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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## REVISITING VIRUDDHA AHARA IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN DIET AND HEALTH DISORDERS

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### Abstract

The Ayurvedic concept of Viruddha Ahara (incompatible food combinations) is deeply rooted in classical texts and continues to hold relevance in the context of modern dietary habits and lifestyle diseases. This paper explores the foundational principles of Viruddha Ahara, as described by Acharya Charaka, Sushruta, and Vagbhata, and reinterprets them through the lens of current nutritional science. Incompatible dietary combinations—whether due to opposite properties, improper timing, unsuitable methods of preparation, or poor alignment with one's constitution—are known to disturb digestion (Agni), imbalance doshas, and lead to the formation of toxins (Ama), contributing to metabolic disorders. Modern research corroborates these traditional views, demonstrating how improper food pairings can disrupt the gut microbiota, impair immune responses, and contribute to inflammation, oxidative stress, and chronic diseases. Examples include the reheating of oils producing carcinogenic compounds, nutrient depletion from processed foods, thermodynamic incompatibility of cold and fatty foods, and harmful interactions between certain foods and metals during storage. This article integrates Ayurvedic wisdom with contemporary evidence, emphasizing the need for awareness about food synergy, digestive compatibility, and mindful eating practices. By bridging traditional principles with modern science, the study advocates for the reevaluation of dietary behaviors as part of a preventive and therapeutic approach to health and wellness.

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### Introduction:-

Viruddha Ahara, or incompatible food combinations, is a fundamental concept in classical Ayurvedic literature that highlights the health risks associated with improper dietary pairings. Ancient Ayurvedic sages, particularly Acharya Charaka, emphasized its critical role in the development of various systemic and metabolic disorders. Kashyapa highlights "Aaharo mahabhashajayamuchyate" which means that "food is medicine when consumed properly."<sup>2</sup> Viruddha Ahara refers to the consumption of food combinations that disturb the balance of the doshas,

impair digestion (Agni), disrupt tissue metabolism, and ultimately contribute to disease manifestation. These incompatibilities may stem from improper food pairings, incorrect processing methods, unsuitable timing of intake, or incompatibility with one's constitution (Prakriti) and season (Ritu).

In today's dietary landscape, the significance of Viruddha Ahara has become increasingly apparent, particularly in relation to lifestyle disorders and poor eating habits. The increasing consumption of fast food, processed meals, and chemically-laden or artificially combined food items has paralleled the rise in lifestyle-related diseases such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular ailments, and gastrointestinal disorders. While Ayurveda approached this through a holistic lens, modern nutritional science and biochemistry echo similar concerns—identifying food–food interactions and metabolic responses as contributing factors to chronic health issues.

In Western countries, food incompatibilities are known to affect approximately 20% of the population. Among those affected, food allergies are particularly prevalent—impacting 25% of children and 10% of adults—most often as a result of immunological reactions. Gastrointestinal complications are reported in nearly one-third of these cases.<sup>3</sup> So, Ayurveda has long emphasized the concept of wholesome (pathya) and unwholesome (apathya) ahara (diet), underscoring the importance of compatibility in dietary habits to maintain optimal health.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, emerging research supports the Ayurvedic understanding that diet is not solely about the nutritional content but also about the synergy, timing, method of preparation, and environmental context in which food is consumed. Improper food combinations are now being linked to inflammation, oxidative stress, metabolic imbalances, and long-term health consequences.

This article seeks to explore and reinterpret the traditional concept of Viruddha Ahara, examining its significance in the context of modern eating patterns and emerging health issues. By integrating Ayurvedic principles with contemporary scientific insights, this study explores how the age-old concept of incompatible diet can inform preventive strategies and dietary guidelines for modern-day wellness.

The term Viruddha literally translates to "opposite." In the context of dietetics, it refers to certain food combinations that may exhibit antagonistic characteristics, leading to adverse effects on the body. It appears that combining certain types of foods may lead to adverse effects on health.<sup>5</sup>

Opposite properties

Opposite activities on the tissues

It can potentially lead to harmful effects if cooked or processed in a particular way.

