

**VIRUDDHA AHARA IN AYURVEDA: UNDERSTANDING HARMFUL FOOD PAIRINGS
AND THEIR IMPACT****Prof. Manohar Ram***

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ABSTRACT

Viruddha Ahara is a unique and important idea in *Ayurveda* that explains how certain food combinations can harm the body. This article reviews the concept in detail, focusing on incompatible food pairings and wrong processing methods. According to *Ayurveda*, any diet that disturbs normal body functions, prevents proper tissue formation, or acts opposite to the body's natural properties is called *Viruddha Ahara*. Such incompatibility can happen due to wrong food combinations, improper cooking, incorrect amounts, eating at the wrong time, or during unsuitable seasons. The article also explains modern views on these incompatibilities, such as *Sanskara Viruddha* (wrong processing), *Veerya Viruddha* (opposite potency), and *Samyoga Viruddha* (wrong combination). It also lists common incompatible foods we eat today and explains how they can harm health.

KEYWORDS: *Ayurveda*, incompatible diet, processing, *Viruddha Ahara*, *Agni*, incompatible foods.**INTRODUCTION**

Viruddha Ahara, or incompatible diet, is a distinctive concept widely elaborated in Ayurvedic literature. Ancient scholars emphasized its role as a causative factor for various systemic disorders, ranging from digestive disturbances to chronic metabolic and immune-related conditions. Individuals who habitually consume such incompatible food combinations are considered prone to multiple health issues. Therefore, it becomes essential to understand how these dietary incompatibilities interfere with metabolic processes and contribute to disease development.

According to Charaka,^[1] *Viruddha Ahara* refers to diets and combinations that interrupt the normal metabolism of tissues, inhibit proper tissue formation, or exhibit properties contrary to those of the tissues. These incompatibilities can occur due to various factors, including erroneous food combinations, improper processing methods (*Sanskara*), incorrect quantity (*Matra*), consumption at unsuitable times (*Kala*), or intake during inappropriate seasons (*Desha*). In modern dietary practice, similar incompatibilities can be observed, such as combining dairy with sour fruits, reheating oils, and consuming processed foods with chemical additives. Understanding these interactions is vital not only to preserve digestive balance but also to prevent chronic disorders influenced by diet. This article critically reviews the classical concept of *Viruddha Ahara*, explores its mechanisms, and highlights its relevance in contemporary nutritional science.

In recent years, global epidemiological studies have shown a marked rise in diet-related chronic conditions, including obesity, diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disorders, gastrointestinal issues, and allergic reactions.^[2] These health problems are closely linked to altered eating habits, higher consumption of processed foods, and reduced adherence to traditional dietary guidelines. This trend highlights the growing importance of Ayurvedic dietary principles in tackling modern nutritional challenges.^[3]

Ayurveda literature has described various types of *Viruddha Ahara*^[4] which can be summarized as follows.

1. Desha (place) *Viruddha*
2. Kala *Viruddha*
3. Agni *Viruddha*
4. Matra (quantity) *Viruddha*
5. Satmya (wholesome) *Viruddha*
6. Dosha *Viruddha*
7. Sanskar (mode of preparation) *Viruddha*
8. Veerya (potency) *Viruddha*
9. Koshtha *Viruddha*
10. Avastha (state of health) *Viruddha*
11. Kram (sequence) *Viruddha*
12. Parihar *Viruddha*
13. Upachar (treatment) *Viruddha*
14. Paak (cooking) *Viruddha*
15. Samyoga (combination) *Viruddha*
16. Hriday *Viruddha*
17. Sampad (richness of quality) *Viruddha*

18. Vidhi (rules for eating) Viruddha

8. Parihara Viruddha (Contraindication) – Cold water right after hot tea or coffee.

Examples of Incompatible (Viruddha Ahara) Combinations

1. Veerya Viruddha (Potency Incompatibility) – Combining substances with opposite potencies, such as fish with milk.
2. Sanskara Viruddha (Processing Incompatibility) – Food items that become harmful due to improper processing, for example, heated honey.
3. Matra Viruddha (Quantity Incompatibility) – Consumption of substances in incorrect proportion, such as honey and ghee mixed in equal quantity.
4. Krama Viruddha (Sequence Incompatibility) – Eating or drinking in an improper sequence, such as drinking hot water immediately after taking honey.
5. Kala Viruddha (Time) – Pungent foods in summer, cold foods in winter.
6. Krama Viruddha (Order) – Curd at night; sweet foods at the end, bitter/pungent at the start.
7. Samyoga Viruddha (Combination) – Milk with banana, fruit salad.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Aim: To study the Ayurvedic concept of Viruddha Ahara and its health implications.

