



A NAVIGATION ON FOOD PAIRING: CONCEPT OF FOOD INCOMPATIBILITY IN AYURVEDA

Dr. Pragya¹, Dr. Manoj Kafaltiya², Dr. Madhavi Goswami³

- 1- P.G. Scholar, P.G. Department of Rachana Sharir, Rishikul Campus, Uttarakhand Ayurved University, Haridwar
- 2- P.G. Scholar, P.G. Department of Rachana Sharir, Rishikul Campus, Uttarakhand Ayurved University, Haridwar
- 3- Former Registrar UAU, Professor, P.G. Department of Rachana Sharir, Rishikul Campus UAU, Haridwar, Uttarakhand

Abstract: *Ayurveda*, the ancient Indian system of medicine, places significant emphasis on diet and nutrition for maintaining health and preventing diseases. *Ahara Shastra* elucidates the importance of diet as a cornerstone of health, considering not only the nutritional aspects but also the impact of food on the body, mind, and consciousness. It emphasizes the concept of "food as medicine" as *Acharya Kashyap* stated *Ahara* as 'Mahabhaishajya' and recognizes the unique metabolic constitution of individuals, known as *Doshas* (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha), influencing their dietary requirements and preferences.

The principles of *Ahara Shastra* are rooted in the understanding of the *Shadrasa* and their effects on the *Doshas*. Furthermore, *Ahara Shastra* emphasizes the significance of seasonal eating, advocating for the consumption of locally grown, fresh, and seasonal foods to align with the body's natural rhythms and support overall health. However, when two or more food substances are mixed without knowledge, that combination becomes toxic and known as *Viruddha Ahara* (food incompatibility).

Central to Ayurvedic dietary principles is the concept of food incompatibility which elucidates the dynamic relationship between various food combinations and their impact on digestion, metabolism and overall well-being. By embracing the wisdom of Ayurveda's perspective on food incompatibility, individual can activate a deeper awareness of their dietary habits and foster holistic health in alignment with nature's rhythms.

Key words: *Ahara*, Food, Diet, Nutrition, Health, Food incompatibility, *Viruddha Ahara*

Introduction: In the ancient texts of Ayurveda, *Aharashastra* stands as a profound guide to nutrition, offering insights into the harmony between food and health. This holistic science, rooted in the Vedic tradition, recognizes food not only as sustenance but also as medicine. The ultimate goal of Ayurveda is to protect the

health of the healthy and to cure the illness of the diseased⁽¹⁾. To achieve this, it is essential for us to have a proper understanding of food and nutrition because the quality of life depends totally on food and nutrition. Ever since humans discovered food, they began experimenting with the various combinations but not every combination proved beneficial. Many time certain combinations led to discomfort, illness or even death. Different Acharyas have given definitions to *Viruddha Ahara* according to their understanding:

According to Acharya Charaka:

Foods those are opposite to the properties to the properties of *Deha Dhatus* are known as *Viruddha Ahara*. These can be opposite in properties (*Gunas*), combinations (*Sanyogas*), modifications (*Sanskar*), places or habitat (*Desha*), time (*Kaala*), and quantity (*Matra*)⁽²⁾.

According to Acharya Sushruta:

Some substances become toxic when combined. Acharya Sushruta explains many notes of

Viruddhahara; including *Karma Viruddha* (functionally incompatible), *Maana Viruddha* (quantitatively incompatible), *Samyoga Viruddha* (unsalutary combinations) and *Rasa Viruddha* (Incompatibilities amongst two tastes)⁽³⁾.

According to Acharya Vagbhata:

Any food that dislodges the *Doshas* but does not expel them from the body is referred to be *Viruddha Ahara*⁽⁴⁾.

Some combinations which can be incompatible are as follows⁽⁵⁾:

