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Time to look upon the Ayurvedic Dietary Habits in the Present Scenario : A Critical Reappraisal

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ABSTRACT

Background: Ayurveda places special emphasis on "Ahara" (diet) and "Anna" (food) as a means to good life, health and wellness. According to the Ayurveda ones who consume *Viruddha Ahara* are prone to many disorders. According to *Acharya Charak* those food substances and combinations, which induce deteriorating action on the body tissues, that is, *Dhatu* can be called as *Viruddha Ahara*. *Acharya Charaka* also pointed out the eighteen dietetic incompatibilities that generate the toxins responsible for generating the pathogenesis systematically or less commonly localized. **Objective:** To conclude the association of *Viruddha Ahar* with disease in the individual who consume these incompatible foods with short and long duration. **Materials and Methods:** A through search of modern medicine and *Ayurvedic* literature through free searching engine like PubMed and Google Scholar are used. Relevant results analysed and draw the conclusion. **Results:** Many studies held in *Ayurvedic* Institutions in India regarding the *Viruddh Ahar* mostly arrived on the conclusion that combinations of certain food items cause certain disease. Even for taking chronically this may cause cancer also. **Conclusion:** There is great need of checking and proving facts enumerated in the old text regarding the *Viruddha Ahar* based on the evidence based Modern medicine. So that it can be applied in modern medicine also. However, In *Ayurvedic* discipline the *Viruddha Ahar* certainly cause the disease depending on the nature, amount, frequency, duration and immunity status of the individual approved in many *Ayurvedic* studies.

Key words: Ayurveda, Diet, Incompatible food, *Viruddha Ahara*.

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda defines health as balance of *Dosha*, *Agni*, *Dhatu* and *Mala* as well as the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. This definition of health is in coherence with WHO's definition of Health is a Physical, mental, Social and spiritual wellbeing and

not merely an absence of disease. Healthy life depends on proper nutrition. According to *Ayurveda Ahara* is the most important thing for healthy life and type of *Ahara* we eat affect our body as well as mind. Nowadays, people are adopting sedentary lifestyle. Also, the craze for junk food is increasing in rural areas also. The change in food habit, lack of knowledge about proper nutrition is causative factors for many diseases. *Ayurveda* has mentioned about *Astavidh Ahar Vidhi Vishesh Ayatane* in which *Acharyas* has explained in detail about properties of food, effect of combination of different food articles, quantity of food to be consumed, properties of food substances according to their cultivation area, cooking procedure etc.^[1]

Viruddha Anna or incompatible diet is very important issue discussed by ancient *Ayurveda* workers. It is said to be the cause of many systemic disorders as per *Ayurveda* literature. Persons who consume *Viruddha*

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Ahara are prone to many disorders. It is very important to correlate the mechanism as to how *Viruddha Ahara* is a cause of many metabolic disorders. It is also essential to know how certain food combinations interact with each other and create a disease.^[2] *Viruddha Ahara* is defined by *Charaka*. He clearly says that certain diet and its combinations, which interrupts the metabolism of tissue, which inhibits the process of formation of tissue and which have the opposite property to the tissue are called as *Viruddha Anna* or incompatible diet.^[3] The food which is wrong in combination, has undergone wrong processing, consumed in incorrect dose, and/or consumed in incorrect time of the day and in wrong season can lead to *Viruddha Ahara*. *Svasthya*, “to be established in one’s self or own natural state” is optimal health according to Ayurveda. In order to achieve this, one has to have a balance of structural and physiological factors, metabolic and excretory processes, body tissues, senses, mind, and attain a state of self-awareness and contented self.^[4]

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1. To evaluate the significance of food incompatibilities in the pathogenesis of healthy individuals.
2. To develop awareness regarding *Viruddha Ahara* to prevent various health problems. And to make awareness about ayurveda dietary regimes.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Used electronic searching engine like PubMed and Google Scholar with key words Diet, *Viruddha Ahara*, food incompatibilities and *Ayurveda*. Comparison with results and conclusion was done and summed up the derived findings. Literature has been reviewed from both classical *Ayurveda* literature & Modern medicine literature.

