

EXPLORING THE LINK BETWEEN VIRUDDHA AAHAR AND SKIN DISEASES: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Article Received on
02 Feb. 2025,

Revised on 23 Feb. 2025,
Accepted on 15 March 2025

DOI: 10.20959/wjpr20256-36118



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ABSTRACT

In Ayurveda, the Ashraya Ashrayi Bhava concept explains the interdependence between Rakta Dhatu and Pitta Dosha, both possessing Ushna (heat) and Aagneya (fire) properties. An increase in Rakta Dhatu leads to an elevation in Pitta Dosha, contributing to Raktaja and Pittaja disorders. Viruddh Aahar (incompatible diet) disrupts Aahar Rasa formation, affecting Rakta Dhatu metabolism and potentially leading to skin diseases. From a modern perspective, oxidative stress plays a critical role in conditions like dermatitis, psoriasis, and scleroderma, as well as systemic diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, and atherosclerosis. The imbalance between free radicals and antioxidants leads to cellular damage, chronic inflammation, and tissue degeneration. A cross-sectional study in dermatology patients indicated higher scores for incompatible food intake in acne and psoriasis patients. Additionally, the combination of banana and milk demonstrated mild toxicological effects, highlighting the need for dietary awareness in disease prevention.

KEYWORDS: Viruddha Ahar, Amavisha, Agnimandya, Twachavikar.

INTRODUCTION

Etymologically, the word "**Aahar**" refers to the act of eating food or anything that is consumed. The intake of food should be aligned with one's **Agni (digestive fire)**, which varies from person to person. Since Agni is responsible for the digestion and assimilation of food at different levels, it is essential to consume Aahar accordingly.

A healthy diet is a diet that maintains or improves overall health. A balanced diet can be defined as one which contains variety of foods in such quantities and proportion that the need for energy, amino acid, vitamins, minerals, fats, carbohydrates and other nutrients are adequately met for maintaining health, vitality and general well-being and also makes a small provision for extra nutrients to withstand short period of starvation.^[1]

Modern lifestyle changes have significantly altered dietary habits, leading to the **frequent consumption of Viruddh Aahar (incompatible food combinations)**, which is now a common concern.

Improper food combinations can lead to **disturbances in the normal physiological functions** of the human body. These disturbances arise due to incorrect dietary habits such as **Samashan (consuming both Pathya and Apathya foods together)**, **Adhyashan (overeating)**, **Vishamashan (irregular eating patterns)**, or the **consumption of Viruddh Aahar (incompatible foods)**.

Starting with most common example i.e., a cup of tea which is a day starter in every household. Tea contains flavonoids called catechins, which have many beneficial effects on the heart. When milk is added to tea, then a group of proteins in milk, called caseins, interact with the tea to reduce the concentration of catechins. So, tea and milk together should be avoided.^[2]

Additionally, **tea contains anticoagulant compounds (coumarins)**, and when consumed with **garlic**, which also has anti-clotting properties, it may **increase the risk of bleeding**. Another example is **deep-fried potatoes**, which can develop **toxic substances like acrylamide** during frying, potentially leading to **carcinogenic effects**. These examples highlight the importance of consuming food in the right combinations to maintain overall health.

Concept of Viruddh Aahar

According to classical texts, Viruddh Aahar refers to substances that act antagonistically to the body's Dhatus (tissues), leading to imbalances. This antagonism can arise due to incompatibility in properties, combination, processing, place, time, dosage, or natural composition of the food consumed.

The adverse effects of incompatible food combinations are not limited to the gastrointestinal tract but can also disrupt major physiological systems in the body. Viruddh Aahar, also referred to as antagonistic, incompatible, or incorrect food combinations, can interfere with the digestive process, leading to indigestion (Ajirna) or weak digestive fire (Agnimandya).

Any Aahar (food) or Aushadhi (medicine) that aggravates the Doshas without facilitating their proper elimination from the body becomes harmful and is classified as Viruddh Aahar in Ayurveda.

- Opposite properties
- Opposite activities on the tissues
- May exert some unwanted effect on the body when processed in a particular form
- May exert undesirable effects, when combined in certain proportion
- May have unwanted effect if consumed at wrong time.

