Reconsidering the Date of the Nirvāṇa of Lord Mahāvira

The Jaina writers usually, after equating their dating with the Śaka era, have concluded that after a period of 605 years and 5 months of the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvira, Śaka became king. (Tiloyapannatti 4 : 1499; Paññayasauttām 1 part : 1984 - Tithhogalīpannaya 1 : 623). On the basis of this postulate, even today, the date of the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvira is held to be 527 B.C. Among the modern Jaina writers, Pt. Jugal Kishore Mukhtar (1956 : 26-56), of the Digambara sect, and Muni Śri Kalyana Vijaya (1966 : 159), of the Śvetāmbara sect, have also held 527 B.C. to be the year of the Vira Nirvāṇa. From about the 7th century A.D., with a few exceptions, this date has gained recognition. In the Śvetāmbara tradition, for the first time in the Prakrāta entitled Tīthhogalī (paññayasauttām 1 part : 1984 - Tithhogāti 623) and in the Digambara tradition, for the first time in Tiloyapannātī (4 : 1499), it is clearly mentioned that 605 years and 5 months after the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvira, Śaka became king. Both the texts were composed between 600 and 700 A.D. To the best of my knowledge, none of the earlier texts ever showed the difference between the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvira and the Śaka era. But this much is definite that from about 600-700 A.D., it has been a common notion that the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvira took place in the year 605 before Śaka. Prior to it, in the Staviravali of Kalpasūtra and in the Vācaka genealogy of the Nandisūtra, the reference to the hierarchy of Mahāvira is found, but there is no mention of the chronology of the Ācāryas: therefore, it is difficult to fix a date of the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvira on the basis of these texts. In the Kalpasūtra (Sūtra-147, p. 145) only this much is mentioned that now 980 years (according to another version 993 years) have passed since the Vira Nirvāṇa. This fact makes only this much clear that after 980 or 993 years of Vira Nirvāṇa, Ācārya Devardhīn Ksmāśramana finally edited this last exposition of the present Canon. Similarly, in Sthānāṅga (7 : 41), Bhagavatisūtra (9 : 222-229) and Āvaśyaka Niryuku (778-783), along with the reference to Nihnavas, a reference to after how much time of Mahāvira's life-time and his Nirvāṇa were they prevalent is found. Here only there are some clues by comparing which with the external evidences of definite date, we can contemplate the date of Nirvāṇa of Mahāvira.

There have been differences of opinion from the very beginning on the date of Nirvāṇa of Mahāvira. Although, it has been clearly stated in Tiloyapannātī, a book recognised by the Digambara sect, that 605 years and 5 months after the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvira, Śaka became the king, there are four different statements found in this book, which are as follows:

i. 461 years after Vira Jinendra attained salvation, Śaka became the king.
ii. 9785 years after Vira Bhagavān attained salvation, Śaka became the king.
iii. 14793 years after Vira Bhagavān attained salvation, Śaka became the king.
iv. 605 years and 5 months after Vira Jina attained salvation, Śaka became the king.

Besides this, in Dhavalā (4 : 1 : 44 : p. 132-133), a commentary on Satkhaṇḍāgama, there are three different statements as to after how many years of the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvira, Śaka (Śālivāhana Śaka) became the king:

i. 605 years and 5 months after Vira Nirvāṇa.
ii. 14793 years after Vira Nirvāṇa.
iii. 7995 years and 5 months after Vira Nirvāṇa.

In Śvetāmbara tradition there are two clear opinions as to how much time after the Nirvāṇa of Lord Mahāvira Devardhī's last assembly on Āgama was held. According to the first opinion, it was composed 980 years after the Vira Nirvāṇa, whereas according to the second it was composed 993 years after the event.

It is significant also to note that in the Śvetāmbara tradition, there are two opinions regarding the date of Chandragupta Maurya's accession to the throne. According to the first, he ascended the throne in the year 215 of the Vira Nirvāṇa. However, in Tīthhogalī Paññayasauttām only this much has been mentioned that (after Vira Nirvāṇa) the region of the Mauryas started 60 years after the Pālakas and 155 years after the Nandas (Paññayasauttām I part : 1984, Tīthhogalī Paññayasauttām 621), whereas according to the second opinion of Hemacandra (Paṃśiṣṭa Parva : 8 339), he ascended the throne 155 years after Vira Nirvāṇa. Similarly, in Laghapūyaśālī Pāṭṭavāli (p. 37) it is written that 155 years after Vira Nirvāṇa Candragupta Maurya ascended the throne. Also, in Nāgapuriya Tapāgaccha
Reconsidering the Date of the Nirvāṇa of Lord Mahāvīra

Paṭāvali (p. 48) it is written that 155 years after the Vīra Nirvāṇa Candragupta became the king, (Vīrat 155 varṣe Candraguptopariṇāmaḥ). According to this Paṭāvali, the reign of Mauryan dynasty ended after 278 years of Vīra Nirvāṇa. Now the period of 189 B.C. as the end of the Mauryan dynasty can be justified only when the Vīra Nirvāṇa is accepted as to be 467 B.C. It is worth mentioning here, that the historians have accepted 187 B.C. to be the date of accession to the throne of Puṣyamitra. This second theory, presented by Hemacandra, is a hindrance in ascertaining the year 527 B.C. to be the year of the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra.6 It is clear from these discussions that there has been a controversy regarding the date of the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra even in ancient times.

