



### Review Article

## Ayurvedic And Modern View of *Viruddha Aahar* (Incompatible Food)

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### Abstract

In Ayurveda, the profound idea of *Viruddha Aahar*, or incompatible food, highlights the negative consequences of incorrect food combinations, cooking techniques, and eating habits. Numerous incompatibilities that disrupt digestion, hinder metabolism, and produce metabolic toxins (Ama) are described in ancient Ayurvedic texts, especially the Charak Samhita. These incompatibilities can result in a variety of health disorders. The fast-paced urban lifestyle of today is reflected in modern dietary trends like processed foods, irregular eating schedules, and fusion cuisines, which can lead to systemic, metabolic, and digestive disorders. By emphasizing how incompatible foods disrupt the gut microbiota, denature proteins, interfere with enzyme activity, and increase oxidative stress, modern science supports these findings. Clinical research also shows that long-term ingestion of these foods is linked to autoimmune diseases, skin disorders, infertility, and IBS. Ayurveda suggests a comprehensive approach to treatment that includes lifestyle modification, dietary control (Pathya Apathya), and detoxification (Shodhana). Long-term wellness and preventive healthcare can benefit from a deeper comprehension and application of this integrative knowledge.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Viruddha Aahar*, translated as *incompatible food*, is a foundational concept in Ayurveda that addresses how certain food combinations, methods of preparation, or dietary habits can negatively impact health by disrupting digestion and metabolism. First described in classical Ayurvedic literature such as the Charak Samhita, *Viruddha Aahar* refers specifically to foods or combinations that interfere with tissue metabolism (*Dhatu* formation), hinder doshic balance, and create toxic byproducts (*Ama*) in the body.<sup>[1][2]</sup>

While a single food may be wholesome on its own, its combination with another, improper timing, or unsuitable preparatory methods can render it harmful. Examples include pairing milk with fish, combining honey and ghee in equal parts, or consuming foods inappropriate for the climate or personal constitution. According to Ayurveda, the regular intake of incompatible foods is implicated in numerous diseases, including digestive disorders, skin conditions, metabolic syndromes, and even psychological disturbances, underlining the importance of proper dietary conduct in health maintenance.<sup>[3]</sup>

Modern research increasingly echoes these concerns, highlighting how certain food interactions can alter nutrient absorption, metabolism, and gut microbiota, sometimes leading to adverse health outcomes. Thus, understanding *Viruddha Aahar* is essential not only for practitioners of Ayurveda but for anyone interested in the holistic science of nutrition and preventive healthcare.<sup>[4]</sup>

### Definition of *Viruddha Aahar* (Ayurvedic concept)

*Viruddha Aahar* in Ayurveda is defined as food, drink, or their incompatible combinations, meaning they act *antagonistically* to the body's physiological processes, disrupt metabolism, or hinder tissue formation when combined, processed, or consumed under certain conditions. The literal meaning of "Viruddha" is "opposite," referring to substances that possess properties or actions contrary to the normal function of bodily tissues and doshas, resulting in adverse health effects.<sup>[5]</sup>

### Importance in today's context (urban diet, fast food, mixing hot/cold foods, etc.)

In today's world, *Viruddha Aahar* (incompatible food) is extremely pertinent, especially in light of the fast-food culture, urban diet, and widespread eating habits like combining hot and cold foods. Convenience-based eating, frequent fast-food consumption, processed snacks, and fusion cuisine practices are characteristics of modern lifestyles that frequently disregard the basic Ayurvedic compatibility principles and unintentionally increase health risks.

### Key Points Highlighting the Importance Today:

**Urban Diet & Fast Food:** Urbanization has increased reliance on packaged, ready-to-eat, and restaurant foods that often combine multiple ingredients (e.g., dairy, meats, preservatives, refined carbs) without consideration for compatibility. Such

combinations parallel what Ayurveda describes as *Viruddha Aahar* and have been linked with metabolic disorders, obesity, diabetes, and digestive problems.<sup>[6]</sup>

**Mixing Hot/Cold Foods:** Frequently pairing hot and cold foods or beverages (for instance, ice-cold drinks with spicy/hot meals) can disrupt digestive function. Ayurveda warns against such practices, as they can impair Agni (digestive fire), resulting in improper digestion and toxin (*ama*) formation.

