

AYURVEDIC UNDERSTANDING OF VIRUDDHA AHARA AND ITS ROLE IN 21ST-CENTURY DISEASE CAUSATION

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Article Received on 15 Dec. 2025,
Article Revised on 05 Jan. 2026,
Article Published on 16 Jan. 2026,

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18255829>

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How to cite this Article: Dr. Gopal S. Gayakwad^{*1}, Dr. Vikas Digambar Waghmare² (2026). Ayurvedic Understanding Of Viruddha Ahara And Its Role In 21st-Century Disease Causation. World Journal of Pharmaceutical Research, 15(2), 185–191.

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ABSTRACT

Viruddha Ahara (incompatible diet) is a distinctive and fundamental concept elaborated in classical Ayurvedic literature, particularly in *Charaka Samhita* and *Aṣṭanga Hṛdaya*. Ayurveda states that *Ahara* is the primary sustaining factor of life and when consumed appropriately, it promotes health, strength, and longevity; however, when consumed incompatibly, it becomes a potent causative factor for disease. *Viruddha Ahara* refers to food that is incompatible due to improper *Samyoga* (combination), *Samskara* (processing), *Matra* (quantity), *Kala* (time), *Veerya* (potency), *Agni*, *Desa*, and *Prakriti*. Such intake leads to *Agnimandya*, *Dosha Prakopa*, impaired *Dhatu Paka*, and formation of *Ama*. Habitual consumption of *Viruddha Ahara* acts as a causative factor for diseases like, *Kushtha Grahani*, *Amlapitta*, and *Unmada*. Understanding *Viruddha Ahara* is essential for *Swasthavritta*, disease prevention, and *Ahara vidhi* based lifestyle modification in contemporary health care. In the present era, the consumption of incompatible food (*Viruddha Ahara*) has

increased significantly, resulting in various hazardous effects on health. This article aims to elucidate the classical concept of *Viruddha Ahara* and its relevance in contemporary dietary practices. It also describes different types of incompatibilities such as *Samskara Viruddha*,

Veerya Viruddha, and *Samyoga Viruddha* from a modern perspective. Commonly consumed incompatible food combinations and their adverse health effects are also highlighted.

KEYWORDS: *Viruddha Ahara*, Diseases, lifestyle, Health, Dietary practices.

1. INTRODUCTION

Viruddha Ahara (incompatible diet) is a distinctive and fundamental concept elaborated in classical Ayurvedic literature, particularly in *Charaka Samhita* and *Astanga Hṛdaya*. Ayurveda states that *Ahara* is the primary sustaining factor of life, and when consumed appropriately, it promotes health, strength, and longevity; however, when consumed incompatibly, it becomes a potent causative factor for disease.

1.1 Definition of *Viruddha Ahara*

Viruddha Ahara is defined as any type of food or dietary practice that disturbs *Agni*, vitiates *Doshas*, and obstructs *Dhatu-Paka* (tissue metabolism) because of improper combination (*Samyoga*), incorrect processing (*Samskara*), opposing potency (*Virya*), inappropriate quantity (*Matra*), inappropriate time (*Kala*), or incompatibility with the individual constitution (*Prakṛiti*).^[1] *Desha Viruddha*, *Kala Viruddha*, *Agni Viruddha*, *Matra Viruddha*, *Samyoga Viruddha*, *Sanskara Viruddha*, and *Virya Viruddha* have a few of the eighteen types of incompatibilities (*Aṣṭādaśa Viruddhatva*) listed in classical texts.^[2]

According to *Acharya Charaka*, eating *Viruddha Ahara* on a regular basis causes *Ama* to form, induces a persistent Doshic imbalance, and becomes the primary cause of disorders like *Kustha*, *Shotha*, *Grahaṇi*, *Amlapitta*, *Unmada*, and even *Visha-Sadrushya* (toxic-like) effects in the body.

Additionally, the review discusses the potential health risks associated with common incompatible dietary practices in today's lifestyles, such as consuming heated honey, milk with sour or salty substances, fruit with dairy, and improper food processing methods. The importance of *Viruddha Ahara* in lifestyle modification, dietary counselling, and preventive medicine is emphasized, highlighting Ayurveda's timeless dietary wisdom in the context of modern nutritional science.