Since the old internal evidences regarding the date of the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra were not strong, the Western scholars on the basis of the external evidences alone, tried to ascertain the date of the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra; and as a result many new theories came into light regarding the same. The following are the opinions of different scholars regarding the date of Mahāvīra's Nirvāṇa:

1. Hermann Jacobi9 (It is to be noted that initially Hermann Jacobi accepted the traditional date 527 B.C., but later on he changed his opinion), 476 B.C. He has accepted the reference found in the Pariśīṣṭa Purva of Hemacandra to be authentic which says that 155 years after the Vīra Nirvāṇa Candragupta Maurya ascended the throne, and he ascertained the date of Mahāvīra's Nirvāṇa on the basis of this reference only.

2. J. Charpentier10, 467 B.C., He followed the opinion of Hemacandra and ascertained that the date of Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra as to be 155 Years before Chandragupta Maurya.

3. Pandit A. Shanti Raja Shastri11, 663 B.C., He considered the Śaka Era to be the Vikrama Era and establish the date of Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra as to be 605 years before the Vikrama Era.

4. Prof. Kashi Prasad Jayaswal,12 546 B.C., He has mentioned only the two traditions in his article "Identification of Kalki". He has not ascertained the date of Mahāvīra's Nirvāṇa. But at some other places he has considered 546 B.C. to be the date of Mahāvīra's Nirvāṇa, adding 18 years between Vīkarma's birth and his accession to the throne (470+18) he fixes the date of Mahāvīra's Nirvāṇa as 488 years before Vikrama.

5. S.V. Venkateswarlu,13, 437 B.C., His assumption is based on the Anand Vikrama Era. This Era came into vogue 90 years after the Vikrama Era.

6. Pandit Jugal Kishor Ji Mukhtar,14, 528 B.C. On the basis of various arguments, he has confirmed the traditional theory.

7. Muni Sri Kalyana Vijaya, 15, 528 B.C., While confirming the traditional theory, he has tried to remove the inconsistencies of the theory.

8. Prof. P.H.L. Eggernmont,16, 252 B.C., The basis of his argument is equating the incident of Saṅghabheda of Tisyaṇa in the Jaina tradition, which took place during the life time of Mahāvīra in 16th year of his emancipation. With the incident of Saṅghabheda and the act of drying up the Bodhi tree by Tisyaṇa in the Buddha Saṅgha, which took place during the reign of Aśoka.

9. V.A. Smith,17, 527 B.C., He has followed the generally accepted theory.

10. Prof. K.R. Norman,18, About 400 B.C., Considering Bhadrabāhu to be Chandragupta's contemporary, he fixed the period of 5 earlier Ācāras as 75 years, at an average of 15 years each, and thus fixed the date of Mahāvīra's Nirvāṇa as 320+75 = 395 B.C.

In order to determine the date of the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra, along with the Jaina literary sources we must also take into account the legendary and epigraphical evidence. We would follow the comparative method to decide which of the above-mentioned assumptions is authentic, and will give priority to the epigraphical evidences, as far as possible.

Among the contemporaries of Lord Mahāvīra, the names of Lord Buddha, Bimbisāra-Śrenika and Ajātaśatru are well-known. The Buddhist sources give more information about them than the Jaina sources. The study of Jaina sources also does not give rise to any doubt about their contemporaneity. The Jaina Āgamas are mostly silent about Buddha's Life-history, but there are ample references to the contemporary presence of Mahāvīra and Buddha in the Baudhī Tripiṭaka literature. Here we shall take only two of the references. In the first reference there is a mention of the event of Dīghanikāya (Sāmāṇḍaphalaśutta : 2 : 1 : 7) in which Ajātaśatru meets many of his contemporary religious heads. In this reference, the chief minister of Ajātaśatru talks about Nirgrantha Jñātṛputra like this: "Master, this Nirgranta Jñātṛputra, is the master of the sect as well as the monastery, teacher of the sect, a scholar, and a renowned Tīrthaṅkara, he is admired by many and respectable gentleman. He has been a long wandering mendicant (Parīvṛjaka) and is middle-aged". It can be derived from this statement that at the time of
Ajātaśatru’s accession to the throne Mahāvira’s age must be about 50 years, because his Nirvāṇa is supposed to have taken place in the 22nd year of Ajātaśatru Kunika’s rule. By deducting 22 years from his total age of 72 years, it is proved that at that time he was 50 years old (see Vīra Nirvāṇa Saṁvat aur Jaina Kāla Gaṇānā, pp. 4-5). So far as Buddha’s case is concerned, he attained his Nirvāṇa in the 8th year of Ajātaśatru’s accession to the throne. This is the hypothesis of Buddhist writers. This hypothesis given rise to two facts. Firstly, when Mahāvira was 50 years old, Buddha was 72 (80-8), i.e. Buddha was 22 years older than Mahāvira. Secondly, Mahāvira’s Nirvāṇa took place 14 years after Buddha’s Nirvāṇa (22-8-14). It is worth mentioning here, that in the reference occurring in the Dīghanikāyā (Sāmaññaphalasutta : 2 : 2 : 8), where Nīrgranthā Jñātīputra and other five Tīrthankaras have been called middle-aged, there is no mention of Gautama Buddha’s age, but he must be 72 at that time because this event took place during the rule of Ajātaśatru Kunika and Buddha’s Nirvāṇa took place in the 8th year of the rule of Ajātaśatru.

