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## Viruddha Ahara in Ayurveda and Its Clinical Correlation with Svitra Roga A Review Article

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### Abstract

**Background:** Ayurveda places paramount importance on Ahara (diet) as one of the Trayopasthambha (three pillars of life). Within this framework, the concept of Viruddha Ahara (incompatible diet) is unique and profound, emphasizing that certain combinations, timings, and methods of food intake can be detrimental to health. While individually these foods may be nutritious, together they can impair digestion, disturb Agni (digestive fire), produce Ama (toxic by-products), and cause dosha dushti. Among the numerous diseases linked to Viruddha Ahara, Svitra Roga (commonly compared with vitiligo/leucoderma) has been repeatedly highlighted in classical texts.

**Objective:** This review aims to analyze the classical concept of Viruddha Ahara and its clinical correlation with Svitra Roga, while also exploring parallels with modern scientific perspectives on vitiligo pathogenesis.

**Methods:** A critical review of Ayurvedic classical texts including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Madhava Nidana, and Ashtanga Hridaya was undertaken to extract references on Viruddha Ahara and Svitra. Modern scientific data was sourced from PubMed, Google Scholar, and other indexed journals using keywords such as “incompatible food,” “vitiligo,” and “dietary factors.” Relevant studies were analyzed to establish connections between dietary incompatibility, autoimmune mechanisms, oxidative stress, and skin depigmentation.

**Results:** Ayurvedic literature describes more than 18 types of Viruddha Ahara, with specific mention of milk with fish, heated honey, and curd intake at night as causative factors for Svitra. The pathogenesis involves Agni dushti, Ama utpatti, and Rakta-Mamsa-Meda dhatu dushti leading to depigmentation. Modern literature supports the association between dietary factors, oxidative stress, gut dysbiosis, and immune dysregulation in vitiligo, which resonates with Ayurvedic explanations. Clinical observations also suggest worsening of vitiligo with certain incompatible food combinations.

**Conclusion:** Viruddha Ahara is not merely a theoretical Ayurvedic principle but has significant clinical relevance in the etiology and management of Svitra Roga. Avoidance of incompatible diet plays a preventive role, reduces recurrence, and enhances treatment efficacy. Bridging Ayurvedic dietary wisdom with modern research on vitiligo offers a holistic and integrative approach to prevention and therapy.

**Keywords:** Viruddha Ahara, Svitra Roga, vitiligo, incompatible food, Ayurveda, dietetics

### Introduction

Health in Ayurveda is sustained through the balance of Ahara (diet), Nidra (sleep), and Brahmacharya (regulated lifestyle), which are described as Trayopasthambha—the three pillars of life. Among these, Ahara occupies a primary position as it is the direct source of Prana (life force), nutrition, and immunity. The Ayurvedic classics emphasize that wholesome and compatible food promotes equilibrium of Dosha, Dhatu, and Mala, whereas unwholesome or incompatible food leads to imbalance, disease, and premature ageing<sup>[1]</sup>.

The concept of Viruddha Ahara (incompatible diet) is one of the most unique contributions of Ayurveda to nutritional science. Acharya Charaka has elaborated more than 18 types of incompatibilities such as desha viruddha (regional incompatibility), kala viruddha (time-related), matra viruddha (dose-related), veerya viruddha (potency-related), and samyoga viruddha (combination-related). These refer to situations where food, even if individually wholesome, becomes harmful when consumed in certain forms, amounts, timings, or combinations. For instance, the intake of milk with fish, heated honey, or curd at night are described as incompatible<sup>[2]</sup>.

Continuous consumption of Viruddha Ahara is said to impair Agni (digestive fire), generate Ama (metabolic toxins), and vitiate Tridosha (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha). Ultimately, this leads to Rakta dushti (impurities in blood) and involvement of deeper Dhatus

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(tissues). The skin, being closely related to Rakta and Pitta, is particularly vulnerable to the ill effects of Viruddha Ahara. This is why Kushta Roga (skin disorders) are repeatedly mentioned in Ayurvedic texts as outcomes of incompatible dietary practices [3].