Can lead to harmful outcomes when combined in improper proportions

May negatively affect health if consumed at an inappropriate time

### **Aim:-**

To explore the Ayurvedic concept of Viruddha Ahara (incompatible food combinations) in the light of classical texts and reinterpret it through the lens of modern nutritional science, highlighting its relevance in the prevention and management of lifestyle-related diseases.

### **Objectives:-**

1. To explore the traditional Ayurvedic perspective on Viruddha Ahara as outlined by ancient scholars such as Acharya Charaka, Sushruta, and Vagbhata.
2. To identify various types of incompatible food combinations based on their properties, timing, preparation, and individual constitution.
3. To assess how incompatible food combinations (Viruddha Ahara) influence digestive function (Agni), disturb doshas balance, and contribute to the development of toxins (Ama) in the body.
4. To correlate Ayurvedic principles with current scientific evidence on food incompatibility and its role in gut health, inflammation, and metabolic disorders.
5. To promote mindful eating practices by integrating Ayurvedic dietary wisdom with modern nutrition for better preventive and therapeutic health strategies.

## Materials and Methods:-

This article is based on a review of information gathered from classical Ayurvedic texts and published research journals.

Viruddha Ahara has been recognized in Ayurveda as a significant factor contributing to inflammation at the molecular level. Classical Ayurvedic texts, particularly those by Acharya Charaka and Sushruta, provide several examples of food combinations considered incompatible with health. However, many of these traditional examples are not commonly observed in modern dietary practices. Therefore, it is essential to identify and reinterpret contemporary dietary incompatibilities through the lens of Ayurvedic principles. Modern food habits often include combinations that, although culturally accepted, may adversely affect health by impairing immune function, disrupting cellular metabolism, influencing the secretion of growth hormones, and altering levels of Dehydroepiandrosterone sulfate (DHEAS). Recognizing and managing these modern forms of Viruddha Ahara is important for preventing and controlling lifestyle-related health issues.

### According To Acharya Charaka:-

Acharya Charaka describes Viruddhahara as any food that dislodges the doshas (morbid humours) but fails to expel them from the body, leading to an imbalance. Such substances act contrary to the bodily tissues (dehadhatu) and are referred to as Viruddha Ahara due to their antagonistic nature (virodha).<sup>6</sup>

### According to Acharya Sushruta:-

Any food substance that aggravates the doshas (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha) but does not eliminate them through processes like emesis (Vamana) or purgation (Virechana) tends to remain within the body. This leads to vitiation of bodily tissues such as rasa (plasma) and rakta (blood) etc, ultimately resulting in the manifestation of various diseases. These types of food pairings are referred to as Viruddha Ahara, which means foods that are incompatible with each other.<sup>7</sup>

### According to Acharya Vagbhata:-

Any food that disturbs the doshas (bodily humours) but fails to eliminate them from the body is termed as Viruddha Ahara (incompatible food).<sup>8</sup>

### Types of Viruddha Ahara:-

Proper consumption of food, with attention to its various aspects—including timing, preparation, quantity, and compatibility—plays a crucial role in maintaining the equilibrium of Dosha, Dhātu, and Agni. Ayurveda systematically classifies eighteen distinct types of Viruddha Ahara (incompatible food combinations), as outlined in the accompanying table.<sup>9,10,11</sup>

Sr no.	Type of Viruddha Ahara	Explanation	Example
1.	Desha viruddha Ahara	Food that is inappropriate or incompatible with the geographical or environmental conditions of a particular region.	1. Consuming cold drinks in cold regions like the Himalayas (below 10°C) is incompatible with the local climate. 2. Dry and sharp (Ruksha, Tikshna) foods, such as alcohol, when consumed in arid regions like desert areas (Maru Bhumi), may aggravate bodily imbalances due to the already dry and hot environment.
2.	Kala Viruddha	Food taken at improper or inconsistent meal times	1. Excessive consumption of heat-producing dry fruits, such as dates, during the summer season 2. Intake of cold foods such as ice cream during the winter season. 3. Spicy pavbhaji like food and katu, Ushna Ahara in summer season.
3.	Agni Viruddha	Food that exceeds an individual's digestive capacity can impair digestion(In	1. Consuming oily and heavy foods is incompatible when the digestive fire.

