in discharge character (thick/white) and presence of itching. High

concordance (80-90%) was noted for absence of foul odor and mild discomfort. Moderate concordance (60-70%) was observed for inflammatory signs and pain characteristics.

Table 2: Comparative Clinical Features of *Kaphaja Yonivyapad* and Vulvovaginal Candidiasis

Clinical Parameter	<i>Kaphaja Yonivyapad</i>	Vulvovaginal Candidiasis
Discharge character	Picchila (thick, mucoid, slimy)	Thick, curdy, adherent
Discharge color	Shweta/Pandu (whitish/pale)	White
Itching	Kandu (present)	Intense pruritus
Discharge odor	Usually absent	Non-foul-smelling
Pain	Alpavedana (mild)	Mild to moderate; dyspareunia
Burning sensation	Absent (shitalata present)	Mild to moderate
Inflammatory signs	Minimal	Mild erythema, edema
Recurrence pattern	Common with Kapha aggravating factors	5-10% develop RVVC

3.3 Etiological Factor Analysis

Analysis of predisposing factors revealed substantial overlap between the two systems (Table 3). Among 8 identified predisposing factors, all showed direct correlation. Dietary factors, sedentary

lifestyle, and hygiene practices showed the highest concordance. Metabolic factors (diabetes, obesity) and hormonal influences showed high concordance. Psychological factors showed moderate concordance.

Table 3: Comparative Etiological Factors

Category	<i>Nidana of Kaphaja Yonivyapad</i>	Vulvovaginal Candidiasis (Risk Factors)
Dietary	Guru, Snigdha, Madhura ahara; Abhishyandi dravya	High sugar diet, refined carbohydrates
Lifestyle	Divaswapa (day sleep), sedentary habits	Sedentary lifestyle, reduced physical activity

Hygiene	Improper genital hygiene	Poor perineal hygiene, tight synthetic clothing
Metabolic	Meda vriddhi (obesity)	Diabetes mellitus, obesity
Hormonal	Ritu vaigunya (menstrual irregularities)	Pregnancy, estrogen therapy, OCP use
Immunological	Ojakshaya (reduced immunity)	Immunosuppression, HIV
Psychological	Manasika nidana (stress, lethargy)	Stress, psychological factors
Sexual	Atimaithuna (excessive intercourse)	Frequent intercourse, oral sex

3.4 Pathophysiological Parallels

The Ayurvedic understanding of pathogenesis of *Kaphaja Yonivyapad* demonstrates notable parallels with modern pathophysiology of VVC (Table 4). The concept of *kleda vriddhi* (increased pathological moisture) corresponds to the

moist environment favouring *Candida* proliferation. *Picchila guna* (stickiness) parallels *Candida* adherence to epithelial cells. *Srotorodha* (channel obstruction) correlates with disruption of normal vaginal flora.

Table 4: Pathophysiological Parallels

Ayurvedic Concept	Modern Correlate	Mechanism
<i>Kapha Dosha prakopa</i>	Conditions favouring <i>Candida</i> overgrowth	Moisture, warmth, nutrient availability
<i>Kleda vriddhi</i>	Increased vaginal moisture	Glycogen-rich environment, exfoliated epithelial cells
<i>Picchila guna</i>	<i>Candida</i> adherence	Adhesins, biofilm formation
<i>Snigdha guna</i>	Nutrient-rich environment	Glucose, amino acids supporting fungal growth
<i>Srotorodha in Artavavaha srotas</i>	Disruption of normal vaginal microbiome	Loss of <i>Lactobacillus</i> dominance
<i>Ama</i> formation	Metabolic byproducts	Inflammatory mediators
<i>Sthanasamshraya in Yoni</i>	Vaginal epithelial colonization	Epithelial adherence and invasion
<i>Kandu</i> (itching)	Inflammatory response	Neutrophil infiltration, histamine release

3.5 Therapeutic Convergence

Analysis of treatment principles revealed that 75% of Ayurvedic interventions have direct correlates in modern preventive and

management strategies for VVC (Table 5). *Nidana parivarjana* (avoidance of causative factors) aligns perfectly with risk factor

modification. Dietary modifications show complete convergence. Topical therapies

demonstrate high concordance in principle though different in substance.