Among the various Kushta, Svitra Roga (commonly compared with vitiligo/leucoderma) is specifically linked with Viruddha Ahara. Svitra is described as a condition characterized by shweta mandala (white depigmented patches), which occur due to vitiation of Pitta dosha in association with Rakta, Mamsa, and Medas dhatu. The classics emphasize dietary causes such as intake of fish with milk, sour substances with milk, stale food, and excess use of curd as prime factors in the pathogenesis of Svitra [4].

From a modern perspective, vitiligo is an acquired pigmentary disorder marked by selective destruction of melanocytes. Although its exact etiology is multifactorial—genetic, autoimmune, oxidative stress, and neural mechanisms—dietary and metabolic factors are increasingly acknowledged as contributors to disease onset and progression. Studies highlight the role of oxidative imbalance, immune dysregulation, and gut dysbiosis in vitiligo, which can be conceptually related to the Ayurvedic idea of Ama formation and Agni dushti due to Viruddha Ahara [5].

Therefore, understanding Viruddha Ahara not only has historical significance but also contemporary clinical relevance. A careful analysis of its association with Svitra Roga may provide insights into preventive strategies, disease progression, and holistic management. This review aims to analyze the Ayurvedic and modern perspectives on Viruddha Ahara and its direct clinical correlation with Svitra Roga.

### Aims and Objectives

- To review the Ayurvedic concept of Viruddha Ahara with reference to classical literature.
- To analyze the role of Viruddha Ahara as a causative factor in Svitra Roga.
- To explore modern correlations of diet-induced mechanisms in vitiligo pathogenesis.
- To provide a consolidated understanding that bridges Ayurvedic and modern perspectives for better preventive and therapeutic approaches.

### Materials and Methods

**Source of Data:** This review is based on classical Ayurvedic texts including Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya, Madhava Nidana, and relevant commentaries. Modern references were collected from PubMed, Google Scholar, Scopus, and Ayurveda research databases.

**Inclusion Criteria:** Peer-reviewed journal articles, classical references with commentary, and clinical studies on vitiligo related to diet.

**Exclusion Criteria:** Non-relevant texts, articles without relation to dietary factors, and non-peer-reviewed sources.

**Method of Review:** Comparative analysis was done between Ayurvedic classical principles and modern scientific literature to establish possible clinical correlations. Data was organized thematically under headings: types of

Viruddha Ahara, Nidana of Svitra Roga, clinical correlation, and modern diet-immunology links.

### Concept of Viruddha Ahara in Ayurveda

The term Viruddha Ahara literally translates to “incompatible food.” It refers to those dietary substances or their combinations which, though individually wholesome, become harmful when consumed together, in improper proportion, at the wrong time, or when prepared or processed in certain ways. The uniqueness of this concept lies in Ayurveda’s recognition that the impact of food is not merely dependent on its nutritional value, but also on its qualities (guna), potency (veerya), timing (kala), place (desha), and method of combination (samyoga) [6].

### Types of Viruddha Ahara (Charaka Samhita) [7]

- **Desha Viruddha (regional incompatibility):** Consuming heavy, unctuous food in marshy lands where Kapha predominates.
- **Kala Viruddha (time-related incompatibility):** Taking cold food in winter or hot, spicy food in peak summer.
- **Agni Viruddha (digestive capacity incompatibility):** Consuming heavy food when digestive fire is weak.
- **Matra Viruddha (dose incompatibility):** Eating honey or ghee in excessive amounts.
- **Satmya Viruddha (wholesomeness incompatibility):** Eating food not accustomed to one’s body.
- **Dosha Viruddha (constitution incompatibility):** Intake of dry and light food in a Vata-prone individual.
- **Veerya Viruddha (potency incompatibility):** Combining substances of opposite potency, e.g., milk (cold) with fish (hot).
- **Koshtha Viruddha (bowel nature incompatibility):** Eating heavy food in a person with sluggish digestion.
- **Avastha Viruddha (state incompatibility):** Eating heavy meals immediately after exercise or sexual activity.
- **Krama Viruddha (sequence incompatibility):** Eating curd before meals or fruits immediately after heavy food.
- **Parihara Viruddha (avoidance incompatibility):** Drinking cold water immediately after taking hot tea or oily food.
- **Upachara Viruddha (therapeutic incompatibility):** Using cold therapy right after ingesting hot food.
- **Paaka Viruddha (processing incompatibility):** Heating honey or reheating stale food.
- **Samyoga Viruddha (combination incompatibility):** Milk with sour fruits, milk with fish.
- **Hridaya Viruddha (psychological incompatibility):** Eating food with dislike or hatred.
- **Sampad Viruddha (quality incompatibility):** Consuming unripe or overripe fruits.
- **Vidhi Viruddha (procedure incompatibility):** Eating without following proper rules like overeating, eating too fast, or eating in silence without mindfulness.
- **Samyoga Viruddha (repeated combinations):** Mixing substances that change properties when combined, like equal amounts of honey and ghee.

