

Review of *viruddhahara* (incompatible diet) and its hazardous effects on human health

Manjusha Dapurkar^{*1}, Mrityunjay Sharma², Archana S. Dachewar³

1. PG Scholar, Dept. of Kayachikitsa, Shree Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur, India.
2. Associate Professor, Dept. of Kayachikitsa, Shree Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur, India.
3. H.O.D. and Professor, Dept. of Kayachikitsa, Shree Ayurved Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur, India.

***Corresponding Author – Email id – drmanjushadapurkar@gmail.com**

Abstract

In the modern era of globalization, there has been a major shift in diet pattern. Unwholesome diet is causative factor for disease & wholesome diet is promoting factor for health. “Unhealthy diet is one key cause of the growing global burden of disease”. *Ahara* (food) is the prime need for the sustaining of life. *Ayurveda* explained about *Trividha Upasthambha* (sub-pillars of body) and *Ahara* (food) is one of the important pillars for healthy living being. For healthy living, *Ayurveda* emphasizes on consuming right kind of diet which provide health and nutrition. *Viruddha Ahara* is a unique concept described in *Ayurveda*. The diet which disturbs the balance among the body elements is called *Viruddha Ahara* (Incompatible diet). It can be further elaborated as certain diet and its combinations, which interrupts the metabolism of tissue, which inhibits the process of formation of tissue

and which have the opposite property to the tissue are called as *Viruddha Anna* or incompatible diet. The present article deals with the review of *Viruddha Ahara* (Incompatible diet) referred in context of *Viruddha Aaharajanit Vyadhis* (Incompatible food induced diseases) and its Prevention in *Brihatrayi*.

KEYWORDS: *Ayurveda*, food–food interactions, incompatible diet, *Viruddhahara*.

INTRODUCTION

In the modern era of globalization, there has been a major shift in diet pattern. Unwholesome diet is causative factor for disease & wholesome diet is promoting factor for health. “Unhealthy diet is one key cause of the growing global burden of non infectious diseases”. WHO says that unhealthy diet, unsafe food and malnutrition in all its form accounts for about one third of all deaths globally (July 2019).^[1] *Ahara* (food) *Nidra* (sleep) and *Brahmacharya* (controlled sex) are three

basic pillars of Shareera (body).^[2] Ahara (food) is the prime need for sustaining of life. It has its own importance in concept of *TrividhaUpasthambha*. Without Ahara (food), life would not continue for very long, so it is considered under *Upasthambha* (pillars of body). For sustainment of life, for all living beings Ahara (food) is very much essential. It is responsible for both *Arogya* (health) and *Vyadhi* (diseases). Within the field of holistic health and nutrition there is a great deal of controversy about food combining. Even among the population at large there is growing concern about diet, and confusion over the large number of conflicting theories on the subject.

Ayurveda, offers a logical and scientific approach for determining correct diet based upon an individual's constitution. *Vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*; the *tridosha*, are the elements which comprise individual constitution. According to *Vidhi* (Dietary regimen) if *HitaAhara* (compatible diet) is consumed it provides *Bala* (promotion of strength), *Varna* (complexion) and *Indriyaprasadna* (nourishment of the senses). Ahara (food) does not benefit the body, if it is not prepared as per the *Asta Ahara Vidhi Visheshayatana* (factors for wholesomeness)^[3]. According to *Ayurveda*, every food has its own taste (*Rasa*), a heating or cooling energy (*Virya*) and post-digestive effect (*Vipak*). When two or three different food substances of different taste, energy and post-digestive effect are combined together *Agni* can become overloaded inhibiting the enzyme system and resulting in production of toxins in the system. While it is true that an individual's *Agni* largely determines how well or poorly food is digested, food combinations are also of great importance. When foods, (proteins, carbohydrates and fats)

