

VIRUDDHAHARA-A CONTEMPORARY REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Viruddha Ahara is a unique concept described in *Ayurveda*. This present article deals with critical review of *Viruddha Ahara* referred in terms of food–food interactions, food processing interactions. Ancient *Ayurveda* texts clearly defines that certain diet and its combinations, which interrupts with the metabolism of tissue, which inhibits the process of formation of tissues and which have the opposite properties to the tissues are called as *Viruddha Anna* or incompatible diet. In today's era, the daily routine, food habits are extremely changed. Due to these drastic changes in life style and food habits our body gets exposed to various toxins. Various junk foods like sugary drinks, pizza, white bread, potato chips, etc. are also results of the modern lifestyle which responsible for formation of toxins within the body. These types of foods can correlate with *Viruddha ahara*. All these toxins remains in our body in a dormant stage for a long duration and due to some stimulating factors, they result into various diseases.

Keywords: *Viruddha Ahara*, Junk food, toxins

INTRODUCTION

(a) According to Acharya Charaka:

Whatever article of food, which having dislodged the doshas (morbid humors) but do not eliminated from the body is to be considered as viruddhahara^[1]

(b) According to Acharya Sushruta:

Acharya Sushruta has explained various types of *viruddhahara*^[2] in *Sutrasthana* 20th chapter - *Hitahitiyam Adhaya* like *Karma viruddha* (Functionally incompatible), *Maana viruddha* (Quantitative incompatible), *Samyoga viruddha*

(Unsalutary combinations), *Rasa viruddha*

(Incompatibilities amongst two tastes).

(c) According to Acharya Vagbhatta:

Acharya Vagbhatta has described *viruddhahara* (Incompatible food) in the text *Ashtanga sangraha*, *Viruddhahara* means substances which when consumed cause aggravations of *doshas* (morbid humors) but do not expel them out of the body and bring about abnormalities in *dhatu*^[3] (tissues of the body).

Viruddhahara is said to be the cause of many systemic disorders as per *Ayurveda* literature. Persons who consume *Viruddha Ahara* are prone to many disorders. It is very important to correlate the mechanism as to how *Viruddha Ahara* is a leading cause of many metabolic disorders. It is also essential to know how some of the food combinations interact with each other and create a disease. *Viruddha Ahara* is clearly defined by Charaka^[4]

Acharya Charaka 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. The food which is wrong in combination, has undergone wrong processing, consumed in incorrect dose, and/or consumed in incorrect time of the day as well as in the wrong season can lead to *Viruddha Ahara*.

With the help of today's modern technology and biochemistry aspects, it becomes very easy to elaborate the effect of *Viruddha Ahara*. Food–food interaction is a serious issue but not much alerted one. Most of these food–food interactions are harmless but it is always better to know about some of them.

Ayurveda literature has described various types of *Viruddha Ahara*^[5] which can be summarized as follows:

Desha (place) *Viruddha*; *Kala Viruddha*; *Agni Viruddha*;
Matra (quantity) *Viruddha*;
Satmya (wholesome) *Viruddha*; *Dosha Viruddha*;
Sanskara (mode of preparation) *Viruddha*;
Veerya (potency) *Viruddha*; *Koshtha Viruddha*;
Avastha (state of health) *Viruddha*;
Kram (sequence) *Viruddha*; *Parihar Viruddha*;
Upachar (treatment) *Viruddha*;
Paak (cooking) *Viruddha*;
Samyoga (combination) *Viruddha*; *Hriday Viruddha*;
Sampad (richness of quality) *Viruddha*; *Vidhi* (rules for eating) *Viruddha*;

Some common *Viruddhaahara* in day to day life

- Milk shake, Fruit salad – *Rasa & Virya viruddha*
- Juice/ Ice-cream/Alcohol after hot spicy meal – *Upachaar viruddha*
- Cold water or soft drinks before hot tea – *Koshtha & Agni Viruddha*
- Spicy Punjabi food with cold drink – *Awastha & Koshta virudhha*
- Sizzling Browne ice-cream with Hot Chocolate – *Guna, Agni & Samyog virudhha*
- Popcorn with watching movie – *Matra virudhha*
- Popcorn along with Cold-drink – *Vidhi virudhha*

