



Virudha Ahara - The Ayurvedic Insight into Incompatible Food Combinations

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Food is the fundamental requirement for the human survival. Ayurveda described the Trividha Upasthambha (sub-pillars), including Ayurveda Ahara (food) being one of the most important for a healthy lifestyle. Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of eating a well-balanced diet. Virudha Ahara (Incompatible Diet) is a diet that disrupts the body's elemental balance, digestion, metabolism (Agni), and homeostasis leading to the accumulation of Ama (toxins). Consuming two incompatible food items together or adhering to a specific type of diet can result in toxicity, this is referred to as Virudha Ahara (incompatible diet). Virudha Ahara can be caused by consuming food in the inappropriate dose, time of day or season. The article discusses the modern perspectives on Samskara Virudha, Veerya Virudha and so on. These perspectives contain incompatible dietary items that can be harmful to a person's health. Ayurvedic literature describes food incompatibility as Gara Visha. This term refers to a substance's toxic effects that become apparent over time. This article focussed on unhealthy food habits that speed up the catabolic process in our bodies.

Keywords: Ayurveda, Virudha Ahara, incompatible food

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Introduction

Ahara (Food), Nidra (Sleep) and Brahmacharya (Celibacy) are the three fundamental pillars of Shareera (body) and the primary requirement for viability is Ahara (food). Ahara (food) is accountable for both Arogya (health) and Vyadhi (disease). According to Vidhi (Dietary regimen), consuming Hita Ahara (compatible diet) promotes Bala (strength), Varna (complexion) and Indriyaprasadna (sensual nourishment).

According to Acharaya Charaka, certain diets and combinations that disrupt tissue metabolism and inhibit cell formation are known as Virudha Ahara or incompatible foods. Modern technology and biochemistry have made it easier to understand how Virudha Aahar affects our daily lives. Interactions between food and time are a major concern for our nation and the global community. But its effects are not given the lime light because of its gradual toxic action and non-lethal effect. Literal meaning of term Virudha is opposite.

It sounds like a certain food combinations could have:

- Opposite features
- Activities that are contrary to those of the cells or tissues
- May have unintended effects when processed in a specific way,
- May have unintended effects when mixed in a specific amount;
- May have unintended consequences if ingested at an inappropriate time; and many more are yet to be discovered.

Acharyas defined Virudha Ahara using specific words such as:

According to Acharya Charaka

Virudha Ahara refers to food that dislodges doshas but does not eliminate them from the body. Virudha Ahara refers to substances that have an antagonistic effect on Dehadhatu.

According to Acharya Sushruta

In the 20th chapter of Sutrasthana, Hitahitiyam Adhaya, Acharya Sushruta discusses various types of Virudhahara, including Karma Virudha (functionally incompatible),

Maana Virudha (quantitatively incompatible), Samyoga Virudha (unsatisfactory combinations) and Rasa Virudha (incompatibilities between two tastes).

According to Acharya Vagbhatta

Acharya Vagbhatta defines Virudha Ahara as food that dislodges but doesn't eliminate Doshas (morbid humours) from the body.

Ayurveda literature has described various types of Virudha Ahara, which can be summarized as follows:

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

Examples of incompatibility (Virudha-Aahara)

1. Desha Virudha refers to food items that share similar qualities with Desha. It is recommended to consume foods with the opposite qualities as the related Desha. Acharya Charaka identified just Bhumi Desha as Desha Virudha, while Gangadhara explains it as both Bhumi Desha and Sharira Desha Virudha. Eg: -

- Ruksha, Tikshna Ahara in Maru Bhumi like consumption of alcohol in desert land.
- Eating spicy food in a warm geographical area.

2. Kaala Virudha refers to consuming foods with qualities similar to Kaala, such as seasoning. Eg: -

- In Hemant Ritu, Sheet Ahara refers to the consumption of ice cream throughout winter.
- In Grisham Ritu consumption of alcohol.

3. Agni Virudha refers to consuming food without knowing one's Agni, which can be one of four types: Mridu, Madhyama, Tikshna, or Vishama.

Eg: - *Laghu* and *Alpa Matra Aahara* for *Tikshna Agni*, such as ingesting, *Moong dal* soup, *Laja* (Puffed rice), *Kanji*, *Churmura* (popcorn) while really hungry.

4. Matra Virudha refers to some dietary components that act as *Virudha Ahara* when blended in equal parts. Eg: -

- Combine equal parts cow's ghee and honey.
- Radish with milk, Banana with milk etc.