RESULT

There are concordant results emerged from the evidence-based medicine in modern era and ancient teachings from *Ayurveda*. In *Ayurvedic* version, *Agni* plays a dominant role in the manifestation of lifestyle

disorders by affecting the digestive system and one need to refrain from all unhealthy lifestyle habits and keep gut healthy by following simple guidelines of Ayurveda. Anyone having *Viruddha Ahara* knowingly or unknowingly exposed to several fatal diseases including autoimmune disease and even cancer, if took for a long time. Therefore, it is prudent to enlist the causative incompatible dietary factors and teach the patients regarding all lethal aspects of such diet combination along with simultaneous lifestyle modification as described by *Acharya’s* in *Ayurveda* just to avoid fall prey of such deadly diseases.

DISCUSSION

All foods provide nutrition and are therefore good for us in proper amounts. But random mixing and processing of raw food and ingredients while cooking or partaking may produce certain side effects, some of them due to chemical reactions, others due to changes in intestinal permeability and metabolic conversion in the liver, and still others due to more subtle actions on the gut microbiome or on the immune system. Medical advances are only now beginning to unravel immune mechanisms of antigen presentation and especially of lipid antigens. Processing of proteins with lipids while cooking can result in lipidated proteins, the antigenic potential and tolerance to which are as yet unknown. Only systematic scientific investigations can elucidate these mechanisms and perhaps uncloak the mystery behind the causation of auto-immune and metabolic disorders.^[5]

Acharya Charaka described eighteen types of dietetic incompatibilities (Table 1)^[6]

Table 1

1.	<i>Vidhi</i> (rules for eating) <i>Viruddha</i>
2.	<i>Desha</i> (place) <i>Viruddha</i>
3.	<i>Kala Viruddha</i>
4.	<i>Agni Viruddha</i>
5.	<i>Matra</i> (quantity) <i>Viruddha</i>

6.	<i>Satmya</i> (wholesome) <i>Viruddha</i>
7.	<i>Dosha Viruddha</i>
8.	<i>Sanskar</i> (mode of preparation) <i>Viruddha</i>
9.	<i>Veerya</i> (potency) <i>Viruddha</i>
10.	<i>Koshtha Viruddha</i>
11.	<i>Avastha</i> (state of health) <i>Viruddha</i>
12.	<i>Kram</i> (sequence) <i>Viruddha</i>
13.	<i>Parihar Viruddha</i>
14.	<i>Upachar</i> (treatment) <i>Viruddha</i>
15.	<i>Paak</i> (cooking) <i>Viruddha</i>
16.	<i>Samyoga</i> (combination) <i>Viruddha</i>
17.	<i>Hriday Viruddha</i>
18.	<i>Sampad</i> (richness of quality) <i>Viruddha</i>

Susruta has enumerated four types of *Viruddhahara*^[7]

1. *Samyoga Viruddha*
2. *Krama Viruddha* (*Samskara Viruddha*)
3. *Mana Viruddha* (*Matra Viruddha*)
4. *Rasa, Virya, Vipaka Viruddha*

Well known incompatibility / antagonistic (*Viruddha-Aahara*) were described in Ayurvedic literature (Table 2)^[8]

Table 2

SN	Types of <i>Virudha Ahara</i>	Example
1.	<i>Veerya Viruddha</i> (potency incompatibility)	Fish + milk
2.	<i>Sanskar Viruddha</i> (processing incompatibility)	Heated honey
3.	<i>Matra Viruddha</i> (dose incompatibility)	Honey + cow's ghee mixed in equal proportion.
4.	<i>Krama Viruddha</i>	Hot water after taking honey

5.	<i>Kala Viruddha</i> - (time incompatibility)	Pungent substance in summer and cold substances in winter.
6.	<i>Krama Viruddha</i> (order incompatibility)	Consuming curd at night. Taking <i>Madhura Rasa</i> food or <i>Dravya</i> at the end of meals and <i>Tikta</i> and <i>Katu Rasa Dravyas</i> (food substances) at the starting of meals.
7.	<i>Samyoga Viruddha</i> (combination incompatibility)	fruit salad or milk + banana.
8.	<i>Parihar Viruddha</i> (contraindication incompatibility)	consuming cold water immediately after having hot tea or coffee.

