

VIRUDDHA AHARA - INCOMPATIBLE FOODS IN AYURVEDA

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Abstract

In Ayurvedic classics, Ahara (food) is mentioned as one among the three Upasthambas (Sub-pillars of body) which supports the three main Sthambas (Pillars) of the body. Ahara is considered to be vital for a human body as it provides the basic nutrients, which are very essential to carry out the basic activities of digestion and metabolism. Ayurveda emphasizes on consuming healthy and nutritious diet. The difference of proper health and disease is based on the difference between wholesome and unwholesome food (ahara). Unwholesome ahara (Viruddha Ahara) is a unique and important concept described in Ayurveda. The diet, which disturbs the balance among the body elements, is called as Viruddha Ahara. Many times a physically balanced diet can also disturb the homeostasis. Food taken in proper method nourishes the person physically and mentally both and it is the food through which person attains positive health and growth of body. Food taken in improper (Unbalanced) methods can cause various types of diseases. Therefore Ayurveda have given keen attention on concept of wholesome ahara and unwholesome ahara. Correspondingly intake of incompatibility food is much increases in present era. This paper details about variety of incompatible food consumed in today's day to day life style also enlists the hazardous effects on health.

Key words: Viruddha Ahara; Incompatible diet; Food interactions; Unbalancing diet.

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INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, an ancient medical science of healing, focuses more on the healthy living and well being of the person. Ayurveda offers a logical and scientific approach for determining correct Ahara (food) based upon an individual's constitution. According to Ayurveda, there are positive and negative attributes of Ahara. Since, Ayurveda deals with a holistic approach to cure; it covers the Ahara factor in depth. Ayurveda clearly mentioned regarding the wholesome diet and the benefits of such food. For healthy living, Ayurveda emphasizes on consuming right kind of diet which is healthy and nutritious.

Ahara is very much essential for the sustainment of life of all living beings.^[1] It is stated to be responsible for both Arogya (health) and Vyadhi (disease). Hita Ahara (wholesome food) if consumed according to rules, they provide fuel to the fire of digestion; they promote mental as well as physical strength and complexion.^[2]

The difference of proper health (Happiness) and unhealth (Unhappiness) is based on the difference between wholesome ahara and unwholesome ahara. Unwholesome ahara (Viruddha Ahara) is a unique and important concept described in Ayurveda. The diet, which disturbs the balance among the body elements, is called as Viruddha Ahara.^[2] The second meaning of Viruddha indicates about the combination of two substances which are not similar to each other.^[3]

Definition of Viruddha Ahara

According to Acharya Charaka all kinds of foods which aggravate (Increase) the doshas but do not expel them out of the body and all of them become unsuitable or unhealthy for body is called as Viruddha.^[4] The food articles by which the doshas are going to be provoked and spread or diffused from their place but these doshas are not eliminated from

the body. So these food articles become unwholesome. According to Acharya Sushruta Viruddha Aahara not only provokes the doshas but that also aggravate the Dhatus.^[5]

Etymology

The word Viruddha is originated from the root "Rudhir Avarni" by applying the Prefix "VI". This leads to two factors i.e. on combining two, three things; the stronger one shades or overpowers the weaker ingredients. This has been accepted principally in Ayurveda also. It has been stated that in a combination of so many opposite qualities the majority of the power packed qualities overpower the weaker qualities.^[6]

Types of Viruddha Ahara

Ayurvedic literature has described various types of Viruddha Ahara, which can be summarized as follows

1. **Desha Viruddha** - Consumption of those substances which are against place or land region^[7] - For example –
 - a. To have Ruksha (Dry) and Tikshna (Acute) substances in arid region (Maru desha)
 - b. Snigdha (Unctuous) and Sheet (Cold) substances in Marshy land or Anoop desha.
2. **Kala Viruddha** - Consumption of those substances which are against time or season^[8] – For example –
 - a. Intake of Katu (Pungent) and Ushna (hot) substances in Ushna kala (Grishma, Sharada Ritus)
 - b. Sheeta (cold) and Ruksha (dry) substances in Sheeta Kala (Hemanta, Shishira & Vasanta Ritus).
 - c. Sushruta mentioned that food substances having opposite Rasa and Guna are beneficial in that respective season. Therefore similar qualities of food substances are harmful to

respective season and it may be cause for disease after a long period.