		individuals with strong digestive fire (Tikshna Agni), heavy meals are digested more efficiently, whereas in those with weak digestive fire (Manda Agni), digestion is slow and prolonged.)	2. Combining hot foods like brownies with cold items such as ice cream. 3. Light and small-quantity food for sharp digestion (Tikshna Agni), like eating popcorn when extremely hungry.
4.	Matra Viruddha	Consumption of food in inappropriate quantities—either in excess or insufficient amounts.	1. Intake of diet having lower/higher calories than the individual body's requirement. 2. Taking honey and cows ghee in equal amounts is considered incompatible in Ayurveda
5.	Dosha Viruddha	Dietary practices that disturb the equilibrium of the doshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha—can lead to physiological imbalance	1. Intake of cold fruit juice mixed with hot milk or coffee. 2. Gangadhara has elaborated this term in 3 types- Dosha Viruddha based on taste (Rasa) refers to the use of astringent taste (Kashaya Rasa), which is considered incompatible for individuals with a Vata constitution. Vyadhi Viruddha refers to food combinations that aggravate specific diseases—for example, curd mixed with rice is considered incompatible in cases of Kushtha (skin disorders) Dravya Swabhava- Poison (Dhatu pradushana dravya)
6.	Sanskar Viruddha	Improperly prepared food is considered unwholesome and may disturb digestion and bodily functions.	1. Intake of carbohydrates rich food like bread, potatoes, and bananas with sour fruits like lemons, limes, oranges, and tomatoes. 2. Consuming potato chips and chicken together with yogurt. 3. Reheating food items- French fries
7.	Koshtha Viruddha	Foods that put extra strain on digestion and are not easily broken down by the stomach.	1. Intake of strong laxatives by Mrudu Koshtha (soft-bowel) person. 2. Ice tea 3. Consumption of barbecue and baked foods by individuals with a tendency toward constipation (Krura Koshtha)
8.	Avastha Viruddha Ahara	Diets and foods unsuitable for specific age groups or health condition.	1. Intake of heavy food (e.g., sweets or milk products) during a fever. 2. Popcorn while watching a movie.
9.	Upachar Viruddha Ahara	Consuming restricted foods after specific therapies.	Drinking cold water following Snehapana and a steam bath can diminish the desired therapeutic benefits.
10.	Samyoga Viruddha Ahara	Improper combination of food	1. Pomegranate juice and grapefruit juices can inhibit the cytochrome P450 3A4 enzyme in the colon, potentially elevating blood concentrations of drugs. 2. madhura rasa with amla rasa- banana milkshake 2. Influence of Western culture on most Indian people. Like - burger, pizza, and pasta.
11.	Vidhi Viruddha Ahara	Improper way of eating	Curd is acidic and heavy, which can aggravate Pitta and Kapha doshas and cause constipation when taken at night

12.	Hriday Viruddha	Unappetizing and unsuitable diet for individual taste.	1.Plain khichdi – for people who dislike mushy textures or mild flavors. 2. Steamed broccoli or kale – often disliked due to bitterness or texture.
13.	Sampad Viruddha	The incompatibility of attributes or qualities in food, regardless of their type or quantity.	Consuming dietary items that are under-ripe, overripe, or spoiled, such as unripe fruits, overripe bananas, and moldy bread.
14.	Paak Viruddha	Diets That is poorly prepared, such as overcooked or undercooked foods.	Food that is raw, overcooked, or burnt during preparation like- half fried eggs, charred flatbreads.
15.	Upachar Viruddha	Consuming food products not on a prescribed diet	Intake of cold drinks, after consuming a high-fat diet
16.	Parihar Viruddha	Consuming food that contradicts medical advice, such as consuming hot items immediately after pork intake	Consuming hot beverages immediately after eating boar meat.
17.	Krama Viruddha	The consumption of food in a manner that contradicts the proper order	This includes situations where a person eats before emptying their bowels and urinating, lacks appetite for food, or eats excessively after experiencing intense hunger
18.	Avastha Viruddha	Consuming food that is inconsistent with an individual's health	Consuming a meal aggravates Vata after physical activity, consuming a diet that aggravates Kapha when feeling tired, or eating heavy food during a fever