5. Satmya Virudha refers to food that's incompatible with a person's natural tolerance or habitual intake – means what suits one individuals may not suits another. Eg: -

- Someone who is accustomed to *Katu* and *Ushna Ahara* may employ *Madhura* and *Sheeta Ahara*.
- Alcohol for a non- drinker.
- Milk and dairy for lactose-intolerant individuals.

6. Dosha Virudha refers to foods that have qualities similar to *Doshas*, aggravates or imbalance a specific *dosha* and cause *Dosha Dushti*.

Gangadhara classified this phrase into three types

Virudha Dosha based on *Rasa*: *Kashaya Rasa* for *Vata*.

Vyadhi Virruddha: Curd and rice for *Kushtha*.

Dravya Swabhava: Poison (*Dhatu Pradushana Dravya*).

7. Samskar Virudha: During *Samskara* if *Aahar* turns into Eg: -

Reheating Food items - French Fries.

Reheating oil which is used once.

Heated Honey (mixing with hot water, cooking biscuits).

8. Virya Virudha: When *Sheeta Virya* and *Ushna Virya* substances combined together are taken

Eg: - Fish of *Ushna Veerya* consumed with *Sheeta Veerya* Milk.

9. Kostha Virudha: According to *Chakrapani* and *Gangadhara*, *Koshtha Virudha* refers to any substance or food consumed without the individual's knowledge.

Krura Kostha - Consumption of barbecue and baked foods by individuals with constipation, known as *Krura Koshtha*.

Mridu Kostha - *Mridu Koshtha* uses strong laxatives.

10. Krama Virudha refers to consuming foods in the incorrect order.

Eg: For instance, consuming food prior to *Mala Mutra Tyaga* can lead to lack of appetite or hunger.

Desserts after dinner

11. Avastha Virudha Consuming food without exact knowledge of own health & bodily conditions.

Eg: - Labourers consuming alcohol without considering its impact on their health or the physical demands of their work.

12. Parihara Virudha consuming cold food items after hot and spicy food are *Parihara Virudha*. Eg:-

- Cold water after hot tea
- Drinking cold drinks after having hot and spicy food (Pizza, Burgers, Samosa)

13. Upachara Virudha Consumes *Sheetala Jala* after *Ghrita Pana*. Eg: -

- Drinking cold water after taking ghee
- Juice, Alcohol, Alcohol after Hot spicy food.

14. Paka Virudha consumption of substances that are incompatible with proper cooking methods, which can result in food incompatibility. This includes the use of bad or rotten fuel for cooking, undercooking, overcooking, or burning the food during the preparation process. Eg: -

- Half-baked food is *Paak Virudha*.
- Half fried egg

15. Samyoga Virudha Consuming food items which are not supposed to combine with each other is *Samyoga Virudha*. Especially citrus (*Amla*) fruits with milk. Eg: -

- Strawberry milkshake, Banana milkshake, Mango shakes etc.
- Sizzling Browne ice cream with Hot Chocolate.

16. Hridi Virudha Consumption of food which is not liked by one's *Manas*.

Eg: - Decoctions for Children.

17. Sampat Virudha Consumption of diets and drugs that have not yet acquired their natural taste, which have lost their natural taste, or which have an unnatural or bad taste.

Eg: - fruits which haven't fulfilled their original taste or damaged taste or over ripped.

18. Vidhi Virudha Eating in an open place. Eg: -

- Eating food while watching T.V. or talking.
- Popcorn along with a Cold drink

Acharya Sushruta explained the concept of *Virudha Ahara* in Chapter 20.

1. Sanyoga Virudha refers to food items or substances that resemble Consuming animal flesh from villages, marshy places, and water should not be coupled with freshly harvested grains, sprouting grains, muscles, fat, honey, milk, jaggery, or black gram.

2. Karma Virudha refers to food items that become *Visha* after a set period of time when stored together. For example, *Ghrita* stored in a bronze pot for ten days should not be consumed.

3. Mana Virudha: Certain food items should not be combined in specific proportions, as they may become toxic (*Visha*). For example, consuming honey with hot water or honey with *ghee* in equal quantities is considered harmful.

4. Rasa-Virya-Vipaka Virudha: Certain combinations of two tastes are incompatible due to differences in taste, potency, & final taste produced after digestion. For instance, sweet (*Madhura*) combined with sour (*Amla*) or sweet (*Madhura*) with salty (*Lavana*) are examples of *Rasa & Virya*.