**Convenience and Dietary Diversity:** Increased multicultural food options and novel food pairings (e.g., fruit smoothies with milk/yogurt, meats with cream-based sauces, desserts after heavy meals, or cereal with cold milk and fruit) are common in modern diets. Many of these are examples of *Viruddha Aahar*, potentially leading to bloating, fermentation, and nutrient malabsorption.

**Processed Food Combinations:** Fast and junk foods often contain combinations of incompatible fats, preservatives, and refined sugars. Such processed food combinations not only contravene Ayurvedic wisdom but are also implicated by modern science in the development of chronic diseases due to their impact on digestion and metabolic health.<sup>[1]</sup>

**Health Consequences:** Repeated and habitual consumption of incompatible foods contributes to a spectrum of disorders, including indigestion, IBS, skin problems, metabolic syndrome, autoimmune issues, and disturbance of the gut microbiome.<sup>[7]</sup>

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ayurveda describes a novel idea called *Viruddha Ahara*. Interactions between foods and during processing are the focus of this article's critical evaluation of *Viruddha Ahara*. Incompatible diets, or *Viruddha Anna*, are specified in Ayurveda as those that interfere with tissue metabolism, hinder tissue synthesis, or have the opposite effect on tissues. *Viruddha Ahara* can result from consuming food that is improperly prepared, either in terms of its ingredients or processing, or from eating it at the wrong time of day or during the wrong season. *Samskar Viruddha*, *Veerya Viruddha*, *Samyoga Viruddha*, and many more are told from a contemporary point of view in this article. It also includes a range of unhealthy foods that people eat daily and the harm they cause to their bodies.<sup>[8]</sup>

One distinctive and crucial idea presented in Ayurveda is *Viruddha Ahara*, or an unhealthy diet. Food incompatibility, including interactions between different types of food, disrupts the body's homeostasis and can cause a variety of ailments, including skin disorders (*Viruddha Ahara*). Ancient texts provide descriptions of various forms of *Viruddha Ahara*, such as *Samskara*, *Samyoga*, *Veerya*, and others. Many people believe that *Viruddha Ahara* is a major contributor to skin problems, with *Veerya Viruddha* being the most significant of these factors. Several problems, such as *Visarpa*, drunkenness, rhinitis, infertility, *Kustha roga*, allergic disorders, etc., may be triggered by *Viruddha Ahara*. Learn how *Viruddha Ahara* can help with skin disorders in this article.<sup>[9]</sup>

The three primary pillars of the body, or Sthambas, are supported by the three sub-pillars, or Upasthambas, of which Ahara, or food, is one in the Ayurvedic canon. Ahara is fundamental to human health because it supplies the building blocks needed to perform fundamental metabolic and digestive processes. Ayurveda places an emphasis on eating a balanced and healthy diet. The distinction between a healthy and an unhealthy diet is the foundation of good health and disease (ahara). One of the most distinctive and significant ideas in Ayurveda is the idea of viruddha ahara, or unhealthy ahara. A diet that throws off the body's elemental equilibrium is known as Viruddha Ahara. Even a healthy, well-balanced diet might throw off equilibrium sometimes. Properly prepared and consumed food not only fuels the body but also the mind, allowing for optimal health and physical development. Several ailments can be brought on by eating food in an unbalanced way. So, the idea of wholesome ahara and unwholesome ahara has received a lot of focus in Ayurveda. Similarly, there has been a marked uptick in the consumption of foods that are incompatible with modern diets. The report goes into detail on the many incompatible foods that people eat daily and the harmful effects on their health.<sup>[10]</sup>