- 1) Diseases due to Viruddha Ahara
- 2) Regular intake of Viruddha Ahara (incompatible foods) can impair the senses, reduce physical strength and vitality, and weaken immunity, making the body more prone to diseases. Ayurvedic Literature documents various disorders linked to such dietary incompatibilities.<sup>12</sup>

Sr.no	Diseased conditions	Comments
1	Klaibya	Impotence refers to the inability to achieve or sustain an erection adequate for sexual activity.
2	Andhya	Visual impairment or blindness.
3	Visarpa	Erysipelas; a skin infection caused by bacteria, often leading to redness and inflammation.
4	Jalodara	Ascites refers to the abnormal build-up of fluid within the abdominal cavity.
5	Unmada	Insanity or severe mental disorder.
6	Bhagandara	Anal fistula; an abnormal connection between the anal canal and the skin.
7	Murccha	Fainting or loss of consciousness, similar to a coma-like state.
8	Aadhmana	Abdominal bloating or distention due to gas or fluid.
9	Galagraha	Throat obstruction; a condition involving difficulty in swallowing or blockage.
10	Anemia (Pandu Roga)	decreased concentration of red blood cells or hemoglobin.
11	Ama	Toxic by-products of incomplete digestion; considered harmful in Ayurveda.
12	Leucoderma (Kilasa)	A condition marked by the loss of skin pigmentation (white patches).
13	Kushtha	A broad category of skin diseases or chronic dermatological conditions.
14	Grahani	Malabsorption syndrome; often related to disorders of the small intestine like sprue
15	Shotha	Swelling or inflammation; medically referred to as edema.
16	Amlapitta	Excess stomach acid; commonly known as hyperacidity or acid reflux.
17	Jwara	Fever; increase body temperature due to infection or imbalance.

18	Pinas	Allergic rhinitis; inflammation of the nasal mucosa, caused by allergens.
19	Santana Dosha	Infertility; inability to conceive a child.
20	Mrutyu	Death; cessation of life.

Examples of incompatibility according to modern diet:-Some food/food products which have incompatible combinations and their possible adverse effects.

Sr. no	Food/food products	Combination to which food is incompatible	Possible adverse effect
1.	Beans	cheese, eggs, Fruit, fish, milk, meat, yogurt	Combining milk with other high-protein foods like eggs, meat, or beans can be hard for the stomach to digest and may cause discomfort. <sup>13</sup>
2.	Green tea or black tea	Milk	Tea is a healthy drink that contains natural compounds called catechins, which are a type of flavonoid. These catechins are especially good for your heart and can support overall cardiovascular health. However, mixing milk into your tea may lessen these positive effects. This is because proteins in milk, known as caseins, can attach to the catechins and lower their effectiveness. To enjoy the full health benefits of tea, it's better to drink it without milk. <sup>14</sup>
3.	Milk	Fish, Krushara (khichari), meat	Milk and fish are considered an unsuitable combination because they have opposite effects on the body. Milk has a cooling nature, while fish has a heating effect. Eating them together may disturb the body's natural balance and could cause unwanted chemical changes, which might lead to discomfort or health issues. It's generally best to avoid having them at the same time. <sup>15</sup>
4.	Sour fruits	As a general rule, milk should not be mixed with most other foods. There are some exceptions—like dates and milk, or certain cooked recipes—where the combination works well because they share similar qualities (taste, energy, and after-digestion effect). However, foods like cucumbers, tomatoes, yogurt, and lemons should not be eaten with milk, as they can cause digestion problems and imbalance in the body.	Sour fruits, especially citrus ones, should be avoided just before consuming milk, as they can cause nausea or even vomiting. These fruits may also interfere with calcium absorption if milk is consumed too soon afterward. To support healthy digestion and get the most benefits from milk, it's best to wait at least two hours after eating sour or citrus fruits. <sup>16</sup>
5.	Tea	garlic	Tea contains natural anticoagulant compounds such as coumarins, and when consumed alongside garlic—which also exhibits blood-thinning properties—it may potentiate the risk of bleeding. Therefore, it is advisable to avoid the concurrent intake of tea and garlic. <sup>17</sup>
6.	Honey	Honey should never be mixed with an equal amount of ghee by weight—for example, one tablespoon of honey with one tablespoon of ghee—as this combination may be harmful to health. Also, honey should never be boiled or	Mixing honey and ghee in equal amounts, especially at high temperatures, can be harmful to your health. When heated together, this combination may produce a toxic substance called sodium furfuraldehyde, which the body cannot easily digest. Consuming this mixture

		cooked, as heating it can change its natural properties and produce toxic effects in the body. Always use honey in its raw, natural form for the best health benefits.	can lead to poisonous effects and may disturb the body's natural balance. For safety and health, it's best to avoid combining honey and ghee in equal parts, particularly when heating is involved. <sup>18</sup>
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### Food Incompatibilities in Modern Perspectives:-