Virudha Ahara causes diseases:

Condition (Sanskrit)	Condition (English)
Shandhya	Impotency
Andhya	Blindness
Visarpa	Erysipelas
Jalodara	Ascites
Visphota	Pustules
Unmada	Insanity
Bhagandara	Fistula in ano
Murchha	Coma/Fainting
Mada	Narcosis
Aadhmana	Abdominal distention
Galgraha	Obstruction in throat
Pandu Roga	Anemia
Ama	Endogenous toxin
Kilasa	Leucoderma
Kushtha	Various skin disorders
Grahani	Sprue
Shotha	Swelling or edema
Amlapitta	Acidity
Jwara	Fever
Pinasa	Allergic Rhinitis
Santana Dosha	Infertility problem

Acharyas have elaborated not only on the types and examples of *Virudha Ahara* (incompatible foods) but also on the various diseases that can manifest in the human body as a result of consuming multiple types of such incompatible combinations. These health issues primarily arise due to *Dhatu Dushti* (vitiation of bodily tissues), which, if left unmanaged over time, can lead to severe consequences, including death.

Discussion

According to Ayurvedic texts, certain food items or their combinations are classified as *Virudha Ahara* (incompatible foods), which can harm the *Sharirastha Dhatus* (bodily tissues). *Acharya Charaka*, along with commentators *Chakrapani* and *Gangadhara*, has described a total of 18 types of *Virudha a Ahara*. Consuming such incompatible foods disrupts the balance of *Prakruta Doshas* (natural bodily humors) and deteriorates the *Prakruta Dhatus* (healthy tissues), leading to various diseases. In modern times, changing lifestyles, urbanization, and the growing influence of Western culture have significantly altered the dietary habits of society. There has been a significant shift in food habits and preparation methods from earlier times to the present era. In the fast-paced and competitive lifestyle of the 21st century, individuals often prioritize their ambitions over proper dietary practices. This has led to the frequent consumption of incompatible diets and unhealthy food habits, which are major contributors to various diseases. From this, it is evident that regular intake of *Virudha a Ahara* (incompatible foods) can result in numerous health disorders. *Acharya Charaka* has extensively documented these effects in his *Samhita*.

With increasing modernisation, food plays a very vital role in health. More packaged food, instant food, packed beverages, etc., are preferred to basic well-cooked food. Due to the feasibility and affordability of fast food, people like them more as their meal, neglecting their health. A sedentary lifestyle also plays a significant role; when combined with *Virudha Ahara*, it leads to health issues, commonly lifestyle disorders such as Diabetes Mellitus, obesity, & hypertension, which are silent killers. In pursuit of earning more & maintaining societal standards, people often compromise their health, lifestyle, values, & culture.

Unfortunately, this neglect invites various silent killers into their lives and those of their loved ones, gradually deteriorating health and leading to a painful aging process. Over time, significant changes have occurred in work patterns and dietary habits, contributing to this decline.

To ensure the well-being of future generations, it is crucial to address these unhealthy food and lifestyle patterns. By taking deliberate steps, we can bring about transformative changes in our lives.

A nutritious diet not only enhances physical health but also supports mental well-being, ultimately improving work efficiency and overall quality of life.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it is evident that *Virudha a Ahara* plays a significant role in the improper dietary habits prevalent today. Consumption of such foods can lead to various disorders and, in severe cases, may result in life-threatening diseases.

It is, therefore, crucial to identify and eliminate these incompatible dietary factors (*Nidana Parivarjana*), particularly in children who frequently consume flavoured snacks, fried chips (potato, corn), and similar items. The preservatives and salts used in these products are often associated with carcinogenic effects.

Ahara (food) is not only essential for maintaining health but also plays a vital role in the treatment of various diseases. Patients suffering from food poisoning or adverse effects of preservatives can be treated using similar therapeutic approaches. Raising awareness and educating the general public about the hazards of incompatible foods is of utmost importance.

Acharya Charaka emphasized that diseases caused by the consumption of *Virudha a Ahara* can be managed through therapies such as *Vaman Karma* (medicated emesis), *Virechana* (purgation), administration of antidotes, and taking prophylactic measures. Additionally, adhering to the dietary rules and guidelines outlined in classical Ayurvedic texts is essential.

Laypersons are encouraged to follow *Panchakarma Therapy* as a preventive measure, tailored to specific seasons, as described in Ayurveda, to maintain health and prevent disease.

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