

## The Role of *Viruddha Ahara* in Disease Manifestation: An *Ayurvedic* Review

Sweety<sup>1</sup>, Amandeep Shrama<sup>2</sup>, Ravi Dabas\*<sup>3</sup>, Shanker Sharan Mishra<sup>4</sup>,

<sup>1,2</sup>Department of Agad Tantra evam Vidhi Vaidyaka, Desh Bhagat University, Mandi Govindgarh, Punjab.

<sup>3</sup>(Ayurveda), Directorate of AYUSH, Govt. of NCT of Delhi.

<sup>4</sup>Department of Agad Tantra evam Vidhi Vaidhkyka, Chaudhary Brahm Prakash Ayurved Charak Sansthan, Govt. of NCT of Delhi.

\*Corresponding author: ravidabas1988@gmail.com

### Abstract

*Ayurveda* gives a lot of importance to *Ahara* (diet) as one of the three basic pillars of life. In classical *ayurvedic* texts, among the various principles of diet, the concept of *Viruddha ahara* (incompatible food) has a prominent place, due to its great effect on health and disease. *Viruddha ahara* refers to the food combinations, methods of processing, quantities, timings or eating habits which are incompatible with the constitution and physiological status of an individual. Regular intake of such incompatible foods creates disturbance in the equilibrium of doshas, hampers *Agni* (digestive fire) and resulted into production of *Ama* (toxic metabolites) that leads to onset of various diseases. The present review is an attempt to explore the concept of *Viruddha ahara*, its classifications, mechanism of action and role in disease manifestation from *Ayurvedic* perspective with special emphasis on its relevance in current day dietary practices.

**Keywords:** *Viruddha ahara*, *ayurveda*, *Agni*, *Ama*, *dosha*, disease manifestation

### Introduction

*Ayurveda* believes that food is the fundamental source of nourishment, vitality and health maintenance. In classical texts it is written that good diet maintains life, while bad dietary habits become a major cause of disease.(1) *Viruddha ahara* is one of the different dietary errors mentioned in *Ayurveda* and is known as a critical factor responsible for disturbing physiological homeostasis. *Viruddha* means opposite, contradictory or antagonistic. *Viruddha Ahara* means food substances and food habits which have adverse effect on the tissues of body and on the metabolic processes, even though they may have nutritional value individually.(2) *Ayurvedic* texts state that incompatible food items, when taken regularly, cause *Dosha* vitiation, tissue dysfunction and disease manifestation. In the present day society changing food habits, processed foods and

unorthodox dietary combinations have led to increased prevalence of dietary incompatibility. Thus the study of *Viruddha ahara* is highly relevant.

### Materials & methods

- 1) Critical literary review.
- 2) Collection of classical references related to Ahara and viruddha ahara.
- 3) Peer- reviewed journals etc. Methodology - Collection of classical references related to ahara and viruddha ahara etc.

### Aim & Objectives-

- 1) To review classical ayurvedic literature regarding ahara and Viruddha Ahara.
- 2) To examine the various categories of viruddha ahara.

### Concept of *viruddha ahara*

*Viruddha Ahara* is defined by *Acharya Charaka* as the food which provokes *doshas* and prevents its elimination and adversely affects the body tissues. Such foods interfere with normal digestion, metabolism, absorption and assimilation of food. *Viruddha ahara* may not produce immediate symptoms but repeated eating, over a period of time, results in pathological changes.(3) The disturbances produced are expressed as impaired digestion, accumulation of toxins, and changes in physiological functions.

### Classification of *viruddha ahara* <sup>(4)</sup>

*Acharya Charaka* described eighteen types of *Viruddha ahara*:

1. *Desha viruddha* (Place incompatibility)- Consumption of foods unsuitable to the geographical region or climate e.g. -

**consumption of alcohol at Ushna pradesh (hot areas).**

2. *Kala viruddha* (Time incompatibility) - Food intake inappropriate to season, age, or time of day e.g.- **consumption of curd during night time.**
3. *Agni viruddha* (Digestive capacity incompatibility) - Food consumed contrary to an individual's digestive strength e.g.- **consumption of meat, black gram etc in the state of food indigestion.**
4. *Matra viruddha* (Quantity incompatibility) - Improper proportions of food ingredients e.g.-**honey & ghee mixed in equal proportion.**
5. *Satmya viruddha* (Habitual incompatibility) - Sudden intake of foods not adapted to the individual's system e.g.- **advice of milk to lactose intolerance individual.**
6. *Dosha viruddha* - Food aggravating already dominant *doshas* e.g.- **Vataja prakriti individual is advice for Vatavardhak aharaa.**
7. *Samskara viruddha* (Processing incompatibility) - Improper processing methods altering food properties adversely e.g.- **eating curd in copper vessel.**
8. *Veerya viruddha* (Potency incompatibility) - Combination of substances possessing opposite potencies, such as hot and cold qualities e.g.- **consumption of milk with salty food.**
9. *Koshtha viruddha* - Food incompatible with bowel constitution e.g.- **consumption of dry, rough fried food articles like jwar, bajara etc by krure koshtha.**

