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AN INSIGHT INTO UNDERSTANDING ANCIENT PERSPECTIVES OF RESPIRATORY HEALTH

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ABSTRACT:

The article explores the historical evolution of respiratory diseases highlighting its references in early vedic texts such as the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda & Upanishads offering insights into ancient understandings of respiratory diseases. It also delves into ayurvedic treatments and practices detailed in classical texts like *Veerasimhavalokana* in relation to respiratory disease. Additionally, it covers traditional healing practices including vedic mantras and their impact on human health. The narrative extends to folklore with the story of Ondine's Curse, which inspired the term for central hypoventilation syndrome. By synthesizing these historical sources and practices, it underscores the depth of ancient knowledge in managing respiratory health and its influence on contemporary respiratory therapy.

KEYWORDS: Respiratory disease, *Veerasimhavalokah*, *Shwasa*, *Kasa*

INTRODUCTION

The *Pranavaha Srotas* (channel responsible for respiration) is a vital system within the human body which comprises the channels through which *Pranavayu* (essential air) flows. *Hridaya* (heart) and *Mahasrotas* (major channels) are considered the primary sources of it.[1] Descriptions of *Pranavaha Srotas* and *Pranavahasrotovikaras*, are provided in the *Brihatrayees* and *Laghutrayees*, which include comprehensive discussions on diagnosis, treatment principles, and management. Respiratory diseases have been a persistent threat to human health from early ages. Ayurvedic texts and allied sciences offer valuable insights into the understanding and treatment of respiratory conditions. *Daivavyapashraya Chikitsa* (divination therapy) is a therapeutic approach in Ayurveda, emphasizing the use of vedic mantras like *Vishnusahasranama* in *Vishamajwara* (fever of irregular onset)[2] as they are believed to possess healing potential for humans & plants, a fact supported by recent research. This underscores the approach of ancient practices, reflecting an understanding of the interconnectedness of health and the environment. No much thoughts have been done on historical or mythological references regarding respiratory disease. This article aims to compile references related to respiratory diseases from various sources under one umbrella, shedding light on the historical approaches to treating these conditions and highlighting the depth of ancient.

Vedic period: The Rigveda contains few references which includes phrases such as *Pranau Vayuhu Jayataha* & *Ayu Na Pranaha* which

underscore the significance of *Pranavayu* in sustaining life.[3] Yajurveda provides limited references on respiratory diseases. Term *Prana* is frequently mentioned throughout the text. The phrases *Vatam Pranena Nasike* [4] which emphasises the importance of nose in the process of respiration & *Pranam Apyayanam* [5] where *Apyayanam* refers to *Tarpanam /Preenanam* according to *shabdakalpadruma* [6] which highlights the significance of *Pranavayu* in nourishing the body. In Atharvaveda under *Swasaroga* (breathing difficulty), *Pushkaramula* (*Inula racemosa*) is said to be grown in the himalayan region near ponds where *Kamala* (*Nelumbo nucifera*) is found.[7] Other drugs mentioned in *Swasa* include *Pippali* (*Piper longum*), *Vacha* (*Acorus calamus*), and *Talisa* (*Abies webbiana*).[8] Under *Kasaroga* (cough) which is resulted from excessive rain, severe wind & intense heat, advises patients to live in the forest[9]. *Pippali* is explained as *Kshiprabheshaji* (quick-acting remedy) for curing cough. [10] **Upanishad kala :** In Hamsa upanishad the cardio-respiratory system is metaphorically compared to the anatomy of a bird, the hamsapakshi. This analogy provides an insightful perspective on the functional relationships within the human body. It compares wings of the bird & human lungs, trunk of the bird & heart and neck of the bird & windpipe.[11] Varahopanishad provides the count of respiratory rate. The normal respiratory rate of human being is described as 21,600 breaths per day which is normal as proved by the modern medicine .[12] In Kena upanishad, *Prana* is told as the one that is breathed out.[13] **Purana kala:**

Garuda purana gives description of *Kasa* [14], *Shwasa* [15] & *Hikka* [16].

