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# Concept of *Mahagad* in Ayurveda w.s.r. to *Bhagandara* (Fistula-In-Ano)

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## ABSTRACT

In *Samhitas* many concepts are explained as *Leshokta* (incompletely explained) or they have *Linartha* i.e. concept is not elaborated or proper meaning is difficult to understand. So there is a need to explore such concept to understand the vision of Ayurveda. The term '*Mahagada*' is used as '*Visheshana* (attribute)' for few diseases in various Ayurvedic *Samhitas*. Original *Samhitas* shows very little information regarding the term '*Mahagada*'. The concept of '*Mahagada*' is useful to decide prognosis of diseases. *Mahagada* is a group of diseases having incurability, primarily due to development of complications. The conceptual study shows belief of ancient Ayurvedic *Acharyas* regarding concept of *Mahagada* and clinical survey was done to support the concept. On the basis of collected data, efforts were made to throw light on the concept of *Mahagada*.

**Key words:** *Mahagada*, *Bhagandara*, Fistula-In-Ano

## INTRODUCTION

*Mahagada* is one of the fundamental concept of Ayurveda, which need simplification and proper study to adopt the meaning. The word *Mahagada* in Ayurveda is used to signify the eight diseases which are *Asadhya* in nature.<sup>[1]</sup>

*Acharya* Charaka did not mentioned *Mahagada* term for commonly known 8 diseases which are *Asadhya* (incurable) in nature.<sup>[2]</sup> But *Acharya* Charaka use term *Mahagada* for a few diseases like *Atatwabhinivesh*,

In *Astanga Sangraha* and *Astanga Hridaya*, eight disease are described as *Maharoga*. Which are *Yapya* (difficult to treat) in nature.<sup>[3]</sup>

After gross review of *Samhita* it is clear that concept of *Mahagada* is described as *Leshokta* (incompletely explained) and *Avyakta* (hidden meaning) i.e. explained in concise form.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The available authentic books related commentaries and material available on internet were studied to explore the concept of *Mahagada*. The compilations regarding *Mahagada* w.s.r. to *Bhagandara* were analyzed.

## Clinical Survey Study

Clinical survey study was conducted at Subhadeep Ayurveda Medical College, Indore on 100 volunteers suffering from *Bhagandara*. A special proforma was prepared which include *Mahagada Lakshana* and other points like *Sadhya*, *Asadhya*, complications, recurrence etc. On the basis of collected data, efforts

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were made to throw light on the concept of *Mahagada*.

#### Literary review of *Mahagada*

*Mahagada* is group of diseases having incurability primarily due to development of complications. The conceptual study shows belief of ancient Ayurvedic *Acharyas* regarding concept of *Mahagada*.

#### Meaning of the word *Mahagada*

According to *Dalhanacharya*, commentator of *Sushruta Samhita* and other *Acharyas*, *Mahagada* means deadly and Incurable imperative diseases.<sup>[4]</sup>

As per *Chakrapanis* view in *Bhanumati* commentary *Mahavyadhi* means deep rooted disease.<sup>[5]</sup> *Maha* means imperative/ gigantic/ sturdy in terms of deadly and Incurable.<sup>[6]</sup>

#### Synonyms of *Mahagada*

On the basis of above references it can be realized, that the terms *Maharoga*, *Mahavyadhi*, *Nindita Vyadhi*, *Mahamula Vyadhi*, *Dirgharoga* and *Achikitysa Vyadhi*, are used as synonyms for *Mahagada* by various *Acharyas*.

- ***Mahagada*** - This term is used by *Acharya Sushruta*<sup>[7]</sup> and *Acharya Charaka*<sup>[8]</sup>
- ***Maharoga*** - This term is used by *Acharya Vagbhata*<sup>[9]</sup> and *Aadhamalla*<sup>[10]</sup>
- ***Mahavyadhi*** - This term is used by *Acharya Dalhana*<sup>[11]</sup>
- ***Nindita Vyadhi*** - This term is used by *Acharya Indu*<sup>[12]</sup>
- ***Achikitysa Vyadhi*** - This term is used by *Acharya Charaka*<sup>[13]</sup>
- ***Mahamula Vyadhi*** - This term is used by *Acharya Chakrapani*<sup>[14]</sup>
- ***Dirgha Roga*** - This term is used by *Acharya Bhela*<sup>[15]</sup>

#### Diseases which are termed as *Mahagada*

It is evident from various references that the term *Mahagada* is applied in two ways in *Samhitas*. These two different approaches are;

1. For group of eight diseases having incurable nature e.g. *Ashtau Mahagada*<sup>[16]</sup>
2. This term is also used for single disease having deadly and Incurable imperative nature e.g. *Raktapitta*.