- ✦ **Milk and Fishes** because they both are of *Madhur Rasa*, *Madhur Vipaka* and combination of these two is *Maha Abhishyandi*(substances which causes obstruction to *Shrotas* and are slimy in nature). Milk is of *Sheeta Veerya* on the other hand fish is of *Ushna Veerya*. Hence, combination of these two is *Veerya Viruddha*. So, they contaminate the blood. Being *Maha Abhishyandi* it blocks the *Shrotas* of *Dosha*, *Dhatu* and *Mala*.
- ✦ One should not consume meat of domestic animals, aquatic animals and marshy animals with honey, sesame, jaggery, milk, black gram, radish, lotus stem and germinated grains. This combination is incompatible and leads to deafness, blindness, tremors, stupor, unclear speech or even death.
- ✦ Lotus root and pigeon or dove meat roasted in mustard oil with honey and milk. Consuming them together leads to blood impurities, artery blockages, epilepsy, migraine, goitre, diseases related to throat or even death.
- ✦ After consuming radish, garlic, drumstick, *Tulsi* (*Arjak*, *Sumukh* and *Sursa*) one should not drink milk as it may lead to the fear of skin diseases.
- ✦ With milk one should not consume mango, lemon, black currant fruit, banana, star fruit, java plum (*Jamun*), wood apple, tamarind, walnut, jackfruit, coconut, sour pomegranate, Indian gooseberry (*Amla*), all sour substances, *Kanguni*, *Vanak*, peas, black gram, green gram and beans.
- ✦ Drinking *Sattu* mixed with water after consuming *Kheer* aggravates the *Kapha Dosha*.
- ✦ Cooking Malabar spinach (*Poi*) vegetable in sesame paste causes diarrhoea.
- ✦ Heated honey becomes toxic. If a person suffering from heat consumes honey, it can

✦ Honey and ghee in equal quantities, honey and rainwater in equal quantities, honey and lotus stalk in equal quantities, honey with hot water as well as honey, *Bhallatak* and hot water are very harmful.

The different varieties of *Viruddha Ahara*⁽⁶⁾ according to *Acharya Charaka* are as follows:

Desha Viruddha: Intake of foods those are of similar properties to that of *Desha*.

e.g.-In the jungle or desert, the *Ruksha* and *Teekshana* foods are consumed and in the marshy areas; *Snigdha* and *Sheeta Dravyas* are used.

Kaala Viruddha: Intake of foods having similar properties to that of *kaala*.

e.g.-Use of *Sheeta* and *Ruksha Dravyas* in winters and *Katu* and *Ushna Dravyas* in summers.

Agni Viruddha: If a person does not consume food according to its *Agni*.

e.g.- Consumption of *Laghu Ahara* in *Teekshnagni* and *Guru Ahara* in *Mandagni*.

Matra Viruddha: There are some food items which act as *Viruddha Ahara* when mixed in equal proportions.

e.g.- Honey and ghee in equal proportion acts as poison.

Satmya Viruddha: Consumption of food which is not a part of regular routine.

e.g.- Consumption of *Katu* and *Ushna Ahara* by a person who is use to *Madhur* and *Sheeta Ahara*.

Dosha Viruddha: Consumption of foods having similar properties to that of *Prakriti* or *doshas* which are already aggravated in the body.

e.g.- Intake of *Vata Pradhana Ahara* in *Vata Prakriti* or when *Vata Dosha* is already aggravated.

Sanskar Viruddha: When food is not prepared by correct methods or utensils. e.g.- Peacock meat is prepared in castor wood's skewers is toxic in nature.

Veerya Viruddha: Consuming food items having opposite *Veerya* at the same time i.e. combining *Sheeta Veerya Dravyas* with *Ushna Veerya Dravyas*.

e.g.- Combining milk and fish together

Koshtha Viruddha: Food item taken without proper knowledge of individuals *Koshtha* termed as *Koshtha Viruddha*.

e.g.- Consumption of less food or food that is less in fibres and is *Laghu* in *Krura Koshtha* person.

Avastha Viruddha: Consuming food without exact knowledge of own health and bodily conditions.

e.g.- Consumption of *Vata Vardhaka Ahara* just after exhaustion, coitus, exercise etc.

Kram Viruddha: When food is consumed by wrong sequence.

e.g.- Consumption of food without evacuation of feces and urine or consumption of food without appetite.

Parihaar Viruddha: Consumption of *Ushna* food just after consuming pork.

Upchaar Viruddha: Consuming food items which are not supposed to consume after specific treatment.

e.g.- Consumption of *Sheetal Jala* and *Sheetal Ahara* just after consuming *Sneha* or *Ghrit*.

Paaka Viruddha: Food which is not properly cooked.

e.g.- Consumption of undercooked or overcooked or burnet food.

Sanyoga Viruddha: Consuming food items which are not supposed to combine with each other.

e.g.- Consumption of milk with sour foods.

Hriday Viruddha: Consuming food items which are undesirable to the person.

Sampad Viruddha: Consuming unripen foods or those which are lacking in proper *Rasa*.

Vidhi Viruddha: Consuming food contrary to the rules of proper diet.

