

Reconsidering the Date of the Nirvāṇa of Lord Mahāvīra

The Jaina writers usually, after equating their dating with the Śāka era, have concluded that after a period of 605 years and 5 months of the *Nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra, Śāka became king. (*Tiloyapaṇṇatti* 4 : 1499; *Paiṇṇayasuttāim* : I part : 1984 - *Titthogālīpaiṇṇayaṃ* : (623).¹ On the basis of this postulate, even today, the date of the *Nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra 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 Śrī Kalyana Vijaya (1966 : 159), of the Śvetāmbara sect, have also held 527 B.C. to be the year of the *Vīra 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 *Prakṛmaka* entitled '*Titthogālī*,' (*paiṇṇayasuttāim* : I part : 1984 : *Titthogālī* 623) and in the Digambara tradition, for the first time in *Tiloyapaṇṇatti* (4 : 1499), it is clearly mentioned that 605 years and 5 months after the *Nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra, Śāka 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 Mahāvīra and the Śāka era. But this much is definite that from about 600-700 A.D., it has been a common notion that the *Nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra took place in the year 605 before Śāka. Prior to it, in the *Sthavirāvalī* of *Kalpasūtra* and in the *Vācaka* genealogy of the *Nandīsūtra*, the reference to the hierarchy of Mahāvīra 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 Mahāvīra 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 *Vīra Nirvāṇa*. This fact makes only this much clear that after 980 or 993 years of *Vīra Nirvāṇa*, Ācārya Devarddhigani Kṣamāśramaṇa finally edited this last exposition of the present Canon. Similarly, in *Sthānāṅga* (7 : 41), *Bhagavatisūtra* (9 : 222-229) and *Āvaśyaka Nirvyukti* (778-783),² alongwith the reference to Nihnavas, a reference to after how much time of Mahāvīra'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 Mahāvīra.

There have been differences of opinion from the very beginning on the date of *Nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra. Although, it has been clearly stated in *Tiloyapaṇṇatti*,³ a book recognised by the Digambara sect, that 605 years and 5 months after the *Nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra, Śāka became the king, there are four different statements found in this book, which are as follows :

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

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

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

In Śvetāmbara tradition there are two clear opinions as to how much time after the *Nirvāṇa* of Lord Mahāvīra Devarddhi's last assembly on Āgama was held. According to the first opinion, it was composed 980 years after the *Vīra Nirvāṇa*, whereas according to the second it was composed 993 years after the event⁵.

It is significant also to note that in the Śvtāmbara tradition, there are two opinions regarding the date of Chandragupta Maurya's accession to the throne. According to the first, he ascended the throne⁶ in the year 215 of the *Vīra Nirvāṇa*. However, in *Titthogālī Paiṇṇaya* only this much has been mentioned that (after *Vīra Nirvāṇa*) the region of the Mauryas started 60 years after the Pālakas and 155 years after the Nandas (*Paiṇṇayasuttāim* I part: 1984, *Titthogālī Paiṇṇayaṃ* : 621), whereas according to the second opinion of Hemacandra (*Parīṣiṣṭa Parva* : 8 339),⁷ he ascended the throne 155 years after *Vīra Nirvāṇa*. Similarly, in *Laghuposālik Paṭṭāvalī* (p. 37) it is written that 155 years after *Vīra Nirvāṇa* Candragupta Maurya ascended the throne. Also, in *Nagapurīya Tapāgaccha*

Paṭṭāvalī (p. 48) it is written that 155 years after the *Vīra Nirvāṇa* Candragupta became the king, (*Virāt 155 varṣe Candraguptonṛpaḥ*). According to this *Paṭṭāvalī*, 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.⁸ 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 *Parīśiṣṭa Parva* 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 Jayaswal¹², 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 Vikrama'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. Venkateswara¹³, 437 B.C., His assumption is based on the Anand Vikram Era. This Era came into vogue 90 years after the Vikrama Era.

6. Pandit Jugal Kishor Ji Mukhtar¹⁴, 528 B.C. On the basis of various arguments, he has confirmed the traditional theory.

