



**A UNIQUE CONCEPT OF AYURVEDA - MAHAGADA**

**Dr. Mamta Masram<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Sandeep Singh Tiwari<sup>2\*</sup> and Dr. Rambhool Singh<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>PG Scholar at Department of Samhita and Siddhanta, BKAMCH, Daudhr, Moga.

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor at Department of Rog Nidana, BKAMCH, Daudhr, Moga.

<sup>3</sup>Associate Professor at Department of Ras Shastra and Bhaishajyakalpna, DAMCH, Bareilly.

**\*Corresponding Author: Dr. Sandeep Singh Tiwari**

Assistant Professor at Department of Rog Nidana, BKAMCH, Daudhr, Moga.

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**ABSTRACT**

*Ayurveda* is a science of life. It has detail description to live long and happy life without disease with help of preventive and treatment aspects. The eight cripple and fatal diseases are said to be great diseases because of their incurable nature; known as *Mahagada*. *Mahagada* is one of the fundamental concept of *Ayurveda*, which 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*.

**KEYWORDS:** *Ayurveda, Mahagada, Achikitsya Vyadhi*, etc.

**INTRODUCTION**

*Mahagada* is one of the fundamental concepts 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>

The eight cripple and fatal diseases are said to be great diseases because of their incurable nature.

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Adaptation of incompatible dietetic regimen leads to development of fatal disorders, which kills the person like poison.<sup>[2]</sup>

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

*Acarya Caraka* did not mention *Mahagada* term for commonly known eight diseases which are *Asadhya* (incurable) in nature.<sup>[3]</sup> But *Acarya Caraka* use term *Mahagada* for a few diseases like *Atatwabhinivesh*,<sup>[4]</sup> In

*Astanga Samgraha* and *Astanga Hridaya*, eight disease are described as *Maharoga*.<sup>[5][6]</sup> Which are *Yāpyā* (difficult to treat) in nature.<sup>[7]</sup> After gross review of *Samhita* it is clear that concept of *Mahagada* is described as *Leśhokta* (incompletely explained) and *Avyakta* (hidden meaning) i.e. explained in concise form.

**Meaning of the word Mahagada**

According to *Dalhanācārya*, commentator of *Suśruta Samhita* and other *ācāryas*, *Mahagada* means deadly and Incurable imperative diseases.<sup>[8]</sup> As per *Chakrapānis* view in *Bhanumatī* commentary *Mahāvvyādhi* means deep rooted disease.<sup>[9]</sup> *Mahā* means imperative/ gigantic/ sturdy in terms of deadly and Incurable.<sup>[10]</sup> Synonyms of *Mahagada* On the basis of above references it can be realized, that the terms *Maharoga*, *Mahāvvyādhi*, *NinditaVyādhi*, *Mahāvvyādhi*, *Dirgharoga* and *AchikitsyaVyādhi*, are used as synonyms for *Mahagada* by various *Acaryas*.

**Mahagada** - This term is used by *Acarya Suśruta*<sup>[11]</sup> and *acarya Caraka*<sup>[12]</sup>

**Maharoga** - This term is used by *Acarya Vagbhata*<sup>[13]</sup> and *Acarya Aadhamalla*<sup>[14]</sup>

**Mahāvvyādhi** - This term is used by *Acarya Dalhana*<sup>[15]</sup>

**NinditaVyādhi** - This term is used by *Acarya Indu*<sup>[16]</sup>

**AchikitsyaVyādhi** - This term is used by *Acarya Caraka*<sup>[17]</sup>

**MahāmūlaVyādhi** - This term is used by *Acarya Chakrapāni*<sup>[18]</sup>

**Dirgharoga** - This term is used by *Acarya Bhela*<sup>[19]</sup>

Diseases which are termed as *Mahāgada*, It is evident from various references that the term *Mahāgada* is applied in two ways in *Samhitas*. These two different approaches are;

1. For group of eight diseases having incurable nature e.g. *Aṣṭa Mahāgada*<sup>[20]</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 *Mahāgada* e.g. *Aṣṭa Mahāgada*.

