

Review Article

Hazardous Effect of *Viruddha Ahara* (Incompatible Food) on Health: A Critical Review

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ABSTRACT

The wellbeing of the individual chiefly depends upon the kind of food he consumes. The maximum benefits of *Ahara* (food) can be achieved only by following the healthy dietary guidelines mentioned in classics of Ayurveda whereas wrong dietary pattern can be hazardous to health. The food which is incompatible in respect to climate, quantity, method of preparation, combination etc. are described as potent cause of both physical and psychological illnesses. The present article is intended to explore the concept of *Viruddha Ahara* (incompatible food) described in Ayurveda classics mainly Charaka Samhita. The recent publications related to incompatible food is also referred for this. The ancient and recent surveys both prove that incompatible food habits are one of the chief causes of physical and psychological pathologies.

Key Words: *Viruddha Ahara*, incompatible food, *Ahara*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is one of the most ancient medical sciences which is still continuing and proving its effectiveness in present scenario. Unlike other medical sciences, instead of focusing on treatment of any particular disease, Ayurveda focuses more on the healthy living and wellbeing of the person. For healthy living, Ayurveda emphasizes on consuming right kind of diet which is healthy and nutritious. *Ahara* (food) is one of the important factors supporting this life. ^[1] It is explained as the chief factor for the maintenance and growth of this body and also for diseases. ^[2] Diet is considered to be vital for a human body as it provides the basic nutrients, which are necessary to carry out the basic activities of digestion and metabolism. According to Ayurveda, The food which is wrong in combination, has undergone wrong processing, consumed in incorrect dose,

and/or consumed in incorrect time of the day and in wrong season can lead to incorrect metabolism, which inhibits the process of metabolism and have the opposite property to the *Dhatus* (fundamental tissues) are called as *Viruddha Ahara* or incompatible diet or unwholesome diet. ^[3] Continuous intake of such food is the cause of manifestation several diseases both physical and psychological. Not only that such incompatible food habits by pregnant woman may causes defects in the born offspring. ^[4]

Types of *Viruddha Ahara* (incompatible food):

Ayurveda literature has described various types of *Viruddha Ahara* ^[5], which can be summarized as follows in table no.1.

Maharshi Charaka mentions that such types of unwholesome diet can lead to diseases like abdominal distention, stiffness

in neck, varieties of anemia, indigestions, insanity, various skin diseases, diseases of intestines, fever, rhinitis, and infertility etc. [6] It can be observed from the above list that *Viruddha Ahara* can lead to disorders up to impotency, infertility, and *Santan Dosha* (defects in progeny) thus it has an impact up to *Shukra Dhatu Dushti* (vitiation of *Shukra Dhatu*). [3] If the above list of diseases is classified as per the body system, it can be said that, immune system, endocrine system, digestive system, nervous system, and circulatory systems are affected by continuous consumption of *Viruddha Ahara*.

Table No.1. : Shows the types of *Virudha Ahara* (incompatible food)

S.No.	Types of Viruddha	English terminology
	Desha Viruddha	Incompatible in respect to place
	Kala Viruddha	Incompatible in respect to time
	Agni Viruddha	Incompatible in respect to digestive capacity
	Matra Viruddha	Incompatible in respect to quantity or dose
	Satmya Viruddha	Incompatible in respect to suitability
	Dosha Viruddha	Incompatible in respect to Dosha
	Sanskar Viruddha	Antagonistic in respect to method of preparation
	Veerya Viruddha	Antagonistic in respect to potency of the substances
	Koshtha Viruddha	Incompatible in respect to nature of gut
	Avastha Viruddha	Incompatible in respect to state of health of the consumer
	Kram Viruddha	Incompatible in respect to sequence of intake
	Parihar Viruddha	Incompatible in respect to contraindication
	Upachar Viruddha	Incompatible in respect to indication
	Paak Viruddha	Incompatible in respect to cooking
	Samyoga Viruddha	Incompatible in respect to combinations
	Hridya Virudda	Incompatible in respect to palatability
	Sampad Viruddha	Incompatible in respect to richness in properties of food substances
	Vidhi Viruddha	Incompatible in respect to rules of eating

1. Desh Viruddha [5]:

A person if consume diet or food which is similar in properties of that particular region can lead to the malformation of the different nutrients required for the proper functioning of the body, leading to the manifestation of various diseases. For example using diet

which is *Ruksha* (dry), *Ushna* (hot) and *Tiksana* (sharp) quality in a *Jangal Desha* (arid region) can lead to *Vata Prakopa*. It can also vitiate the *Rakta Dhatu* (blood tissues) and cause reduction in the formation of succeeding *Dathus*. Similarly the use of *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Sheeta* (cold), *Guru* (heavy) and other substances of similar quantities to *Anoopa Desha* (marshy region) can cause disturbances in the *Agni* (digestive enzymes and hormones) and may leads to autoimmune diseases. There will be obstruction to the *Srotas* (channels in body) and can lead to diseases like *Premeha* (diabetic syndrome), *Arsha* (hemorrhoids), *Bhagandar* (fistula), *Visarpa* (erysipelas), *Kushta* (skin diseases) etc. So one should consume the diet or food which is opposite in quality of that region, by which the diet or food will manage accordingly and keep the body stable and free from diseases.