Following references shows group of eight diseases which are termed as *Mahagada* e.g. *Astaumahagada*.

**Table 1: Showing *Ashtau Mahagad* as per different Ayurvedic *Samhitas***

<i>Sushruta Samhita</i>	<i>Astanga Hruday</i>	<i>Astanga Sangraha</i>	<i>Charaka Samhita</i>	<i>Acharya Gangadhar</i>
<i>Vata vyadhi</i>	<i>Vata vyadhi</i>	<i>Vata vyadhi</i>	<i>Vata vyadhi</i>	<i>Vata vyadhi</i>
<i>Kustha</i>	<i>Kustha</i>	<i>Kustha</i>	<i>Kustha</i>	<i>Kustha</i>
<i>Prameha</i>	<i>Pra meha</i>	<i>Pra meha</i>	<i>Madhu meha</i>	<i>Madhu meha</i>
<i>Udara</i>	<i>Udara</i>	<i>Udara</i>	<i>Udara</i>	<i>Udara</i>
<i>Arsha</i>	<i>Arsha</i>	<i>Arsha</i>	<i>Raja yakshma</i>	<i>Raja yakshma</i>
<i>Ashamari</i>	<i>Ashmari</i>	<i>Ashmari</i>	<i>Apasmar</i>	<i>Apasmar</i>
<i>Bhaganda -r</i>	<i>Bhagan-dar</i>	<i>Bhagan-dar</i>	<i>Gulma</i>	<i>Gulma</i>
<i>Mudha garbha</i>	<i>Grahani</i>	<i>Grahani</i>	<i>Sopha</i>	<i>Raktapitta</i>

From above table it is clear that all the different *Acharyas* and different Ayurvedic *Samhitas* don't have similar opinion regarding listing of eight *Mahagada* / *Maharoga* / *Achikitsya Vyadhi*. But among eight diseases four diseases are matching in the list of all the different *Acharyas* and different Ayurvedic *Samhitas*. These four diseases are *Vatvyadhi*, *Kushtha*, *Prameha* and *Udara Roga*.

*Acharya Sushruta* and *Acharya Vagbhata* has analogous view regarding *Astau Mahagada* / *Astau Maharoga* diseases except one disease. *Charaka Samhita*, *Astanga Sangraha Sharirasthana* reference

and Acharya Gangadhara has similar opinion regarding Astaumahagada / Astaumaharoga.

Harita Samhita has similar opinion that of Sushruta Samhita. In Bhela Samhita instead of eight diseases, list of seven diseases is given. Vatavyadhi is missing in the list. Hence according to Bhela Samhita number of Mahagada / Dirgharoga diseases are seven. Seven diseases are same as mentioned by Charaka Samhita.

Following references shows single disease which is termed as Mahagada - Raktapitta,<sup>[17]</sup> Apasmara,<sup>[18]</sup> Shotha<sup>[19]</sup> and Atatvabhinivesha,<sup>[20]</sup> these four diseases are termed as Mahagada in separate chapters.

### Causes of Mahagada

According to Acharya Sushruta, because of Prakriti i.e. Swabhava (nature) Vatavyadhi etc. eight diseases are hardly curable and termed as Mahagada.<sup>[21]</sup> He also explained that development of Upadrava i.e. complications in above said diseases lead to Mahagada.<sup>[22]</sup>

As per Charakacharya, decline in Bala (strength) and Mamsa Dhatu (Muscle), as well as development of Arishta symptoms in above said eight diseases lead to Mahagada.<sup>[23]</sup>

Astanga Sangraha quotes that advancement of above mentioned eight diseases in very weak patient leads to incurability and treatment of such patients should be avoided.<sup>[24]</sup>

Harita Samhita added one more contributory factor for creation of Mahagada diseases i.e. Papakarma (sin).<sup>[25]</sup>

Chakrapani Acharya explains that sudden relief in disease is Arishta Lakshana and is thus termed as Mahamula Vyadhi i.e. Mahavyadhi.<sup>[26]</sup>

**Table 2: Showing causes of Mahagada / Maharoga / Mahavyadhi as per different opinion**

Samhita	Opinion regarding causes of Mahagada / Maharoga / Mahavyadhi
Sushruta	Swabhava (nature), development of

Samhita	Upadrava
Charaka Samhita	decline in Bala (strength) and Mamsa Dhatu (Muscle), development of Arishta symptoms
Astanga Sangraha	debility of patient
Harita Samhita	Papakarma (sin)
Chakrapani	Mahamoolatva (deep sidedness) and sudden relief in symptoms

### Diseases which are termed as Mahagada

If all the diseases which are termed as Mahagada / Maharoga / Achikitsya Vyadhi taken into account then total number of Mahagada diseases are 15 in number.