having different attributes, tastes, heating or cooling properties, and post-digestive effects are eaten together, *Agni* will be slowed down. The foods can then remain in the stomach for seven to eight hours. These same foods, if eaten separately might well stimulate *Agni*, be digested more quickly and even help to burn *Ama*. Thus, according to *Ayurveda*, one should eat according to one's constitution and take fruits, starches, proteins and fats separately at different times of the day. Combining foods improperly can produce indigestion, fermentation, putrefaction and gas formation. This condition, if prolonged, can lead to toxemia and disease complex. For example, eating bananas with milk can diminish *agni*, change the intestinal flora producing toxins and may cause sinus congestion, cold, cough and allergies.^[4] *Ayurveda* clearly defines that certain diet and its combinations, which interrupts the metabolism of tissue, which inhibits the process of formation of tissue and which have the opposite property to the tissue are called as *Viruddhahara*. The food which is wrong in combination, which has undergone wrong processing, which is consumed in incorrect dose, which is consumed in incorrect time of day and in wrong season can lead to *Viruddhahara*. Awareness of *Viruddhahara* may avoid certain diseases. In *Ayurveda*, *AcharyaCharka* also stated that, diet is the life of an individual, but when it is taken with proper planning. Diet becomes effect like *Rasyana* (Rejuvenation) if taken with *Yukti* but without *Yukti*, it can be like *Visha* (Poison).^[5] Concept of *Viruddhahara* holds wider significance in today's perspective when consumption of such food items may

lead to several hazardous diseases unknowingly. It is pertinent to acquaint oneself with the knowledge of incompatibilities in consuming various food items to attain a healthy living.

MATERIALS AND METHODS :-

This conceptual study is based on literary review collected from

Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita and Astanga Sangraha, Astanga Hridaya and its commentaries. Modern texts & various websites were referred to collect information on the relevant topics.

Table 1: Types of Viruddha Ahara (incompatible diet) mentioned in Charakaa Samhita^[6]

Sl. No.	Viruddha Ahara	Sl. No.	Viruddha Ahara
1	Desha (place) Viruddha	10	Avastha(state of health)Viruddha
2	Kala(time) Viruddha	11	Kram (sequence) Viruddha
3	Agni Viruddha	12	Parihar Viruddha
4	Matra (quantity) Viruddha	13	Upchar (treatment) Viruddha
5	Satmya (wholesome) Viruddha	14	Paak (cooking) Viruddha
6	Dosha Viruddha	15	Samyoga (combination) Viruddha
7	Sanskar (mode of preparation) Viruddha	16	Hridya Viruddha
8	Veerya (potency) Viruddha	17	Sampad (richness of quality) Viruddha
9	Koshtha Viruddha	18	Vidhi (rules for eating) Viruddha

EXAMPLES OF INCOMPATIBLE DIET^[6] (VIRUDDHA-AAHARA)

1. **Desh Viruddha (Place incompatibility)** – Now a day transportation facilities are improved so much that food items distributed from one place to another in less time. Such food items may lead to several hazardous diseases unknowingly.
2. Ex.- Yogurt, cheese, excessive rice or sea food in marshy places Spicy

food, alcohol or avoiding ghee and oil in dessert or arid regions.

3. **Kala Viruddha (Time incompatibility)** – Due to changing lifestyle and increasing urbanization nobody has time to think what to eat and when to eat also every food item can be preserved for every season, due to consumption of such time incompatible food tridosha imbalance occurs in body and people are becoming more prone to diseases.

4. Ex.- Ice cream, milkshake, cold drinks, frozen foods in winter. Excessive tea, coffee, spices, alcohol in summer.
5. **Agni Viruddha (Digestive incompatibility)** – Availability of various different food items, increasing number of food outlets, people eat mostly in restaurants, People overeat and ignore their digestive capacity due to which acidity, indigestion, flatulence become the common problems in society. Ex.- Intake of heavy food when power of digestion is low, Intake of light food when the power of digestion is sharp and intake of food at variance with irregular & normal power of digestion
6. **Matra Viruddha (Dose incompatibility)** — Some food items become poisonous when taken together. We must be aware about such foods.
7. Ex - Honey + cow's ghee mixed in equal proportion.
8. **Krama Viruddha (Sequence Incompatibility)** — In ayurveda sequence of human routine is mentioned to stay healthy. But now, due to faster lifestyle we are unable to follow that routine, so we become more prone to chronic harmful effects on body and our quality of life is also decreasing day by day.
9. Ex.- Taking *dessert* at the end of meal, consumption of hot water after honey.
10. **Satmya Viruddha (Habit Incompatibility)**- In this modern era, everybody wanted to try different food, but those food items are harmful to our body if

they are against our habit, long term consumption can lead to hazardous diseases. Ex.- Intake of sweet and cold substance by person accustomed to pungent and hot substance.

11. **Dosh Viruddha** – Regular utilization of drug, diet and regimen having similar qualities with predominant dosha of body leads to diseases related to that particular dosha.