7. Muni Sri Kalyana Vijaya¹⁵, 528 B.C., While confirming the traditional theory, he has tried to remove the inconsistencies of the theory.

8. Prof. P.H.L. Eggermont¹⁶, 252 B.C., The basis of his argument is equating the incident of *Samghabheda* of Tiṣyagupta in the Jaina tradition, which took place during the life time of Mahāvīra in 16th year of his emancipation. With the incident of *Samghabheda* and the act of drying up of the Bodhi tree by Tiṣyarakṣita in the Buddha *Samgha*, which took place during the reign of Aśoka.

9. V.A. Smith¹⁷, 527 B.C., He has followed the generally accepted theory.

10. Prof. K.R. Norman¹⁸, About 400 B.C., Considering Bhadrabāhu to be Chandragupta's contemporary, he fixed the period of 5 earlier *Ācāryas* 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-Śreṇika 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 Buddhist Tripitaka literature. Here we shall take only two of the references. In the first reference there is a mention of the event of *Dīghanikāya* (*Sāmaññaphalasutta* : 2 : 1 : 7)¹⁹ in which Ajātaśatru meets many of his contemporary religious heads. In this reference, the chief minister of Ajātaśatru talks about Nirgrantha Jñātrputra like this : "Master, this Nirgrantha Jñātrputra, 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 (*Parivrājaka*) and is middle-aged". It can be derived from this statement that at the time of

Ajātaśatru's accession to the throne Mahāvīra's age must be about 50 years, because his *Nirvāṇa* is supposed to have taken place in the 22nd year of Ajātaśatru Kuṇika'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 Saṃvat aur Jaina Kāla Gaṇanā*, 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 Mahāvīra was 50 years old, Buddha was 72 (80-8), i.e. Buddha was 22 years older than Mahāvīra. Secondly, Mahāvīra'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 *Dīghanikāya* (*Sāmaññaphalasutta* : 2 : 2 : 8), where Nirgrantha Jñātrputra and other five *Tīrthaṅkaras* 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 Kuṇika 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 *Dīghanikāya* that Mahāvīra has attained *Nirvāṇa* during Buddha's life-time. The reference from the *Dīghanikāya* 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 Śākya known as *Vedhaññā* in Śākya (country).

At that time Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta (*Tīrthaṅkara* Mahāvīra) had recently died at Pāvā. A rift was created among the *Nigaṇṭhas* 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 *Dharmavinaya* (=Dharma), I know it. How can you know this *Dharmavinaya*? you are wrong in ascertaining, (your understanding is wrong), I am rightly ascertained. My understandint is correct. My words are maningful 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 your 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 *Nigaṇṭhas*."

The house-holder disciples of the Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, wearing white dresses, also were getting indifferent,

distressed and alienated from the *Dharma* of *Nigaṇṭha* which was not expressed properly (*durākhyāta*), not properly investigated (*duṣpravedita*), unable to redeem (*anairyaika*), unable to give peace (*ana-upāsama-Saṃvartanika*), not verified by any enlightened (*a-Samyak- Saṃbuddha-pravedita*) without foundation = a different *stūpa* and without a shelter."

Thus, we see that in the Tripiṭaka literature, on the one hand where Mahāvīra has been described as middle-aged, on the otherhand, there is an information about the death of Mahāvīra during the life-time of Buddha. Since, according to the sources based on Jaina literature, Mahāvīra 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 Saṃvat aur Jaina Kāla Gaṇanā*, 1987, p. 12) has called the theory of Mahāvīra *Nirvāṇa* during the life-time of Buddha as a mistaken concept. He maintains that the incident of Mahāvīra's demise is not a reference to his real death, but to a hearsay. It is alos clearly mentioned in Jaina Agamic texts that 16 years before his *Nirvāṇa*, rumour of his death had spread, hearing which many Jaina *Śramaṇas* started shedding tears. Since the incident of the bitter-argument between Makkhaligosāla, a former disciple of Mahāvīra, and his other *Śramaṇa* disciples was linked with this rumour, the present reference from the *Dīghanikāya* about the dath of Mahāvīra 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 *Tejoleśyā*, 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 Mahāvīra's death, therefore, Buddha must have attained *Nirvāṇa* 14 years, 5 months and 15 days before Mahāvīra's *Nirvāṇa*.