But contrary to the above-mentioned fact one finds another information in the Dīghanikāyā that Mahāvira has attained Nirvāṇa during Buddha’s life-time. The reference from the Dīghanikāyā is as follows (Pāsādikasutta : 6 : 1 : 1)\(^{20}\):

“I heard this once that the Lord was residing in a palace built in the mango orchard of the Sākyas known as Vedhaññā in Śākya (country).

At that time Nīgānṭha Nāṭaputta (Tīrthankara Mahāvira) had recently died at Pāvā. A rift was created among the Nīgānṭhas after his death. They were divided into two groups and were fighting by using arrows of bitter words at one-another - "you don’t know this Dharma (=Dharmavīna) you are wrong in ascertaining, (your understanding is wrong), I am rightly ascertained. My understandint is correct. My words are meaningful and yours are meaningless. The things you should have told first you told in the end and vice-versa. Your contention is mindless and topsy-turvy. You presented your theory and withdrew. You try to save yourself from this allegation and if you have power, try to save yourself from this allegation and if you have power, try to resolve it. As if a war (slaughtering) was going on among the Nīgānṭhas."

The house-holder disciples of the Nīgānṭha Nāṭaputta, wearing white dresses, also were getting indifferent, distressed and alienated from the Dharma of Nīgānṭha which was not expressed properly (durākhyāta), not properly investigated (duspravedita), unable to redeem (anairiyāka), unable to give peace (ana-upaśama-Śaṁvartanika), not verified by any enlightened (a-Samyak- Sambuddha-pravedita) without foundation = a different stūpa and without a shelter."

Thus, we see that in the Tripiṭaka literature, on the one hand where Mahāvira has been described as middle-aged, on the otherhand, there is an information about the death of Mahāvira during the life-time of Buddha. Since, according to the sources based on Jaina literature, Mahāvira died at the age of 72, it is certain that both the facts cannot be true at the same time. Muni Kalyana Vijaya ji (Vīra Nirvāṇa Saṁvat aur Jaina Kāla Gaṇānā, 1987, p. 12) has called the theory of Mahāvira Nirvāṇa during the life-time of Buddha as a mistaken concept. He maintains that the incident of Mahāvira’s demise is not a reference to his real death, but to a hearsay. It is also clearly mentioned in Jaina Agamic texts that 16 years before his Nirvāṇa, rumour of his death had spread, hearing which many Jaina Šarmanas started shedding tears. Since the incident of the bitter-argument between Makkhaligosāla, a former disciple of Mahāvira, and his other Šramaṇa disciples was linked with this rumour, the present reference from the Dīghanikāyā about the death of Mahāvira during the life time of Buddha is not to be taken as that of his real death, rather it indicated to the rumour of his death by burning fever caused by Tejolesyā, hurled upon him by agitated and acutely jealous Makkhaligosāla after dispute.

Buddha’s Nirvāṇa must have taken place one year and few months after the rumour about Mahāvira’s death, therefore, Buddha must have attained Nirvāṇa 14 years, 5 months and 15 days before Mahāvira’s Nirvāṇa.