1. Vatavyadhi	2. Kushta
3. Prameha	4. Kshaya
5. Arsha	6. Ashmari
7. Bhagandara	8. Mudhagarbha
9. Udara	10. Apasmara
11. Gulma	12. Raktapitta
13. Grahani	14. Shopha
15. Atatvabhinivesha	

### Basis for conversion of disease to Mahagada Avastha

#### A) Upadrava:

Acharya Sushruta and Harita Samhita explains different complications of eight diseases due to which these eight diseases becomes incurable and termed as Mahagada.

*Upadravaih* - *Upadrava* is defined as disorder which associate afterwards with the disease originated earlier and having the same root cause.

The diseases which, associated with *Upadrava* / complications, become incurable, except on the use of *Rasayana*.<sup>[27]</sup>

If *Vatavyadhi* etc. eight diseases associated with complications like wasting of vitality and musculature, consumption, thirst, vomiting, fever, diarrhoea, fainting, hiccough and dyspnoea, then patient suffering from these diseases believed to be non curable.<sup>[28]</sup>

#### B) *Arishta*:

The patients with the symptoms of *Sharirika* and *Manasika Bala Kshaya*, *Mamsa Kshaya* and disease is progressive, die within 45 days.<sup>[29]</sup>

#### OBSERVATIONS

After analysis of observations collected through survey study, following key points emerge out, which supports the view of Ancient *Acharyas* regarding *Bhagandara* as *Mahagada*.

100 patients were found *Guda* as organ involved. As stated above, *Bhagandara* is one of the diseases found in *Guda Pradesha*, which ultimately hampers various body functions (*Prana Vikruti*, *Purishavaha Strotas Vikruti*, *Karmendriya Karyahani*, *Vata Vikruti* etc. and may lead to death.

Out of 100 patients, 86 patients reported weight loss. Weight loss can be taken as one of the sign of *Mamsa* and *Balakshaya*.

Out of 100 patients, 84 patients reported *Balakshaya*. *Balakshaya* is stated as key factor for diseases incurability. *Mahagada* diseases shows *Balamamsakshaya* (diminished strength and musculature).

*Mamsakshaya* - Out of 100 patients, 85 patients reported *Mamsakshya*. *Mamsakshya* is stated as key factor for diseases incurability.

*Shamana* and *Shashtra Chikitsa* - Out of 100 patients, 90 patients gave history of I&D while 10 patients gives

history of C&D. Surgical intervention is the characteristic of *Kastasadhya* nature of disease. This supports *Bhagandara* as difficult to treat.

28 patients were hospitalized for 0-1 week, 20 patients were hospitalized for 1.1-2week, 4 patients were hospitalized for >2week. This shows long term care required after surgery.

Duration of disease - Out of 100 patients, 24 Patients were suffering from disease from 0-1yr, 68 Patients were suffering from disease from 1.1-3yr, 8 Patients were suffering from disease from >3yr. This remark confirms chronic nature of disease.

Palliative treatment result - Out of 86 patients, 68 were having no positive result after palliative treatment, 18 having positive result after palliative treatment.

Operation done - out of 100 patients, 43 were having previous operations for fistula, 57 were not operated for fistula. This proves recurrence of the disease which make it hard to cure.

*Manobhava vikruti* - Out of 100 patients, 38 reported *Avasada*, 62 reported with *Attitanava*. This finding shows psychological impact of disease which affects his daily routine.

*Agni* - Out of 100 patients, 58 patients were having *Mandagni*, 1 patient was having *Tikshnagni*, and 61 patients were having *Vishmagni*. This shows vitiation of *Agni* as prime factor in *Bhagandara*.

Post operation result - Out of 43 patients, 23 (53.48%) were having positive results, 20 (46.5%) were having negative results. This shows that surgery has not given 100% cure.

#### DISCUSSION

*Mahagada* is one of the distinctive thought present in *Ayurveda Samhitas* which signify disorders having poor prognosis or difficult to treat resulting in morbidity and mortality. Even though *Acharyas* have mentioned *Mahagada*, still the references regarding this particular topic are very much scattered and less informative. At the time of *Astaumahagada* listing, *Sushruta Samhita* gives emphasis on diseases which

are incurable/ hardly curable in *Shalyatantra* view. While *Charaka Samhita* listed diseases which are incurable/ hardly curable in *Kayachikitsa* point of view. In *Sharirsthana* of *Astanga Sangraha* and *Astanga Hrudaya*, author follows view of *Charaka Samhita* and at *Nidansthana* of *Astanga Sangraha* and *Astanga Hrudaya*; author follows view of *Sushruta Samhita*. These differences may be due to the reason that some diseases were more severe than the others at different periods of time with respect to incidence and management.