10. *Avastha viruddha* - Food unsuitable to an individual's physiological state e.g.- **consumption of dry, rough fried food articles like *jwar*, *bajara* etc immediately after heavy physical exercise.**
11. *Krama viruddha*- Improper sequence of food consumption e.g.- **taking a bath after a meal.**
12. *Parihara viruddha*- Food incompatible with preceding dietary practices e.g.- **consumption of hot water with pork meat.**
13. *Upachara viruddha* - Incorrect dietary regimen following meals e.g.- **intake of wheat during typhoid infection.**
14. *Paka viruddha* - Improper cooking methods e.g.- **consumption of barbecued meat over fire.**
15. *Samyoga viruddha*- Harmful food combinations e.g.- **combination of fish with milk.**
16. *Hridaya viruddha*- Food disliked by the individual.
17. *Sampat viruddha*- Consumption of poor-quality or spoiled food.
18. *Vidhi viruddha*- Improper dietary habits violating prescribed eating rules.

These combinations are believed to disrupt digestion and metabolism, leading to disease development.

### **Pathogenesis of disease due to *viruddha ahara* <sup>(5)</sup>**

The pathological process induced by *viruddha ahara* can be understood through the following sequence:

*Agnimandya* (Impaired digestion) →  
 Formation of *ama*(6) → *Dosha* vitiation  
*Srotorodha* (channel obstruction) →  
*Dhatu dushti* (tissue damage) → Disease manifestation.

Over time, pathological changes manifest as various diseases depending upon the predominant *dosha* and affected tissues.

### **Diseases Associated with *Viruddha ahara* <sup>(7)</sup>**

Classical texts attribute several disorders to prolonged intake of incompatible foods: Gastrointestinal disorders, indigestion, hyperacidity, abdominal distension, irritable bowel conditions, dermatological disorders, skin allergies, eczema, psoriasis-like conditions, pigmentation disorders, metabolic disorders, obesity, diabetes mellitus, dyslipidemia, autoimmune and inflammatory conditions, chronic inflammatory disorders, joint diseases, immune dysfunction, reproductive disorders, infertility, menstrual irregularities, impaired reproductive health, psychological disturbances, mental fatigue, irritability, reduced cognitive performance

### **Modern Scientific Correlation <sup>(8)</sup>**

The concept of *viruddha ahara* has been derived from *Ayurveda* but many of the modern scientific observations prove its concepts.

- Food-food interactions- Some combinations change nutrient absorption and digestion. □
- Metabolic stress- Incompatible dietary patterns can increase oxidative stress and inflammation.(10)
- Gut dysbiosis- Wrong food combinations may affect the balance of intestinal microbiota.
- Food intolerance and allergy- Some incompatible combinations may be the cause of allergic or hypersensitive reactions.(11) □
- Formation of harmful compounds- Toxic substances may be formed due to improper cooking and processing methods which may affect health.(12)

These observations point to possible scientific explanations for the pathological effects described under *viruddha ahara*.

### Prevention and management <sup>(13)</sup>

The following measures help prevent the adverse effects of *viruddha ahara*:

- Adherence to *Ayurvedic* dietary principles
- Consumption of fresh and wholesome food
- Eating according to digestive capacity
- Avoidance of incompatible food combinations
- Seasonal dietary modifications
- Maintenance of proper meal timing
- Strengthening *agni* through healthy lifestyle practices
- Individual person has different dietary planning on the base of their *Prakriti*.

Whenever Pathology caused by *viruddha ahara*, its *tayurvedic treatment* included *Deepana* (enhancing digestive fire), *Pachana* (digestion of *ama*), *Shodhana* (purification) and appropriate dietary changes are required.

### Discussion

*Viruddha ahara* is an *ayurvedic* approach that looks at how diet relates to health. This idea goes beyond just mixing foods; it also includes things like how foods are processed, when they are eaten, how much is consumed, the climate, digestive ability, and a person's unique nature. Health issues can arise when *Agni* is weakened, *Ama* is formed, and *doshas* become unbalanced. Nowadays, many people's diets include processed foods and unusual combinations that may reflect the dietary conflicts noted in *ayurveda*. Thus, grasping and using the principles of *Viruddha ahara* could play a major role in preventive healthcare.

### Conclusion

The *Viruddha ahara* is one of the basic principles of *ayurveda*, which stresses on

the significance of a balanced diet in the sustenance of good health. The regular intake of an unbalanced diet affects the process of digestion, causes the production of *Ama*, results in an imbalance of the *doshas*, and eventually leads to disease formation. The application of the concept of *Viruddha ahara* in modern-day diets could aid in the advancement of preventive healthcare measures.

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