Since Buddha’s Nirvāṇa took place in the 8th year of Ajātaśatru Kunika’s accession to the throne, Mahāvira’s Nirvāṇa must have taken place in the 22nd year of his accession. Vīra Nirvāṇa must have taken place in the 22nd year of his accession (Vīra Nirvāṇa Saṁvat aur Jaina Kāla Gaṇānā, p. 4). Therefore, it is certain that Mahāvira’s Nirvāṇa took place 14 years after the Nirvāṇa of Buddha. The fixation of the date of Buddha’s Nirvāṇa would definitely influence the date of Mahāvira’s Nirvāṇa. First of all we shall fix the date of Mahāvira on the basis of the Jaina sources and inscriptions and then we will find out what should be the date of Buddha’s Nirvāṇa and whether it is supported by the other sources.
While determining the date of Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra, we would have to keep in our mind that the contemporaneity of Ācārya Bhadrabāhu and Sthūlībhadrā with Mahāpādma Nanda and Chandragupta Maurya; of Ācārya Suhastī with Sampratī; of Ārya Maṅkṣu (Mangū), Ārya Nandīla, Ārya Nāgagāhastī, Ārya Vṛddha and Ārya Kṛṣṇa with the period mentioned in their inscriptions and of Ārya Devarddhigāni ksamāsrāmanā with king Dhruvasena of Valabhi, is not disturbed in any way. The historians have unanimously agreed that Chandragupta ruled from 317 B.C. to 297 B.C. (Majumdar : 1952 : p. 168; Tripathi : 1968 p. 139),. Therefore the same should be the period of Bhadrabāhu and Sthūlībhadrā also. It is an undisputed fact that Chandragupta had wrested power from the Nandas and that Sthūlībhadrā was the son of Śakḍāla, the minister of the last Nanda. Therefore, Sthūlībhadrā must be the younger contemporary and Bhadrabāhu the older contemporary of Chandragupta. This statement that Chandragupta Maurya was initiated into Jaina religion, may or may not be accepted as authentic, still on the basis of the Jaina legends one must accept that both Bhadrabāhu and Sthūlībhadrā were contemporary of Chandragupta. The main reason behind Sthūlībhadrā’s renunciation could be Mahāpādma Nanda’s (the last ruler of the Nanda dynasty) misbehaviour with his father and ultimately his merciless assassination (Tīṭhōgaḷīpainnayām : 787 : Painnayasuttānī I part : 1984). Moreover, Sthūlībhadrā was initiated by Sambhūṭivijaya and not by Bhadrabāhu. At the time of first assembly on composition of Āgama held at Pāṭaliputra, instead of Bhadrabāhu or Sthūlībhadrā, Sambhūṭivijaya was the head, because only in that particular assembly it was decided that Bhadrabāhu will make Sthūlībhadrā to study the Purva-texts. Therefore, it seems that the first assembly was held any time during the last phase of the Nanda rule. The period of the first assembly can be accepted as before 155 years of the Vira Nirvāṇa era. If we accept that both the traditional notions are correct and that Ācārya Bhadrabāhu remained Ācārya from Vira Nirvāṇa Sanvat 157 to 170 and that Chandragupta Maurya was enthroned in 215 V.N., then the contemporaneity of the two is not proved. It concludes that Bhadrabāhu had already died 45 years before Chandragupta Maurya’s accession. On this basis Sthūlībhadrā does not even remain the junior contemporary of Chandragupta Maurya. Therefore we have to accept that Chandragupta Maurya was on throne 155 years after Vira Nirvāṇa. This date has been accepted by Himvaṇṭa Sthīvīravālī (Muni Kalyana Vijaya : Vikram Era 1987 : p. 178) and Paṭṭāvīṣṭa Parva (8 : 339) of Ācārya Hemacandra also. On this basis only the contemporaneity of Bhadrabāhu and Sthūlībhadrā with Chandragupta Maurya can be also proved. Almost all the Paṭṭāvīsī accepts the period of Bhadrabāhu as an Ācārya to be 156-170 V.S. (Paṭṭāvīsī Parāgā Sanīghraha, p. 166; Vividhagacchīya Paṭṭāvīsī Sanīghraha: I part : 1961 : pp. 15, 37, 48). In Digambara tradition also the total period of the three Kevalis and the five Śrutaśekhālis has been accepted as 162 years. Since Bhadrabāhu was the last Śrutaśekhālī, according to the Digambara tradition his year of demise must be the year 162 of the Vira Nirvāṇa Sanvat. Thus, despite the fact that there is a difference of 8 years regarding the period of demise of Bhadrabāhu as accepted by the two traditions, the contemporaneity of Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta Maurya is fully justified. Muni Shri Kalyana Vijaya (Śri Paṭṭāvīsī Parāgā Sanīghraha : 1966 : 52; Vira Nirvāṇa Sanīvat àur Jaina Kāla Gaṇanā : p. 137)23, in order to prove the contemporaneity of Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta Maurya, accepted the period of Sambhūṭivijaya as an Ācārya to be 60 years in place of 8 years. In this way, while accepting the date of the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra as 527 B.C., he has tried to establish the contemporaneity of Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta Maurya. But it is only his imagination (Vira-Nirvāṇa Sanīvat àur Jaina Kāla Gaṇanā - p. 137 & Paṭṭāvīsī Parāgā Sanīghraha - p. 52)24, there is no authentic proof available. All the Śvetāmbara Paṭṭāvīsī accept the date of the demise of Bhadrabāhu to be the year 170 V.N.S. Also, in Tīṭhōgaḷī it has been indicated that the decay of the knowledge of the fourteen Pūrvas started in the year 170 V.N.S. Bhadrabāhu was only the last of the 14 Pūrvasadhānas. Thus, according to both of the traditions - Śvetāmbara and Digambara, the date of demise of Bhadrabāhu stands as 170 and 162 of V.N.S. respectively.

On the basis of this fact, the contemporaneity of Bhadrabāhu and Sthūlībhadrā with the last Nanda and Chandragupta Maurya can be proved only if the date of Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra is accepted as 410 years before V.S. or in the year 467 B.C. The other alternatives do not prove the contemporaneity of Bhadrabāhu and Sthūlībhadrā with the last king of the Nanda dynasty and Chandragupta Maurya. In Tīṭhōgaḷī Painnayām (783-794) also the contemporaneity of Sthūlībhadrā and the king Nanda has been described. Thus on the basis of these facts it appears more logical to accept the date of the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra as 467 B.C. Himvaṇṭa Sthīvīravālī also mentions that Chandragupta was enthroned in 155 years after the Vira.
Nirvāṇa and that Vikramārka lived 410 years after the Vira Nirvāṇa (see Vira Nirvāṇa Satīvat aur Jaina Kāla-Gaṇanā, p. 177). This also confirms the theory of accepting the date of Mahāvīra's Nirvāṇa to be 467 B.C.