Healing Kasashamana Atharvaveda Mantra[17]: In Atharvaveda, there is a mantra to heal *Kasa*. This mantra is described with similes to illustrate the rapid and effective nature of its curative power. The healing effect of the mantra is likened to: The speed of an arrow released from a bow: Just as an arrow, once it is released from a bow, darts forward with incredible velocity and precision, so does the remedy provided by the mantra act swiftly to alleviate the symptoms of the ailment. The comparison highlights the immediacy and directness of the healing process. The rays of the sun spreading across the sky at sunrise: Just as the rays of the sun spread rapidly and illuminate the sky, mantra alleviates the condition with equal speed. Simile underscores how the healing effect of the mantra envelops the afflicted area swiftly, bringing relief as quickly as the morning sun removes darkness. The swift perception of the mind: The mantra's curative effect to cure the symptoms of *Kasa* is also compared to the mind's rapid ability to perceive and process information.

Veerasimhavaloka: Veerasimhavaloka was a book authored by rajput king Rajaveerasimhan in A.D 1383, son of Devavarmaraja and grandson of Kamaleshasimhan who established Tomara dynasty in 1375. Veerasimhan was quite young when he wrote this treatise with a deep knowledge of Vedas, Astrology and Ayurveda. The treatise stands out from other texts by viewing disease in a different aspect. Whole textbook is designed in practical way and the person who read this can accurately find out the way

in which the patient should be treated under three treatment modalities namely- *Jyotisha Shastra* (astrology), *Dharma Shastra* or *Karmavipaka* (dealing with different rules of life) & Ayurveda Shastra. **JYOTISHA SHASTRA:** In this context, the author discusses various astrological factors and their potential influence on respiratory health. If a person's *Kundali* (astrological chart) features certain positions of *Grahas* (planets), it is believed that these placements could increase the likelihood of developing respiratory conditions. When bhudha is in the karka rashi & dristi of surya is on bhudha the person suffers from *Kasa*, *Shwasa* and other diseases of *Vata & Kapha*. The treatment mentioned was to chant surya mantra and involve in charity works. When gulikayuktha shani is in 6th position & dristi of surya, mangal, rahu is seen, patient suffers from *Kshayaja Kasa* and *Shwasa*. If chandra is present in between two papa graha & shani in 7th position or surya is present in makara rashi & chandra is present in between shani & mangal, patient suffers from *Vidradi*, *Kshaya*, *Shwasa* or *Gulma*. [18] **DHARMA SHASTRA:** Author tries to identify various bad deeds performed by a person that may lead a person to suffer from diseases. A person being an ungrateful human may suffer from *Kasa*, *Shwasa* and *Kaphapithaja Jwara*. Prayaschitha karma (penance) for this is to drink *Yava madya/ Pipilika madya* (alcoholic preparation of barley or ant), offer food to 50 brahmins, chant mantra of vishnu & agni by offering havis to *Homa kunda* (making offerings to sacred fire [19]. If a person refused to offer water, salt and honey can suffer from *Pama* (itchy lesions on hands, legs or elbows), *Kandu*

(itching), *Kasa*, *Swasa* in next life. As a *prayaschitha karma* he is told to donate a buffalo. Patient suffering from *Shwasa*, *Kasa* should chant Vishnusahasranama, offer food, red clothes and gold to brahmanas after doing *Sahasra Kamala Snana* (bath using 1000 lotus), chant achyuta, ananda & govinda 83 times. Patients suffering from *Kasa*, *Swasa* & *Krimi* (intestinal parasitic worms) should offer prayers to varuna and vayu deva and make a *Dwaja* (flag) made of *Swarna* (gold) or *Rajata* (silver) of one *Pala/Ardhapala* (48gm or 24gm) and smear *Sphatika* (alum) over it. After which 5 Drona of *Thila* (*Sesamum indicum*) should be filled in a *Kumbha* (mudpot) and the flag must be kept over it, must be covered with a cloth and anointed with flowers producing good smell and give that to any brahmin by chanting this mantra-

**namaḥ pāsabhṛte tubhyaṃ namadvijavarāyate |
jalādhipataye tubhyaṃ vāyorvāpi priyāya ca ||
yuvayoḥ prītathedatāu dhvajapāsāu surājatau |
svāsakāsau haretāṃ me prītau sarvajanāśrayau ||**
[20]