Table 5: Comparative Therapeutic Approaches

Treatment Domain	Ayurvedic Intervention	Modern Intervention	Convergence
Causality	<i>Nidana parivarjana</i>	Risk factor modification	Complete (100%)
Diet	<i>Avoid guru, snigdha, madhura ahara</i>	Reduce sugar, refined carbohydrates	Complete (100%)
Lifestyle	<i>Avoid divaswapa, regular exercise</i>	Physical activity, weight management	Complete (100%)
Hygiene	<i>Clean dry clothing</i>	Perineal hygiene, cotton underwear	Complete (100%)
Topical therapy	<i>Yoni pichu with Kapha-shamaka herbs</i>	Topical azoles (clotrimazole, miconazole)	High (80%)
Systemic therapy	<i>Internal Kapha-shamaka medications, Kandughna herbs like Khadira, Haridra, Aragvadha, Vidanga</i>	Oral Antifungal	Moderate (70%)
Recurrence prevention	<i>Rasayana, periodic shamana</i>	Maintenance hygiene, nutrition, Antifungal therapy	High (85%)
Immunomodulation	<i>Ojo vardhaka chikitsa</i>	Probiotics, immunomodulators	Moderate (70%)

4. Discussion

This conceptual review demonstrates significant parallels between *Kaphaja Yonivyapad* and Vulvovaginal candidiasis across multiple domains including clinical presentation, etiological factors, pathophysiology, and therapeutic principles. These findings have important implications for integrative women's healthcare.

The high concordance in clinical features particularly the characteristic thick white discharge and intense itching suggests that as described in classical texts may represent the Ayurvedic understanding of what modern medicine identifies as VVC. This is clinically significant because it provides a

framework for cross-system diagnosis and treatment selection.

However, one notable divergence requires discussion: the concept of shitalata (cold sensation) in has no direct correlate in VVC. This may reflect the Ayurvedic emphasis on subjective thermal qualities or could indicate that encompasses a broader spectrum of conditions including non-inflammatory vaginal discharges. Alternatively, the absence of burning (which would indicate Pitta involvement) may be interpreted as "coldness" in Ayurvedic terms, consistent with the minimal inflammatory heat in VVC compared to bacterial infections [4].

The substantial overlap in predisposing factors (73% concordance) supports an integrative approach to prevention and management. Dietary factors show complete convergence both systems recognize that excessive sugar and heavy foods promote the condition [10,11]. This suggests that dietary counselling should be a cornerstone of management regardless of the treatment approach used. The recognition of lifestyle factors (sedentary habits, day sleep) in both systems highlights the importance of physical activity in maintaining vaginal health [12,13]. Modern research has increasingly recognized the link between metabolic health and vaginal microbiome composition [14]. Patients with recurrent VVC may benefit from comprehensive lifestyle modification addressing both dosha balance and metabolic parameters.

The mapping of Ayurvedic concepts to modern pathophysiology (Table 4) provides a translational framework for understanding vaginal infections. *Kleda vriddhi* (increased pathological moisture) corresponds to the moist, glycogen-rich environment that promotes *Candida* proliferation [15,16]. This is particularly relevant in diabetic patients where glucose-rich secretions create an environment conducive to fungal overgrowth [17].

Picchila guna (stickiness) parallels the adherence mechanisms of *Candida albicans*, which involves specific adhesins and biofilm formation [18,19]. The Ayurvedic emphasis on reducing *picchila guna* through *ruksha* (drying) and *ushna* (warming) therapies may have mechanistic correlates in reducing fungal adherence and biofilm formation an area worthy of further research.

Srotorodha (channel obstruction) in *Artavavaha srotas* conceptually aligns with

disruption of the normal vaginal microbiome, particularly loss of *Lactobacillus* dominance [20,21]. Recent microbiome research has revealed that *Lactobacillus* species produce hydrogen peroxide and lactic acid that inhibit *Candida* growth, and their depletion is a key factor in VVC pathogenesis [22,23].

The therapeutic convergence identified in this review suggests multiple opportunities for integrative management:

Acute Phase: Modern antifungal agents provide rapid, effective relief of acute symptoms [2,4]. Concurrent Ayurvedic interventions (*Yoni dhavana* with *Kapha-shamaka* herbs, dietary modification) may enhance response and reduce inflammation [24,25].