2. Kala Viruddha [5]:

The consumption of diet or food with properties similar to the particular season can lead to various diseases. The uses of *Sheeta* (cold), *Rooksha* (dry) *Laghu* (light) and *Khara* (rough) and similar things in winter and the uses of *Ushna* (hot), *Teekshna* (sharp) and *Katu* (pungent) and such similar things in summer are incompatible with reference to *Kala*(season).

The use of *Sheeta* (cold), *Rooksha* (dry) *Laghu* (light) and *Khara* (rough) and similar things in winter can lead to *Vata* Vitiation and diseases resulting from that. Similarly use of *Ushna* (hot), *Teekshna* (sharp) and *Katu* (pungent) similar things in summer can lead to the improper metabolism resulting in damage to the different *Dathus*. Ayurveda mentions that food substances having opposite *Rasa* (taste) *Guna* (properties) are beneficial in that respective session. [7] Therefore similar qualities of food substances are harmful to respective session and it may be the cause for disease after habitual intake.

3. Agni Viruddha [5]:

One should take diet or food after considering the status of Agni. If food has not been taken in accordance to the *Jatharagni Bala* (digestive power) then it will become *Agni Viruddha*.

- a) *Mandagni Viruddha* (incompatible to low digestive power)– *Guru* (heavy), *Snigdha* (unctuous), *Madhura* (sweet), etc. food substances if taken will not digest properly and can lead to diseases like *Grahani* (irritable bowel syndrome), *Atisar* (diarrhea), *Visuchika* (dysentery), *Daurbalya* (weakness).
- b) *Tiksnagni Viruddha* (incompatible to sharp digestive power)- *Laghu* (light), *Tiksana* (sharp), *Vidhi* (heat producing), *Ushna* (hot) food substances if consumed can cause very fast digestion of the food resulting in the over metabolism of the different *Dathus* in the body leading to malnutrition and diseases related to that.
- c) *Visamagni Viruddha* (incompatible to fluctuating digestive power) – *Ruksha* (dry), *Laghu* (light), *Suksma* (), *Guru*, food substances if taken can cause improper digestion and can lead to the production of *Ama*. This can cause the blockage of *Srotas*. This in turn can lead to the malformation of different *Dathus* in the body.
- d) *Samagni Viruddha* (incompatible to balanced digestive power)- Excessive quantity of food and taking can cause improper digestion leading in the formation of *Ama* (metabolic toxins). This in turn can cause different diseases like *Amavata* (rheumatoid arthritis), *Alasya* (laziness), *Tandra* (drowsiness) etc.

4. Matra Viruddha [5]:

Food taken in sufficient quantity is termed as *Matratvat Ahara* (appropriate dose), if one does not take *Matratvat Ahara* than it is called *Matra Viruddha*. According to Maharshi Charak the intake of same quantity of honey & ghee is an example of *Matra Viruddha*. The different *Ahara* if

taken in proper quantity it can work as *Rasayana* in the body or else it can become *Visha* or poison. [8]

5. Satmya Viruddha:

Consuming the food according to ones *Prakirti* (constitution) becomes suitable for the person, while consuming the diet which is opposite to ones *Prakirti* can lead to damage of the body. This type of *Viruddha Ahara* is called as *Satmya Viruddha*. For example a person who is *Satmya* to *Katu*, *Ushna* and *Teekshna Guna* qualities in food, if intakes *Svadu* (sweet), *Sheeta*, *Guru* etc qualities in food it becomes *Asatmya* (unwholesome) to himself. The wholesome diet will help in the proper nourishment and growth of his body. Unwholesome diet or *Satmya Viruddha Ahara* will cause manifestation of different metabolic disorders.

6. Dosh Viruddha [5]:

The use of article of food, which are dissimilar in quality to that of the respective body humors or *Dosha*, is called *Dosha Viruddha*. Consuming the *Ahara* or diet, drugs and procedure which is similar to the aggravated *Doshas* in the body can lead to the further aggravation of the *Doshas* in body leading to different disorders. For example in case of aggravation *Pitta Dosha* consuming *Ushna*, *Teekshna*, *Katu Ahara* becoming cause for further aggravation of *Pitta* and later to various diseases such as vitiation of *Rakta* (blood), skin ailments etc.