Hikka roga is indeed often linked with the same causative factors as *Kasa* and *Shwasa* including *Jyotisha* and *Dharma Shastra*. It is believed that a brahmin who consumes food without performing a ritual bath may be destined to experience *Hikka* in next life as a consequence of this lapse in ritual purity.[21]

AYURVEDA SHASTRA: Author mentioned various formulations for treating respiratory diseases. Most of the treatment methodologies have been taken

from Charaka Samhita & Susruta Samhita. Under *Kasadhikara* many formulations are mentioned for each *Dosha* from which few are listed : *Vatajakasa chikitsa* - administering *Laghupanchamula kashaya* ie, *Salaparni* (*Desmodium gangeticum*), *Prishniparni* (*Uraria picta*), *Brihati* (*Solanum indicum*), *Kantakari* (*Solanum surratance*) and *Goksura* (*Tribulus terrestris*) with *pippali churna* & *Lashuna swarasa* (*Allium sativum*) / *Avaleha* (semisolid formulation) prepared from *Bharngi* (*Clerodendron serratum*), *Draksha* (*Vitis vinifera*), *Shati*(*Curcuma zedoaria*), *Shringi* (*Pistacia integerrima*), *Pippali* & *Shunti* (*Zingiber officinale*) should be taken by mixing with *Guda* (jaggery) & *Thaila* (oil)[22]. For *Pithajakasa chikitsa*, intake of *Padmabeeja churna* with honey is told. In *Kaphajakasa chikitsa* intake of *kashaya* prepared from *Bala* (*Sida cordifolia*), *Bharngi*, *Pippali*. Formulations are *Marichadi Gutika*,[23] *Vibhitaka Avaleha*[24]. Under *Hikkadhikara*, intake of *Snigdha Yavagu* (a type of gruel prepared with six times of water and ghee) / *Ushna Payasa* (hot porridge) / goat's milk or jaggery which is added with *Shuntiswarasa* / goat's & sheep urine added with *Lashuna*, *Vacha*, *Hingu* (*Ferula assafoetida*) to remove the foul smell can cure *Hikka* very fastly [25]. *Mamsa prayoga* in *Hikka* - cooled meat soup of *Kapota* (Pigeon), *Lava* (dusky gull), *Godha* (iguana) added with lemon juice and salt. *Nasya* (nasal instillation) with *Sthanya* (breastmilk) mixed with *Makshika avashista* (stool of honeybee)/ *Laksha rasa* (shellac)/ *Chandana* (*Santalum album*) [26]. *Adravyachikitsa* in *Hikka* – Creating a sense of fear in mind of the patient or narrating stories that create astonishment in them[27]. Under *Swasadhikara*

formulations prescribed are- *Kulathadi kashaya*[28], *Devadarvyadi kashaya* [29], *Bhallatakadi kashaya* [30] for *Vataja Shwasa*.

Ondine's curse: The story of Ondine is an enchanting tale from European folklore, with its roots in German and Italian mythology. The most famous literary version of the story is by the German poet Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué, written in 1811. **Origins and Setting:** Ondine is a water nymph who dwells in the rivers and streams. Ondine falls in love with a human knight named Huldbrand. She sacrifices her immortality and her life as a water spirit to be with him, becoming human in the process. This transformation is tied to the condition that Huldbrand must remain faithful to her. The two marry and live a seemingly happy life together, but Huldbrand is not completely faithful. He falls in love with another woman, a noble lady named Bertalda. Ondine is heartbroken and, in a fit of despair she will curse him to remain awake in order to control his own breathing ie, if he fall asleep his breathing comes to standstill and he will die. During the 19th century, a rare syndrome where there is loss of autonomic breath while voluntary respiration remains intact was named as "Ondine's curse." Today, this term is most commonly associated with central hypoventilation syndrome (CHS), a condition where affected individuals fail to automatically regulate their breathing, particularly during sleep [31].

