Review Article

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ROLE OF VIRUDDHA AHARA IN AARTAVAKSHAYA: AN AYURVEDIC REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Viruddha Ahara (incompatible food) is a significant concept in Ayurveda, wherein certain food combinations, though individually wholesome, when taken together, lead to disturbances in digestion and metabolism. Such dietary incompatibilities cause Doshic imbalances, formation of Ama (metabolic toxins), and depletion of Dhatus (tissues). Long-term consumption of Viruddha Ahara is described to produce various systemic disorders, including gynecological conditions. Aartavakshaya, characterized by scanty, delayed, or absent menstrual flow, is one such manifestation attributed to faulty dietary and lifestyle practices. Classical texts explain that vitiation of Vata dosha, along with impaired Agni and depletion of Shukra Dhatu, are the key factors contributing to the pathogenesis of Aartavakshaya. Modern perspectives suggest that an incompatible diet and lifestyle may contribute to hormonal imbalance, oxidative stress, and metabolic dysfunction, thereby affecting normal ovarian physiology and menstruation. This review attempts to present a comprehensive understanding of Viruddha Ahara and its role in Aartavakshaya. The concept has been explored through Ayurvedic classics, supported by contemporary research on dietary incompatibility and reproductive health. Preventive and therapeutic measures such as Pathya-Apathya (dietary regulations), Shodhana (purification therapies), and Shamana (palliative management) have also been discussed. By correlating classical Ayurvedic principles with modern evidence, this review emphasizes the importance of mindful dietary practices in maintaining women's reproductive health. Understanding and avoiding Viruddha Ahara can therefore be considered a key preventive strategy in the management of Aartavakshaya.

Keywords: Viruddha Ahara, Aartavakshaya, Ayurveda, Vata Dosha, Reproductive health

INTRODUCTION

In Ayurveda, the concept of Ahara (diet) is one of the three primary pillars of health, alongside sleep (Nidra) and proper lifestyle (Brahmacharya)[1]. Ahara is essential for maintaining equilibrium in the body's systems, including the doshas (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha), Agni (the digestive fire), and Dhatu (tissues)[2]. However, the consumption of Viruddha Ahara—food that is incompatible with the body's constitution, season, or digestive capacity leads to various diseases[3].

Aartavakshaya, the depletion or cessation of menstrual fluid, is one such condition often caused by the consumption of incompatible foods that disturb the delicate balance of the reproductive system[4,5]. The role of Viruddha Ahara (Incompatible Food) in Aartavakshaya is explored in this review, highlighting the importance of dietary compatibility for maintaining female reproductive health[6].

Concept of Viruddha Ahara (Incompatible Food)

Viruddha Ahara refers to the consumption of food combinations or preparation methods that are inherently contradictory to the body's digestion, metabolism, and overall balance[3]. These food incompatibilities can be broadly categorized into the following types:

Table 1: Types of Viruddha Ahara (Incompatible Food) described in Ayurveda[7,8]

Viruddha Ahara	Explanation	Examples
Desh Viruddha	Incompatible foods for the local climate or environment.	Cold foods in hot climate or vice versa
Kala Viruddha	Foods consumed at improper times. (Season, time of day or age)	Curd at night, cold drinks in winter.
Agni Viruddha	Food incompatible with digestive strength.	Fried / oily food in low digestive power.
Matra Viruddha	Food taken in inappropriate quantity.	Under – eating, overeating.
Satmya Viruddha	Food against one's accustomed habits.	Sudden change in diet from spicy to bland.
Dosh Viruddha	Food that aggravates the body's dominant dosh.	Excessive dry foods in Vata prakriti.
Samskar Viruddha	Food that becomes harmful due to faulty processing.	Heating honey, reheating cooking oil.
Veerya Viruddha	Combination of foods with opposing potency (hot and cold).	Fish with milk.
Koshtha Viruddha	Food not suitable for bowel tendencies.	Mridu koshtha person consuming heavy, hard to digest foods.

Awastha Viruddha	Food incompatible with the current state or condition of the body.	Heavy meal post-exercise or during illness
Kram Viruddha	Wrong order of intake.	Eating sweets before meals.
Paak Viruddha	Under – or overcooked food.	Unripe fruits or overcooked grains.
Samyoga Viruddha	Harmful food combination.	Banana + milk, ghee + honey in equal proportion.
Hridya Viruddha	Food disliked mentally.	Forcing bitter gourd or oily food if mentally repelled.
Vidhi Viruddha	Food taken against Ayurvedic rules or ethics.	Eating too fast, while standing, or when not hungry.
Upchar Viruddha	Consumption of food against treatment.	Consumes Sheetal jala after ghrita pan.
Parihar Viruddha	Consuming foods that are contraindicated for a specific condition or illness.	Drinking hot water after pork meat.
Sampad Viruddha	Eating too much of a single type of food.	Over consuming sweet and salty food.