Again, in the Jaina tradition the contemporaneity of Ārya Suhasti and the king Samprati is unanimously accepted. The historians have acknowledged the period of Samprati to be 231-221 B.C. (Tripathi : 1986 : p. 139)\textsuperscript{35} According to the Jaina Pāṭṭāvālis, the period of Ārya Suhasti as Yuga Pradhāna Ācārya was 245-291 V.N.S. If we base our calculation on the assumption that Vira Nirvāṇa took place in 527 B.C., we will have to accept that Ārya Suhasti became the Yuga Pradhāna Ācārya in 282 B.C. and died in 236 B.C. In this way, if we consider 527 B.C. to be the year of Vira Nirvāṇa, then, in no way, the contemporaneity of Ārya Suhasti and the king Samprati could be established. But, if we accept 467 B.C. to be the year of Vira Nirvāṇa, then the period of Ārya Suhasti as an Ācārya starts from 222 B.C. (467-245=222). On this basis the contemporaneity is established, but the reign of Samprati extends to only one year during the Ācāryaship of Ārya Suhasti. But Ārya Suhasti had come in contact with Samprati when he was a prince and the ruler of Avanti, and may be at that time Ārya Suhasti was an influential Muni inspite of not being a Yuga Pradhāna Ācārya of the Satīgha. It is remarkable that Ārya Suhasti was initiated by Sthūlībhadrā. According to the Pāṭṭāvālis, Sthūlībhadrā was initiated in 146 V.N.S. and died in 215 V.N.S. It can be derived from this fact that 9 years before Chandragupta Maurya's accession, and during the last Nanda king (Nava Nanda), Ārya Sthūlībhadrā had already been initiated. If, according to the Pāṭṭāvālis, the total life of Ārya Suhasti is considered to be 100 years and his age at the time of initiation to be 30 years, then he must have been initiated in 221 V.N.S. i.e. 246 B.C. (assuming the date of Vira Nirvāṇa in 467 B.C.) It does prove the contemporaneity of Ārya Suhasti with Samprati, but then, there is a difference of 6 years, if he is accepted to have been initiated by Sthūlībhadrā himself because 6 years before he got initiated, in 215 V.N.S., Sthūlībhadrā has already died. It is also possible that Suhasti may have got initiated at the age of 23 or 24, and not at the age of 30. Even then, it is certain that on the basis of the references made in Pāṭṭāvālis, the contemporaneity of Ārya Suhasti and Samprati is possible only by accepting the date of Vira Nirvāṇa as 467 B.C. This contemporaneity is not possible if the date of the Mahāvīra Nirvāṇa is accepted as 527 B.C. or any other later date.

Thus, by accepting the date of the Vira Nirvāṇa as 467 B.C. the contemporaneity of Bhadrabāhu and Sthūlībhadrā with Mahāpāda Nanda and Chandragupta Maurya and that of Ārya Suhasti with Samprati can be proved. All other alternatives fail to prove their contemporaneity. Therefore, in my opinion, it will be more appropriate and logical to accept 467 B.C. as the date of the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra.

Now we shall consider the date of the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra also on the basis of some of the inscriptions. Out of five names - Ārya Maṅgu, Ārya Nandil, Ārya Nāgahasti, Ārya Krṣṇa and Ārya Vṛddha, mentioned in Mathurā inscriptions (see Jaina Śilālekha Sangraha, articles 41, 54, 55, 56, 57 and 63) first three are found in Nandisīṭṭha Sthāvīravāli (Gāthā : 27-29) and remaining four names are found in Kalpasūtra. According to the Pāṭṭāvālis, the period of Ārya Maṅgu as a Yuga Pradhāna Ācārya is considered to be in between 451 and 470 V.N.S. (Vira Nirvāṇa Satīvat aur Jaina Kāla Gaṇanā, p. 112). On accepting the date of the Vira Nirvāṇa Satīvat aur Jaina Kāla Gaṇanā, p. 112). On accepting the date of the Vira Nirvāṇa as 467 B.C. his period extends from 16 B.C. to 3 A.D. and if it is 527 B.C. his period extends from 76 B.C. to 57 B.C. Whereas, on the basis of the inscriptions (Jaina Śilālekha Sangraha article No. 54) his period stands as Saṅga Saṅīvat 52 (Haviṣṭika year 52), i.e. 130 A.D. In other words, while considering the period of Ārya Maṅgu as indicated by Pāṭṭāvālis and inscriptions there is a difference of 200 years if the date of Vira Nirvāṇa is accepted as 527 B.C. and if it is 467 B.C. there is a difference of 127 years.

In several Pāṭṭāvālis, even the name of Ārya Maṅgu, is not mentioned. Therefore, the theories, concerning his period, based on the Pāṭṭāvālis are not authentic. Moreover, the only one Pāṭṭāvālis called Nandisīṭṭha Sthāvīravāli, which mentions Ārya Maṅgu, does not indicate the teacher-taught (Guru-śisya) tradition. Therefore, there are chances of the omission of certain names which has been confirmed by Muni Kalyana Vijaya himself (Vira Nirvāṇa saṅīvat aur Jaina kāla Gaṇanā, pp. 121 & 131). Thus it is not possible to establish the date of the Mahāvīra's Nirvāṇa on the basis of the inscriptions evidences related to Ārya Maṅgu, because on this basis neither the traditional belief in the date of Mahāvīra's Nirvāṇa as 527 B.C. nor the scholars' opinion, as 467 B.C., could be proved correct. On equating the Pāṭṭāvālis with the inscriptions, the date of Vira Nirvāṇa falls around 360 B.C. The reason of this uncertainty is the presence of various wrong conceptions regarding the period.
of Ārya Maṅgu.

So far as Ārya Nandil is concerned, we find the reference to his name also in the Nandisūtra. In the Nandisūtra Sthāvirāvalī (Gāthā, 27-29), his name appears before Ārya Nāgahasti and after Ārya Maṅgu. There is an inscription of Nandika (Nandil) of the Śaka Saṅvat 32 in the inscriptions of Mathurā (see Jaina Śīlālekha Saṅgraha, article No. 41); in another inscription of the Śaka Saṅvat 93, the name is not clear, only 'Nadi' is mentioned there. (see Jaina Śīlālekha Saṅgraha, article No. 67). Ārya Nandil is referred to also in the Prabandhakośa and in some ancient Paṭāvalis, but since at no place there is any reference to his period, it is not possible to establish the date of the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra on the basis fo this inscriptive evidence.