#### Thermodynamic incompatibility of food:-

Antioxidant-rich foods, like nuts, play a crucial role in preserving unsaturated fats, whereas a diet focused solely on purified nutrients misses the synergistic benefits that whole foods provide. The idea of food synergy emphasizes that the combined effects of different food components provide a deeper understanding of nutrition than studying each ingredient separately. Consequently, the overall impact of the food matrix on human biology is far more significant than the effects of isolated nutrients.<sup>19, 20</sup>

In Ayurveda, foods are classified as either hot (Ushna) or cold (Sheet) based on their natural qualities, which affect the body in different ways. These characteristics are extremely important for maintaining the balance of the three doshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha—which are the foundation of Ayurvedic health and healing systems.

According to Ayurvedic principles, food helps regulate body temperature, metabolism, and digestion. Modern research on the immune system and gut microbiota has led to the development of new treatment approaches, such as the use of probiotics to help prevent food allergies. It is essential to understand the difference between food intolerance and allergies, as both require different treatments and management. On-going progress in allergen research is improving diagnostic methods and expanding treatment options.<sup>21</sup>

Scientific studies indicate that the consumption of cold foods can slow down the digestive process, especially in the case of fatty or semi-solid foods, which take longer to break down. For example, ice cream may feel cooling at first but can later raise the body's temperature, whereas warm milk helps to gently warm the body.

The thermodynamic properties of food depend on various factors such as metabolic storage and interactions between molecules, which determine how food impacts digestion and overall health.

#### Impact of incompatible food combinations on digestion:-

Weak digestive fire (Agni Mandya) is regarded as the primary cause of various health disorders in Ayurveda. Viruddha Ahara (incompatible food combinations) disrupts the digestive fire (Agni), particularly when caused by overeating, eating without hunger, consuming unwholesome or excessively dry and cold foods, or ingesting contaminated items.

When the Jatharagni (digestive fire) becomes weak, it is unable to properly digest even easily digestible foods, leading to indigestion (Ajeerna). The undigested food undergoes fermentation in the body and turns toxic, which is referred to as Ama Visha in Ayurveda.<sup>22</sup>

For example, eating curd at night is discouraged due to its acidic nature, which can increase Pitta and Kapha doshas, raising stomach heat. Additionally, combining milk with melons is not advisable because their digestion rates are different, and stomach acid causes the milk to coagulate. Mixing milk with sour fruits should also be avoided.

#### Modern pharmacological insights on the effects of consuming incompatible foods:

1. Repeated use of cooking oils for frying, known as repeatedly heated cooking oils (RCO), leads to the formation of harmful compounds like polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), several of which are recognized as carcinogenic. Excessive intake of repeatedly heated cooking oils (RCO) has been linked to toxic effects and an increased risk of various cancers, such as lung, breast, prostate, and colorectal cancer.<sup>23</sup> This phenomenon illustrates the concept of Sanskar (processing) Viruddha Ahara in Ayurveda, where certain cooking methods or combinations of food and medicines can result in harmful or toxic effects on the body.