Since Buddha's *Nirvāṇa* took place in the 8th year of Ajātaśatru Kuṇika's accession to the throne, Mahāvīra'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 Saṃvat aur Jaina Kāla Gaṇanā*, p. 4). Therefore, it is certain that Mahāvīra'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 Mahāvīra's *Nirvāṇa*. First of all we shall fix the date of Mahāvīra 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 Mahāvira, we would have to keep in our mind that the contemporaneity of Ācārya Bhadrabāhu and Sthūlibhadra with Mahāpadma Nanda and Chandragupta Maurya; of Ācārya Suhasti with Samprati; of Ārya Mañkṣu (Mangu), Ārya Nandila, Ārya Nāgahasti, Ārya Vṛddha and Ārya Kṛṣṇa with the period mentioned in their inscriptions and of Ārya Devarddhigaṇi kṣamāśramaṇa with king Dhruvasena of Valabhī, 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 Sthūlibhadra also. It is an undisputed fact that Chandragupta had wrested power from the Nandas and that Sthūlibhadra was the son of Śakḍāla, the minister of the last Nanda. Therefore, Sthūlibhadra 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 Sthūlibhadra were contemporary of Chandragupta. The main reason behind Sthūlibhadra's renunciation could be Mahāpadma Nanda's (the last ruler of the Nanda dynasty) misbehaviour with his father and ultimately his merciless assassination (*Titthogālipaiṇṇayanā* : 787 : *Paiṇṇayasuttāim* I part : 1984). Moreover, Sthūlibhadra was initiated by Sambhūtivijaya and not by Bhadrabāhu. At the time of first assembly on composition of Āgama held at Pāṭaliputra, instead of Bhadrabāhu or Sthūlibhadra, Sambhūtivijaya was the head, because only in that particular assembly it was decided that Bhadrabāhu will make Sthūlibhadra to study the Pūrva-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 Saṁvat 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 Sthūlibhadra 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 *Himvanta Sthavirāvali* (Muni Kalyana Vijaya : Vikram Era 1987 : p.

178)²² and *Parīṣiṣṭa Parva* (8 : 339) of Ācārya Hemacandra also. On this basis only the contemporaneity of Bhadrabāhu and Sthūlibhadra with Chandragupta Maurya can be also proved. Almost all the *Paṭṭāvalis* accept the period of Bhadrabāhu as an Ācārya to be 156-170 V.S. (*Paṭṭāvali Parāga Saṁgraha*, p. 166; *Vividhagacchiya Paṭṭāvali Saṁgraha* : I part : 1961 : pp. 15, 37, 48). In Digambara tradition also the total period of the three *Kevalis* and the five *Śrutakevalis* has been accepted as 162 years. Since Bhadrabāhu was the last *Śrutakevali*, according to the Digambara tradition his year of demise must be the year 162 of the Vira Nirvāṇa Saṁvat. 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 (*Śrī Paṭṭāvali Parāga Saṁgraha* : 1966 : 52; *Vira Nirvāṇa Saṁvat aur Jaina Kāla Gaṇanā* : p. 137)²³, in order to prove the contemporaneity of Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta Maurya, accepted the period of Sambhūtivijaya as an Ācārya to be 60 years in place of 8 years. In this way, while accepting the date of the Nirvāṇa of Mahāvira as 527 B.C., he has tried to establish the contemporaneity of Bhadrabāhu and Chandragupta Maurya. But it is only his imagination (*Vira-Nirvāṇa Saṁvat aur Jaina Kāla Gaṇanā* - p. 137 & *Paṭṭāvali Parāga Saṁgraha* - p. 52)²⁴; there is no authentic proof available. All the Śvetāmbara *Paṭṭāvalis* accept the date of the demise of Bhadrabāhu to be the year 170 V.N.S. Also, in *Titthogāli* 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 *Pūrvadhara*s. 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 Sthūlibhadra with the last Nanda and Chandragupta Maurya can be proved only if the date of *Nirvāṇa* of Mahāvira 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 Sthūlibhadra with the last king of the Nanda dynasty and Chandragupta Maurya. In *Titthogāli Paiṇṇayanā* (783-794) also the contemporaneity of Sthūlibhadra 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 Mahāvira as 467 B.C. *Himvanta Sthavirāvali* also mentions that Chandragupta was enthroned in 155 years after the *Vira*