1.2 Types of incompatible diet^[3]

Various forms of *Viruddha Ahara* have been described in Ayurvedic literature, which can be summarized together as follows.

- 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.

Examples of incompatibility/antagonistic (*Viruddha-Aahara*).

Sr. No.	Type of <i>Viruddha Ahara</i>	Description	Examples
1	<i>Desh Viruddha</i> (Place incompatibility)	Intake of food unsuitable to the geographical or environmental conditions of a region	Curd, cheese, excess rice, seafood in marshy regions; Alcohol or avoidance of ghee and oil in desert regions
2	<i>Kala Viruddha</i> (Time/season incompatibility)	Consumption of food inappropriate to season or time leading to <i>Tridosha</i> imbalance	Ice cream, milkshakes, cold drinks in winter; Excess tea, coffee, spices, alcohol in summer
3	<i>Agni Viruddha</i> (Digestive incompatibility)	Intake of food without considering digestive capacity	Heavy food when <i>Agni</i> is weak; Light food when <i>Agni</i> is sharp; Irregular eating in <i>Vishama Agni</i>
4	<i>Matra Viruddha</i> (Quantity incompatibility)	Harmful effects due to improper proportion of foods	Honey and cow's ghee in equal quantity
5	<i>Satmya Viruddha</i> (Habit incompatibility)	Intake of food unsuitable to individual habituation	Cold and sweet food in persons habituated to hot and pungent food
6	<i>Dosha Viruddha</i>	Regular intake of foods aggravating the dominant <i>Dosha</i>	<i>Vata Prakriti</i> - dry, roasted food; <i>Pitta Prakriti</i> - tea, coffee, oily and spicy food; <i>Kapha Prakriti</i> - curd, black gram
7	<i>Sanskar Viruddha</i> (Processing incompatibility)	Improper method of preparation producing harmful effects	Heated honey (commercial honey)
8	<i>Veerya Viruddha</i> (Potency incompatibility)	Combination of substances having opposite potency	Fish and milk
9	<i>Kostha Viruddha</i>	Diet incompatible with bowel nature	Bread and biscuits in <i>Krura Kostha</i> individuals
10	<i>Awastha Viruddha</i> (State incompatibility)	Intake of food inappropriate to physical condition or activity	Intake of <i>Vata</i> -aggravating food after exertion; <i>Chana</i> or <i>Poha</i> after brisk walking
11	<i>Krama Viruddha</i> (Sequence incompatibility)	Improper order or timing of food intake	Taking sweets at the end of meals; Hot water after honey
12	<i>Parihar Viruddha</i> (Contraindication incompatibility)	Ignoring prescribed precautions during or after treatment	Drinking cold water right away subsequent to having hot tea or coffee.
13	<i>Upachar Viruddha</i> (Therapeutic-incompatibility)	Violation of dietary precautions after medication	Cold water after intake of ghee

14	Pak Viruddha (Cooking-incompatibility)	Improper cooking methods or use of spoiled fuel or oil	Undercooked food; Reused oil; Food prepared with spoiled fuel
15	Sanyoga Viruddha (Combination incompatibility)	Harmful food combinations	Fruit salad; Milk and banana
16	Hriday Viruddha (Mental aversion incompatibility)	Consumption of disliked food affecting mental state and digestion	Intake of unpleasant or unpalatable food
17	Sampad Viruddha (Quality incompatibility)	Intake of inferior or adulterated food	Chemically fertilized vegetables; Over-mature or stale food
18	Vidhi Viruddha (Violation of dietary rules)	Eating against prescribed dietary conduct	Eating while walking; Buffet-style eating

1.3 Diseases due to *Viruddha Ahara*

Viruddha Aahara can cause the diseases listed below if the aforementioned dietary guidelines are not followed.