Ex.-

- Vata Prakruti individual – dry, roasted food
- Pitta Prakruti individual – Tea, Coffee, spicy food
- Kapha Prakruti individual – Yogurt, black gram

12. **Sanskar Viruddha (Against mode of preparation)** – Traditional preparation methods are now out of trend. Everybody is fond of newer methods for different taste Drug and diet, which, when prepared in a particular way produce poisonous effect. Ex.- Heated honey (market honey is strongly heated before packaging), deep fried potatoes.
13. **Veerya Viruddha (potency incompatibility)** — Substance having cold potency in combination with those of hot potency. Ex. - fish + milk.
14. **Kostha Viruddha** – To give less potency and less stool forming food to a person of kostive bowel. Administrative of more quantity, heavy and

more stool forming food to a person having laxated bowel.
Ex.-Intake of Bread, biscuit by constipated bowel person.

15. **Awastha Viruddha** – Intake of vata aggravating food by a person after exertion, sexual act, physical exertion or intake of kapha aggravating food by a person after sleep or drowsiness.

a. **Ex.-** consumption of Chana Poha immediately after brisk walking or exercise.

16. **Parihar Viruddha (Treatment Against)** – While treating a patient with intervention of ghee, we must have to tell patient about its anupana. Intake of cold thing after taking ghee should be strictly contraindicated; otherwise heaviness or indigestion like problems will additionally start in the patient. Ex.- Cold water intake after taking ghee.

17. **Pak Viruddha (Cooking Incompatibility)**–Preparation of food with bad or rotten fuel and undercooking, overcooking or using used cooking oil for many food items is very common thing in hotels. Many people consume such food daily as breakfast. Long term daily intake of such food directly impacts in lowering immunity, people become more vulnerable to diseases. Such food should be strictly avoided.

18. **Hriday Viruddha (Against Interest)**–Intake of unpleasant food have impact on patients psychological state which indirectly results in weak

digestive power. So, it should be avoided.

19. **Vidhi Viruddha (Against rule for eating)**–Taking meal in public place, eating while walking is not good for health. So, it should be avoided. Ex.- buffet style.

20. **Sampad Viruddha (Richness of Quality against)**–Due to heavy use of chemical fertilizers we consume very poor quality food, which has many adverse effects on our body. Instead of that we must have to use organic vegetables and fruits, Intake of substance that are not mature, over mature should also be avoided.

21. **Samyoga Viruddha (combination incompatibility)**— Now we are accepting western culture and food. So, food combination which are not good for health are mostly used by the people. Ex. – fruit salad or milk+banana.

22. **Parihar Viruddha (contraindication incompatibility)-**

- consuming cold water immediately after having hot tea or coffee.

DISEASES DUE TO VIRUDDHA AHARA -

From the above list 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. If above-said rules for the diet are not followed

then the diseases occurring due to *Viruddha Ahara* can occur, which are mentioned below.

DISEASES DUE TO VIRUDDHA AHARA ACCORDING TO ACHARYACHARAKA

Viruddha Ahara is responsible for the occurrence many diseases. According to *Acharya Charaka* a whole number of disease occurs as a result of *Viruddha Ahara* and they are infertility, *Bhagandara* (fistula), *Moorcha* (fainting), *Pandu* (anaemia), *Amavisha* (acid eructation), *Grahani roga* (malabsorption syndrome), *Jvara* (fever), *Santana dosha* (genetic disturbances) and even *Mrityu* (death).^[7]

ACCORDING TO ACHARYA VAGBHATA

Acharya Vagbhata in *Ashtanga Samgraha* has mentioned that intake of *Viruddha Ahara* results in the manifestations of *Visphotha* (blisters), *Shofa* (swelling), *Yakshma* (Tuberculosis) and loss of body heat, memory and consciousness, *Jvara* (fever), *Raktpitta* (bleeding disorders) *Asta Mahagada* (eight Maharogas) and *Mrityu* (death).^[8]

VIRUDDHA AHARA IN TODAY'S PERSPECTIVE

Viruddha Ahara can lead to inflammation at molecular level. Number of food incompatibilities are mentioned in classical *Ayurvedic* literature like *Charaka* and *Sushruta Samhitas*. Although food combinations today are of different nature, principles remain the same and it is required to identify new food incompatibilities based on the basic principles of antagonism mentioned in *Ayurveda* and categorized in appropriate category of antagonism.^[9] There are number foods incompatibilities are used in

present era-Oxytocin induced milk, Preservatives in food products, Pesticides on vegetables and fruits, Genetically engineered fruits and vegetables, Cooled storage food products, Stale food (Bread, Bun etc.), Heated honey, Hot water with honey, Mutton or chicken with curd or milk, Raw food with cooked food, Ice cream, cold drinks, chilled water etc. in *Shita Ritu* (winter) and *Anupa Desha* (marshy area), Use of radish with milk, Butter toast, Khichari with milk, Curd at night, Fish with milk, Improper eating habits etc. are today's Incompatible Diet.^[10]