The medical practice of Ayurveda dates back thousands of years. The primary goal of Ayurveda, in contrast to conventional medicine, is not the cure of sickness but rather the

promotion of the patient's overall health and happiness. According to Ayurveda, a balanced and nutritious diet is the most important factor in maintaining good health. Among the three Upasthambas (sub-pillars of the body) listed in Ayurvedic literature is Ahara, or food. The fundamental nutrients provided by ahara are crucial for the human body to perform its most fundamental functions, including digestion and metabolism. Ayurveda makes it quite clear that a Viruddha Ahara, or incompatible diet, interferes with tissue metabolism, hinders tissue synthesis, or has the opposite effect on tissue. The Ayurvedic system is the only one that uses the idea of Viruddha Ahar. Viruddha Ahar refers to food that has been processed incorrectly or has the wrong mixes. There is the influence of time, season, and amount. Viruddha ahar can also refer to foods that aren't eaten at the correct time of day (kaala), in the correct season (ritu), or the right amount (matra). Physical and mental diseases can be precipitated by eating foods that are incompatible with one another due to factors such as temperature, amount, cooking method, combination, etc.<sup>[11]</sup>

### Types of Viruddha Aahar

The 18 categories of *Viruddha Aahar* (Incompatible Food) as listed in classical Ayurveda (Charak Samhita) are summarized in the table below, along with pertinent examples and brief explanations. The data was gathered from reputable Ayurvedic sources and evaluations:

No.	Type of Viruddha Aahar	Description	Example/Notes
1	<b>Desha (Place)</b>	Foods unsuitable for geographical/climatic conditions	Dry foods in deserts, oily foods in marshy areas
2	<b>Kala (Time/Season)</b>	Foods incompatible with the time or season of consumption	Eating curd at night, cold foods in winter
3	<b>Agni (Digestive Power)</b>	Foods inappropriate for one's digestive capacity	Heavy foods when digestion is weak (Mandagni)
4	<b>Matra (Quantity/Dose)</b>	Incompatible quantity of food consumed	Equal mixture of honey and ghee
5	<b>Satmya (Habit/Wholesomeness)</b>	Foods incompatible with one's food habits	Sweet & cold for people used to pungent/hot foods
6	<b>Dosha Viruddha</b>	Foods aggravating an individual's dominant dosha	Diet is unsuited to the body's constitution
7	<b>Sanskara (Mode of Preparation)</b>	Improper preparation leading to harmful effects	Heating honey, reheating curd
8	<b>Veerya (Potency)</b>	Combining hot & cold energy substances	Milk and fish (hot/cold combination)
9	<b>Koshtha (Nature of Digestive Tract)</b>	Food is unsuitable for the type of digestive system	Mild purgative for a hard bowel patient
10	<b>Avastha (Condition/State)</b>	Food unsuitable for the individual's current health condition	Vata aggravating foods after exertion
11	<b>Krama (Sequence/Regimen)</b>	Incorrect order or timing of food intake	Hot water immediately after honey
12	<b>Parihara (Avoidance)</b>	Foods to be avoided in specific states or diseases	Cold water just after hot tea
13	<b>Upachara (Treatment)</b>	Food is incompatible with ongoing treatment	Consuming cold things just after ghee intake
14	<b>Paaka (Cooking Method)</b>	Improper cooking methods, which create harmful effects	Undercooked, burnt, or spoiled food
15	<b>Samyoga (Combination)</b>	Incompatible food combinations	Milk with sour fruits or banana
16	<b>Hridaya (Palatability)</b>	Food that is unpleasant or distasteful to consume	Unpleasant-tasting foods
17	<b>Sampad (Quality/Ripeness)</b>	Food that is unripe, overripe, or spoiled	Overripe or rotten fruits
18	<b>Vidhi (Rules of Eating)</b>	Violation of dietary rules or etiquette	Eating hurriedly or in unhygienic conditions

## Modern Science Comparison

The modern scientific comparison of *Viruddha Aahar* (incompatible food) reveals remarkable parallels with ancient Ayurvedic insights, although expressed through biochemical, metabolic, and immunological frameworks.

Scientific reasons for incompatibilities (e.g. milk + citrus → protein denaturation).

### 1. Acidic Reaction Causes Curdling and Protein Denaturation

The proteins found in milk are primarily casein and a small amount of whey protein suspended in a colloidal solution. Casein micelles become unstable when combined with acidic substances, such as citrus fruits (lemons, oranges), as the pH of the mixture falls below 4.6.