**Table no. 01: Showing *AṣṭaMahāgad* as per different *ĀyurvedicSamhitas***

| S.No. | <i>Suśruta</i> <sup>[21]</sup> | <i>Caraka</i> <sup>[22]</sup> | <i>AṣṭāṅgaaSamgraha</i> <sup>[23]</sup> | <i>AṣṭāṅgaaSamgraha</i> <sup>[24]</sup> |
|-------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|---|
| 1     | <i>Vatvyādhi</i>               | <i>Vatvyādhi</i>              | <i>Vatvyādhi</i>                        | <i>Vatvyādhi</i>                        |
| 2     | <i>Prameha</i>                 | <i>Apasmāra</i>               | <i>Aśmarī</i>                           | <i>Apasmāra</i>                         |
| 3     | <i>Kuṣṭha</i>                  | <i>Kuṣṭha</i>                 | <i>Kuṣṭha</i>                           | <i>Kuṣṭha</i>                           |
| 4     | <i>Aṛśa</i>                    | <i>Shof</i>                   | <i>Meha</i>                             | <i>Raktapitta</i>                       |
| 5     | <i>Bhāgandar</i>               | <i>UdarRoga</i>               | <i>UdarRoga</i>                         | <i>UdarRoga</i>                         |
| 6     | <i>Aśmarī</i>                  | <i>Gulma</i>                  | <i>Bhāgandar</i>                        | <i>Kṣhai</i>                            |
| 7     | <i>Mudhgarbh</i>               | <i>Madhumeha</i>              | <i>Madhumeha</i>                        | <i>Madhumeha</i>                        |
| 8     | <i>UdarRoga</i>                | <i>Rājyakshama</i>            | <i>Gṛahaṇī</i>                          | <i>Meha</i>                             |

From above table it is clear that all the different *Ācāryas* and different *ĀyurvedicSamhitas* don't have similar opinion regarding listing of eight *Mahāgada*. But among eight diseases four diseases are matching in the list of all the different *Ācāryas* and different *Āyurvedic Samhitas*. These four diseases are *Vātvyādhi*,<sup>[25]</sup> *Kuṣṭha*,<sup>[26]</sup> *Prameha*<sup>[27]</sup> and *Udararoga*.<sup>[28]</sup> *Ācārya Suśruta* and *Ācārya Vagbhata* have analogous view regarding *Aṣṭa Mahāgada* diseases except one disease. *Caraka Samhita*, *Aṣṭāṅga Samgraha Śārīra Sthāna* reference and *Ācārya Gangādhara* has similar opinion regarding *Aṣṭa Mahāgada*. *Hārīta Samhita* has similar opinion that of *Suśruta Samhita*. In *Bhela Samhita* instead of eight diseases, list of seven diseases is given.<sup>[29]</sup> *Vātavyādhi* is missing in the list. Hence according to *Bhela Samhita* number of *Mahāgada / Dirgharoga* diseases are seven. Seven diseases are same as mentioned by *Caraka Samhita*. Following references shows single disease which is termed as *Mahāgada - Raktapitta*,<sup>[30]</sup>

*Apasmāra*,<sup>[31]</sup> *Śoṭha*<sup>[32]</sup> and *Atatvābhinivesha*,<sup>[33]</sup> these four diseases are termed as *Mahāgada* in separate chapters. Causes of *Mahāgada* According to *Ācārya Suśruta*, because of *Prakṛtī* i.e. *Swabhāva* (nature) *Vātavyādhi* etc. eight diseases are hardly curable and termed as *Mahāgada*.<sup>[34]</sup> He also explained that development of *Upadrava* i.e. complications in above said diseases lead to *Mahāgada*.<sup>[35]</sup> As per *Carakācārya*, decline in *Bala* (strength) and *Māmsadhātu* (Muscle), as well as development of *Ariṣṭa* symptoms in above said eight diseases lead to *Mahāgada*.<sup>[36]</sup> *AṣṭāṅgaaSamgraha* quotes that advancement of above mentioned eight diseases in very weak patient leads to incurability and treatment of such patients should be avoided.<sup>[37]</sup> *HārītaSamhita* added one more contributory factor for creation of *Mahāgada* diseases i.e. *Pāpkarma* (sin).<sup>[38]</sup> *Chakrapāniācārya* explains that sudden relief in disease is *Ariṣṭalakṣaṇa* and is thus termed as *MahāmūlaVyādhi* i.e. *Mahāvvyādhi*.<sup>[39]</sup>