3. **Agni Viruddha** - Consumption of those substances which are against digestive power^[9] – For example –

- a. Intake of Guru food (foods which are heavy to digest) when there is Mandagni (low digestion power) and
- b. Intake of Laghu (light) food when the power of digestion is Tikshnagni (sharp) and intake of food at variance with irregular and normal power of digestion.

4. **Matra Viruddha** –Consumption of those substances which are against quantity^[10] – For example –

- a. Intake of Madhu (Honey) and Ghrita (Ghee) in equal quantity
- b. Intake of Madhu (Honey) and Rain water in equal quantity
- c. Honey + Cow's ghee - mixed in equal quantity.

5. **Satmya Viruddha** - Consumption of those substances which are unwholesome^[11] – For example

- a. Intake of Madhur (sweet) and Sheet (Cold) substance by person accustomed to Katu (Pungent) and Ushna (hot) substance.

6. **Dosha Viruddha** For example –

- a. Utilization of drugs, diets and regimen having similar qualities with Dosha, but at variance with the habit of the individual.^[12]

7. **Sanskar Viruddha** - Consumption of those substances which are against mode of preparation. Drugs and diets which, when prepared in a particular way produced poisonous effects.^[13] For example –

- a. Heated Madhu (Honey)
- b. Meat of peacock roasted on a castor spit

c. Meat of parrot placed inside a faggot of eranda (*Ricinis communis*) and then cooked.

d. Meat of sparrow and peacock roasted on castor spit.

8. **Veerya Viruddha** - Consumption of those substances which are against Potency Substances having Ushna (hot) potency in combination with those of Sheet (cold) potency substances.^[14] For example –

- a. Fish + Milk

9. **Koshtha Viruddha** – Consumption of those substances which are against nature of bowels.^[15] For example –

- a. Administration of less quantity with mild potency purgative drug to a person of Krura koshta (Constipated bowel).
- b. Administration of more quantity heavy purgative drug to a person having soft bowel.

10. **Avastha Viruddha** - Consumption of those substances which are against States or condition.^[16] For example –

- a. Intake of Vata aggravating food by a person after exertion, sexual act or physical exertion.
- b. Intake of Kapha aggravating food by a person after sleep or drowsiness.

11. **Kram Viruddha** - Consumption of those substances which are against sequence.^[17] For example –

- a. Consuming curd at night.
- b. Hot water after taking honey
- c. Intake of food without clearance of his bowel and urination
- d. Intake of food when he doesn't have appetite
- e. Not consuming food when he is hungry

12. **Parihar Viruddha** - Consumption of those substances which are against

things which relieve the symptoms. ^[18]

For example –

- a. Intake of hot potency food after taking meat of boar etc.
- b. Consuming cold water immediately after having hot tea or Coffee.

13. **Upachar Viruddha** - Consumption of those substances which are against treatment. ^[19] For example –

- a. Intake of cold things after taking ghee.
- b. Intake of hot water after taking Madhu (Honey)

14. **Paaka Viruddha** - Consumption of those substances which are against cooking. Preparation of food with bad or rotten fuel and under cooking, over cooking or burning during the process of preparation. ^[20]

15. **Sanyoga Viruddha** - Consumption of those substances which are against combination. Or intake of two such substances which on combination have poisonous effects. ^[21] For example

- a. Intake of sour substances with milk
- b. Fruit Salad / Milk + Banana

16. **Hriday Viruddha** – Consumption of those substances which are not liked by the person. In short intake of unpleasant food. ^[22]

17. **Sampad Viruddha** – Consumption of those substances which are not having their proper qualities. ^[23] For example –

- a. Intake of substance those are not mature, over matured or putrefied.

18. **Vidhi Viruddha** – This type includes the diet which is not according with the rules of eating. ^[24] For example –

- a. Eating food in public place or open place.