## Result

The acidic environment disrupts the ionic interactions that keep casein proteins in suspension, leading them to coagulate (curdle). This is the same principle used in cheesemaking, but when it happens in the stomach or before ingestion, it can impair normal digestion and absorption.

### 2. Impaired Digestion and Nutrient Absorption

Dense curds that are more difficult to digest are created when milk curdles. Particularly in those with sensitive digestion, this may result in bloating, gas, slow stomach emptying, or discomfort. Additionally, the curdled proteins may hinder the absorption of other nutrients in citrus fruits and milk, making them less nutrient-dense when eaten together.

### 3. Reduced Protein Availability

Modern studies indicate that denatured or precipitated proteins may become less available for enzymatic digestion, which can further decrease protein nutritional value.

### 4. Ayurveda and Additional Effects

Ayurveda explains that incompatible foods like milk and citrus can promote the formation of "ama" (toxins), disturb dosha balance, and may manifest as digestive or skin disorders.

### 5. Visible Example

If you pour lemon juice into milk, you'll instantly see it curdle, a visible demonstration of acid-induced protein denaturation. In the digestive tract, this process is less dramatic but can be physiologically significant.

## Biochemical & metabolic effects

### 1. Impaired Digestion and Enzyme Inhibition

Incompatible food pairings, like milk and citrus fruits, proteins and carbs, or reheated processed foods, can overload the digestive system, inhibit digestive enzymes, and interfere with regular digestion. This results in reduced nutrient absorption, the development of dense, indigestible food masses, and discomfort in the gastrointestinal tract. Enzyme inhibition

results in incomplete digestion and nutrient loss by slowing or changing metabolic breakdown.

### 2. Production of Toxic Byproducts (Free Radicals, AGEs, Oxidized Lipids)

Oxidized fatty acids, Advanced Glycation Endproducts (AGEs), and free radicals are produced by some incompatible foods, particularly when they are processed or heated (such as reheated oils, stale fats, or incorrect protein and sugar mixing). These harmful byproducts cause oxidative stress, harm cellular components, and are linked to long-term illnesses like diabetes, heart disease, and neurodegeneration. For instance, reheated oils produce cyclic compounds and aldehydes, which are extremely reactive and molecularly harmful, and AGEs change gene expression and encourage systemic inflammation.<sup>[12][13]</sup>

### 3. Inflammatory & Immune Reactions

Certain foods that are incompatible produce oxidized fatty acids, Advanced Glycation Endproducts (AGEs), and free radicals, especially when they are heated or processed (e.g., reheated oils, stale fats, or incorrect protein and sugar mixing). Chronic diseases like diabetes, heart disease, and neurodegeneration are associated with these toxic byproducts, which also damage cellular components and induce oxidative stress. For example, heated oils release highly reactive and molecularly damaging cyclic compounds and aldehydes, and AGEs alter gene expression and promote systemic inflammation.

### 4. Metabolic Dysregulation & Disease Risk

Regular use of *Viruddha Aahar* causes more extensive metabolic problems over time. This includes malnutrition, lipid peroxidation, poor glucose regulation, and the depletion of micronutrients, particularly zinc and vitamins A, E, and C. Obesity, metabolic syndrome, hormonal imbalance, infertility, gastrointestinal disorders, dermatological problems, and even the early onset of chronic non-communicable diseases are all associated with these biochemical and metabolic stressors.<sup>[14]</sup>

### 5. Gut Microbiome Disruption

Incompatible food combinations can alter the gut microbiome's makeup and activity, decrease helpful bacteria, and promote the growth of dangerous species. This reinforces both Ayurvedic and contemporary views on disease causation through dietary incompatibility by contributing to immune dysfunction, digestive disorders, and increased absorption of toxins.<sup>[15][16]</sup>

## Clinical Impact

*Viruddha Aahar*, or incompatible food, has a substantial and broad clinical impact, influencing several bodily systems and resulting in both acute and long-term health issues. According to traditional Ayurvedic texts and contemporary observations, a habit of consuming incompatible foods can impair immune, metabolic, and digestive processes, resulting in a variety of disorders.