Objectives

1. Review Ayurvedic texts on harmful food combinations.
2. Identify associated physiological health impacts.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Materials: Classical Ayurvedic texts, specifically Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, and Ashtanga Hridaya, along with recent scientific journals, articles, and epidemiological studies related to dietary incompatibilities and health impacts were selected as primary sources.

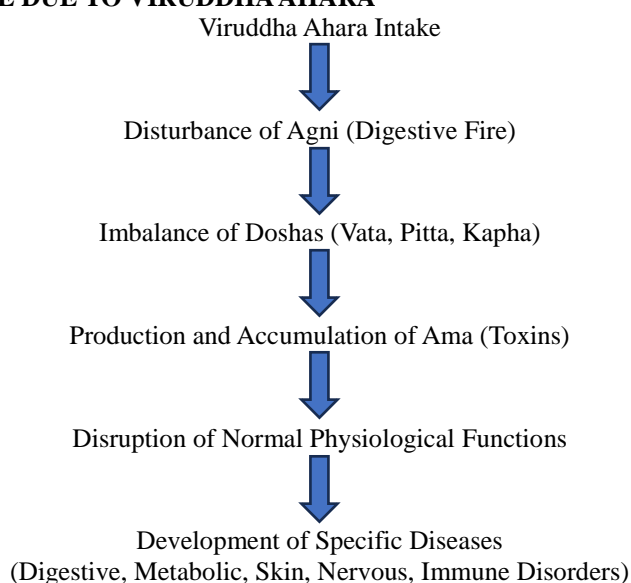
Methods: A systematic literature review was performed to identify descriptions and examples of Viruddha Ahara from the classical Ayurvedic texts.

Types of Viruddha Ahara with Examples^[6]

No.	Type of Viruddha Ahara	Example
1.	Desha Viruddha	a. Consumption of Ruksha (dry) and Tikshna (sharp/penetrating) substances in an arid region (Maru Desha). b. intake of Snigdha (unctuous) and Sheet (cold) substances in a marshy or waterlogged region (Anoopa Desha). Alcohol consumption in hot climates
2.	Kala Viruddha	a. During hot seasons (Grishma and Sharada Ritus), intake of Katu (pungent) and Ushna (hot) substances is not advisable. b. In cold seasons (Hemanta, Shishira, and Vasanta Ritus), consumption of Sheeta (cold) and Ruksha (dry) substances should be avoided. c. According to Sushruta, foods with properties opposite to the season are beneficial, while those with similar qualities can be harmful and may gradually lead to disease. Eating ice-cream during winter
3.	Agni Viruddha	a. Consuming Guru (heavy-to-digest) foods when the digestive power is low (Mandagni). b. Eating Laghu (light) foods when the digestive power is strong (Tikshnagni). c. Taking food inconsistent with the state of digestion, whether irregular or normal. Heavy food during indigestion
4.	Matra Viruddha	a. Consuming honey (Madhu) and ghee (Ghrita) in equal proportions. b. Consuming honey (Madhu) and rainwater in equal proportions. c. Mixing honey and cow's ghee in equal amounts and consuming it. Mixing honey and ghee equally
5.	Satmya Viruddha	a. Consumption of Madhura (sweet) and Sheeta (cold) substances by individuals who are habituated to Katu (pungent) and Ushna (hot) substances. Lactose-intolerant individuals drinking milk
6.	Dosha Viruddha	Adoption of medicines, diet, and lifestyle routines that possess properties similar to the vitiated Dosha, yet differ from the person's accustomed habits. Spicy foods for Pitta dominant persons
7.	Sanskara Viruddha	a. Honey (Madhu) that has been heated. b. Peacock meat roasted on a castor (Eranda) stick. c. Parrot meat cooked by placing it inside a bundle of castor (Ricinus communis) sticks.