Harmful effects of junk food are as follows:^[6]

(1) Effect on digestive system:

Junk food is rich in fats and oil. The fatty system upsets the GI tract resulting in gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and irritable bowel syndrome. The oil gets deposited in the stomach wall, causing gastric cells to produce gastric acid. This excess acid results in various indigestion problems. Diet which has inadequate amount of fibres results in problems like constipation and haemorrhoids. The junk food is also rich in carbohydrates which breakdown into sugars. Pancreas finds it difficult to deal with the excess sugar which can result in fluctuations in blood sugar level and regular consumption can result in diabetes.

A study reveals the harmful effects of junk food on gut bacteria⁽⁷⁾.

(2) Risk of Diabetes:

Low sugars and excess sugars both are not suitable for health. In addition body should have a healthy metabolism rate to combat the high calories consumed by intake of junk foods. Obese people are more resistant to insulin, making metabolism of sugar even more difficult. The junk food effects metabolism and body loses the tendency to deal with the excess sugar produced after eating junk food. People develop resistance to insulin. In a review of studies on junk food and heart health, researchers found that eating fast food more than once per week was associated with a higher risk of obesity, and eating it more than twice per week with higher risks of metabolic syndrome, type 2 diabetes⁽⁸⁾.

(3) Effects on Brain and neurological Functions:

From recently studies, the fat from junk food replaces the good fat present in the brain which decreases the cognitive ability and also learning power. This bad fat also impairs the signalling mechanism from the brain. Junk food can result in neuro-inflammation i.e. inflammation of neurons resulting in brain damage. Researchers in Spain⁽⁹⁾ found that in long term, people who ate processed/junk food were 51% more likely to develop depression than those who didn't or those who ate them infrequently.

(4) Effect on cardiovascular system:

As we all know that junk foods are processed foods and are composed of fatty substances and are especially rich in bad cholesterol. This bad cholesterol gets deposited on the walls of arteries, reducing lumen of arteries and increases the blood pressure. The deposited fats can form plaques and blocking arteries resulting in cardiac arrest. Sometimes, the deposit turns into inflammatory and attracting more agents enhancing the blockage. The fatty substances increases body weight and makes you obese. Higher the body weight, increased is the chances of cardiovascular risk. The fatty deposition can be fatal and may result in cardiac arrest.

Dutch study links easy access to fast food and increased risk for heart disease⁽¹⁰⁾.

(5) Effect on kidney:

Kidney plays vital role for flushing of toxins. Increased junk food increases the risk of diabetes and heart disease. In diabetes, the body does not produce adequate amount of insulin or become resistant to insulin. Long term uncontrolled diabetes increases sugar concentration in the body. Increased blood sugar levels have adverse effects on the kidney along with other organs.

Eating a junk food diet can be as damaging to the kidney as diabetes, according to a new study⁽¹¹⁾.

(6) Effect on liver:

Junk food is highly rich in fatty acid contents. People who regularly eat fatty food, their liver show changes in the liver enzymes. The presence of liver enzymes is an indication of damage caused to the liver. The liver fails to perform its functions properly. The fat gets

deposited onto the liver and results in fatty liver. A study done by Swedish scientists suggested that people who ate fast food very often have high chances of getting fatty liver disease⁽¹²⁾.

(7) Effect on respiratory system:

Excess calories of junk food make people obese. This excess weight produces pressure on heart and lungs. The obese and heavy-weight persons develop shortness of breath and asthma like symptoms even while doing small daily chores. In a study⁽¹³⁾, researchers found that asthma was more likely in children who ate fast food at least three times per week.

(8) Carcinoma :

Junk foods like pizza, biscuits, burgers, and chocolate which are highly rich in calories increases the chances of developing cancer. There are several published reports which indicate consumption of junk food can result in cancer. It is confirmed from a study of Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, a diet rich in high calories without low or nil nutritive value can develop cancer. .

A study published in peer reviewed PLOS journal found that a diet heavy in junk food was linked with increased cancer rats⁽¹⁴⁾.

