



## Review Article

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### A CONCEPTUAL REVIEW ON THE ROLE OF VIRUDDHA AHARA IN FEMALE INFERTILITY

Anjana R.S <sup>1\*</sup>, Anoop A.K <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Samhita, Samskrita and Sidhanta, VPSV Ayurveda College, Kottakkal. Kerala, India

<sup>2</sup> PhD. Scholar, Department of Samhita and Siddhant, Parul Institute of Ayurved, Parul University, Vadodara, Gujarat, India

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#### \*Corresponding author

E-mail: anjanars9@gmail.com

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#### ABSTRACT

Viruddha Ahara is a valuable concept mentioned in Ayurveda. Ayurveda says that a specific diet and its combinations that interfere with the metabolism and have properties opposite to that of the tissue are called Viruddha Ahara or incompatible diets. The present article aims to review the role of Viruddha Ahara in female infertility. Acharya Charaka has mentioned that such types of inconsistent diet can lead to many diseases like impotence, visarpa, blindness, ascites, insanity, fistula in ano, coma, intoxication, abdominal distension, stiffness in the neck, anaemia, indigestion, various skin diseases, intestinal disorders, swelling, gastric irritations, fever, rhinitis and infertility. Hence it is clear that Viruddha Ahara can lead to disorders up to infertility and thus impacts Shukra dhatu.

**Keywords:** Viruddha ahara, female infertility, Agni, Ama.

#### INTRODUCTION

Diet is the primary and vital factor required for the continuation of life. It should be ingested in a definite manner to build the body and maintain a healthy state. But in the case of Viruddha Ahara, instead of preserving life, it becomes harmful to the body and presents various kinds of diseases due to chronic exposure. Nowadays, the present generation is more likely to consume foods like ice creams, curd, added salads with chicken, etc. This leads to the manifestation of many diseases, including infertility, which in Ayurveda is described as Viruddha Ahara. According to WHO, one in every four couples in developing countries is affected by infertility. Hence, an attempt is made to provide an overview of Viruddha Ahara as a causative factor for female infertility. The data were collected from authentic textbooks of Ayurveda, scientific journals and electronic media.

#### Viruddha Ahara

Viruddha Ahara or incompatible diet is an alarming issue discussed in Ayurveda. As per Ayurveda, the person who consumes Viruddha Ahara will be prone to many disorders. So, it is necessary to evaluate the mechanism as to how Viruddha Ahara is a cause for many ailments, including infertility.

**According to Acharya Charaka:** Acharya Charaka has explained that whatever article of food that has dislodged the doshas but is not eliminated from the body is considered Viruddha Ahara. <sup>1</sup>

**According to Acharya Sushruta:** Acharya Sushruta has explained various types of Viruddha Ahara like Karma viruddha (Functionally incompatible), Maana viruddha (Quantitative incompatible), Samyoga viruddha (Unsalutary combinations) and Rasa viruddha (Incompatibilities amongst two tastes). <sup>2</sup>

**According to Acharya Vagbhata:** Acharya Vagbhata has described that Viruddha Ahara means a substance which when consumed, cause aggravation of dosas but do not expel them out of the body and brings about abnormalities in dhatus<sup>3</sup>

Ayurvedic literature describes various types of Viruddha Ahara,<sup>4</sup> which can be summarized as follows:

1. Desha (place) Viruddha
2. Kala Viruddha
3. Agni Viruddha
4. Matra (quantity) Viruddha
5. Satmya (wholesome) Viruddha
6. Dosha Viruddha
7. Sanskara (mode of preparation) Viruddha
8. Veerya (potency) Viruddha
9. Koshtha Viruddha
10. Avastha (state of health) Viruddha
11. Krama (sequence) Viruddha
12. Parihara Viruddha
13. Upachara (treatment) Viruddha
14. Paaka (cooking) Viruddha
15. Samyoga (combination) Viruddha
16. Hridaya Viruddha
17. Sampad (richness of quality) Viruddha
18. Vidhi (rules for eating) Viruddha

Some common examples of Viruddha Ahara in daily life include,

1. Taking fish along with milk is considered as Veerya viruddha.
2. Consuming heated honey, which is a sort of Samskara viruddha.
3. Mixing honey and ghee in equal proportion and consuming which is regarded as Matra viruddha.
4. Drinking hot water after taking honey which forms the Karma viruddha.

5. Using the pungent substance in summer and cold substances in winter, which is the Kala viruddha
6. Consuming curd at night, taking Madhura Rasa food at the end of meals and Tikta - Katu Rasa Dravyas at the starting of meals which comes under Krama viruddha
7. Taking fruit salad or milk along with fried Chicken, fried ice-creams ..etc. forms Samyoga viruddha.
8. Consuming cold water immediately after having hot tea or coffee, which is considered as Parihara viruddha

#### Diseases due to Viruddha Ahara

Many diseases may occur due to administration of Viruddha Ahara, such as impotence, visarpa, blindness, ascitis, bullous, insanity, fistula in ano, coma, intoxication, abdominal distension, stiffness in the neck, anaemia, indigestion, various skin diseases, intestinal disorders, swelling, gastritis, fever, rhinitis, and infertility<sup>5</sup>.

Thus, Viruddha Ahara can lead to disorders up to infertility, i.e., it has an impact up to Shukra dhatu dushti. Suppose the diseases mentioned above are classified as per the body system. In that case, it can be seen that the reproductive system, immune system, endocrine system, digestive system, nervous system, and circulatory systems are being affected by continuous consumption of Viruddha Ahara.

