

CONCEPT OF VIRUDDHA AHARA AND ITS ROLE IN THE CAUSE AND PREVENTION OF HRIDYA ROGA

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ABSTRACT

Background & Aim: *Viruddha Ahara* (dietary incompatibilities) represents a critical yet underestimated etiological factor in modern lifestyle disorders, particularly *Hridya Roga* (cardiovascular diseases). This review synthesizes classical Ayurvedic concepts from the *Brihatrayi* and *Laghutrayi* alongside contemporary pathophysiology to elucidate how dietary incompatibilities trigger metabolic and vascular dysfunction. **Materials & Methods:** A comprehensive literary search was performed across classical Ayurvedic texts (*Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, *Ashtanga Hridayam*, etc.) and electronic medical databases. Classical principles were cross-analyzed with modern concepts of oxidative stress, endothelial damage, and chronic systemic inflammation. **Discussion / Key Findings:** Habitual

consumption of incompatible foods impairs digestive fire (*Agnimandya*), generating a toxic metabolic byproduct (*Ama*). Circulating *Ama* vitiates plasma and blood elements (*Rasa-Rakta Dhatu*), eventually occluding vascular channels (*Srotorodha*). Modern culinary equivalents such as consuming trans-fats with sugars, re-heating frying oils (*Samskara Viruddha*), or combining opposing food qualities (*Veerya Viruddha*) correlate with the formation of Advanced Glycation End-products (AGEs), elevated ox-LDL, and gut dysbiosis. Preventive strategies rely on eliminating incompatible foods (*Nidana Parivarjana*), bio-cleansing therapies (*Shodhana*), digestive stimulants (*Deepana-Pachana*), and specific cardioprotective

herbs (*Hridya Dravyas* like *Arjuna* and *Lashuna*). **Conclusion:** Re-evaluating modern dietary habits through the lens of *Viruddha Ahara* provides an effective preventive framework against diet-induced cardiovascular conditions.

KEYWORDS: *Viruddha Ahara*, *Hridya Roga*, Cardiovascular Disease, *Ama*, *Srotorodha*, *Brihatrayi*, *Laghutrayi*, Endothelial Dysfunction

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda places primary emphasis on preventive health, identifying dietary habits (*Ahara*) as a core pillar of wellness and disease development. A foundational concept in classical texts is *Viruddha Ahara* substances or food combinations that disturb the body's internal humors (*Doshas*) without assisting in their proper elimination. Charaka defines *Viruddha* as any dietary agent that provokes the *Doshas* from their physiological sites while failing to expel them from the body, initiating pathological changes. The pathophysiology of diseases begins with improper food habits. Poor dietary choices play a significant role in the development of lifestyle diseases. Conditions such as hypertension, diabetes mellitus, dyslipidaemia, and obesity, often linked to cardiovascular diseases, are rapidly on the rise.^[1] The prevalence of these illnesses has sharply increased in India as a result of the country's recent rapid economic growth and growing westernization of lifestyle. The Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) reported that the burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) has been gradually rising, accounting for 61.8% of fatalities in India in 2017.^[2] On a global scale, NCDs account for 41 million deaths annually, or 74% of all deaths, with over 15 million people between the ages of 30 and 69 dying prematurely from NCDs each year- 85% of these deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries.^[3] *Viruddha Ahara* is recognized as one of the primary causes of these disorders. The continual consumption of incompatible foods disrupts the function of *Agni* (digestive fire), leading to the accumulation of *Ama* (toxins), which in turn causes disease.^[4] It is critical to comprehend how different food combinations can combine to cause these health problems.

2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

This study presents a comprehensive narrative review of the classical concept of *Viruddha Ahara* from ancient Ayurvedic literature, analyzing its role in the etiology (*Nidana*), pathogenesis (*Samprapti*), and prevention of *Hridya Roga* (cardiovascular diseases). The primary objectives are to compile and analyze literary references on *Viruddha Ahara* from

both the *Brihatrayi* and *Laghutrayi* Samhitas, structure the 18 classical types of *Viruddha Ahara* (*Astadasa Viruddha*) alongside their modern culinary equivalents, detail the pathophysiological sequence (*Samprapti*) of diet-induced *Ama* formation, *Rasa-Rakta Dhatu* vitiation, and *Srotorodha* leading to cardiac pathologies, and highlight preventive (*Nidana Parivarjana*) and therapeutic (*Shodhana, Shamana, Hridya Dravya*) dietary strategies to mitigate cardiovascular risk.