Now let us consider Nāgahasti. Usually in all the Paṭāvalis, the date of the demise of Ārya Vajra, has been considered as 584 V.N.S. After Ārya Vajra, Ārya Rakṣita remained the Yuga Pradhāna Ācārya for 13 years, Puṣyamitra for 20 years and Vajrasena for 3 years, i.e. Vajrasena died in the year 620 V.N.S. In Merutunga's Vicāraśreṇī, the period of Ārya Nāgahasti as the Yuga Pradhāna has been accepted as continuing for 69 years, i.e. Nāgahasti was the Yuga Pradhāna from 621 to 690 V.N.S. (Vira Nirvāṇa Saṅvat aur Jaina Kāla Gananā, p. 106 note). If Hastahasti of the Mathurā inscription is Nāgahasti, then it is also referred to as the guru of Māghahasti in the inscription of the Śaka Saṅvat 54, which establishes him of before 131 A.D.

If we accept the date of the Vira Nirvāṇa as 467 B.C., then the period of his Yuga Pradhānavah is extends between 154 and 223 A.D. According to the inscriptions he had a disciple in 132 A.D. yet one can be content by assuming that he must have initiated some one 22 years before being a Yuga Pradhāna. If we accept his life-span to be 100 years, he must have been 11 years old when he is supposed to have initiated Māghahasti. It seems almost impossible to believe that he was able to initiate somebody by his sermons at the age of 11 and that such an under age disciple was able to perform the Mūrtī-Praśīṭhā. But if, on the basis of the traditional concept, we accept the Vira Nirvāṇa year to be before 605 of the Śaka Era or 52 B.C., then the references made in the Paṭāvalis tally the inscriptive evidences. On this basis his tenure of Yuga Pradhānavah extends from 16 to 85 of the Śaka Era, Māghahasti, one of his disciples was able to perform the Mūrtī-Praśīṭhā by his sermons. Although common sense would hardly accept it as logical that his Yuga Pradhānavah extended for 69 years, yet because of the fact that it considers the information given in the Paṭāvalis to be correct, this inscriptive evidence about Nāgahasti supports the date of Vira Nirvāṇa as 527 B.C.

Again, in one of the inscriptive sketches of Mathurā, Ārya Kṛṣṇa with that Ārya Kṛṣṇa mentioned after Śivabhūti in Kalpasūtra Sthāvirāvalī (last part 4:1), then his period on the basis of the Paṭāvalis and Viśeśavāsyakabhāṣya (Gāthā : 2552-2553), could be established around 609 V.N.S., because as a result of the dispute over clothes between the same Ārya Kṛṣṇa and Śivabhūti the Bōṭika, Nihmava came into existence. The period of this dispute is fixed as 609 V.N.S. If we accept the Vira Nirvāṇa year to be 467, then the period of Ārya Kṛṣṇa is supposed to be as 609-467=142 A.D. This inscriptive sketch belongs to 95-78=173 A.D. Since Ārya Kṛṣṇa has been figured as a deity, it is natural that 20-25 years after his death, in 173 A.D., this sketch must have been made by some Ārya Arha, one of his follower disciples. In this way, this inscriptive evidence can maintain compatibility with other literary reference only when 467 B.C. is established as the year of the Vira Nirvāṇa. It is not possible to reconcile it with any other alternatives.

In the Mathurā inscriptions (Jaina Śīlālekha Saṅgraha: article no. 56 & 59), the name of Ārya Vṛddhahasti is related with two inscriptions. One is from the Śaka Era 60 (Huviska year 60) and the other from 79 of the same. According to th Christian era, these inscriptions belong to 138 and 157 A.D. respectively. If he is the Ārya Vṛddha of the Kalpasūtra Sthāvirāvalī and the Vṛddhadeva of the Paṭāvalis (Vividha Gačchhya Paṭāvali Saṅgraha: p. 17), then according to the Paṭāvalis, he was led to perform Mūrtī Praśīṭhā in Karnāṭaka in the year 695 V.N.S. If we accept 467 B.C. to be the year of the Vira Nirvāṇa, then this period can be fixed at 695-467=228 A.D. whereas the inscriptive evidences are from 138 and 157 A.D. But, if according to the traditional concept the date of the Vira Nirvāṇa is accepted as 527 B.C. then his period is to be fixed at 695-527=168 A.D. Therefore, on accepting 527 B.C. to be the Vira Nirvāṇa year, the equation between this inscriptive evidence and the Paṭāvali based evidence is found to the matching well. On assuming 25 years to be the average period of tenure of each Ācārya, his period should be around 625 V.N.S. because Vṛddha occupies the 25th place in Paṭāvali. Thus his time can be fixed as 625-467=158 A.D. which also proves the 467 B.C. as the period of Vira Nirvāṇa.
The last evidence, on the basis of which the date of Mahāvira’s Nirvāṇa can be established is king Dhruvasena’s inscriptions and his period. According to the popular belief, after the Valabhi assembly, first time Kalpasūtra was recited before a congregation at Änandpur (Vadanagar) in order to console the grieving King Dhruvasena on his son’s death (Śrīkalpasūtra : 147 pp. 145, Vinaya Vijaya : Commentary : p. 15-16). The period of Valabhi assembly is fixed as 980-993 V.N.S. There are several inscriptions of Dhruvasena available. The period of Dhruvasena the first, is said to be from 525 to 550 A.D. (Parikh, Rasikalal : 1974 :40). If this event is related to the second year of his accession i.e. 526 A.D., then it is proved that Mahāvira’s Nirvāṇa must have taken place in 993-526 = 467 B.C.