Food incompatibilities in today's era

Viruddha Ahara can initiate the disease process and affect the body at molecular level. Ancient literature like *Charaka and Sushruta Samhitas* already mentioned many combinations of food incompatibilities. However, those mentioned *Viruddha Ahar* not exactly found in today's era. Hence, there is need to identify new food incompatibilities, which are used today in day-to-day life as per Ayurvedic perspective. These food incompatibilities can also be categorized into *Karma Viruddha, Matra Viruddha, and Veerya Viruddha*. These food combinations can generate various toxins that affects the immune system, cellular metabolism, growth hormone.^[9] The undesired effect of harmful combinations of food is not restricted to particular organ system but signs can be noticed in any site. The toxic side effects can emerge inside the body when two or more types of foods are consumed together. After consumption metabolism of the body release such proteins that can harm the vitals at cellular and moreover molecular level. Severity of these deleterious combination depends on the amount, antigenicity of toxic element, duration, immune-compatibility and age. The most lethal outcome that is cancer can be noted in long term consumption of these food combinations. *Viruddha Ahara* if consumed in less quantity is not harmful and

if it is consumed regularly in considerable amount then it leads to some diseases.^[10]

Now a day's adulteration of the foodstuff is a common practice. It is also primary cause of incompatibility in food. There are number of food adulterants responsible for the toxicity of the food (Table 3).^[11]

Table 3

SN	Food stuff	Common Adulterants
1.	Milk	Polluted water, skim milk, removal of butter and addition of refined oil or hydrogenated Fat.
2.	Ghee	Vanaspati, oleomargarine, Hydrogenated fat.
3.	Vegetable oil (Mustard)	Argemine oil, non-edible oil
4.	Wheat flour	Tapioca flour, Talc, Ergot (Poisonous fungus)
5.	Bengal gram	Kesari Dal (Lathyrus Sativus)
6.	Honey	Molasses, sugar cane
7.	Tea	Other leaves, Black /Bengal gram dal husk with colour.
8.	Green chilies and peas	Malachite green.
9.	Butter and cream	Cheaper plant oils such as palm oil, sunflower oil and soybean oil, banana, oleomargarine
10.	Ice cream	Pepperonil, ethylacetate, butraldehyde, emil acetate, nitrate, washing powder etc
11.	Chilies powder	Brick powder
12.	Pulses	Lathyrus sativus
13.	oils	Rancid oil
14.	Black pepper	Papaya seeds
15.	Coriander powder	Cow dung powder

Diseases caused by food incompatibles

All the *Dosas*, *Dhatus* and *Malas* get vitiated if one keeps on taking the above mentioned incompatible foods and harmful combinations in the diet, resulting in innumerable problems. Consumption of *Viruddha Ahara* gives rise to various disturbances of mild to violent nature and disease of acute to chronic nature including the eight *Maharogas*, genetic disturbances and even sometimes causes death of the person.^[12]

According to Acharya Charaka

Viruddha Ahara is responsible for the cause of many diseases. Whole number of diseases occurs as a result of *Viruddha Ahara* viz. infertility, *Bhagandara* (fistula), *Moorchha* (fainting), *Pandu* (anaemia), *Amavisha* (acid eructation), *Grahani Roga* (malabsorption syndrome), *Jvara* (fever), *Santana Dosha* (genetic disturbances) and even *Mrityu* (death). *Nidanas* of Mental disorders like *Unmaada*, *Apasmara*, and *Attatwabhinivesha*. *Acharya Charaka* has given due emphasis on dietetic causes.^[13]

According to Acharya Vagbhata

Acharya Vagbhata in *Ashtanga Samgraha* has mentioned that intake of *Viruddha Ahara* results in the manifestations of *Visphotha* (blisters), *Shofa* (swelling), *Yakshma* (Tuberculosis) and loss of body heat, memory and consciousness, *Jvara* (fever), *Raktpitta* (bleeding disorders) *Asta Mahagada* (eight *Maharogas*) and *Mrityu* (death).^[14]

There are various types of *Virudha Ahara* on health described in the ancient texts (Table 4)^[15]

Table 4

SN	Bodily elements vitiation	Effect	Disease
1.	<i>Agni</i> Vitiation	<i>Agni Nasha</i> (decrease)	<i>Ajirna</i>
		<i>Agni Bahirniryasa</i>	<i>Jwara</i>
		<i>Amavisa</i>	<i>Vishuchika & Dandalasaka</i>