Viruddha Ahara (unwholesome diet) produces various types of diseases. Charakaa

advocating this matter gives one more verse specially regarding to Ahara and its causativeness for diseases. Body is the result of nourishment by food ingested in the four-fold manner i.e. eaten, drunk, licked up and masticated and similarly the diseases that afflict this body are equally the result of food that is also eaten, drunks, licked up and masticated. It is the distinction between the use of wholesome diet and that of unwholesome diet that is responsible for the distinction between health and disease in the body. ^[25]

Agnimandya is source of several diseases. Viruddha ahara causes the vitiation of Agni by Abhojana, Ajirnatibhojana, Vishamashana, Asatmya, Ati Ruksha and Sheeta, Sansrusta Bhojana. Thus the Agni mostly gets vitiated by Viruddhahara. This vitiated Jatharagni does not digest even the lightest of food substances, resulting in indigestion (Ajirna). This undigested food material turns sour and acts like a poison, which is called Ama visha in Ayurvedic terminology. Following are the diseases mentioned in Ayurved texts as a result of Viruddha Ahara ^{[26], [27]}

- Klaibya (Impotency)
- Blindness
- Visarpa (Erysipelas)
- Jalodara (Ascitis)
- Unmada (Insanity)
- Bhagandara (Fistula in ano)
- Murcha (Coma/fainting)
- Aadhmana (Abdominal distention)
- Galgraha (Obstruction in throat)
- Pandu roga (Anemia)
- Ama (Endogenous toxin)
- Kilasa (Leucoderma)
- Kushtha (Various skin disorders)
- Grahani (Sprue)
- Shotha (Swelling or oedema)
- Amlapitta (Acidity)
- Jwara (Fever)
- Pinas (Allergic Rhinitis)
- Santana Dosha (Infertility problem)
- Mrutyu (Death)

Food combinations must be avoided

Many food combinations are given in the texts as incompatible with proper explanation^{[28][29]} for e.g.

- Fish (Specially Chilmil fish) should not take along with milk because both substances are Madhura (sweet) in taste and sweet after digestion. This combination is Abhishyandi (produce more moisture in the tissue and causes obstruction of various channels). Second reason is that both have opposite (incompatible) in potency. Fish being hot in potency and milk is of cold potency. This opposite potencies causes great vitiations of three doshas i.e.Vata, Pitta and Kapha doshas.
- Dadhi (Curd) should not be consumed in the night. Because curd is acidic in nature. It aggravates Pitta and Kapha doshas which later on produces a lot of heat in the stomach. A curd is heavy, slow to digest and produces constipation. It can be best digested at lunch time when the digestive abilities are the strongest.
- Warm honey should not be consumed by the person suffering from heat exhaustion or sun stroke. Because after heated honey becomes poison and this can cause death.
- Avoid consuming cold water immediately during or after a meal hot tea or coffee. Because it diminishes the Agni and causes various digestive problems.
- Avoid eating bananas with milk. Because it can diminish Agni, change the intestinal flora producing excess toxins in the body. The combination may also cause cold, cough and even produce allergies.
- After consuming green leafy vegetables, drinking of milk should be avoided.
- Avoid consuming meat of animals of marshy and domestic region with Masha / black gram (*Phaselolus radiatus* Linn), honey, radish, milk, germinated grains and jaggery. Because it leads to Deafness and Blindness. Trembling, loss of intelligence, loss of voice and nasal voice and even cause death.
- One should not consume Pushkara mula (*Nelumbo nucifera* Gaertn) or rohini shak or meat of kapota (pigeon) fried in sarshapa taila along with milk and honey. Because this obstructs channels of circulation and causes dilation of blood vessels, Apasmara (Epilepsy) Shankhak (Temporal headache), Galaganda (Scrofula), Rohini (Diphtheria) or even death.
- After eating Muli (radish), Lasuna (garlic), Tulsi (basil) one should not be consumed milk because of the risk of skin disorders (Leprosy).
- All Sour substances are incompatible with milk.
- Ghee (Clarified butter) kept for more than ten consecutive days in a bronze vessel should be avoided as unwholesome.
- Avoid eating melons and grains together. Melons digest quickly whereas grains take more time. This combination will upset the stomach. Melons should be eaten alone or left alone.
- Milk and melons both should not be consumed at a same time. Because both are Sheet (cold) in nature, but milk is Sarak (laxative) and melon is Mutral (diuretic). Milk takes longer time to digest. Moreover the action of hydrochloric acid in the stomach causes the milk to curdle. For this reason Ayurveda advises against taking milk with sour fruits.
- Avoid eating melons and grains together. Melons digest quickly whereas grains take more time. This combination will upset the stomach. Melons should be eaten alone or left alone.
- Sweet and sour fruits should never be combined as in a fruit chat. Individual