Viruddha Ahara can trigger **inflammation at the molecular level**, leading to various health disturbances. Ayurveda, as described by **Acharya Charaka** and **Acharya Sushruta**, has documented numerous **food incompatibilities** that can negatively impact the body. However, many of these traditional **dietary combinations are not commonly observed today** due to changes in food habits and lifestyles. Therefore, it is essential to **identify new food incompatibilities** relevant to modern diets from an **Ayurvedic perspective**. Certain **harmful food combinations** can **disrupt immune function, alter cellular metabolism, interfere with growth hormone secretion, and impact Dehydroepiandrosterone sulfate (DHEAS) levels**, potentially leading to long-term health issues. Recognizing and avoiding such combinations can help in **preventing metabolic disorders** and maintaining overall well-being.

The unwanted side effects can emerge inside the body when two or more types of foods are consumed together. Such reactions can be less important but in long term, it can be fatal due to precipitating serious side effects.

There are 18 types of Viruddh mentioned by Acharya Charaka, which are explained below: ³

1. Desh Viruddh: Dhanwan / Jangal / Maru Bhoomi → Ruksha & Tikshna Dravya Anoop Desha → Snigdha & Sheetala Dravya
2. Kaala Viruddh: Sheeta Kaala → intake of Sheetala & Ruksha Aahar/ Aushadh Ushna Kaala → intake of Katu & Ushna Aahar/ Aushadh
3. Agni Viruddh: Intake of Aahar opposite to functioning of four types of Agni
4. Matra Viruddh: Intake of Madhu & Ghrita in equal quantity
5. Satmaya Viruddh: Person who has adapted to Katu Rasa & Ushna Virya Aahar, intake of Madhura Rasa & Sheeta Virya
6. Dosha Viruddh: Intake of Aahar/ Aushadh similar to Dosha
7. Samskar Viruddh: During Samskara if Aahar turns into Visha E.g., in the case of the peacock's flesh roasted on a spit made of a stick of the castor plant
8. Virya Viruddh: When Sheeta Virya and Ushna Virya substances combined together are taken.
9. Kostha Viruddh: Kroor Kostha → Taking food in less quantity or Manda Virya Aahar Mridu Kostha → Taking food in large quantity or Guru Dravya
10. Avastha Viruddh: Shrama, Vyavaya or Vyayama → Vatavardhaka Aahar Nidra, Aalasya → Kaphavardhaka Aahar
11. Krama Viruddh: When one takes food before Mala Mutra Tyaga and without appetite or excessive hunger
12. Parihar Viruddh: Ushna Aahar is taken after intake of Varah Mans
13. Upchara Viruddh: Intake of Sheeta Aahar Aushadhi after Ghrita Sevan
14. Paka Viruddh: Cooking on damaged or bad fuel or if the grains are uncooked, over-cooked or burnt
15. Sanyog Viruddh: Amla Rasa with Dugdha Sevan
16. Hridaya Viruddh: Intake of unliked things
17. Sampad Viruddh: When Rasa in Aahar/Aushadhi is Ajata Rasa, Atikranta Rasa or Vipanna Rasa
18. Vidhi Viruddh: When the Aahar Vidhi Vidhan is not followed

Above mentioned Viruddh leads to occurrence of diseases such as Shandya, Andhya Visarpa, Dakodar, Visphotaka, Unmada, Bhagandara, Murcha, Mada, Adhmana, Galagraha, Pandu, Aama Visha, Kilasa, Kustha, Grahani Gada, Shotha, Amlapitta, Jwara, Peenasa, Santana Dosha & even Mrityu.

Common wrong food combinations according to ministry of AYUSH^[4]

1. Milk is not compatible with fruits, melons, sour fruits, and bananas. It should not be consumed with salty items such as samosa/paratha/khichadi. Don't boil it with tea.
2. Grains should not be consumed with Tapioca and Fruits.
3. One should not consume fruits and milk with vegetables.
4. Beans are the wrong combination with eggs, milk, fish, fruits, yogurt, and meat.
5. Yogurt is to be avoided with cheese, hot drinks, sour fruits, milk, mangoes, nightshades, beans, eggs, and fish.
6. Fat and proteins are mismatched foods as they need different digestive juices.
7. Cheese cannot be paired with eggs, fruits, hot drinks, milk, beans, and yogurt.
8. Proteins are not compatible with starches and their collective consumption may result in delayed digestion.
9. Nightshades (tomato, potato, etc) are not compatible with fruits like cucumber, melon, and dairy products.
10. Milk, yogurt, tomatoes, and cucumber are incompatible with lemons.