Nirvāṇa and that Vikramārka lived 410 years after the *Vīra Nirvāṇa* (see *Vīra Nirvāṇa Saṁvat 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 Jain 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)²⁵ According to the Jain *Paṭṭāvalis*, the period of Ārya Suhasti as *Yuga Pradhāna Ācārya* was 245-291 V.N.S. If we base our calculation on the assumption that *Vīra 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 *Vīra 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 *Vīra 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 Ācaryaship 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 in spite of not being a *Yuga Pradhāna Ācārya* of the *Samgha*. It is remarkable that Ārya Suhasti was initiated by Sthūlibhadra. According to the *Paṭṭāvalis*, Sthūlibhadra 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 Sthūlibhadra had already been initiated. If, according to the *Paṭṭāvalis*, 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 *Vīra 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 Sthūlibhadra himself because 6 years before he got initiated, in 215 V.N.S., Sthūlibhadra 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 *Paṭṭāvalis*, the contemporaneity of Ārya Suhasti and Samprati is possible only by accepting the date of *Vīra 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 *Vīra Nirvāṇa* as 467 B.C. the contemporaneity of Bhadrabāhu and Sthūlibhadra with Mahāpadma 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 Kṛṣṇa and Ārya Vṛddha, mentioned in Mathurā inscriptions (see *Jaina Śilālekha Saṁgraha*, articles 41, 54, 55, 56, 57 and 63) first three are found in *Nandisūtra Sthavirāvalī* (*Gāthā* : 27-29) and remaining four names are found in *Kalpasūtra*. According to the *Paṭṭāvalis*, the period of Ārya Maṅgu as a *Yugapradhāna Ācārya* is considered to be in between 451 and 470 V.N.S. (*Vīra Nirvāṇa Saṁvat aur Jaina Kāla Gaṇanā*, p. 112). On accepting the date of the *Vīra Nirvāṇa Saṁvat aur Jaina Kāla Gaṇanā*, p. 112). On accepting the date of the *Vīra 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 Saṁgraha* article No. 54) his period stands as Śaka Saṁvat 52 (Haviṣka year 52), i.e. 130 A.D. In other words, while considering the period of Ārya Maṅgu as indicated by *Paṭṭāvalis* and inscriptions there is a difference of 200 years if the date of *Vīra Nirvāṇa* is accepted as 527 B.C. and if it is 467 B.C. there is a difference of 127 years.

In several *Paṭṭāvalis*, even the name of Ārya Maṅgu, is not mentioned. Therefore, the theories, concerning his period, based on the *Paṭṭāvalis* are not authentic. Moreover, the only one *Paṭṭāvalī* called *Nandisūtra Sthavirāvalī*, which mentions Ārya Maṅgu, does not indicate the teacher-taught (*Guru-śiṣya*) tradition. Therefore, there are chances of the omission of certain names which has been confirmed by Muni Kalyana Vijayaji himself (*Vīra Nirvāṇa saṁvat 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 inscriptional 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 *Paṭṭāvalis* with the inscriptions, the date of *Vīra 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 Sthavirāvalī* (*Gāthā*, 27-29), his name appears before Ārya Nāgahastī and after Ārya Maṅgu. There is an inscription of Nandika (Nandil) of the Śaka Saṃvat 32 in the inscriptions of Mathurā (see *Jaina Śilālekha Saṃgraha*, article No. 41); in another inscription of the Śaka Saṃvat 93, the name is not clear, only 'Nadi' is mentioned there. (see *Jaina Śilālekha Saṃgraha*, article No. 67). Ārya Nandil is referred to also in the *Prabandhakośa* and in some ancient *Paṭṭāvalis*, but since at no place there is any reference to his period, it is not possible to establish the date of the *Nirvāṇa* of Mahāvira on the basis of this inscriptional evidence.