2. Certain cooking techniques can transform otherwise edible foods into harmful substances. For example, repeatedly reheating oils such as corn, soybean, and sunflower can produce a toxic compound known as 4-hydroxy-trans-2-nonenal. This toxin, commonly found in polyunsaturated oils, has been shown to have cytotoxic and



genotoxic effects, and is linked to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, and neurodegenerative disorders.<sup>24</sup>

3. Fast food, often categorized as junk food, serves as a clear example of Agni, Matra, and Samyoga Viruddha Ahara in Ayurvedic terms—where the food's nature, quantity, and combinations are incompatible with healthy digestion. These foods are typically high in calories but deficient in essential nutrients like zinc, which plays a crucial role in antioxidant defense. Excessive consumption of such nutrient-poor foods can lead to oxidative stress and inflammation, negatively impacting testicular function in young male rats, and may be associated with conditions like Klaibya (reproductive dysfunction) as described in Ayurveda.<sup>25</sup>

4. In recent decades, lifestyle transitions have significantly altered global dietary habits, leading to the increased consumption of unpreserved foods requiring refrigeration, spoiled items, and incompatible food combinations—such as mutton or chicken paired with dairy products. Regular intake of such unsuitable dietary choices has been shown to disrupt the eicosanoid system, elevating levels of arachidonic acid, prostaglandin-2, and thromboxane. This cellular-level inflammation not only compromises Agni (digestive fire) but also contributes to Agni Mandya (weakened digestive strength) and the onset of various metabolic disorders.<sup>26</sup>

5. The concentration of antioxidant compounds plays a critical role in determining their interactions with other dietary components. Studies have shown that combining green and black tea extracts with milk can reduce the availability of antioxidant compounds in their bio-accessible fractions. However, under intestinal conditions, tea extracts may exhibit synergistic effects due to their high total antioxidant capacity (TAC). Moreover, interactions between peptides, proteins, and phenolic compounds can lead to a physical entrapment effect within the intestinal tract, potentially diminishing the expected antioxidant efficacy of tea-dairy combinations.<sup>27</sup>

6. Clinical evidence suggests that individuals with rheumatoid arthritis often report heightened morning stiffness following the consumption of curd and sour foods at night. This observation underscores the potential implications of Kala Viruddha Ahara (time-incompatible food combinations) and warrants further investigation into their influence on antigen-antibody interactions and immune response modulation.<sup>28</sup>

7. Furthermore, storing buttermilk in copper or brass containers can lead to chemical reactions between lactic acid and the metal surfaces, resulting in the formation of toxic compounds. This highlights the importance of appropriate food storage practices to prevent the development of harmful substances.<sup>29</sup>

8. The simultaneous consumption of milk and melons is discouraged in Ayurveda due to their incompatible qualities. Although both are cold (Sheet) in nature, their physiological effects differ—milk acts as a laxative (Saraka), while melon has diuretic (Mutrala) properties. Additionally, milk requires a longer time to digest, and the presence of hydrochloric acid in the stomach can cause it to curdle, leading to digestive discomfort. Consequently, Ayurveda advises against combining milk with sour fruits, as such combinations may disturb digestion and overall metabolic balance.

## Results and Discussion:-

The review highlights that the Ayurvedic concept of Viruddha Ahara—incompatible food combinations—is highly relevant in the modern context, where poor dietary habits contribute to a rise in lifestyle disorders. Classical texts by Charaka, Sushruta, and Vagbhata outline 18 types of incompatibilities that, when ignored, impair digestion (Agni), generate toxins (Ama), and disturb doshic balance, leading to diseases like skin disorders, anemia, infertility, IBS, and even premature death. Modern science supports these principles, showing that food interactions can influence gut microbiota, immune response, antioxidant activity, and metabolic health. Examples like tea with milk, milk with citrus or fish, reheated oils, and honey-ghee mixtures validate Ayurvedic warnings. Additionally, thermodynamic and biochemical studies reveal how improper combinations disrupt enzymatic function, pH balance, and digestion. Thus, integrating Ayurvedic wisdom with scientific evidence provides a holistic, preventive framework for personalized nutrition and better management of chronic health conditions.



### Conclusion:-

Viruddha Ahara, as described in classical Ayurvedic texts, remains highly relevant today. Incompatible food combinations can disturb dosha balance, weaken digestion (Agni), and produce toxins (Ama), leading to various chronic diseases. Modern diets, filled with processed and mismatched foods, reflect these same risks. Scientific research now supports Ayurvedic insights, showing that improper food combinations can impair metabolism, gut health, and immunity. Hence, combining ancient Ayurvedic wisdom with modern nutrition can help us form healthier dietary habits.

By adopting mindful eating and avoiding Viruddha Ahara, we can prevent lifestyle disorders and maintain long-term health and harmony.

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