		d.Sparrow and peacock meat roasted on a castor spit. Reheating previously used cooking oil
8.	Veerya Viruddha	Substances having Ushna (hot) potency in combination with those of Sheet (cold) potency substances Fish consumption with milk
9.	Krama Viruddha	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. Sweet dishes immediately after heavy meals
10.	Koshtha Viruddha	a.Giving a mild purgative in small quantity to an individual with Krura Koshta (hard or constipated bowel). b.Giving a strong purgative in large quantity to a person with Mridu Koshta (soft bowel). Barbecue foods for constipated individuals
11.	Avastha Viruddha	a.Consuming Vata-aggravating foods after engaging in physical exertion or sexual activity. b.Consuming Kapha-aggravating foods after sleeping or experiencing drowsiness. Alcohol consumption by physically tired individuals
12.	Parihara Viruddha	a.Consuming foods with hot potency after eating boar meat or similar meats. b.Drinking cold water immediately after consuming hot tea or coffee. Cold drinks after spicy food
13.	Paak Viruddha	a.Consuming cold substances after ingesting ghee. b.Drinking hot water after consuming honey (Madhu). Half-cooked or burnt food
14.	Upachar Viruddha	a.Cooking food using contaminated or decayed fuel, and preparing it either undercooked, overcooked, or burnt during the cooking process. Cold water immediately after Snehapana
15.	Samyoga Viruddha	a.Consuming sour substances along with milk. b.Combining milk with fruits, such as in a fruit salad or with banana. Citrus fruits with milk
16.	Hriday Viruddha	a.In short intake of unpleasant food. Consuming food disliked by the person
17.	Sampat Viruddha	a.Intake of substance those are not mature, over matured or putrefied. Over-ripened fruits or chemically treated fruits
18.	Vidhi Viruddha	a.Eating while watching TV or distractions

MECHANISM OF DISEASE DUE TO VIRUDDHA AHARA^[7]



According to Acharya Charaka, regular consumption of Viruddha Ahara (incompatible foods) can lead to a wide range of disorders affecting multiple body systems.^[8]

- **Digestive System:** Conditions such as gastritis, indigestion, malabsorption (*Grahani*), and ascites.
- **Immune System:** Allergic reactions, autoimmune disorders, inflammatory conditions, and various skin diseases.
- **Nervous System:** Mental disturbances including insanity, fainting (*Moorcha*), and neck stiffness.
- **Circulatory System:** Disorders like anaemia (*Pandu*) and hereditary abnormalities (*Santana Dosh*).
- **Others:** Infertility, erysipelas (*Visarpa*), blindness, and chronic rhinitis.

Viruddha Ahara in the Modern Context^[9]

Contemporary eating habits often include several incompatible combinations, such as.

- Chemically processed or genetically modified foods.
- Intake of milk produced using oxytocin injections.
- Combining carbohydrates with acidic fruits (for example, bread with citrus fruits).
- Protein with carbohydrates – For example, combining meat with bread.
- Multiple protein sources together – Such as milk with meat.
- Protein with high-fat foods – For instance, eggs cooked with butter.
- Frequently seen incompatible pairings – Fish with milk, curd consumed at night, and honey mixed with hot substances.
- Here's the paraphrased version:

Preventive and Management Strategies

- **Nidana Parivarjana** (Elimination of the cause): The foremost preventive approach involves avoiding incompatible food combinations.
- **Shodhana Chikitsa** (Detoxification therapies): Includes procedures like *Vamana* (therapeutic emesis) and *Virechana* (therapeutic purgation) to eliminate accumulated toxins.^[10]
- **Shamana Chikitsa** (Palliative measures): Incorporates corrective dietary practices and specific Ayurvedic formulations to restore balance.^[11]

Modern Incompatible Food Combinations and Their Health Implications

Contemporary dietary habits often include food combinations that are considered incompatible from both a traditional and scientific standpoint. Such combinations can interfere with digestion, alter metabolic processes, and predispose individuals to various health disorders. Below are common examples of modern incompatible food pairings along with their potential health risks.

1. **Processed Dairy with Acidic Fruits Examples:** Strawberry yogurt, banana milkshake
Impact: Combining dairy with acidic fruits can lead

to impaired digestion, altered gut microbiota, and increased risk of food allergies due to protein denaturation and enzymatic disturbances.