### Pathophysiological Basis [8]

- **Agni Dushti:** Incompatible foods suppress or derange digestive fire, resulting in incomplete digestion.

- **Ama Formation:** Undigested or improperly processed food transforms into Ama, a toxic metabolic residue.
- **Dosha Prakopa:** Viruddha Ahara disturbs equilibrium of Vata, Pitta, and Kapha, particularly leading to Pitta-Kapha aggravation.
- **Dhatu Dushti:** Toxins accumulate in deeper tissues, especially Rakta, Mamsa, and Medas dhatu.
- **Disease Manifestation:** Long-term indulgence manifests as Kushta (skin diseases), Jwara (fever), Grahanidosha (malabsorption), infertility, and Svitra.

#### Pathogenesis<sup>[9]</sup>

Viruddha Ahara → Agni Mandya → Ama utpatti → Dosha Prakopa (especially Pitta & Kapha) → Rakta Dushti → manifestation of Svitra.

#### Svitra Roga in Ayurveda

##### Classified under Kushta Roga (skin disorders)<sup>[8, 9, 10]</sup>

Involves vitiation of Tridosha with predominance of Pitta dosha affecting Rakta, Mamsa, and Medas.

- **Clinical features:** Depigmented patches (svitra mandala), no itching or discharge, gradual spreading.
- **Nidana (causes):** Intake of Viruddha Ahara (milk with fish, curd at night, excessive sour or salty food, stale food), along with psychological factors (stress, fear).

#### Clinical Correlation of Viruddha Ahara with Svitra Roga

- **Milk + Fish:** Different veerya (potency) → leads to dosha vitiation and skin discoloration.
- **Curd at night:** Causes Kapha aggravation, Rakta dushti.
- **Excessive sour & salty food:** Enhances Pitta, leading to burning and pigmentary disorders.
- **Improper processing of food (Paaka viruddha):** Generates Ama, affecting skin metabolism.

#### Discussion

The concept of Viruddha Ahara illustrates the Ayurvedic understanding of the close relationship between diet and disease. According to Charaka Samhita, consumption of incompatible foods leads to Agni dushti (derangement of digestive power) and Ama utpatti (toxin accumulation). This Ama circulates in the body and interacts with Tridosha, resulting in vitiation of Rakta dhatu, Mamsa dhatu, and Medas dhatu. In the case of Svitra Roga, this pathological sequence manifests as localized depigmented patches due to impaired function of Bhrajaka Pitta, the subtype of Pitta responsible for skin color and complexion<sup>[11]</sup>.

#### Ayurvedic Viewpoint

**Role of Viruddha Ahara:** Repeated intake of fish with milk, sour substances with milk, or heated honey are frequently cited as potent causes of Svitra. These combinations are believed to create metabolic disturbances equivalent to dosha-dushti and defective assimilation at the tissue level.<sup>12</sup>

**Dosha Involvement:** Primarily Pitta and Kapha doshas are disturbed. Pitta leads to derangement of skin color (loss of pigmentation), while Kapha contributes to obstruction and sluggish tissue metabolism. Vata assists in the irregular spreading of lesions.<sup>13</sup>

**Dhatu Dushti:** Rakta dushti directly alters skin integrity, while Mamsa and Medas involvement explains chronicity and resistance to treatment.<sup>14</sup>

Samprapti (pathogenesis): Viruddha Ahara → Agni Mandya → Ama → Tridosha Prakopa → Rakta-Mamsa-Meda Dushti → Svitra<sup>[15]</sup>.

