ARDITA VĀTA (FACIAL PARALYSIS): A CONCISE HISTORICAL SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

In India the struggle to conquer the disease began centuries and centuries ago and it is as old as human civilisation. It can be safely presumed that during Vedic period diseases like Ardita vata, Pakshaghara etc. were prevalent. The Brhat Trai, composed during samhita period have described Ardita Vata Vyadhi. The Laghu Trai occupy the next place after Samhitas. Ardita has been mentioned in these works. Other popular texts like Kashyapa Samhita and Bhela Samhita also contain the references about this disease. Modern medicine noticed this disease as Facial Paralysis at a very later period in the early 18th century.

History is the continuous methodical record of important events that took place in the course of Human affairs. And medical History reveals systematic account of the events or efforts that have taken place in the past against the Roga or the disease, the painful experience.

In India, the struggle to conquer the disease, began centuries and centuries ago and it is as old as Human civilisation.

Around 2000 BC, during the period of great saint Bharadwāja, different types of diseases occurred with so much frequency and severity that they caused Hindrance (obstruction) in the daily routines of life, such as Adhyayana, Tapasya, Upavāsa and other religious rituals. Moved by these tragic and traumatic events, the social and health conscious mahar-is conducted the first great convention on health on the holy Himālayas, the participants were the great mahar-is like Bharadwāja, Angirasa, Vasistha, Jamadagni, Kaśyapa, Ātreya etc. After prolonged deliberations on the “Ways and means” to eradicate the diseases, ultimately it was resolved to approach the Lord Indra, In turn the Lord preached Ayurveda to great saint Bharadwāja, to propagate this system of medicine on the earth in order to enable the people to achieve the four-fold puruṣārthas viz. Dharma, Artha, Kama and Mok-a.

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VEDIC PERIOD:

There are some references in the Rigveda and Atharvaveda, which indicate the possible prevalence of certain Vāta rogas like Pakṣaghāta, Ardita Vāta etc during the Vedic time. In support of this opinion the following references are quoted.

1. There is a prayer recorded in the Rigveda, requesting Aśvini kumārs, the Divine physicians, to restore the vision of Eye sight (AKŚI DARŚANAM). This prārthanā sukta gives us an idea about the diseases or Rogas prevalent during Rigvedic period, where in (such diseases) 'Kriya Heenata of Indriyas', Viz. loss of functions of motor and sensory organs were involved, as such it appears that the patients of Neurological diseases of that time used to offer this prayer to AŚVINI KUMĀRS in tune with the 'Daivavyāpāśrya' line of treatment prevalent during the Rigvedic period. Thus, it can be safely presumed that during Rigvedic times diseases like Ardita Vāta, Pakṣaghāta etc. were prevalent.

2. Similarly, in Atharva veda also, there are certain references, which support the above presumption. In the symptomatology of Jvāra (fever), a symptom 'Vyanga' has been mentioned, which gives the meaning of 'Angavikṛti' or 'deformity of the organ' and 'Angavikṛti' occurs in number of Neurological diseases like Poliomyelitis, paralysis, Facial paralysis etc.

3. In Atharva veda, many synonymys were used for 'Vāta' like Maruta, Vātajee, Viśkhana etc., which clearly indicates that the Somatic doṣa 'Vāta' was well known at that time.

4. 'Jingide' a drug has been quoted as having the action of 'Vāta (Viśkhana) Roga Haratwam'. This also clearly establishes the presence of Vāta Vikāras in the Vedic period.

5. Similarly 'Viṣani' and 'Pippali Kipta' drugs have been cited as having 'Vātahara' actions.

All these references indicate the prevalence of Vāta Vyādhis like Ardita Vāta etc., in the Rigvedic and Atharva vedic period.

SAMYHTA PERIOD:

Samhitā period has given the much needed basic structure, and concrete shape to the Ayurveda. Samhitā granthas like Caraka Samhitā, Suśruta Samhitā, Aṣṭāṅga Saṅgraha/ Hṛdaya (Brhat Trai-the ancient great trio) were composed or compiled during this period. As such this period is considered as 'Golden Era' of Ayurveda, these Samhitā granthas
provided a very firm foundation, on which Ayurveda stands even today.

**CARAKA SAMHITA:**

In Caraka Samhita, the Ardita Vāṭa Vyāḍhi, has been mentioned under 'Vāṭaja Nānātmaja Vikāras' in Sūtra sthāna and Cikitsāsthāna, a detailed Samprāpti, and Laksānas are mentioned, along with line of treatment. ‘Cikitsāsūtra’.

**SUSRUTA SAMHITA:**

Susruta has described the Ardita Vāṭa Vyāḍhi, in the Nidanasthanā (1/68) and in Cikitsāsthāna respectively. Vāgbhatā has mentioned it in Aṣṭāṅga Saṅgraha and in Hirdaya respectively.

**LAGHU TRAI:**

Madhava Nidāna, Sāraṅgadhara Samhitā and Bhāva Prakāśa, are the later works which are collectively known as ‘Laghu Trai, are also important books. These works occupy the next place after Samhitā Granthas.

In Madhava Nidāna, Ardita has been described in detail in Vāṭa Vyāḍhi Nidāna chapter. Similarly in Sāraṅgadhara, and Bhāvaprakāśa, also Ardita has been figured. Other popular texts like kāśyapa samhitā, Bhelasamhitā, etc. also contain the references about Ardita Vāṭa Roga.

**MODERN PERIOD:**

Modern medicine noticed this disease, as Facial Paralysis in a very later period in the early 18th century.

1. Sir Charles Bell (1774-1842) a noted Scotish Surgeon, was the first person to describe this phenomenon in the year 1823. As such there after, it is popularly known as ‘Bell’s Palsy’ indicating the name of Inventor Sir Charles Bell.

2. Nicholas (1761-1836), a Frederick Physician also described the Facial Paralysis.


4. Sir Herald Gillis, the Father of Modern Plastic Surgery, was the first person to perform plastic surgery on the victims of the facial palsy and successfully brought the ‘disfigure’ in to ‘FIGURE’.
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