Food Incompatibilities in Today's era

Numerous dietary incompatibilities are described in ancient literature such as the Charaka and Sushruta Samhita, however many of these pairings are uncommon in today's diet. Therefore, from an Ayurvedic perspective, it is necessary to discover new food incompatibilities that are common in modern living. People's dietary habits and lives have changed significantly as a result of the fast urbanization and globalization. Fast food's availability, ease of preparation, and convenience have made it a staple of everyday life. However, due to incorrect processing and inappropriate food pairings, the majority of fast food and junk food items are classified as *Viruddha Ahara*. Fast food is usually high in calorie density but low in essential micronutrients, especially zinc, which is essential for antioxidant processes. Examples of such foods include chicken burgers, pizzas, packaged salty snacks, carbonated drinks, processed and canned foods, milkshakes with fruit salads, buffet-style meals, and more. These foods are becoming *Viruddha* due to incompatible food combinations, incorrect preparation methods, and low nutrient value.

According to Acharya Charaka^[5]

यत्किञ्चिद् दोषमुत्क्लेश्य न निर्हरति कायतः।आहारजातं तत्सर्वं विरुद्धायापपद्यते॥ (च.सू. 26/85)

Food or medicinal substances that disturb the Doshas from their natural sites without facilitating their proper elimination from the body are termed *Viruddha* (incompatible). Such agents aggravate the Doshas, causing imbalance and pathological changes, as they mobilize them but fail to expel them effectively.

Types of *Viruddha ahara*

18 types of *Viruddha ahara* are mentioned in Charaka Samhitha^[6]

S.No.	Types of viruddha ahara	examples
1.	Desha Viruddha (place incompatibility)	Ruksha, Teekshna Dravyas in Jangala Desha (dry region)
2.	Kala Viruddha (time	Consuming curd at night

	incompatibility)	
3.	AgniViruddha (digestive incompatibility)	Overeating when there is Agnimandya(low digesting power)
4.	Matra Viruddha (dose incompatibility)	Mixing equal quantities by weight of honey and ghee.
5.	Satmya Viruddha (suitable incompatibility)	Person habit of hot, pungent substances consuming sweet, cold
6.	Dosha Viruddha (dosha incompatibility)	Vata Rogi taking Vatakara Ahara(food which aggravates vata dosha)
7.	Sanskar Viruddha (preparation incompatibility)	Directly heating raw honey or frying food in burnt, re-used oil.
8.	Veerya Viruddha (potency incompatibility)	Combining cold-potency items with hot-potency items (Fish & milk)
9.	Koshtha Viruddha (gut incompatibility)	Mild laxative in chronic constipation
10.	Avastha Viruddha (health incompatibility)	Kaphavardhaka Ahara to sleepy, lazy individual
11.	Krama Viruddha (sequence incompatibility)	Hot water after taking honey
12.	Parihar Viruddha (contraindication incompatibility)	Cold water after hot tea
13.	Upachar Viruddha (indication incompatibility)	Consuming cooling items like ice cream immediately after a sweating therapy (<i>Svedana</i>).
14.	Paak Viruddha (cooking incompatibility)	Eating undercooked, overcooked, or partially charred food.
15.	Samyoga Viruddha (combination incompatibility)	Mixing sour fruits (like strawberries or citrus) with milk, which causes curdling and blocks <i>Srotas</i> .
16.	Hridya Viruddha (palatable incompatibility)	Phobia towards objects/ things
17.	Sampad Viruddha (property incompatibility)	Incompatibility due to the quality/state of the substance e.g., unripe, excessively ripe or putrefied food.
18.	Vidhi Viruddha (rules incompatibility)	Eating in public/noisy environments, talking while chewing, or rushing through meals.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Classical Literature: *Charaka Samhita*, *Sushruta Samhita*, and *Ashtanga Hridayam* were reviewed alongside key minor texts (*Laghutrayi*, *Bhavaprakasha*, *Sharangdhara Samhita*) to extract concepts regarding *Viruddha Ahara*, *Ama*, *Srotorodha*, and *Hridya Roga*.