Diseases due to *Viruddha Ahara*:

As per *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)^[15]

***Viruddha ahara* does not affect every individual**

Though it is stated that regular consumption of *Viruddha Ahara* causes several diseases, in day to day life; it may be observed that many people who consume *Viruddha Anna* remains unaffected by it. *Acharya Charaka* has explained this condition too. He described that a person who is young in age and performs regular exercises, who is habitual to *Viruddha Ahara*, whose digestive power (*Agni*) is

high and has consumed *Viruddha Ahara* in small quantity remains unaffected of it^[15]

Food incompatibilities in today's perspective:

Viruddha Ahara may lead to inflammation at a molecular level. Large number of food incompatibilities is mentioned in old *Ayurved* literature, such as Charaka and Sushruta Samhitas. These types of food combinations are not used in today's era. We should have to identify new food incompatibilities, which are used today in day-to-day life as per Ayurvedic perspective. These food incompatibilities may also be categorized into *Karma Viruddha*, *Krama Viruddha*, *Veerya Viruddha*, and so on. Such food combinations can prove harmful, which may be imparting its untoward effects on immune system, cellular metabolism, growth hormone, and Dehydroepiandrosterone sulphate (DHEAS).

A new branch called topography (a science related to combination of food) is emerging, which states about the combination of basic categories of the food.^[16] As per this science proteins must not get combined with starch and carbohydrates and may be consumed differently. This is due to starches requiring an alkali medium and the amylase in saliva contains ptyalin, an enzyme that breaks down starch into maltose. The process continues in the small intestine, where more amylase further breaks down the maltose into simple glucose, fructose, and galactose. These absorbed into the bloodstream, and taken to the liver, which dispenses the energy to whatever cells in the body need it. If there is no immediate requirement, glucose converted into glycogen and stored in the liver, or into fat to be stored in adipose tissue.

Consuming proteins and starches together will result in absorption of one being delayed by the other. Similarly, eating sugars and acid fruits hinder the action of ptyalin and pepsin, reducing the secretion of saliva, and delaying digestion. If insufficient amylase is present in the mouth, starch will not get digested at all in the stomach, instead clogging up the works until amylase in the small intestine can get to work on it. Fats hinder the secretion of digestive juices, and reduce the amount of pepsin and hydrochloric acid, so

they should be avoided or used sparingly with protein-rich foods.

The unwanted side effects can emerge inside the body when two or more types of foods are consumed together. Such reactions can be less important but on long term, it can be fatal upon precipitating serious side effects.

TREATMENT:

Diseases produced by unwholesome food, can be treated by the help of purification therapy like *Panchakarma*, especially *vamana* (emesis) and *virechana* (purgation), and also by *shamana* or palliative therapy and wholesome diet^[17,18]. Prophylactic measures counteract the disorders born from *viruddhahara* but *nidanparivarjan* is the best way to live healthy life. 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.

As per modern medicine researches, a study at Imperial College London reveals that skipping breakfast could lead to junk food cravings, a study that concluded a healthy breakfast may help to avoid junk food habits^[19]

DISCUSSION

In our *Ayurvedic* classics there are so many terms which are related to *viruddhahara* i.e. *mithya ahara*, *adhyashana*, *vishmashana* *atyashana* these are the terminologies comes under *viruddha ahara* some acharyas like Charaka has enlisted eighteen type of *viruddhahara*, while Sushruta has enumerated four types, are some special *viruddha* as causative factor for particular diseases. Considering "Prevention is better than cure", our responsibility should be more toward prevention of these toxicities in community. First of all banning or partial banning of fast food advertisement should be employed by government

bodies because from these advertisements children get attracted towards these foods. Also fast food avoided by planning of meals and snacks ahead of time and other easy foods can be made under consideration like brown rice, beans, salads etc. fruits like apples, bananas and oranges travel well and can be used as easy afternoon snacks.

CONCLUSION

These healthy food habits should be followed in day to day life. Also works on stress management by doing proper exercise, yoga, meditation or doing involve yourself in doing work can distract from overeating. Thus proper follow up of *dincharya* and *aharvidhivishashayatana* that explained in Ayurveda can prevent such toxicities which produce due to junk food in the individual.

Therefore, it is important to enlist the causative incompatible dietary factors in today perspective and train the patients to avoid such etiologic factors.

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