**Table no. 2: Showing causes of *Mahāgada / Mahārōga / Mahāvvyādhi* as per different opinion.**

| <i>Samhita</i>           | Opinion regarding causes of <i>Mahāgada / Mahārōga / Mahāvvyādhi</i>                                    |
|--------------------------|---|
| <i>Suśruta Samhita</i>   | <i>Swabhāva</i> (nature), development of <i>Upadrava</i>  |
| <i>Caraka Samhita</i>    | Decline in <i>Bala</i> (strength) and <i>MāmsaDhātu</i> (Muscle), development of <i>Ariṣṭa</i> symptoms |
| <i>Aṣṭāṅgaa Samgraha</i> | debility of patient   |
| <i>Hārīta Samhita</i>    | <i>Pāpkarma</i>   |
| <i>Chakrapāni</i>        | <i>Hamūlatva</i> (deep sidedness) and sudden relief in symptoms   |

Table no. 03: Asht- Mahagad Vyadhi Ke Hetu evum Samprapti Nirveshan.

| S. No. | Astmahagada | Hetu  |  | Samprapti Ghatak   |
|--------|-------------|---|--|--|
|        |             | Aharaj  | Viharaaj   |  |
| 1      | Vatavyadhi  | Alpa, Ruksha, Sheet Ahara   | Atimaitun, Ratrijagaran, Ativyayam, Divashayan               | Dosh- Vata Pradhan Tridosha<br>Dushya- Sarwadhatu<br>Agni- Mandya<br>Shrotas- Asthivahsrotash<br>Dushti- Atipravriti                                   |
| 2      | Apasmara    | Ahitkar, Dushit Bhojan;   | Asatmendriyarth-samyoga, Pragyaparadh                        | Dosh- Vata, Kapha Tridosha<br>Dushya- Smruti, Mana<br>Agni- Mandya<br>Shrotas- Sangyavahirodash<br>Dushti- Sanga, Tamahpravesha                        |
| 3      | Kustha      | Viruddha- Ahar Sevan, Amla Sevan, Sheetushna karma Sevanat            | Adharniyavegon ko Dharan Karna, Guru evum Dwij Jano Ka Apman | Dosh- Vata, Kapha Tridosha<br>Dushya- Rasa, Rakta, Twak, Mamsa, Ambu<br>Agni- Mandya<br>Shrotas- Rasa, Rakta, Mamsa<br>Dushti- Sanga                   |
| 4      | Shof        | Dushit & Viruddha Ahar Sevan,   | Samshodhn Atiyoga, Vegdharan, Shram Na Karna                 | Dosh- Vata, Kapha Tridosha<br>Dushya- Smruti, Mana<br>Agni- Mandya<br>Shrotas- Rasa, Ambu, Udak<br>Dushti- Sanga, Atipravriti                          |
| 5      | Udar Roga   | Ushna, Lavan, & Kshara Sevan, Viruddha Ahara Sevan                    | Samshodhn Atiyoga, Vegvidharan,                              | Dosh- Vata, Kapha Tridosha<br>Dushya- Rasa, Udak, Mamsa<br>Agni- Mandya<br>Shrotas- Sangyavahirodash<br>Dushti- Sanga, Atipravriti                     |
| 6      | Gulma       | Abhojan, Ruksh Annapana, Samshodhn pashat Vidahi Anna Sevan           | Samshodhn Atiyoga, Vegvidharan,                              | Dosh- Vata, Tridosha<br>Dushya- Nirashraya<br>Agni- Mandya<br>Shrotas- Annavahisrotash<br>Dushti- Sanga, Vimarg Gaman                                  |
| 7      | Madhumeha   | Navannpan, Dugdh & Ghee ka Ati Sevan                                  | Avyayam, Divashayan, Aalasya karne se                        | Dosh- Vata, Kapha Tridosha<br>Dushya- Rasa, Mamsa, Meda, Ambu<br>Agni- Mandya<br>Shrotas- Rasa, Mamsa, Meda, Udak, Mutra<br>Dushti- Sanga, Atipravriti |
| 8      | Rajyakshama | Kshaya, Vishmashan  | Vegdharan, Sahas   | Dosh- Vata, Kapha Tridosha<br>Dushya- Sarwa Dhatu<br>Agni- Mandya<br>Shrotas- Rasa, Rakta & Sarwa<br>Dushti- Sanga                                     |
| 9      | Arsha       | Ahitkar Bhojan, Guru Ahar Sevan, Basi Bhojan Sevan                    | Ratrijagaran, Avyayam, Diwashayan                            | Dosh- Tridosha<br>Dushya- Rakta, Mamsa<br>Agni- Mandya<br>Shrotas- Rakta, Mamsa & Purish<br>Dushti- Sanga  |
| 10     | Bhagandar   | Asht- Aharvidhi- Visheshayatan Ka Palan Na Karna, Abhyantar Shalya Se | Avyayam, Agantuj Shalya se                                   | Dosh- Tridosha<br>Dushya- Rakta, Mamsa<br>Agni- Mandya<br>Shrotas- Rakta, Mamsa & Purish<br>Dushti- Sanga, Atipravriti                                 |
| 11     | Ashmari     | Katu Ahar Sevan, Kapha Vardhak Ahar Sevan                             | Sanshodhan Ka Atiyoga  | Dosh- Tridosha<br>Dushya- Mutra<br>Agni- Mandya<br>Shrotas- Mutravaha<br>Dushti- Sanga   |
| 12     | Moodhgarbha | Abhojan, Ruksha, Katu, Tikta Rasa                                     | Garbha Kshobhak Dravyon Ka Sevan                             | Dosh- Tridosha<br>Dushya- Rakta, Mamsa   |