Involvement of Rakta Dhatu in Twak Vikar

Rakta is one of the seven Dhatu which plays an important role in providing 'Jeevana' to the human body. Rakta is formed from its preceding Rasa Dhatu and its Mala is Pitta.

Consumption of healthy food leads to formation of healthy Aahar Rasa, which is further responsible for the formation of 'Shudha Rakta'.^[5]

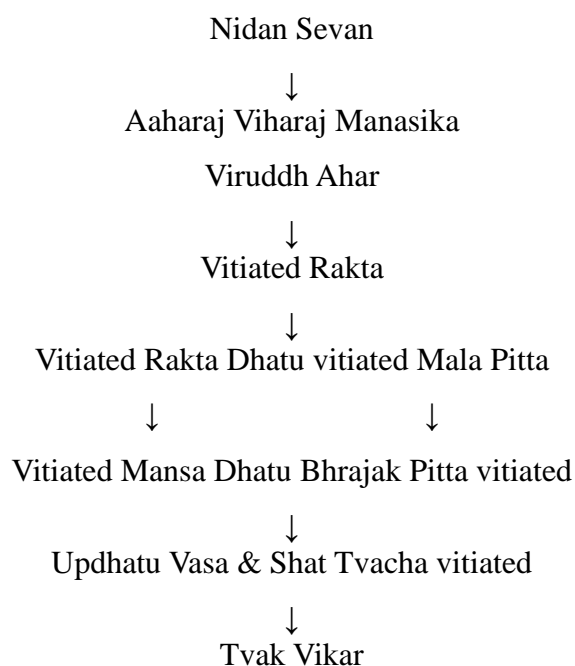
Blood is essential to life, and has several functions. First it functions to transport oxygen and nutrients to the tissues from pulmonary and digestive systems while taking away waste products such as carbon dioxide from the tissues to the pulmonary system. In doing so, it performs an important role in maintaining the pH of the body fluids. Other waste products that are removed from tissues by the blood include lactic acid from muscles, as well as urea and ammonia. It is also important for maintaining body thermal equilibrium as well as in immunity.^[6]

All the following factors lead to vitiation of Rakta Dhatu which is the main trigger in causing various diseases out of which following are the skin diseases.^[7]

Visarpa, Pidika, Kotha, Charmadala, Kustha, Santapa, Kandu, Vaivarnya.

Aaharj Nidan	Viharaj Nidan	Other
Madira Sevan – Dushta, Bahu, Tikshna, Ushna Atirasa Sevan – Lavana, Kshara, Amla, Katu Kulatha, Masha, Nishpav, Til Tail, Pindalu, Mulak, Harita Varga Mansa Sevan – Jalaj, Anoop, Bilshaya, Prasah Dadhi, Kanji, Mastu, Sattu, Sauveer Viruddh Aahar, Klinna/ Pooti Aahar, Ajirna, Adhyshana	Divaswapna after Drava, Snigdha, Guru Sevan Krodha, Aatapanalsevan Chardivega Pratighata Abhighata Krodha Aatap & Vayu Sevan Santapa	Sharadakala

Flow Chart 1: Samprapti of Twak Vikara



Pathophysiology of skin diseases^[8,9,10]

According to **Ayurveda**, the consumption of **Viruddh Aahar** leads to the improper formation of **Aahar Rasa**, the first nutritive essence derived from food. Since **Rakta Dhatu** (blood tissue) is directly formed from **Rasa Dhatu**, its vitiation results in **vitiated Rakta**, which further produces **vitiated Mala Pitta**. **Pitta Dosha**, specifically **Bhrajaka Pitta**, which

resides in the skin, plays a crucial role in maintaining skin health. Disturbances in this **Pitta subtype** due to improper dietary habits can contribute to **various skin disorders**.