2. **Reheated Cooking Oils Examples:** Reused oil for frying
Impact: Repeated heating of oils promotes the formation of trans fats and oxidative by-products, which may induce inflammation, oxidative stress, and cardiovascular risk.
3. **Protein and Carbohydrate-Dense Foods Together Examples:** Meat sandwiches, burgers
Impact: Simultaneous intake of protein-rich and carbohydrate-heavy foods can delay gastric emptying, cause fermentation in the gut, and result in digestive disorders such as bloating and gas.
4. **Protein and Fat-Rich Foods Simultaneously Examples:** Cheese omelet, creamy meat dishes
Impact: This combination slows down digestion, contributes to lipid accumulation, and increases cholesterol levels, thereby elevating cardiovascular risk.
5. **Artificial Sweeteners with Dairy or Fruits Examples:** Diet soda with dairy snacks
Impact: Artificial sweeteners may disrupt gut microbiota, cause gastrointestinal discomfort, and alter glucose metabolism when combined with natural food components.
6. **Chemically Ripened Fruits and Preservatives Examples:** Commercial fruit juices, processed canned fruits
Impact: Such combinations increase the body's toxic load, potentially triggering metabolic disorders, allergic reactions, and long-term oxidative damage.
7. **Cold Beverages Immediately After Hot Meals Examples:** Cold drinks consumed post-meal
Impact: Sudden temperature contrast hampers digestive enzyme activity, slows metabolism, and may lead to gastrointestinal disturbances.
8. **Heavy Meals with Milk-Based Beverages Examples:** Milkshakes consumed with rich meals
Impact: This pairing suppresses Agni (digestive fire) from an Ayurvedic perspective and, scientifically, results in sluggish digestion and reduced metabolic efficiency.
9. **Raw and Cooked Foods Consumed Together Examples:** Raw salads served with hot cooked dishes
Impact: Combining raw and cooked foods can cause digestive discomfort, nutrient malabsorption, and microbial imbalances due to varying enzymatic requirements.
10. **Stale or Frequently Reheated Refrigerated Foods Examples:** Reheated bread, leftover pizza
Impact: Repeated reheating promotes the development of advanced glycation end products (AGEs) and other toxins, increasing oxidative stress and digestive ailments.
11. **Hot Beverages with Cold Food Items Examples:** Ice cream with hot coffee or brownies
Impact: Extreme temperature differences cause

digestive shock, impair enzymatic function, and disturb metabolic activity.

FINDINGS

Identification of 18 types of Viruddha Ahara

Viruddha Ahara have been identified in classical Ayurvedic texts, highlighting different forms of incompatibility based on factors such as place (*Desh*), season or time (*Kala*), digestive strength (*Agni*), food combinations (*Samyoga*), methods of preparation (*Sanskara*), and dietary regulations (*Vidhi*).^[12]

Modern dietary practices

Current eating habits often include incompatible food combinations like processed dairy paired with acidic fruits, reheated cooking oils, mixing proteins with carbohydrates, and drinking cold beverages right after hot meals. Such practices are linked to a higher incidence of digestive issues, metabolic disturbances, allergic reactions, chronic inflammation, obesity, and various lifestyle-related disorders.^[13]

Health Implications

Continuous consumption of incompatible food combinations is associated with numerous health problems mentioned in Ayurvedic texts, such as digestive disorders, skin diseases, metabolic syndrome, weakened immunity, and persistent inflammatory conditions.^[14]

Scientific Evidence: Modern research corroborates these Ayurvedic insights, showing that such dietary incompatibilities impair digestive enzyme activity, disrupt gut microbiota, hinder nutrient absorption, and compromise overall metabolic health.^[15]

DISCUSSION

The concept of Viruddha Ahara, as described in classical Ayurvedic texts, holds significant relevance in today's dietary practices. Ayurveda offers a structured explanation of incompatible food combinations and their harmful effects on health—a perspective that is now being increasingly supported by modern nutritional science.^[16]

Classical Ayurvedic texts like Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita classify Viruddha Ahara into various categories, highlighting factors such as seasonal influence, digestive strength, preparation techniques, and inappropriate food combinations. Modern epidemiological studies support this understanding, indicating that incompatible dietary practices significantly contribute to digestive issues, metabolic disorders, skin problems, allergic reactions, and immune system dysfunctions.^[17]

Recent scientific studies reveal that incompatible food combinations can impair enzymatic activity, disrupt gut microbiota, promote toxin accumulation, and place a metabolic burden on the body. These findings validate the Ayurvedic concepts of *Agni Dushti* (disturbance of

digestive fire) and *Ama* (toxic accumulation) as fundamental causes of disease.^[18]

However, despite growing scientific support for these principles, public awareness about Viruddha Ahara remains minimal. Therefore, it is essential to incorporate this knowledge into modern nutritional education and preventive healthcare strategies. Integrating Ayurvedic wisdom with evidence-based nutrition can enable practitioners to guide individuals toward healthier and more balanced dietary habits.^[19]

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