Modern Literature Search: Electronic databases including PubMed, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate were searched using key terms: *Viruddha Ahara*, *food incompatibility*, *Ama*, *endothelial dysfunction*, *lipid peroxidation*, and *advanced glycation end-products (AGEs)*.

Mode of Action of Viruddha ahara

Lifestyle diseases have become increasingly common in today's era, primarily stemming from poor dietary habits. The prevalence of conditions such as hypertension, diabetes mellitus, dyslipidaemia, and obesity, which are closely linked to cardiovascular diseases, is rising rapidly. Cardiovascular diseases are responsible for the majority of non-communicable disease (NCD) deaths, claiming around 17.9 million lives each year, followed by cancers (9.3 million), respiratory diseases (4.1 million), and diabetes (1.5 million). Together, these four disease categories account for more than 80% of all premature NCD-related deaths.^[7] Viruddha Ahara has the ability to cause molecular inflammation. These incompatible dietary combinations result in toxins that have detrimental effects on growth hormones, cellular metabolism, and the immunological system. After incompatible foods are digested, the body's metabolism produces proteins that can harm essential organs on a cellular and molecular level.^[8] The severity of these harmful effects depends on factors such as the quantity of the toxic substance, its antigenicity, the duration of exposure, the individual's immune compatibility, and their age.

Viruddha Ahara starts the pathogenesis by upsetting the Agni balance, which is essential for both the nutrition of the body's tissues (Dhatus) and the digestion and transformation of food. Long-term ingestion of unsuitable meals leads to the production of Ama, a poison that obstructs the body's channels. This obstruction, known as Srothorodha, can cause a variety of acute and chronic illnesses, the severity of which depends on the type and length of time that incompatible food combinations are consumed.^[9]

Frequent use of Viruddha Ahara can cause cellular inflammation by interfering with the eicosanoid pathway, which raises arachidonic acid and boosts prostaglandin-2 and thromboxane synthesis. Because these imbalances lead to Agni Mandya, the development of Ama, and other metabolic diseases, this inflammatory response is important.^[10]

5. DISCUSSION

The etiopathogenesis (*Samprapti*) of diet-induced *Hridya Roga* centers around the heart (*Hridaya*), which is an essential *Marma* and the seat of *Vyana Vayu* (governing blood circulation and cardiac contraction), *Sadhaka Pitta*, *Kledaka/Avalambaka Kapha*, and *Ojas*. The progression from habitual *Viruddha Ahara* intake to cardiac disease begins with *Agnimandya*, where incompatible pairings overburden gastric and pancreatic digestive

capacity, weakening *Jatharagni*. Incomplete digestion leads to *Ama Udbhava*, generating a sticky, toxic, un-metabolized byproduct characterized by high viscosity and acidity. This *Ama* enters systemic circulation and mixes with *Rasa Dhatu* to form *Ama-Rasa*, causing *Rasa-Rakta Dhatu Dushti*, which alters blood viscosity and impairs oxygen transport. As circulating *Ama-Rasa* adheres to the delicate inner walls of cardiac blood vessels (*Hridaya Srotas / Dhamani*), it causes structural vascular narrowing (*Srotorodha*) and arterial wall thickening (*Dhamani Prachaya*). This local blockage triggers *Dosha Vaishamyas*: aggravated *Vyana Vayu* causes arterial spasms, irregular rhythms (*Hrid-Gati Vaishamyas*), and chest pain (*Hritshoola*); aggravated *Sadhaka Pitta* drives local metabolic heat, oxidative damage, and vascular wall inflammation; and aggravated *Kledaka/Avalambaka Kapha* promotes lipid accumulation and atheromatous plaque formation, completing the manifestation of *Hridya Roga*.