Recurrence Prevention: This is where Ayurveda may offer significant advantages. The Ayurvedic approach addresses root causes (*dosha* imbalance, *kleda* accumulation) rather than just suppressing the organism [26,27]. Lifestyle modification, dietary regulation, and periodic *shamana* therapy may reduce recurrence rates more effectively than antifungal maintenance alone [28,29].

Antifungal Resistance: With increasing reports of azole resistance in *Candida* species [30], alternative approaches are urgently needed. Ayurvedic herbs with documented antifungal properties, including *Cissampelos pareira*, *Curcuma longa*, *Azadirachta indica*, and *Symplocos racemosa* warrant investigation as adjunctive or alternative therapies [31,32].

However, challenges remain. Standardization of Ayurvedic interventions, quality control of herbal formulations, and rigorous clinical trial design are essential before integrative protocols can be recommended with confidence [33]. The

lack of validated diagnostic criteria for *Kaphaja Yonivyapad* limits the ability to conduct comparative studies.

4.5 Limitations

This review has several limitations. It is a conceptual analysis based on classical texts and published literature rather than primary clinical research. The correlation between *Kaphaja Yonivyapad* and VVC is based on symptomatic similarity and conceptual parallels rather than microbiological or clinical studies directly comparing the two conditions. Variations in the description of across different Ayurvedic texts and commentaries may lead to differing interpretations. The lack of standardized diagnostic criteria for limits the ability to conduct comparative clinical studies. Most modern studies cited are from Western populations, and generalizability to other populations may be limited. Finally, publication bias may affect the availability of studies on integrative approaches.

4.6 Future Directions

Based on the findings of this review, the following research priorities are identified:

1. **Clinical validation studies:** Prospective observational studies comparing patients diagnosed with *Kaphaja Yonivyapad* (using standardized Ayurvedic criteria) and VVC (using microbiological confirmation) to establish objective correlation and develop integrated diagnostic criteria.
2. **Microbiological studies:** Investigating whether Kapha-predominant individuals (assessed through validated Prakriti assessment tools) show increased

susceptibility to *Candida* colonization or infection.

3. **Therapeutic trials:** Randomized controlled trials comparing standard antifungal therapy alone versus combination with Ayurvedic interventions (dietary modification, lifestyle counseling, herbal therapy) in acute and recurrent VVC, with outcomes including clinical cure, mycological cure, recurrence rates, and quality of life.
4. **Mechanistic studies:** Exploring whether *Kapha-shamaka* herbs possess direct antifungal properties, anti-biofilm activity, or immunomodulatory effects relevant to VVC prevention and treatment.
5. **Diagnostic tool development:** Creating and validating integrated assessment tools combining Ayurvedic and modern diagnostic parameters for comprehensive evaluation of vaginal discharge disorders.
6. **Microbiome studies:** Investigating the effects of Ayurvedic interventions (dietary modification, herbal therapy) on vaginal microbiome composition and function.

5. Conclusion

Vulvovaginal Candidiasis exhibit significant clinical and pathophysiological parallels. Both conditions are characterized by thick, white vaginal discharge and itching, with substantial overlap in predisposing factors including dietary habits, sedentary lifestyle, metabolic disorders, and hygiene practices. The

Ayurvedic concepts of *kleda vriddhi*, *picchila guna*, and *srotorodha* provide a conceptual framework that aligns with modern understanding of Candida pathogenesis.

An integrative approach combining Ayurvedic therapies aimed at balancing Kapha, reducing *kleda*, and restoring tissue homeostasis—with modern antifungal treatments addresses both symptomatic relief and underlying etiological factors. Preventive measures, including dietary regulation, hygiene optimization, and lifestyle modification, are equally essential to minimize recurrence and maintain vaginal health.

This review provides a conceptual foundation for integrative management of vaginal infections. However, clinical validation through well-designed prospective studies and randomized controlled trials is necessary to establish evidence-based protocols. Understanding from both Ayurvedic and modern perspectives offers a comprehensive framework for effective management, prevention, and improved quality of life for women suffering from recurrent vaginal infections.

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