- Never consume carbohydrates like bread, potatoes, bananas etc. with lemons, limes, oranges, tomatoes or other sour fruit. Fruit acid not only prevents carbohydrate digestion, but they also favor their fermentation.
- Never consume Protein and Carbohydrate together, because when they are mixed in the stomach they interfere with the digestion of each other i.e. do not consume nuts, meat, cheese etc. with bread, cereals, cakes etc.
- Never consume two concentrated proteins together i.e. Do not use milk and meat, eggs and milk etc. at the same meal.
- Never consume Protein and Fat together i.e. do not use cream, butter, oil etc. with eggs, cheese etc.^[9]

PATHOGENESIS OF VIRUDDHA AHARA^[11]

Various types of *Viruddha Ahara* described in all *Samhitas* reveals that vitiation and aggravation of *Doshas* are the mode of action of *Viruddha Ahara*. Some types are such as *Desha Viruddha*, *Kala Viruddha*, *Kostha Viruddha* making body prone to diseases. As *Agni Viruddha* and *KarmaViruddha* etc.

leading to formation of *Ama* (undigested material) Some of *Viruddha Ahara* because of their potency produce *Srotodusthi* (vitiation of channels) particularly *Srotosanga* and *Srotaavroda* (obstruction of the channels). For example Milk and *Chilchimi* (a type of fish) variety of fish taken together produce *Ama Visha* due to their *Maha Abhishyandi Guna* (secretory).

Regarding the different mechanisms of pathogenesis described it seems that the three important mechanisms besides *Dosha* aggravation are - *Srotavarodha* or *Sanga* or obstruction in channels, *Shonita Dushti* (vitiation of blood) and production of *Ama* or *Ama Visha*. Production of “*Ama*” or “*Strota Avarodha*” (channels obstruction) causes aggravation of *Vata* leading to emaciation of body and loss of body physiological functions. *Shonita dushti* can affect in two ways – by producing different skin diseases and also by affecting the nourishment of body and its tissue.

Here it is also important to note that when the pathogenesis has taken as that of “*Ama Visha*” its properties will have to be equated with *Visha* in respect of its qualities as well as effects on the body. Certain similarities are also found between *Viruddha Ahara* (incompatible food) and *Garavisha* (artificial poison). As *Viruddha Ahara* (incompatible diet) has been mentioned as one of the ingredients in the preparation of “*Gara*” (Artificial poison) we can come to a conclusion provisionally that *Viruddha Ahara* (incompatible diet) also act in a manner similar to it.

TREATMENT^[13]

Nidana Parivarjna (prophylactic measures) is the main line of treatment. Diseases caused by *Viruddha Ahara* (incompatible diet) can be treated by *Vamana* (Emesis), *Virechana* (purgation) and *Shamana Chikitsa* (Palliative therapy) and by the prior use of beneficial substances.

DISCUSSION

Frequent intake of incompatible food leads to aggravation of all *Doshas* (morbid humors) resulting in hazardous diseases and decreasing quality of life. The recommended therapy for diseases caused by incompatible food is *Shodhana Chikitsa* (Eliminative therapy), *Shamana Chikitsa* (Palliative therapy) and avoidance of incompatible food. *Charaka*, who mentioned that incompatible diet, is one of the causes for spreading the morbid humors from the alimentary tract to the peripheral systems and causes diseases. Avoidance of intake of incompatible diet plays key role in the prevention of disease.

CONCLUSION

Viruddha Ahara (incompatible diet) is a very important concept of *Ayurveda*, ignoring it results in the manifestation of various diseases and as we know Prevention is better than cure, it is very essential to follow guidelines given by *Ayurvedic Acharyas* to lead a healthy life. As an *Ayurvedic Physician* its our prime duty to spread alarming health hazards of *Viruddha Ahara* (incompatible diet). Further research with the help of modern analytical techniques is not only essential but need to establish the classical concept of *Viruddha Ahara* (incompatible diet) in present perspective.

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