2.	<i>Srotasa</i> vitiation	<i>Atipravirty</i> (Increased flow)	<i>Atisara</i>
		<i>Sanga</i> (Decreased flow)	<i>Vibandha</i>
		<i>Shira Granthi</i> (Knotted condition of the passage)	<i>Arshas</i>
		<i>Vimarga gamanam</i> (Flow in abnormal channels)	<i>Kusta</i>
3.	<i>Dosha</i> vitiation	<i>Vata</i>	<i>Udarasula, Gulma</i>
		<i>Pitta</i>	<i>Amalapitta</i>
		<i>Kapha</i>	<i>Amavisha, Grahani etc.</i>
4.	<i>Dhatu</i> vitiation	<i>Sukra</i>	<i>Sandhya</i>
		<i>Majja</i>	<i>Murcha</i>
		<i>Asthi</i>	<i>Adhayasthi</i>
		<i>Medha</i>	<i>Sthaulaya</i>
		<i>Mamsa</i>	<i>Arbuda</i>
		<i>Rakta</i>	<i>Visarpa</i>
		<i>Rasa</i>	<i>Hridroga</i>

Treatment

Nidana Parivarjna (prophylactic measures) is the main line of treatment.

Diseases produced by incompatible food combination, can be cured by the help of purification therapy like *Panchakarma*, especially *Vamana* (emesis) and *Virechana* (purgation), and also by *Shamana* or palliative therapy and wholesome diet. Prophylactic measures counteract the disorders born from *Viruddhahara* but *Nidanparivarjan* is the best way to live healthy life.^[16] The person who consumes contradictory food regularly in small quantities will lead to *Okasatmya*. *Viruddhahara* generally does not

have any effect on those who are young, whose *Agni* (digestive fire) is strong, doing oleation & person who exercise regularly. One who does exercise regularly and consumes *Viruddhahara*, it gets digested properly without any difficulty or trouble. Diet is the most important part of management of disease. It is said that, 'what we eat that we are'. So how we eat and what we eat both are equally important.^[17] As mentioned in *Aahara Vidhi Vishesh Ayatana* the effect of food depends on many factors like way of cooking, origin, season, *Dosh*, *Sthiti* of body, *Agni*, *Bala* etc. This diversified aspect of dietetics and nutrition is well elaborated in *Ayurveda* in form of *Aahara Vidhi Vishesh Ayatana*.^[18] Eight principles of food consumption enumerated in Table 5^[19]

Table 5

SN	Eight Principals
1.	<i>Prakriti</i> : Qualitative characteristic of food
2.	<i>Karana</i> : Processing of food
3.	<i>Samyoga</i> : Combination / mixing
4.	<i>Rashi</i> : The Quantity
5.	<i>Desha</i> : Habitat
6.	<i>Kaala</i> : Time & Seasonal variation
7.	<i>Upayoga Samstha</i> : Classical Ayurvedic Rules of eating
8.	<i>Upayokta</i> : The person who takes the food

Factors pacifying ill effects of *Viruddhahara*^[19]

Charaka has stated that *Viruddhahara* become harmless in following situations. In these circumstances dietetic incompatibility becomes neutralized. These are,

1. If the person takes unctuous elements continuously.
2. If dietetic incompatibility is very slight (in quality and quantity).
3. If the person concerned is of strong digestive power.

4. If the person (consumer) is young.
5. 5.If the incompatibility is homologous to the person concerned.
6. If the person is strong due to exercise.^[20-22]

Food incompatibilities is significantly affecting the health which was already mentioned in the ancient text, (*Ayurveda* literature) and modern medicine. Evidence based modern medicine also providing the same hence there is relevance of following instruction regarding the food incompatibilities laid down by ancient sages. Many factors are implicated to balance the lifestyle and the diet. These are nature, quantity, composition of food, timing, and frequency of feeding. Both the nutritional and non-nutritional components are essential for the balanced diet. The balanced diet with lifestyle modification has a profound effect on intestinal recovery and successful management of chronic or severe GI disease. In *Ayurveda Agni* is responsible for all digestive and metabolic processes in the human beings. *Acharya Charaka* already mentioned about the diet and lifestyle modification in various forms. Few of these are importance of amount of food, personal hygiene and effect of seasons on the health. *Acharya Charaka* also pointed out the eighteen dietetic incompatibilities that generate the toxins responsible for gastrointestinal and extra intestinal diseases.

CONCLUSION

Food incompatibilities emerged as etiological factors in the disruption of homeostatic state of body mechanism in the healthy individual. Hence assimilating these instructions, one can lead a disease-free life. We can conclude that the practice of *Ayurveda* is very relevant in the present era and proved by the modern medicine. However, for accepting globally it needs to be validated by evidence based modern medicine and getting patent for preserving our ancient knowledge.

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