Thus atleast three of the six inscriptionsal evidences prove that the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvira took place in 467 B.C. Whereas the two evidences may prove 527 B.C. as the period of Vīra Nirvāṇa. But the dates based on the Paṭṭavali could be incorrect; therefore, they cannot be an obstacle in determining the date of the Vīra Nirvāṇa as 467 B.C. One of these inscriptions is not helpful in fixing the date. These discrepancies are there also because the authenticity of the periods of the Ācāryas given in the Paṭṭavali is doubtful and today, we have no grounds to remove these discrepancies. Still we derive from this discussion, that most of the textual and inscriptional evidences confirm the date of Mahāvira’s Nirvāṇa as 467 B.C. In that case, one will have to accept the date of the Nirvāṇa as 467 B.C. In that case, one will have to accept the date of the Nirvāṇa of Buddha to be 483 B.C., which has been accepted by most of the western scholars, and only then it will be proved that about 15 years (14 years and 5 months) after the Nirvāṇa of Buddha the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvira took place.

Notes:
   b. pañca ya māsā pañca ya vāsā chaceva hontivāsasyā parinivvussāriho so uppanño sago rāmā.

   Titthogāli Painñayān, 623
2. bahuraya paeça avvattasamuccādugatigab addhityā ceva. satte-e nihagā khalu titthami u addhhamānassā, (778) bahuraya jamañigailavahā jivapesā ya nisgattao avvatā addhao samuccēyā samiddāo. (779).
   gaṅgā doṅkiriya chalūgā terāiyāna uppati. therāya goṭhhamāhila putthamabaddharī paruvīntī. (780)
   sāvaṭṭhi usabhapuraṁ seyaviyā mihilaṁ ullagātirām. purimantaraniyā dasapura rahavirapuraṁ ca nagaṁ añā (781)
   coddasasasolasā vāśa caudaddasavānītā yā domi sayā. aṭṭhāvāsā ya duve pañca sayā u coyālā. (782)
   pañca sayā calastāy chaceva sayā nāvottarā hoti. nānupattiyā duve uppanńā viṇavveve sesā. (783)

   pāṭhānṭarām.
   coddasasahassasagasyata nautavāsākālaviccchede. (19793) vīrāsasiddhido uppanṇo ahavā. 1498.
   pāṭhānṭarām.
   nīvāṇe vīra jīne chhavīsāadesu pañcavārisēsūm. paṇamāsesu (Y. 605, M.5) gadesu sanjādo sago ahavā. 1499.
   pāṭhānṭarām.

Tiloyapanṇaṭṭi - section 4, 1496 - 1499.
4. avanidesu pañcamāsāhiyapācuṭaturachassadavāsānī havanti aiso virajinindajnivvānagaddavāsāvado jaya sagakālasses aďi hodi tavādyikālo. kudo? (605) edamhi kāle saganānindakālamūnī pakkhiite vaddamāninjaṇiṇiṇivvudakālagamānādo. vuttam ca-paṅca ya masa paṅcaya vāsā chaceva hoti vāsāsayā. sagakālaṇa ya sahiyā thaveyavo tado rāsi (41)
   āne ke vīriyā coddassahassā - sattasad - tīnādvaivāsē su-Injąṇivvānindad ākāntesu saganānindaduppatṭiṁ bhanantī (14793) vuttam ca-guttī-paṇṭhā-bhayaṁ coddasasaraṇāṁ samaikältantī. pariṇivvude jinīntite to rajya saganāribdassā. (42)
   āne ke vīriyā evam bhanantī. tam jāha-sattasahassā navasaya paṇcāṇaṇaṇadāvāsē paṇcamāsāhīsē vaddhamānajnaṇivvudānindad ākāntesu saganānindarajuppatī jādo ti. ethha gāhā-sattasahassā navasada paṇcāṇaṇaṇa sampancāmāsā ya. ākānta vāsānāṁ jatīya tāyā saguppatī : (43) (7995)
   edesu tisu ekkere nodavvam na tīnāmuvadesāna saccattai, aṇṇopnavirohado tado jānyā vattavvam.

--Dhavala tikā samanvi Ṛādhikāgama. Khandā 4, Bhaga 1, Pustak 9, p. 132-133 (section 4/1/44)
5. samanassa bhagavao Mahāvīrasa Jaya savvadukkhapaṁhinassā navavāsā sayāṁviṁ kāntāntiṁ dasamassa vāsasayassā ayam asime sanvacchare kāle gacchai,
vāyanairite puna ayam tenauc saṁvacchare kālam gacchai iha disai.

Śrī Kalpaśūtra 147, p. 145.

6. pālagaraṇṇo satī saṁpanpaṇnasaṁyaṁ viyāna nandaṇāṁ
maruyānaṁ aṭṭhasaṁyaṁ tīsā puna paśamitaṇāṁ.

--Tīṭhogalī pāññayaṁ (Pāññaya Suttaṁ) 621
When 60 pākaja + 155 Nandavanā = 215 years had passed,
the rule of the Maurya dynasty began.