#### Mode of action of Viruddha Ahara

Viruddha Ahara taken regularly can induce inflammation at a molecular level, disturbing the eicosanoid pathway and thereby creating more arachidonic acid leading to increased prostaglandin-2 and thromboxane. This inflammatory effect is essential as these are all the primary pathologies that make Agni Mandya, Ama, and several other metabolic disorders. According to Charaka Samhita, the most critical factor in the build-up of Ama is Agni and all the disease occurs due to imbalance in Agni<sup>6</sup>. The impaired Agni leads to impaired tissue formation up to the Shukra dhatu, which in turn vitiates the Ojas, which is considered the essence of all dhatus.

#### Infertility

According to WHO, infertility is the inability of a sexually active, non-contracepting couple to achieve pregnancy in one year. This can be grouped as a malefactor and female factor infertility. Female factor infertility can be classified as:

- Primary infertility – Those who have never conceived.
- Secondary infertility – Indicates previous pregnancy but failure to conceive subsequently.

Apart from the leading causes of infertility like PCOS, prevalent endocrine disorders, etc., there are also some hidden causes.<sup>7</sup>

#### Ayurvedic interpretation of female infertility

According to Ayurveda, conception results from a healthy sperm, healthy ovum, and uterus. The reproductive health of men and women depends on Shukra dhatu. In women, the ovum is produced by Shukra dhatu as part of the monthly cycle<sup>8</sup>. The Shukra dhatu is created as part of a long chain of metabolic transformations, starting with the digestion of food and then converting food to Rasa, Raktha, Mamsa, Medas, Asthi Majja, and finally, to Shukra dhatu. Healthy Shukra dhatu, thus, depends on the health of all the other dhatus in the body<sup>9</sup>. To conceive a healthy child, one should be healthy oneself. This optimum state

of health provides a fertile ground for the embryo to get implanted and grow<sup>10</sup>.

#### Types of infertility as written in classical textbooks

- Vandhya denotes absolute sterility and is considered incurable.
- Apraja means that the women can become pregnant by treatments and is considered curable
- Sapraja denotes women with infertility during their childbearing years after conceiving one or more children.

The menstrual cycle can be affected by many factors, such as diet, emotional instability, excessive physical exercise, lifestyle, and stress<sup>11</sup>, which creates an imbalance of the Doshas -Vata, Pitta and Kapha.

#### Role of Viruddha Ahara in the occurrence of female infertility

Generally, Viruddha Ahara leads to both Dosha and Dhatu aggravation<sup>12</sup> because Viruddha Ahara is nothing but those articles of food, which dislodge the morbid dosas but do not eliminate them out of the body. So continuous intake of Viruddha Ahara leads to vitiation of Agni<sup>13</sup>, which is the root cause of many diseases. Since Agni is responsible for the biotransformation of materials, vitiation of Jatharagni leads to vitiation of Dhatvagni and Bhutagni. This vitiated Jatharagni does not digest even the lightest food substances, resulting in Ajirna or indigestion. This undigested food material turns sour and acts like a poison called Ama Visha in Ayurveda. 'Ama Visha' (undigested poisonous food) eventually leads to the breakdown of the immune system. The Tridosha gets provoked by this type of ingestion<sup>14</sup>.

The most easily disturbed is the Vata Dosha, which causes functional defects in the egg and difficulties in implantation and is often responsible for infertility. However, infertility rarely involves only one Dosha. The aggravated Pitta Dosha results in infertility by causing scarring of the fallopian tube, inhibiting the ascent of the sperm or descent of the ovum. The excess heat produced may also be responsible for the depletion of Shukra Dhatu<sup>15</sup>. Because of the dominant water element in their constitution that supports Shukra Dhatu, the people with Kapha Prakriti experience the healthiest and strongest reproductive system. But when the Kapha Dosha is aggravated, fallopian tubes may get thickened; uterine fibroids may develop, and often involves Pitta and Vata displacement. The formation of scar tissue is due to the action of Pitta and Kapha.

Intake of Viruddha Ahara vitiates Srotas also. It is said that food substances and activities (Vihara) which are similar in quality to Dosas and opposite in qualities to the Dhatus vitiate the body channels or Srotas<sup>16</sup> and subsequently result in Srotorodha (obstruction in channels).

There are three Srotas in women's bodies involved in fertility:

- Rajovaha srotas include the uterus, cervix and vagina, and blood supply.
- Artavavaha srotas consist of the ovary and fallopian tube and their blood supply.
- Stanyavaha srotas, which includes breast tissue along with its blood supply<sup>17</sup>.

These Srotas get vitiated by Viruddha Ahara, leading to issues with female infertility. Viruddha Ahara also acts at the gene level, which reveals that it is a cause for many congenital factors leading to infertility like the absence of uterus etc.

## CONCLUSION

Diet plays a vital role in preventing and curing diseases and maintaining good reproductive health. Infertility has increased tremendously in the past decade. This increase is due to social, environmental, psychological, and nutritional factors. Among the nutritional aspects, Viruddha ahara plays an essential role in female infertility. Dietary management can be done by strictly adhering to Ojas-building foods and avoiding substances like the Viruddha Ahara, which diminish the Agni and causes Ama. This is important to regulate ovulation and enhance fertilization. Panchakarma (Ayurvedic deep internal cleansing procedure) can be utilized to eliminate Ama and thereby maintain Agni to lead a healthy reproductive life. Viruddha ahara shows its effects from rasa dhatu level to sukra dhatu, i.e., it affects all the dhatus, which offers its severity of consequences and leads to various types of diseases, including infertility. The main factor leading to female infertility is improper rasa dhatu formation due to impaired Agni. Viruddha Ahara contributes a lot to Agni Mandya. So, to prevent these disorders, one has to take the initial step of avoiding the intake of Viruddha ahara in our day to day life.

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