A) According to Acharya Charaka^[4]: Impotency, blindness, *Visarpa* (erysipelas), ascitis, bullus, insanity, fistula in ano, coma or fainting, intoxication, abdominal distention, neck stiffness, *Galagraha*, various forms of anaemia, indigestion, skin conditions, intestinal disorders, swelling, gastritis, fever, rhinitis, infertility and even result in death.

B) According to Acharya Vaghbhata^[5]: Consumption of *Viruddha Ahara* (incompatible food) causes disorders such as convulsions (*Vikshepa*), grief or depression (*Shoka*), intoxication or mental derangement (*Mada*), abscess (*Vidradhi*), abdominal lump or tumor (*Gulma*), tuberculosis (*Yakshma*), and leads to destruction of vitality (*Teja*), strength (*Bala*), loss of memory (*Smriti Nasha*), intellect (*Mati*), impairment of the sense organs (*Indriya Nasha*), and destruction or loss of mental stability (*Chitta Nasha*); it also produces fever (*Jwara*).

The aforementioned list makes clear that *Viruddha Anna* has an effect up to *Shukra Dhatu Dushti* and can cause conditions up to impotence and infertility. The immune system, endocrine system, digestive system, nervous system, and circulatory system are all impacted by ongoing *Viruddha Ahara* consumption, if the aforementioned list of illnesses is categorized according to the body systems.

1.4 21st-Century Perspective

Viruddha Ahara is known to trigger harmful processes, including inflammation at the molecular level. Classical Ayurvedic texts like the Charaka Samhita and Sushruta Samhita discuss many types of food incompatibilities; however, many of these combinations are not

commonly practiced today. As dietary habits and lifestyles change, it is important to identify new forms of food incompatibilities that occur in everyday life from an Ayurvedic viewpoint. These modern incompatible dietary practices can be organized into different categories of *Viruddha Ahara*, such as *Karma Viruddha*, *Krama Viruddha*, *Veerya Viruddha*, and others.

Food Combination	Reason for Incompatibility (Modern Explanation)	Possible Health Effects	Ayurvedic Perspective (Type of Viruddha)
Green tea / dark tea with milk ^[6]	Catechins (flavonoids) present in tea bind with casein proteins of milk, reducing catechin bioavailability	Reduced cardioprotective and antioxidant benefits of tea	<i>Veerya Viruddha</i> , <i>Samyoga Viruddha</i>
Milk and yogurt together ^[7]	Co-consumption may cause milk protein precipitation and digestive disturbance	Nausea, gastric discomfort, vomiting	<i>Samyoga Viruddha</i> , <i>Agni Viruddha</i>
Tea and garlic ^[8]	Tea contains coumarins (anticoagulants); garlic also has antiplatelet activity	Increased risk of bleeding	<i>Veerya Viruddha</i> , <i>Karma Viruddha</i>
Pomegranate juice and grapefruit juice ^[7]	Both inhibit cytochrome P450 (CYP3A4) enzymes in the gut, increasing drug bioavailability	Potential drug toxicity due to elevated blood drug levels	<i>Karma Viruddha</i> , <i>Samyoga Viruddha</i>
Unripe (green) tomatoes or potatoes with alcohol ^[7]	Unripe vegetables contain solanine, which may interact with alcohol	Increased sedation, toxicity	<i>Avastha Viruddha</i> , <i>Veerya Viruddha</i>

1.5 Pathogenesis^[9]

Regular consumption of *Viruddha Ahara*

(Processed foods, fast foods, incompatible combinations, irregular eating habits)

↓
Opposition of *Guna*, *Rasa*, *Veerya*, *Vipak* and improper *Krama*
(*Samyoga*, *Veerya*, *Karma Viruddha*)