Among the 18 types of Viruddha Aahar responsible for Aartavakshaya, the following are, Kala Viruddha, Agni Viruddha, Matra Viruddha, Satmya Viruddha, Samskar Viruddha, Paak Viruddha, Sampad Viruddha, and Vidhi Viruddha.

Understanding Aartavakshaya in Ayurveda

Aartavakshaya refers to the depletion or complete absence of Aartava (menstrual fluid), a vital substance in the female body responsible for fertility and health[9,10]. The condition primarily occurs due to the vitiation of Vata dosha and depletion of Shukra Dhatu[11,12].

Nidana (Causes)

Chronic stress, poor diet, excessive physical exertion, and inappropriate food choices (Viruddha Ahara) can lead to Aartavakshaya[3].

Other contributing factors include Vata derangement, improper menstrual hygiene, and suppression of natural urges[5].

Lakshana (Symptoms) [13]

- Hypomenorrhoea (Scanty) and Oligomenorrhoea (Prolonged cycle) picture of menstrual cycle
- Painful menstruation
- Infertility
- Weight gain
- Dark pigmentation over neck and back (Acanthosis)

Pathophysiology pathway of Viruddha Ahara leading to Aartavakshaya

The pathogenesis of Aartavakshaya begins with the consumption of Viruddha Ahara (Incompatible Food), leading to the disruption of Agni (digestive fire) [3]. Weak Agni results in the production of Ama (toxins), which circulate throughout the body, accumulating in the srotas (channels), particularly the Aartavavaha srotas (channels responsible for menstrual fluid) [5]. Which results in obstruction of Aartavvvaha srotas (Apan Vayu Avaran)

Mechanism of Pathogenesis

- Viruddha Ahara leads to Agni Mandya (weak digestion) Impaired digestion leads to the formation of Ama[14].
- Ama circulates in the body, blocking srotas Accumulation of toxins blocks the Artavavaha srotas[15].
- Apan Vata Vitiation by Aam, which results in Artava Kshaya (Updhatu).

As Ama blocks the channels, Vata dosha becomes aggravated, leading to the depletion of Rasa (plasma) and Shukra (semen) Dhatus, which are essential for menstrual health[5].

Viruddha Ahara (Incompatible Food)

↓

Agni Mandya (Weak Digestion)

↓

Ama Formation

↓

Avaran Ras dhatu channels by *Aam*

↓

Ras dhatu kshaya

↓

Updhatu kshaya (Aartavakshaya)

Flowchart: Pathogenesis of Ayurvedokt Aartavakshaya

Note: In Avaran, only the channels of the Updhatu of Ras dhatu are obstructed.

Preventive and Therapeutic Approaches

To prevent and treat Aartavakshaya, Ayurveda emphasizes a pathya-apathya (dos and don'ts) regimen:

Dietary Guidelines for Reproductive Health[4,9]

Pathya	Apathya
Fresh, warm, light foods	Cold, stale, heavy foods
Vegetables, whole grains, lean protein sources	Milk with fish or sour foods
Pungent, bitter, astringent food	Sweet, oily, and salty foods in excess
Consuming foods at appropriate times and seasons	Eating an incompatible food combination (e.g., fruits and milk)
Regular exercise, and Yoga aasan-like lifestyle, and meditation	Inadequate sleep, smoking, alcohol

Clinical Implications and Case Observations

Classical Ayurvedic texts such as the Charaka Samhita and Ashtanga Hridaya emphasize the central role of Ahara (diet) in maintaining the health of reproductive health[3]. Clinical insights and case observations in Ayurvedic practice demonstrate that modifying dietary patterns especially eliminating Viruddha Ahara (incompatible food)—can lead to marked improvements in symptoms associated with Aartavakshaya[4,5].

CONCLUSION

Viruddha Ahara plays a crucial role in disturbing Agni, producing Ama, and depleting Dhatus, thereby contributing to Aartavakshaya and menstrual irregularities. Correcting dietary habits and avoiding incompatible food combinations can help restore Dosha balance and improve reproductive health. Correlating Aartavakshaya with modern disorders like PCOS highlights the importance of lifestyle modification and awareness. Integrating Ayurvedic dietary principles with modern approaches offers a holistic strategy for the prevention and management of reproductive disorders.

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