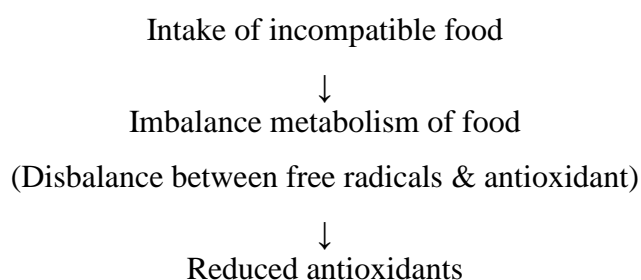
From a **modern perspective**, Viruddh Aahar may not directly align with a specific **pathophysiological mechanism** of skin diseases but can be understood through the concept of **oxidative stress**. Improper assimilation of **Viruddh Aahar** may trigger an **excessive free radical chain reaction**, disrupting cellular balance and **damaging cells**. **Oxidative stress** occurs when free radicals exceed the body's **antioxidant defense system**, leading to **chronic inflammation, collagen fragmentation, and impaired skin cell function**. This imbalance may contribute to **various skin diseases, including cancer**.

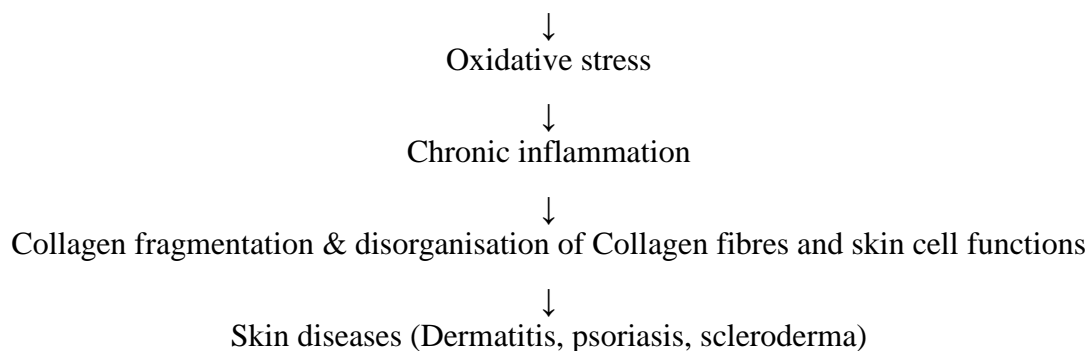
A **cross-sectional, diet-based questionnaire study** was conducted in the **skin outpatient department**, highlighting the **significant role of diet in skin diseases**. The study findings revealed that **patients with acne and psoriasis had higher scores for the consumption of incompatible foods and improper dietary habits** compared to the control group. This underscores the **impact of Viruddh Aahar on skin health** and its potential role in **triggering or exacerbating dermatological conditions**.

The repeated administration of a combination of *Kadaliphala* (banana) and cow milk resulted in a **statistically significant increase in SGOT and urea levels**. Notable variations were observed in **SGOT, urea, and creatinine levels**, along with **histopathological alterations in the heart, liver, and spleen**, suggesting **mild toxicological implications** of this dietary combination. These findings indicate that the combination of **banana and milk may have potential adverse effects on organ function and metabolism**. And continued use of this combination may lead to harmful effects in future.

Immediate negative affects might not be visible to us. Viruddh Aahar can be a hidden factor behind many diseases.

Flow Chart 2: Modern Aspect of Skin Diseases





DISCUSSION

In Ayurveda, the concept of Ashraya Ashrayi Bhava explains the relationship between Rakta Dhatu and Pitta Dosha, highlighting why the vitiation of Rakta leads to the vitiation of Pitta. Since both Rakta and Pitta share Ushna (heat) and Aagneya (fire) properties, an increase in Rakta Dhatu directly elevates Pitta Dosha and vice versa. This imbalance serves as a causative factor for Raktaja (blood-related) and Pittaja (Pitta-dominant) disorders.