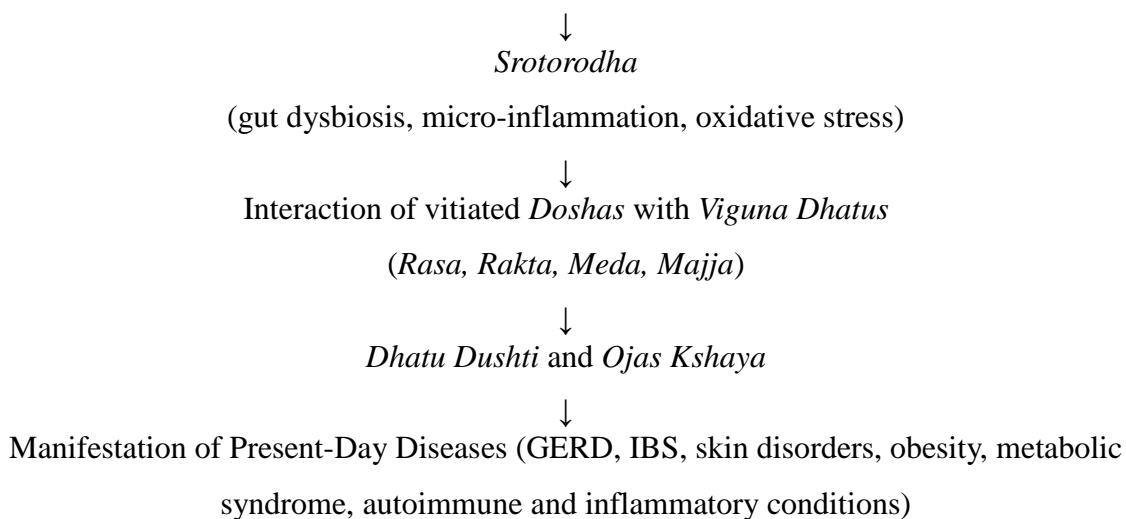
↓
Aggravation of *Sharirastha Prakruti Doshas*
(*Vata*, *Pitta*, *Kapha*)

↓
Doshas are not eliminated from the body

↓
Agnimandya (*Jatharagni* & *Dhatvagni* dysfunction)

↓
Ama formation

(incompletely metabolized, pro-inflammatory metabolites)



2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This review article is based on classical Ayurvedic texts, along with their commentaries. Relevant modern literature was collected from databases Ayurvedic journals using keywords related to *Viruddha Ahara*. The collected information was critically analysed to understand its relevance in present-day diseases.

3. DISCUSSION

Viruddha Ahara disturbs the equilibrium of *Dosha*, *Dhatu*, and *Agni* without being eliminated properly from the body. Regular intake of *Viruddha Ahara* leads to the formation of *Ama*, which acts as the root cause for many diseases.

In the present era, newer forms of *Viruddha Ahara* have emerged due to drastic changes in dietary habits, lifestyle, food processing, and eating patterns. Modern dietary practices such as consumption of fast foods, ultra-processed foods, reheated or preserved foods, incompatible combinations (e.g., milk with salty or sour foods, fruits with heavy meals), irregular meal timings, and eating without proper digestion of previous meals represent contemporary forms of *Viruddha Ahara*. These practices directly impair *Jatharagni* and *Dhatvagni*, leading to chronic metabolic disturbances. Resulting in metabolic disorders, increasing prevalence of lifestyle diseases, autoimmune conditions, and psychosomatic disorders can be correlated with long-term consumption of *Viruddha Ahara*.

Further, *Viruddha Ahara* is also implicated in mental and neurological disorders. Classical references mention impairment of *Medha*, *Smriti*, and *Indriya* due to incompatible diet. In today's context, rising incidences of anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, and cognitive

dysfunction can be partially attributed to faulty dietary combinations and disturbed gut–brain axis, supporting the timeless relevance of Ayurvedic dietary principles. Incorporating Ayurvedic dietary guidelines along with modern nutritional science can offer a holistic approach to managing and preventing lifestyle disorders in the 21st century.

4. CONCLUSION

It is understood from the discussion above that *Viruddha Ahara* has a significant role in the unhealthy eating habits of today. Patients may unknowingly contract a number of dangerous illnesses as a result.

As a result, it's critical to identify the causative incompatible dietary factors and educate patients on how to avoid these etiologic factors. Additionally, the paper creates a new avenue for Ayurvedic dietetics research by examining a range of incompatible factors to see how they affect.

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