|    |              |   |  |  |
|----|--------------|---|--|--|
|    |              | Sevan, Kshar Sevan  |  | Agni- Mandya<br>Shrotas- Artaw<br>Dushti- Sanga  |
| 13 | Grahani      | Asht- Aharvidhi-<br>Visheshayatan Ka<br>Palan Na Karna,<br>Katu Tikta Ahar<br>Sevan | Vaman Karma ka<br>Mithya yoga,<br>Vegavidharan   | Dosh- Tridosha<br>Dushya- Rasa, Sarwa Dhatu<br>Agni- Mandya<br>Shrotas- Anna, Purish<br>Dushti- Atipravriti  |
| 14 | Rakta- Pitta | Ushan, Teekshana,<br>Amla, Lavan Ahar<br>Sevan, Viruddha<br>Ahar Sevan              | Ati Vayu Sevan, Ati<br>Atap Sevan,<br>Adhvagaman | Dosh- PittaTridosha<br>Dushya- Rakta<br>Agni- Mandya<br>Shrotas- Rasa, Rakta<br>Dushti- Vimarg Gaman   |
| 15 | Prameha      | Navannpan, Dugdh<br>& Ghee ka Ati<br>Sevan  | Avyayam,<br>Divashayan,<br>Aalasya karne se      | Dosh- Vata, Kapha Tridosha<br>Dushya- Rasa, Mamsa, Meda, Ambu<br>Agni- Mandya<br>Shrotas- Rasa, Mamsa, Meda, Udak, Mutra<br>Dushti- Sanga, Atipravriti |

## 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 *Astamahagada* listing, *Sushruta Samhita* gave 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*, the author follows the view of *Charaka Samhita* and at *Nidansthana* of *Astanga Sangraha* and *Astanga Hrudaya*; author follows the view of *Sushruta Samhita*.

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*. While *Charaka Samhita* listed diseases which are incurable/ hardly curable in *Kayachikitsa* point of view. In *Sharirsthana* of *Astanga Sangraha* and *Astanga Hrudaya*, the author follows the 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.

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 the *Ashtodareeya* chapter of *Charaka Samhita Sutrasthana*, *Acharya* has mentioned *Atatwabhinivesha* as the *Mahagada*. In *Maharoga* chapter, *Acharya* does not mention about *Mahagada*. However, in *Indriyasthan*,

*Acharyas* have explained *Astamahagada* instead of *Eka Mahagada*. *Avaraniya* chapter of *Susruta Samhita Sutrasthana* is dedicated to *Mahagadas* explaining its importance.

*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*.

## 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 *Achikitysa Vyadhi* are used as synonyms for *Mahagada*.

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