**Key Clinical Impacts of *Viruddha Aahar*:****1. Digestive Disorders**

Incompatible food consumption frequently results in indigestion, bloating, gas, acidity, gastritis, constipation, and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). These disorders impede intestinal function and nutrient absorption because of compromised digestive fire (Agni) and the production of metabolic toxins (Ama).

**2. Metabolic and Nutritional Imbalances**

Due to ineffective digestion and toxin buildup, prolonged consumption causes metabolic syndrome, obesity, type 2 diabetes, and malnutrition. Different tissue formations (Dhatus) can be impacted by disruptions in nutrient metabolism, which can result in systemic deficiencies and compromised physiological functioning.

**3. Skin and Autoimmune Disorders**

Chronic skin diseases like psoriasis, acne, eczema, and pigmentation disorders are linked to *Viruddha Aahar*. Systemic inflammation brought on by dietary incompatibility may be connected to autoimmune conditions like vitiligo and rheumatoid arthritis.

**4. Reproductive and Hormonal Effects**

Continuous intake of incompatible foods can lead to infertility, impotency, and Shukra Dhatu (reproductive tissue) vitiation, impacting reproductive health and hormonal balance.

**5. Neurological and Psychological Manifestations**

Chronic consumption of incompatible foods has been linked to conditions like sleeplessness, anxiety, depression, epilepsy, and cognitive disturbances because of dosha imbalance and toxin accumulation that affects the nervous system.

**6. Respiratory and Immune System Disorders**

Allergic rhinitis, asthma, and other immune-related disorders may worsen with *Viruddha Aahar* by disturbing immune regulation and triggering inflammatory responses.

**7. Systemic and Organ-Specific Effects**

*Viruddha Aahar* may cause fever, rhinitis, anemia, swelling, coma, intoxication, and even fatal outcomes in extreme cases. Multiple body systems can be affected, including the endocrine, circulatory, digestive, nervous, and immune systems.

**Case studies**

Clinical case studies on *Viruddha Aahar* (incompatible food) provide real-world examples of how consuming incompatible food combinations on a regular basis can lead to a variety of health issues, as explained by Ayurveda. These case studies, which frequently highlight both Ayurvedic methods and

contemporary connections, focus on diagnosis, treatment, and results.

**1. Case Study on *Viruddha Aahar*-Induced Diseases**

Consuming *Viruddha Aahar* can result in a wide range of conditions, including infertility, anemia, skin conditions (Kushtha), fistula in ano, ascites, insanity, and even death, according to a thorough study published in the AYUSHDHARA journal. Long-term use of Rasayana (rejuvenative medicines), palliative therapies (Shamana), and detoxification procedures (Vaman, Virechana) are all part of the case management approach. The study emphasizes that while young adults with strong digestion may exhibit less impact, those with weak digestive fire (Mandagni) or those in middle to old age are more vulnerable. Inflammation and oxidative stress are also compared in the study as contemporary scientific correlates of *Viruddha Aahar* toxicity.<sup>[17]</sup>

**2. Clinical Observations of Food Combinations in Modern Diets**

According to clinical studies, *Viruddha Aahar* can cause bloating, indigestion, and metabolic problems in response to common modern dietary patterns like cereal with cold milk and fruits or fruit smoothies with milk or yogurt. Detoxification treatments like Panchakarma and dietary adjustments based on a person's constitution are part of Ayurvedic treatment to undo the negative effects.

**3. *Samyoga Viruddha* (Combination Incompatibility) Case Study**

Recent articles (2024) present patient cases where *Samyoga Viruddha*, such as milk combined with sour fruits or reheated honey, triggered skin disorders and digestive complaints. Therapeutic interventions included avoidance of specific food combinations, detoxification, and supportive herbal medicines. This case highlights the importance of clinician awareness about *Viruddha Aahar* in patient history and dietary counseling.<sup>[18]</sup>

**4. *Viruddha Aahar* and Reproductive Health**

Case reports associate habitual *Viruddha Aahar* consumption with male infertility and hormonal imbalances. Patients presented with reduced sperm quality and testicular oxidative damage, paralleling Ayurvedic concepts of impairment of *Shukra Dhatu*. Treatment demonstrated benefit through detoxification and Rasayana therapies aimed at restoring tissue health and improving fertility.<sup>[3]</sup>

**Management**

Ayurveda's approach to managing *Viruddha Aahar* (incompatible food) focuses on both preventive and therapeutic measures meant to rejuvenate the body's tissues (Dhatus), remove accumulated toxins (Ama), and restore digestive balance (Agni). Dietary control, detoxification techniques, herbal remedies, lifestyle modifications, and individualized dietary counseling are all part of this holistic management.