7. a. evam ca Śrīmāvīraṁ mūlevarṣasate, pañcapañcā-
śadabhike candraṇugto abhavannapāṇā.


b. Laghupalika paṭṭāvali, Nāgapūryatapiṣṭaccha paṭṭāvali (ed. Jinvijaya 1961) and
Himavanta Therāvali also acknowledge that Chandragupta
Maurya ascended to the throne 155 years after the
Vīra Nirvāṇa.

8. It is remarkable that the year of the Vīra Nirvāṇa may
be accepted as 527 B.C. only when Chandra Gupta
Maurya’s accession is accepted to have taken place in
the year 215 of the Vīra Nirvāṇa era. It the date of his
accession is accepted to be the year 155 of the Vīra
Nirvāṇa, then we should accept 467 B.C. to be the date of
the Vīra Nirvāṇa.

p. 5; He considers the reference of the Pāriśīṣṭaparva of
Hemacandra to be authentic according to which 155
years after the Vīra Nirvāṇa, Chandragupta Maurya’s
accession took place, and on only this basis he
determined the date of the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvīra.

10. Charpentier, 1992 : 13-16; He also based, his arguments
on Hemacandra and considered that the Nirvāṇa of
Mahāvīra took place 155 years before Chandragupta
Maurya.

He considered the Śaṅka Saṁvat to be the Vikram
Saṁvat and accepted that 605 years before the Vikram
Saṁvat Mahāvīra attained Nirvāṇa.

12. Jayaswal, 1917 : 151-152; In his article entitled ‘The
Historical Position of Kalki and his Identification with
Yaśodharman’, he has mentioned only two traditions.
He made no mention of the date of the Nirvāṇa of
Mahāvīra.

13. Venkateshwar, 1917, p. 122-130; His opinion is based
on the Anand Vikram Saṁvat. This was is vague 10
years after the Vikram Saṁvat.

arguments he confirmed the traditon accepted theory.

15. Muni Kalyana Vijaya : Vikrama Saṁvat aur Jaina
Kālagaṇanā, 1987 : p. 149; while confirming the
traditional accepted theory, he also tried to remove its
inconsistencies.

16. Eggermont, P.H.L. He has given his arguments equating
the very event of schism by Tisyaagupta which took
place during the 16th year of the attainment of Lord
Mahāvīra with the event of drying the Bodhi tree by
Tisyaagupta and event of schism in Buddha Order during
the reign of Āsoka.

17. Smith : 1969 : 141 He accepted the common popular
theory.

and Buddha" in Bechert, H. The Dating of the Historical
Buddha, a P. I. p. 300-312 Gottingen.

ajarāparipiko rājāmaccio māgadharni ājātasat-
uṁ vedhehiṣṭam idvatvocca "ayanī, deva, niganṭho
nātputto satī cevā ca gani ca ganācāriyo ca, iñlo,
yasassi, tithhakaro, sādhusammato bahujanassu, ratta-
fīčā, citrapabbajito, addhagato, vayoanuppato. Digha-
nikāya, Sāmaṇṇaphalasutta. 2/17.

evamī me sutam. ekaṁ samayam bhagavā sakkesu
viharati vedhaññā nāma sakāyā tesāṁ ambavana pāśade.
tenā ko pana samayena niganṭho nātputto pāyavam
adhunākālankato hoti. tassa kālāṅkiniriyā bhinnum
niganṭhā dvedhiṣṭaṁ bhaṅdaṇaṁ kalahajātaṁ viveda-
pāṇaṁ aṁhaṁnamcitu mukhasatiṁ viutudanī viharantī.
na vāma imaṁ dhammaṁvaṁyaṁ ājānasī, aham imaṁ
dhammaṁvaṁyaṁ ājānasī, kimī vāma imaṁ dhamma-
maṁvaṁyaṁ ājānasīsaṁ? miciṣṭāpīpanno tvamasi, aham
smi sammāpaṭipanno. Sahitaṁ me, asaṁtaṁ te. pureva-
cantyām pacchā avaca pacchāvaccanivaṁ pure avaca.
Adhīciṁtaṁ te viparāvattāṁ āropto te vāda. nigahito
tvamasi. cara vādappamokkhāya. nibbheṭhe vā sace
pahosī tek. vadho yeva kho maṁya niganṭhese nātput-
tīyesu vattati. ye pi niganṭhassa nātputtassa sāvaṁ
giṁ odātavasaṁ te pi niganṭhesu nātputtiyesu
nibbinnaruṇā pirattarūpaṁ paṭivānarūpaṁ-yathā taṁ
durakkhāte dhammapiye duppaivedite aniyāṇake
anupasamasarīvattaniyo asammasambuddha-ppaivedite
bhinnatupi appatiṣaramā.
Kunika and Udayi ruled for 60 years after the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvira and the Nandas ruled for 94 years there after, and accordingly Chandragupta Maurya’s accession is said to be in 155 V.N.S.

23. Vikram Sañvat 1987 : 137; Note that Munji’s effort to accept the period of Maurya to be 160 instead of 108, considering “muryāṇamaṭṭhasayān” as “muryāṇam- saṭṭhasayān”. is not a historical fact.

24. It should be noted that Munji’s effort to extend Sambhūtivijaya’s period from 8 year to 60-years, and changing 108 year period of the Mauryas (this fact is supporte by history) to 160. years is nothing but an effort to confirm his own hypothesis.

References:


15. Nandīśṭhāra (Sthavirāvali), Ed. Madhukar Muni, Shri Agm Prakashan Samiti, Beawar, (Rajasthan).