7. Samskar Viruddha [5]:

The change in the properties of a *Dravya* (substances) due to processing is called *Samskara*. But if improper processing is done it can lead to the formation of toxins which in turn can lead to the damage of the bodily tissues. For example if peacock's flesh is roasted on sticks of the castor plant it can make the peacock's flesh poison. This type of processing is called as *Samskara Viruddha*. So while processing any *Dravya* one should take care about the materials used in processing. The present fast food

processing can be taken in this category where many harmful chemical and preservatives are used for commercial purpose, compromising with the health of the population.

8. Veerya Viruddha [5]:

The *Ahara* or diet, drugs and procedure which are opposite to the Potency if consumed or practiced can lead to *Veerya Viruddha* condition. This type of incompatibility in diet can lead to different physical diseases such as *Kushta* (skin diseases) etc, psychological disorders like *Apasmara* (epilepsy), *Unmada* (insanity), *Bhrama* (giddiness) etc.

9. Kostha Viruddha [5]:

A person with *Krura Kostha* (excessive absorbent gut) will have an increased level of *Vata Dosha* in him, leading to *Rookshata* (dryness) in his body channels. This *Rookshata* can cause obstruction in the channels and lead to obstruction in the free flow of *Vata* and *Malas* (metabolic waste). If such a person is administered a drug, which is in insufficient dose, weak in potency and poor in laxative quality it will further aggravate the condition. Similarly a person having *Mirdu Kostha* (less absorbent gut) will have *Manda Agni* (weak digestive power). So if given a drug which is heavy cathartic and in large dose, then it will not be digested and can lead to further diseased condition. This type of *Viruddha* is called as *Kostha Viruddha*.

10. Avastha Viruddha [5]:

Incompatibility with reference to state of person is known as *Avastha Viruddha* i.e. when a *Vata* provoking meal is given to one who is exhausted on account of fatigue sexual act or physical strain then it further aggravates *Vata Dosha* in the body. This is called as *Avastha Viruddha*.

Similarly, if a *Kapha* provoking meal is given to one subject who is lethargic or sleepy or indolence, then it becomes *Avastha Viruddha* because it further

aggravates the condition. Our diet should be in accordance to our energy expenditure through physical and mental activities. Intake of high calorie diet and sedentary habits is the cause of weight gain, obesity and later many diseases associated with it. Such things can be considered due *Avastha Viruddha Ahara*.

11. Krama Viruddha [5]:

When a person takes his meal without relieving himself from natural urge of defecation, micturition etc. or eats without feeling of hunger or does not eat in spite of severe hunger then it turns out to be *Krama Viruddha*. This type of *Viruddha Ahara Sevana* can lead to formation of *Ama Dosha* (metabolic toxins) in the body or can lead to *Dathu Kshaya* (depletion of body tissues), leading to different diseases like *Visuchika* (dysentery), *Alasaka* (intestinal torpor), *Pandu* (anemia), psychological disturbances etc. So in order to be in a healthy State one should follow a diet and regimen which is compatible to oneself.

12. Parihar Viruddha [5]:

This is incompatibility of the rule of prohibition, when a person takes hot substance after a meal of the flesh of a boar and similar animals. The flesh of boar is *Ushna Veerya* (hot potency), consumption of hot substance after consumption of boar flesh can lead to increase in the *Ushna Guna* in the body leading to *Dathu Kshaya*. This type of *Viruddha Ahara* is called *Parihar Viruddha*.

13. Upachara Viruddha [5]:

That is incompatibility of the rules of ingestion is called as *Upachara Viruddha*. For example after the consumption of Ghee intake of cold water or cold food items is called as *Upachara Viruddha*. A person suffering from *Rakta Pitta* (hemorrhagic disorders) if administered *Ushna* and *Rakta Prakopaka Ahara* (diet aggravating vitiation of blood tissue) can lead to further aggravation of the condition. This type of incompatibility can

cause the production of *Ama* by destroying the *Jataragni*. This in turn can cause diseases like skin disorders, *Amlapitta* (acid peptic disorders) etc.

14. Paka Viruddha [5]:

If food substance is prepared with bad and rotten firewood or is undercooked or burnt it is called *Paka Viruddha*. The overcooking and Undercooking of food can cause the production of *Ama* and can lead to *Agnivaishamyā* (disturbed digestive capacity). This in turn can lead to indigestion and cause diseases like duodenal ulcers, *Amplapitta*, skin disorders etc. the over cooked foods can cause increase in dryness in body leading to *Vata Prakopa* leading to the depletion of *Dhatu* (tissues).