Ayurvedic approach: Shodhana, Pathya Apathya  
Shodhana (detoxification/purification) and Pathya Apathya (dietary regimen of what is beneficial and what is to be avoided) are two components of the Ayurvedic approach to managing *Viruddha Aahar*.

### Shodhana (Detoxification) in Ayurveda

The term "shodhana" describes therapeutic purification techniques meant to rid the body of accumulated toxins (Ama) and restore doshic balance. It revitalizes tissues (Dhatus), purifies the body's channels (Srotas), and rekindles the digestive fire (Agni). Panchakarma, the collective term for the traditional five main Shodhana procedures, consists of:

- *Vamana* (therapeutic emesis)
- *Virechana* (purgation)
- *Basti* (medicated enemas)
- *Nasya* (nasal administration of medicines)
- *Raktamokshana* (bloodletting)

In addition to removing toxins produced by eating the wrong foods (like *Viruddha Aahar*), these procedures thoroughly cleanse the body and aid in reviving health and vitality. Other purification techniques like oil massages (Abhyanga), steam therapy (Swedana), fasting, and special diets to support Shodhana therapy are also described in Ayurvedic texts. To lessen the negative effects of toxic substances on the body, shodhana may entail detoxifying them from incompatible food components.

### Pathya Apathya (Dietary Regimen: What is Beneficial and What is to be Avoided)

The term "pathya" describes healthy, harmonious, and restorative foods or practices that ought to be adhered to either for preserving health or following the negative effects of *Viruddha Aahar*. These foods promote tissue nourishment, doshic balance, and digestion. Apathya includes harmful, incompatible foods or behaviors that should be avoided at all costs, especially those that are classified as *Viruddha Aahar*, like reheated oils, mixing milk with sour fruits, or eating at the wrong times. Adhering to Pathya Apathya promotes recovery from the negative effects of incompatible foods, improves digestive capacity, and stops the formation of toxins from recurring. The dietary recommendations are tailored to the individual based on their health status, season, digestive strength (Agni), and constitution (Prakriti).

### CONCLUSION

A crucial nexus between contemporary nutritional science and traditional Ayurvedic knowledge is represented by the idea of *Viruddha Aahar*. Ayurveda's categorization of incompatible foods, whether because of time, preparation technique, combination, or personal constitution, provides a sophisticated understanding of how poor eating habits can upset physiological balance and result in a variety of acute and chronic illnesses. These findings are supported by recent studies that show incompatible foods can increase the risk of systemic inflammation, metabolic syndrome, infertility, and autoimmune

diseases by affecting digestion, changing enzyme activity, causing metabolic imbalances, and disrupting the gut microbiome. The ubiquity of processed foods, fast food culture, and irregular eating habits in the modern world increases the significance of *Viruddha Aahar*. Examples that fit the traditional definitions of food incompatibilities and have observable biochemical effects include combining hot and cold foods, reheating oils, or mixing milk with sour fruits." There is clinical evidence that the cumulative effects of eating incompatible foods can cause skin conditions, hormonal imbalances, and even neurological problems in addition to gastrointestinal symptoms. Through detoxification techniques like Panchakarma, individualized dietary adjustments, and lifestyle changes meant to strengthen the digestive tract and restore systemic balance, Ayurveda provides all-encompassing care. This study emphasizes how timeless Ayurvedic dietary principles are. A strong foundation for preventive healthcare is provided by combining these insights with current nutritional knowledge. People can greatly improve their immune system, digestive health, and general well-being by avoiding *Viruddha Aahar* and embracing holistic eating practices.

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