Now let us consider Nāgahastī. Usually in all the *Paṭṭāvalis*, 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 Nāgahastī as the *Yuga Pradhāna* has been accepted as continuing for 69 years, i.e. Nāgahastī was the *Yuga Pradhāna* from 621 to 690 V.N.S. (*Vira Nirvāṇa Saṃvat aur Jaina Kāla Gaṇanā*, p. 106 note). If Hastahastī of the Mathurā inscription is Nāgahastī, then he is also referred to as the *guru* of Māghahastī in the inscription of the Śaka Saṃvat 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 Pradhānaship* 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 Māghahastī. 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 underage disciple was able to perform the *Mūrti-Pratiṣṭhā*. 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 *Paṭṭāvalis* tally the inscriptional evidences. On this basis his tenure of *Yuga Pradhānaship* extends from 16 to 85 of the Śaka Era, Māghahastī, one of his disciples was able to perform the *Mūrti-Pratiṣṭhā* by his sermons. Although common sense would hardly accept it as logical that his *Yuga Pradhānaship* extended for 69 years, yet because of

the fact that it considers the information given in the *Paṭṭāvalis* to be correct, this inscriptional evidence about Nāgahastī supports the date of *Vira Nirvāṇa* as 527 B.C.

Again, in one of the inscriptional sketches of Mathurā, Ārya Kṛṣṇa with that Ārya Kṛṣṇa mentioned after Śivabhūti in *Kalpasūtra Sthavirāvalī* (last part 4 :1), then his period on the basis of the *Paṭṭāvalis* and *Viśeṣāvaśyakabhāṣya* (*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 Boṭika, Nihnavā 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 inscriptional 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 inscriptional 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 Śilālekha Saṃgraha*: article no. 56 & 59), the name of Ārya Vṛddhahastī is related with two inscriptions. One is from Śaka Era 60 (Huviṣka year 60) and the other from 79 of the same. According to the Christian era, these inscriptions belong to 138 and 157 A.D. respectively. If he is the Ārya Vṛddha of the *Kalpasūtra Sthavirāvalī* and the Vṛddhadeva of the *Paṭṭāvalis* (*Vividha Gacchīya Paṭṭāvalī Saṃgraha* : p. 17), then according to the *Paṭṭāvalis*, he was led to perform *Mūrti Pratiṣṭhā* in Karmāṭaka 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 inscriptional 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 inscriptional evidence and the *Paṭṭāvalī* based evidence is found to be 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 *Paṭṭāvalī*. 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 Ānandpur (Vadānagar) in order to console the grieved 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 inscriptional 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 *Vira Nirvāṇa*. But the dates based on the *Paṭṭāvalī* could be incorrect; therefore, they cannot be an obstacle in determining the date of the *Vira 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 *Paṭṭāvalī* 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 :

1. a. *Nivvāṇe Vira jīṇe chavvāsadesu pañcavarisesuṇ. Paṇamāsesu gadesuṇ sañjādo saganio ahavā.*
b. *pañca ya māsā pañca ya vāsā chaceva hontivāsasayā pariṇivvuassārihato so uppanṇo sago rāmā.*
Titthogālī Painṇayam, 623
2. *bahuraya paesa avvattasamucchādugatiga abaddhiyā ceva. satte-e niṇhagā khalu titthami u vaḍḍhamāṇassa, (778) bahuraya jamālīpabhavā jīvapaesā ya tisaguttao avvattā āsadhao śamuccheyā samittāo. (779). gaṅgāo dokiriyā chalugā terāsiyāṇa uppatti. therāya goṭṭhamāhila puṭṭhamabaddham parūvinti. (780)*

sāvattṭhī usabhapuram seyaviyā mihilam ullugātiram. purimantaranji dasapura rahavirapuram ca nagarāim (781)

coddasa solasa vāsā cauddasavīsuttarā ya donṇi sayā. aṭṭhāvīsā ya duve pañceva sayā u coyālā. (782)

pañca sayā calasiyā chaceva sayā nāvottarā hoti. nānupattiya duve uppanṇā viṇavveve sesā. (783)