DISCUSSION: History is not just about the past, it's a vital tool for navigating the present and shaping the future. Importance of knowing history regarding any subject matter includes understanding the past, cultural Identity, informed citizenship, inspiration and

innovation, preserving knowledge and appreciating change,

Practical application of atharvaveda mantras:

Atharvaveda contains a significant amount of practical knowledge, including medicinal and therapeutic applications in the form of mantras. It provides insight into how ancient Indian civilization viewed disease and healing. **Integration with Ayurveda:** The principles underlying Atharvaveda mantras align closely with Ayurveda, which emphasizes the balance of *Doshas* & utilize mantras as a complementary therapy for enhancing health and treating various ailments in the form of *Daivavyapasrayachikitsa*. **Psychological and Emotional Healing:** Chanting mantras may have significant psychological benefits, including stress reduction and emotional stability. The repetitive and rhythmic nature of mantra chanting promotes relaxation and mental clarity, which can support overall health and well-being. Future research studies can be done by blending concepts of *Manasikavikaras* and concepts of Atharvaveda in shedding lights in *Daivavyapasrayachikitsa*. **Breathing Practices:** Incorporating the mantra into breathing exercises or pranayama may amplify the benefits of these practices. **Future scope :** Although numerous mantras for addressing every type of disease are mentioned throughout the text, they are dispersed across the text. To facilitate their use, it would be beneficial to compile these mantras into a single source, organized under the concept of *Daivavyapasraya Chikitsa*. This approach would streamline the process of accessing and applying these mantras for effective treatment.

Hamsopanishad: The comparison of hamsapakshi with cardiorespiratory system not only elucidates the functions of different components within the cardio-respiratory system but also reflects the ancient understanding of the interconnectedness of bodily systems and skillful way of correlation making it easy for the readers to understand as well as create interest in them. The probable justification for this comparison can be given as: Wings of the bird & lungs - Just as the wings facilitate flight, allowing the bird to move through the air, the lungs enable respiration, facilitating the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide essential for sustaining life. The expansive nature of the wings depicts the lung's role in accommodating the flow of air and maintaining vital respiratory functions. Trunk of the bird & heart - The trunk serves as the central support structure, housing vital organs and providing stability, much like how the heart acts as the central pump, circulating blood throughout the body. This comparison shows the heart's pivotal role in maintaining the body's overall health and functionality. Neck of the bird & windpipe - Just as the neck acts as a conduit for the bird, connecting the head with the body and facilitating the passage of air and food, the windpipe serves as the main airway, conducting air to and from the lungs. This comparison highlights the importance of the windpipe in the respiratory process, ensuring that air reaches the lungs for effective breathing.

Varahopanishad: Historical Significance: The Varahopanishad's mention of the respiratory rate underscores the ancient understanding of the importance of regular breathing in maintaining health and vitality. The alignment of this ancient figure with

contemporary estimates reflects the profound observational skills of early scholars in understanding human physiology. Health Implications: A normal respiratory rate is crucial for effective gas exchange and overall bodily function. Deviations from this range can indicate respiratory or systemic issues, making the Varahopanishad's reference a noteworthy aspect of traditional knowledge that parallels modern medical insights.

Medical significance of ondines curse: Medical Awareness & Diagnosis: The mythical story serves as a reminder of the importance of understanding and diagnosing respiratory conditions. It shows the significance of respiratory health & the potential consequences when automatic systems fail. It also brings attention to the need for awareness of conditions like CHS, which may not be immediately apparent and easily diagnosable but require vigilant medical intervention. Inspiration for Research: The association between Ondine's curse and CHS has influenced medical research and understanding. It provides a historical and cultural framework that enriches the concepts around respiratory disorders, helping to raise awareness and foster a deeper comprehension of the underlying mechanisms of such conditions. Also it is the need for hour to provide permanent treatment facilities for such conditions as the victims are in lot of sufferings. Just as Ondine's curse evokes a sense of tragedy and despair, patients with CHS may experience significant emotional strain due to their condition.

CONCLUSION: The historical evolution of respiratory health and therapy offers a profound insight into the intricate relationship between

ancient knowledge and modern medical practices. This exploration reveals how diverse ancient cultures, particularly within the Vedic and Ayurvedic traditions, have contributed significantly to our understanding and management of respiratory health. History provide strong base for present topics that we study. It offers valuable lessons on new innovation that can be modified in our life. It gives us a reminder about rich cultural base that ancestors had & our responsibility to protect them.

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