From a modern perspective, oxidative stress is a key factor not only in skin diseases such as dermatitis, psoriasis, and scleroderma but also in systemic conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, and atherosclerosis. The disruption in the balance between free radicals and antioxidants contributes to cellular damage, chronic inflammation, and disease progression.

The *Charaka Samhita* describes 18 types of *Viruddh Aahar* (incompatible food combinations), which are essentially factors that can disrupt physiological balance in the body. Based on this concept, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- 1. Desha and Kala-Based Diet:** Food should be consumed based on regional (*Desha*) and seasonal (*Kala*) variations. India's diverse geography leads to distinct dietary patterns. For example, in summer, a diet rich in fluids and electrolytes helps prevent dehydration, while in winter, a protein and carbohydrate-rich diet supports thermoregulation and energy production.
- 2. Individualized Nutrition:** Factors such as *Agni* (digestive fire), *Matra* (quantity), *Satmya* (compatibility), *Dosha* (body constitution), and *Koshtha* (bowel nature) vary among individuals. Hence, diet should be personalized to maintain physiological balance.
- 3. Sanskar (Processing of Food):** *Sanskar* refers to modifications in food properties through methods like boiling (*Jala*), heating (*Agni*), purification (*Shuchi*), churning (*Manthan*), and time adaptation (*Kala-Apkarsha*). These transformations can have both

positive and negative effects, emphasizing the need for proper food processing to ensure health benefits.

4. Consuming foods with opposing *Virya* (potency), such as *Ushna* (hot) and *Sheeta* (cold), can lead to indigestion. This imbalance may trigger gastric vasoconstriction, slow down gastrointestinal peristalsis, and reduce digestive juice secretion. Additionally, a drop in temperature can decrease the activity of digestive enzymes, further impairing digestion.
5. After engaging in strenuous activities like *Vyayama* (exercise) or *Maithuna* (sexual activity), the body requires a nourishing diet to restore energy and maintain balance. Consuming *Vatavardhak Aahar* (foods that aggravate *Vata Dosha*) in such conditions can lead to increased weakness and depletion of bodily strength. Therefore, post-activity nutrition should focus on rejuvenation and nourishment rather than aggravating imbalances.
6. **Paka Viruddh** emphasizes the importance of cooking food hygienically and thoroughly. Consumption of raw or improperly cooked food, especially contaminated meat, water, or food infected with bacteria or viruses, can lead to serious diseases such as neurocysticercosis, food poisoning, or cholera. Proper cooking practices help eliminate pathogens and reduce health risks.
7. **Sanyog Viruddh** refers to incompatible food combinations, such as milk and *Amla Rasa* (sour foods). During digestion, milk undergoes coagulation due to pepsin-induced hydrolysis of casein micelles and milk fat globules, which can delay gastric emptying. Combining milk with sour substances may further aggravate this process, leading to digestive discomfort.
8. Additionally, when an individual smells or consumes their favorite foods, salivation increases compared to consuming disliked foods. The appetite-regulating area of the brain, located near the parasympathetic centers in the anterior hypothalamus, plays a role in this process, ultimately aiding digestion.

CONCLUSION

The consumption of Viruddh Aahar (incompatible food) is one of the key factors contributing to skin diseases. Understanding the pathophysiology of these diseases can provide alternative approaches for treatment. Management can be carried out at different levels, starting with the intake of the right kind of food. Once a disease occurs, it can be treated at the Dosha or Dhatu level, focusing on vitiated Rakta or Pitta Dosha. Prevention plays a crucial role, as avoiding

incompatible food combinations can help halt diseases at their initial stage, aligning with the Ayurvedic principle of Nidaan Parivarjan—the first step in disease prevention.

Ayurveda emphasizes not only disease management but also healing through food, eliminating the need for drugs if dietary care is taken at the right stage. Educating people about healthy eating practices is essential, particularly in modern times where dietary patterns have significantly changed. Viruddh Aahar is not just about eating incorrect food combinations; it also highlights proper cooking methods and the timing of food consumption. Adhering to Aahar Vidhi Vidhan (ten dietary guidelines) can help maintain a disease-free life. By improving our diet and minimizing food incompatibilities, we can promote better health and well-being.

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