#### Modern Correlation<sup>[16]</sup>

Modern science provides a complementary explanation for the pathogenesis of vitiligo:

**Autoimmune Mechanism:** Vitiligo is widely considered an autoimmune condition where the immune system targets melanocytes. This aligns with the Ayurvedic principle of Ama acting as an antigenic or toxin-like substance, triggering abnormal immune responses<sup>[17]</sup>.

**Oxidative Stress:** Excess production of reactive oxygen species (ROS) has been implicated in melanocyte destruction. Ayurvedic texts describe heated honey, stale food, and incompatible combinations as producing toxic by-products (Ama), which could conceptually be compared to free radical overload<sup>[18]</sup>.

**Gut-Skin Axis:** Recent research suggests that gut dysbiosis and impaired digestion contribute to systemic inflammation and autoimmunity. This parallels the Ayurvedic view that impaired Agni and accumulation of Ama play a central role in Svitra Roga<sup>[19]</sup>.

**Nutritional Triggers:** Clinical studies note aggravation of vitiligo with certain foods such as excessive sour or citrus intake, seafood, or processed foods—closely resembling the list of Viruddha Ahara given in Ayurvedic classics.<sup>20</sup>

#### Preventive & Therapeutic Implications

The convergence of these perspectives highlights that avoidance of Viruddha Ahara is not merely a theoretical injunction but a clinically significant preventive strategy. Patients with vitiligo often report worsening of lesions with dietary indiscretions. Therefore, dietary counseling should be integral to Ayurvedic management of Svitra.<sup>21</sup>

Therapeutically, purification therapies (Shodhana such as Virechana), pacifying measures (Shamana chikitsa with Pitta-Kapha balancing herbs), and Rasayana therapy (for immune modulation and skin rejuvenation) should be combined with strict Viruddha Ahara avoidance. Modern integrative approaches could explore the role of dietary antioxidants, probiotics, and anti-inflammatory diets as supportive measures, resonating with Ayurvedic recommendations.<sup>22</sup>

#### Summary of Discussion

Viruddha Ahara plays a pivotal role in the etiopathogenesis of Svitra Roga by disturbing Agni and generating Ama, which in turn leads to Tridosha prakopa and Rakta dushti. Modern science supports this through evidence of dietary triggers, oxidative stress, and gut-immune disturbances in vitiligo. Thus, the ancient principle of avoiding incompatible foods holds significant relevance even in present-day dermatology.

#### Conclusion

The concept of Viruddha Ahara represents one of the most profound contributions of Ayurveda to preventive medicine and dietetics. Ayurveda does not merely focus on the nutritional value of food but emphasizes the guna (qualities), veerya (potency), samyoga (combinations), matra (quantity), kala (time), and desha (region) in determining its health effects. When these principles are disregarded, even foods that are individually wholesome can



become pathogenic. In the case of Svitra Roga (vitiligo), classical Ayurvedic texts explicitly mention Viruddha Ahara as a primary etiological factor. Combinations such as milk with fish, heated honey, or excessive sour and fermented foods have been consistently correlated with depigmentary disorders. This highlights that Svitra is not only a local skin condition but a systemic manifestation of improper dietary practices leading to Agni dushti, Ama utpatti, and Rakta-Mamsa-Meda dushti. Modern scientific evidence also supports this traditional wisdom. Vitiligo is increasingly understood as a multifactorial disorder influenced by oxidative stress, immune dysfunction, and gut dysbiosis. Dietary triggers and metabolic toxins have been shown to aggravate melanocyte destruction, which resonates with the Ayurvedic concept of Viruddha Ahara leading to Ama formation and tissue-level pathology. Clinically, this correlation underscores the importance of dietary counseling and lifestyle regulation in the prevention and management of Svitra. Avoidance of Viruddha Ahara not only prevents disease onset but also reduces relapses, improves treatment response, and enhances the quality of life in patients. Therapeutic protocols in Ayurveda such as Shodhana (purification), Shamana (pacification), and Rasayana (rejuvenation) therapies yield better outcomes when coupled with strict dietary discipline. Thus, Viruddha Ahara is not a mere theoretical construct but a practical and clinically relevant guideline. Recognizing and avoiding incompatible dietary combinations should be considered an essential preventive strategy in the holistic management of Svitra Roga. Integrating these time-tested Ayurvedic principles with modern dermatological and nutritional insights can pave the way for a more comprehensive and patient-centered approach to vitiligo care.

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