This classical Ayurvedic sequence aligns closely with modern biomedical pathology. Incompatible food combinations such as high sugars paired with trans-fats or repeatedly heated cooking oils generate Advanced Glycation End-products (AGEs) and Lipid Peroxides. These molecules act as modern equivalents of *Ama*, triggering low-grade chronic vascular inflammation and damaging the vascular endothelium. Furthermore, processing incompatibilities (*Samskara Viruddha*) and unnatural food pairings alter the gut microbiome, increasing intestinal permeability ("leaky gut"). Translocated bacterial Lipopolysaccharides (LPS) trigger systemic immune activation, accelerating atherogenesis. Continuous intake of foods with opposing potencies (*Veerya Viruddha*) induces oxidative stress, elevating oxidized low-density lipoprotein and cell adhesion molecules which together promote fatty streak formation and arterial calcification. Honey must never be heated directly or mixed with boiling hot water. Exposure to high heat alters its molecular structure, turning its beneficial *Lekhana* quality into a toxic residue (*Ama*) that clogs *Srotas* and causes metabolic dysfunction.

Managing diet-induced heart disease requires a three-pronged approach: *Nidana Parivarjana*, *Shodhana/Shamana*, and *Pathya-Apathya*.^[11] The foundational step, *Nidana Parivarjana*, demands the complete elimination of incompatible dietary practices by discontinuing dairy paired with acidic fruits or seafood, avoiding the re-use of deep-frying oils or overheating of honey, refraining from heavy late-night meals (*Kala Viruddha*), and eliminating ice-cold water during or immediately after warm meals (*Parihara Viruddha*). Therapeutic intervention

through *Shodhana* and *Shamana*, as outlined by Charaka utilizes bio-cleansing therapies such as *Vamana* (therapeutic emesis) and *Virechana* (therapeutic purgation) to clear accumulated *Ama* and vitiated *Kapha-Pitta* from blood vessels, alongside *Deepana-Pachana* formulations like *Trikatu* (Pippali, Maricha, Shunthi), *Hingu*, and *Chitrakadi Vati* to digest circulating toxins and restore *Jatharagni*. Finally, incorporating classical *Hridya Dravya* (cardioprotective botanicals) cleanses vascular channels (*Srotoshodhana*) and supports myocardial function: *Arjuna* (*Terminalia arjuna*) balances *Pitta-Kapha*, strengthens cardiac muscle tone, and improves arterial elasticity; *Lashuna* (*Allium sativum*) exerts a scraping action (*Lekhana*) that reduces *Ama* and arterial lipid buildup; *Pushkarmoola* (*Inula racemosa*) relieves *Vata-Kaphaja* chest pain and reduces coronary spasticity; *Dadima* (Pomegranate - *Punica granatum*) calms *Pitta*, reduces endothelial oxidative stress, and maintains vascular flow; and *Gokshura* (*Tribulus terrestris*) acts as a natural diuretic, reducing fluid overload and regulating blood pressure.

6. CONCLUSION

Diet plays a crucial role in addressing the root cause of diseases and promoting overall health. As highlighted in the discussion, *Viruddha Ahara* (incompatible food combinations) is a significant factor contributing to today's unhealthy eating habits. This can lead to a variety of immunological, metabolic, and digestive disorders, as well as severe diseases, often without the individual's awareness. Food incompatibilities act as key etiological factors that disrupt the body's homeostasis in otherwise healthy individuals. *Viruddha Ahara* generates *Ama* in the body, which disturbs the normal balance of the *Doshas*. The rise in lifestyle diseases today is largely attributed to such incompatible dietary practices. Therefore, it is essential to identify and address these dietary factors in the context of metabolic diseases. Raising awareness about the dangers of incompatible food combinations and their role in the development of lifestyle diseases is crucial to reducing the prevalence of lifestyle diseases. In Ayurveda, food is regarded as *Mahabhaishagya*, the great medicine. Thus, we should adopt the principle, "Let food be our medicine, not medicine our food". Government-led awareness campaigns can be integrated into national programs focusing on prevention of lifestyle diseases by educate the public about importance of healthy eating habits will helps to improve health status of society.

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