fruits should be eaten as such and as a different meal.

- Avoid eating raw and cooked foods together. One can have the salad first and then proceed for dinner after a short gap.
- Likewise honey and ghee in equal quantity, hot water after taking honey are antagonistic.
- Combination of fruit salad with milk and banana should be avoided.
- Upodika should not be cooked with paste of Til (Sesamum). Because it causes diarrhea.
- Meat of haridraka (kind of yellow bird) pierced with wood of haridra (*Berberis aristata*) and cooked with the flame of haridra takes away life quickly. The same smeared with ash and sand (as a method of cooking) and consumed along with honey (also kills the person quickly)
- Pippali (*Piper longum*) processed with fish fat is fried should be rejected.
- Meat of balaka bird along with varuni (supernatant fluid of wine) takes away life.
- Similarly also the meat of Tittir (black partridge) Patradhya (peacock) Godah (iguana lizard) Lava (common quail) Kapinjala (gray pigeon) cooked over by the fire of wood of Eranda (*Ricinus communis*) plant and processed with fried in its oil castor oil.

There are certain incompatible food combinations mentioned in Ayurveda text summarized in Table 1.^[30]

Treatment of diseases aggravated by Viruddha Ahara

Acharya Charaka mentioned that diseases caused by intake of Viruddha Aahar^{[31][32]} (incompatible foods and drugs) can be cured by following therapies-

- Vaman Karma (Medicated Emesis)
- Virechana (Purgation)
- Administration of antidotes (Administration of substances which are of converse qualities)
- Taking prophylactic measures

Exceptional cases for consuming Viruddha Ahara

Food though incompatible do not produce disease If an individual is habituated to the intake of unwholesome drugs or diet or if they are taken in small quantity or taken by a person having strong digestive power or by a young person (adult) or by the one who has undergone Oletion therapy or who is strong physique due to regular physical exercise. The unwholesomeness of various diets does not have any effect.^[33]

Table 1: Incompatible food combinations as per Ayurveda texts

Sr. No	Food	Incompatible With
1	Milk	Bananas, Fish, Meat, Melons, Curd, Sour Fruits and Bread containing yeast
2	Melons	Grains, Starch, Fried foods, Cheese
3	Starches	Eggs, Milk, Bananas and Dates
4	Honey	Ghee (in equal proportions) Heating or cooking with
5	Radish	Milk, Bananas and Raisins
6	Lemon	Yogurt, Milk, Cucumbers and Tomatoes
7	Eggs	Milk, Meat, Yogurt, Melons, Cheese, Fish and Bananas
8	Mangos	Yogurt, Cheese, Cucumbers
9	Corn	Dates, Raisins and Bananas
10	Nightshades, (Potato, Tomato and Chilies)	Yogurt, Milk, Melon and Cucumber

DISCUSSION

Viruddha Ahara is the origin of most of the ailments. Regular consumption of incompatible food can lead to inflammation at a molecular level; ending in creation of arachidonic acid which will finally results in to increased level of prostaglandin-2 and thromboxane. This inflammatory consequence lies behind basic pathologies that create Agni Mandya, Ama, and a number of metabolic disorders.^[34]

Theory of autoimmune mechanism and free radical are playing role in etiopathology of the diseases caused by Viruddha Ahara. Ama which is accrued at the level of intestine may lead to the gastroenteritis; a part of Ama penetrates intestinal mucosa, circulates all over the body and performs the role of Antigen, consequently vitiating the humors to cause different disorders. Ama can also be compared to unstable reactive free radicals, which are the main cause of many diseases and degenerative changes in the body and it may be produced due to Viruddha Ahara. Ama and free radicals can be co-related as follows.