Foremost characteristics of *Mahagada* are -

- a) Chronicity
- b) Syndrome (set of diseases)
- c) *Balamamsakshaya* (diminished strength and musculature)
- d) *Upadrava* (complications)
- e) Recurrence nature or fixed (permanent / set) nature
- f) *Sannipataja Vyadhi*
- g) Affect on *Marmas*
- h) Hereditary disease or congenital disorder
- i) Required surgical intervention
- j) Dominance of *Vata Dosha*
- k) Excessive diminution of *Agni*
- l) Rapid fatality after their *origin*
- m) *Vyadhi Udbhava Sthana* or *Vyakti Sthana* is *Jeevithadhama*

A survey on *Mahagada* in Ayurvedic classics yields few references and it is not very clear about which diseases are to be considered as *Asta-Mahagada* (Eight dreadful diseases). In *Charaka Samhita*, at two different contexts, different enumeration of *Mahagada* is evident. While explaining the types and number of diseases in *Ashtodareeya* chapter of *Charaka Samhita Sutrasthana*, *Acharya* has mentioned *Atatwabhinivesha* as the *Mahagada*. In *Maharoga* chapter, *Acharya* does not mention about *Mahagada*. However in *Indriyasthana*, *Acharyas* have

explained *Astamahagada* instead of *Eka Mahagada*. *Avaraniya* chapter of *Susruta Samhita Sutrasthana* is dedicated to *Mahagadas* explaining its importance. *Varana* means treatment and the disease where treatments are not fruitful is known as *Avaraniya*. *Vatavyadhi*, *Prameha*, *Kushta*, *Arsha*, *Bhagandara*, *Ashmari*, *Mudagarbha* and *Udara* are the *Mahagadas* stated in this chapter. *Acharya Susrutha* in *Nidana Sthana* has explained eight *Mahagadas* in the first eight chapters in the following order as *Vatavyadhi*, *Arsa*, *Asmari*, *Bhagandara*, *Kushta*, *Prameha*, *Udara*, *Mudagarbha*. Unlike *Astanga Hrudaya*, *Susrutha* does not enumerated *Grahani*, instead has mentioned *Mudagarbha*. *Sushruta* has explained *Grahani* in the *Atisara* chapter and complications of *Atisara* in *Avaraniya* chapter. It may be because *Mudagarbha* is a surgically managed disease. In *Astanga Hrudaya*, *Mahagadas* are mentioned in the last part of *Atisara Grahani Nidana* chapter.

Disease in *Guda Pradesha* affects various body functions. *Bhagandara* is one of the diseases found in *Guda Pradesha*, which ultimately hampers various body functions and may lead to death. As *Guda* is *Pranayatana*, *Sadyopranahara Marma*, *Mulasthana* of *Purishvaha Strotas*, *Karmendriya* and chief location of *Vata Dosha*, *Bhagandara* (disease found in *Guda Pradesha*) by affecting *Guda* leads to *Pranayatana* injury during surgery which may lead to mortality, various complication related to *Purishvaha Strotas*, *Karmahani Lakshana*, *Vataprakopa* and various *Vatavyadhis*.

## CONCLUSION

After scrutinizing the compiled data related to *Mahagada* and observational data obtained from the survey study following significant points emerge out – *Mahagada* means deadly, Incurable imperative, deep rooted diseases having either complications or *Arishta Lakshana*. The terms *Maharoga*, *Mahavyadhi*, *Nindit Vyadhi*, *Mahamula Vyadhi*, *Dirgharoga* and *Achikitya Vyadhi* are used as synonyms for *Mahagada*. In maximum patients weight loss, *Mamsa* and *Balakshaya*, history of surgical intervention, long termed care after surgery, bad effect on daily routine,

chronic nature of disease, bacterial infection (*Krimi Utpatti*), no cure after palliative treatment, Recurrence of disease, psychological impact of disease, multiple *Strotas* (Multiple systems / organ) involvement, vitiation of *Agni* were observed after suffering from *Bhagandara*, which shows hardly curable nature of *Bhagandara*. After analysis of observations collected through survey study, it can be concluded that observations of survey supports the view of Ancient *Acharyas* regarding *Bhagandar* as Mahagada.

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