In today's scenario, some good examples of *Viruddha Ahara* are given in following table:

Table no. 1- examples of *Viruddha Ahara* in modern scenario

| Type of <i>Viruddha Ahara</i> | Examples |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <i>Desha Viruddha</i> | Ice cream and cold drinks in marshy places Hot and spicy food in deserts |
| <i>Kaala Viruddha</i> | Ice cream in winters Spicy foods in summers |
| <i>Agni Viruddha</i> | Heavy meals in <i>Mandagni</i> |
| <i>Matra Viruddha</i> | Honey and ghee in equal quantities |
| <i>Satmya Viruddha</i> | Milk products in lactose intolerance |
| <i>Dosha Viruddha</i> | Fried and oily foods in increased <i>Kapha Dosha</i> |
| <i>Sanskaar Viruddha</i> | Roasted peacock meat in castor wood skewers |

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <i>Veerya Viruddha</i> | Waffle with ice cream with sizzling hot chocolate Hot gulab jamun with ice cream |
| <i>Koshtha Viruddha</i> | Fiber rich diet in <i>Mridu Koshtha</i> person |
| <i>Avastha Viruddha</i> | Light snacks after heavy workout |
| <i>Kram Viruddha</i> | Consumption of food without appetite Snaking all the time |
| <i>Parihaar Viruddha</i> | Hot drinks or alcohol with pork |
| <i>Upchar Viruddha</i> | Cold water or cold drinks or ice cream just after <i>Snehapana</i> |
| <i>Paka Viruddha</i> | Sauteed vegetables Frying multiple times with same oil |
| <i>Sanyog Viruddha</i> | Shakes Curd and milk Fruits after meal Pasta Tea with milk Custard |
| <i>Hriday Viruddha</i> | Meats for vegetarians Smelly or rotten foods |
| <i>Sampad Viruddha</i> | Unripened fruits and vegetables |
| <i>Vidhi Viruddha</i> | Snaking all the time Eating food while watching TV Eating fast or in a hurry Swallowing without chewing properly |

Diseases caused by *Viruddha Ahara*⁽⁷⁾:

- ✦ Infertility
- ✦ Blindness
- ✦ *Visarpa*
- ✦ *Jalodara*
- ✦ *Visphota*
- ✦ *Mental disorders*
- ✦ *Anal fistula*
- ✦ *Flatulence*
- ✦ *Anaemia*
- ✦ *Aama Visha*
- ✦ *Kushtha*
- ✦ *Grahni Roga*
- ✦ *Shotha*
- ✦ *Amlapitta*
- ✦ *Jwara*
- ✦ *Death*

**Treatment:** According to Acharya Charaka⁽⁸⁾:

- ✦ *Vamana*
- ✦ *Virechana*
- ✦ *Shamana*

Benefits of avoiding *Viruddha Ahara*: According to Acharya Charaka, a wise person who renounces the incompatible foods and activities deserving renunciation becomes free from the debts of the ancestors and the sages⁽⁹⁾.

Discussion: The article explores Ayurveda's concept of *Viruddhahara* (food incompatibility), emphasizing the importance of mindful food pairing to prevent digestive issues, toxin formation, and *Doshic* imbalance. In today's lifestyle, despite not wanting to consume incompatible foods, it happens anyway. Even under the guise of healthy eating, we end up consuming many incompatible foods like fruit shakes, custard, raw fruits, and vegetables. To avoid this, we should already be refraining from such foods. We should practice mindful eating habits while keeping Ayurvedic concepts in mind. If we have been consuming incompatible foods and now want to quit them, we should not stop suddenly but rather gradually reduce their intake. This way, we can avoid the adverse effects of suddenly giving up incompatible foods⁽¹⁰⁾.

In conclusion, the concept of food incompatibility in Ayurveda serves as a guiding principle for maintaining optimal health and harmony within the body. Through its emphasis on the interplay of food qualities, digestive capacity, and seasonal considerations, Ayurveda provides valuable insights into the art of mindful eating and dietary balance. By adhering to Ayurvedic principles of food compatibility, individuals can nurture their digestive fire, prevent imbalances, and support overall well-being. Furthermore, the holistic approach of Ayurveda encourages individuals to develop a deeper connection with their bodies, fostering a sense of awareness and responsiveness to dietary choices. As we navigate the complexities of modern diets and lifestyles, integrating the wisdom of Ayurveda's perspective on food incompatibility offers a pathway towards sustainable health and vitality. By honouring the principles of Ayurveda in our dietary practices, we can embark on a journey towards holistic wellness, embracing the symbiotic relationship between food, body, and spirit.

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