A current study shows that a toxin called 4-hydroxy-trans-2- nonenal (HNE) forms when such oils as corn, soyabean, and sunflower oils are reheated. There seems to be a influence of 4-HNE on the health of cells.

In higher concentrations (around 10-20 micromolar) have been shown to trigger well-known toxic pathways such as the induction of caspase enzymes, the laddering of genomic DNA, the release of cytochrome c from mitochondria, with the eventual outcome of cell death (through both apoptosis and necrosis, depending on concentration). HNE has been linked in the pathology of several diseases such as Alzheimer's disease, cataract, atherosclerosis, and cancer.^[35]

High-temperature cooking must also be called as Sanskara Viruddha. An advanced glycation end-product (AGE) may be formed external to the body (exogenously) by heating (e.g., cooking). Under certain pathologic conditions (e.g., oxidative stress due to hyperglycemia in patients with diabetes and hyperlipidemia, AGE formation can be increased beyond normal levels. AGEs are now known to play a role as pro-inflammatory mediators in gestational diabetes as well. The formation and accumulation of advanced glycation end products (AGEs) has been implicated in the progression of age-related diseases. AGEs have been implicated in Alzheimer's disease, cardiovascular disease, and stroke. The mechanism by which AGEs induce damage is through a process called cross-linking that causes intracellular damage and apoptosis. They form photosensitizers in the crystalline lens, which has implications for cataract development. Reduced muscle function is also associated with AGEs.^[36]

Fast food is high in energy density and low in essential micronutrient density, especially zinc (Zn), of which antioxidant processes are dependent. It has been tested that frequent fast food consumption could induce oxidative damage associated with inflammation in weanling male rats in relevance to Zn deprivation, which could adversely affect testis function. Zn and iron (in plasma and testicular tissue), plasma antioxidant vitamins (A, E, and C), as well as testicular Super-Oxide Dismutase (SOD) and reduced Glutathione (GSH), lipid peroxidation indexes [Thio-Barbituric Acid Reactive Substances (TBARS) and Lipoprotein Oxidation Susceptibility (LOS)], inflammatory markers (plasma C-Reactive Protein (CRP), and testicular Tumor Necrosis Factor - Alpha (TNF- α)) were determined in one of the studies. Serum testosterone and histological examination of the testes were performed also. A severe decrease in antioxidant vitamins and Zn, with concomitant iron accumulation was

found. Zinc deficiency correlated positively with SOD, GSH, antioxidant vitamins, and testosterone, and negatively with TBARS, LOS, CRP, and TNF- α , demonstrating a state of oxidative stress and inflammation. It was concluded that micronutrient deficiency, especially Zn, enhanced oxidative stress and inflammation in testicular tissue leading to underdevelopment of testis and decreased testosterone levels.^[37]

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda provides a complete and systemic understanding about the effect of food on our physical and mental functioning. Food taken in proper manner helps in the proper growth of the body on contrary if taken in improper manner leads to various diseases. Thus Ahara play a significant role in causation and curing of the disease. Balanced diet provides natural disease prevention, weight control and proper sleep. A balanced diet is also important because it enables you to meet your daily nutritional needs and enjoy a higher overall quality of life. A balanced diet also enables you to live longer. Regarding the importance of food, Ayurveda quotes various references in each and every step. Acharya Charaka mentioned food is the root cause of both body as well as disease. Ahara is not only meant for maintenance of health but is also very important in the curative aspect while treating various diseases.

The need of the day is to increase awareness and consciousness among the general public about hazards of Incompatible Food. From above discussion we can say that incompatible foods should be considers Similar to poison and artificial poisoning.

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