15. Samayog Viruddha [5]:

When two or more *Dravyas* are combined appropriately by considering their similar properties, they help in the development of the body. But if the properties of the combining *Dravyas* are opposite it can lead to depletion of body elements. Such type of incompatibility of combination is called as *Samyoga Viruddha*. For example intake of sour things with milk. Milk is cold in potency and sweet in taste, whereas the sour substance is having hot potency. So combination of these leads to improper metabolism and production of toxins in the body resulting in poor digestion and further manifestation of various diseases.

16. Hridya Viruddha [5]:

The consumption of food which is unpleasant to person is called as *Hridya Viruddha*. This can lead to physiological disturbances leading to poor digestion. The indigested food accumulates to produce toxins in body, leading to different psychosomatic disorders like IBS.

17. Sampad Viruddha [5]:

This is incompatibility with reference to richness of quality of food taken. For example the juice is obtained

from unripe over ripe or unpurified food, intake of such food article, which are not having edible qualities can be considered as *Sampada Viruddha*. Consuming such food can cause the improper digestion leading to poor development of bodily tissues. It can cause the obstruction of body channels leading to different diseases.

18. Vidhi Viruddha [5]:

It is incompatibility of the rules of eating where food is not taken in a solitary place. Here solitary place is only an example. One should consider all the rules and regulations of dietetics, or else it can cause depletion of bodily tissues leading to physiological and psychological imbalance.

Diseases due to Viruddha Ahara:

Classical Ayurveda texts cover an array of themes on food ranging from diversity of natural sources, their properties in relation to seasons and places and to their specific function both in physiological and pathological states. [9] From the above description it can be understood that any procedure, combinations, dose, amount of food, opposite properties of food if consumed in a regular fashion can lead to number of disorders. Maharshi Charaka has mentioned that such types of wrong combinations can lead to even death. *Viruddha Ahara* can lead to many diseases which are; impotency, *Visarpa* (erysipelas), blindness, ascites, bullous, insanity, fistula in ano, coma or fainting, intoxication, abdominal distention, stiffness in neck, varieties of anemia, indigestions, various skin diseases, diseases of intestines, swelling, gastritis, fever, rhinitis, and infertility. If the above list of diseases is classified as per the body system, it can be said that, immune system, endocrine system, digestive system, nervous system, and circulatory systems are affected by continuous consumption of *Viruddha Ahara*. A number of diseases both physical and psychological such as depression, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and obstructive sleep apnea have been found to

be significantly affected by the dietary pattern of the patients. [10,11,12]

Mode of Action of Viruddha Ahara:

Association between dietary pattern and diseases has always been a field of interest among the health professionals. Frequent intake of combination of incompatible food leads in to production of toxins. Then in the alimentary tract this toxins provoke all *Doshas* and which get mixed with digestive juice and then *Rasa Dhātu* and so on it spread from one *Dhātu* to next *Dhātu*. Thus this *Doshas* spread from *Koshtha* (gut) to *Shakha* (*Dhātus* and skin). While travelling through all over the body where ever there is *Khavaigunya* (inherent deformity) it gets lodged and shows the symptoms of the diseases. Effects of incompatible food can be classified in to *Aashukari* (acute) and *Chirakari* (chronic) which may be modified in the form of symptoms or diseases.

Chikitsa Siddhant:

The person who habitually takes *Viruddha Aahara* should be subjected to either of *Shodhana therapy* mainly *Vamana* (therapeutic emesis) and *Virechana* (therapeutic purgation) or *Shamana* (pacifying) therapy denending upon the *Doshik* vitiation with drugs which are qualitatively opposite to such *Viruddha Aahara* [13]. Along with drug therapy gradual shift from unwholesome diet to wholesome diet should be done with care. Sudden change of dietary pattern may not be suitable for the person so this must be done in slow manner.

CONCLUSION

The wholesome use of *Ahara* brings health whereas unwholesome food habits are cause of various diseases. The incompatibility of food is described in Ayurveda under the concept of *Viruddha Ahara*. There are total 18 categories of *Viruddha Ahara* described by Maharshi Charaka in Sutrasthana 26th chapter. Habitual consumption of it may lead to

manifestation of many diseases. The diseases caused by *Viruddha Ahara* can be prevented by following wholesome dietary pattern described in Ayurveda. For the treatment of it, purification therapy followed by *Hita Sevan* (wholesome diet) is indicated.

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