3. *Virajīṇe siddhigade causadaigisaṭṭhivāsaparimāṇe. kālammi adikkāṇte uppanṇo ettha sakarāo. (461) ahavā vīre siddhe sahasasānavakammī sagasayabbhahie. paṇasidimmi yatide paṇamāse (Y. 9785, M5) sakaṇio jādo. 1497.*

pāthāntaram.

coddasasahasasagasayatenaudīvāsakālavicchede. (19793) vīresarasiddhīdo uppanṇo ahavā. 1498.

pāthāntaram.

nivvāṇe virajīṇe chavvāsadesu pañcavarisesu. paṇamāsesu (Y. 605, M.5) gadesu sañjādo saganio ahavā. 1499.

pāthāntaram.

Tiloyapannatti - section 4, 1496 - 1499.

4. *avaṇidesu pañcamāsāhiyapañcuttarachassadavāsāṇi havanti aiso virajīṇindaṇivvāṇagaddivāsādo jāva sagakālassa ādī hodi tāvadiyakālo. kudo? (605) edaṇhi kāle saganarindakālammi pakkhitte vaḍḍamā-ṇajīṇaṇivvudakālāgamāṇādo. vuttaṇ ca-pañca ya masa pañcaya vāsā chaceva hoti vāsasayā. sagakāleṇa ya sahiyā thaveyavvo tado rāsī (41) aṇṇe ke vi āriyā coddasasahassa - sattaṣaḍ - tiṇaudivāse-su jīṇaṇivvāṇaḍiṇādo aikkāṇtesu saganarinduppattiṇ bhaṇanti (14793) vuttaṇ ca-gutti-payattha-bhayāim coddasarayaṇāi samaikaṇtaim. pariṇivvude jīṇinde to rajja saganaribdassa. (42) aṇṇe ke vi āriyā evaṇ bhaṇanti. taṇ jahā-sattasahassa ṇavasaya pañcāṇaudivarisesu pañcamāsāhiesu vaḍḍhamāṇajīṇaṇivvudadiṇādo aikkāṇtesu saganarindarajju-ppatti jādo ti. ettha gāhā-sattasahassā ṇavasada pañcāṇaudī saṃpañcamāsā ya aikantā vāsāṇaṇi jaiyā taiyā saguppatti : (43) (7995)*

edesu tisū ekkēṇa hodavvaṇ na tiṇṇamuvadesāṇa saccattam, aṇṇaṇṇavirohādo tado jāṇiya vattavvaṇ.

--Dhavalā tikā samanvita Śātkhaṇḍāgama, Khanda 4, Bhaga 1, Pustak 9, p. 132-133 (section 4/1/44)

5. *samaṇassa bhagavao Mahāvīrassa Jāva savvadukkhapa-hiṇassa navavāsa sayāim vikaṇtāim dasamassa vāsasayassa ayam aṣṭime saṇvacchare kāle gacchai,*

vāyanantare puna ayaṃ tenaue saṃvacchare kālāṃ
gacchai iha dīsai.

Śrī Kalpasūtra 147, p. 145.

6. *pālagaraṇṇo saṭṭhi paṇapaṇṇasayaṃ viyāṇa nāṇḍāṇaṃ
maruyāṇaṃ aṭṭhasayaṃ tīsā puṇa pusamitāṇaṃ.*
--*Titthogālī painṇayaṃ (Painṇaya Suttāim) 621*
When 60 pākaja + 155 Nandavanśa = 215 years had
passed, the rule of the Maurya dynasty began.
7. a. *eveni ca Śrīmahāvira mūlervarṣaṣate, pañcapañcā-
śadadhike candragupto ābhavannrpaṇā.*
-- *Parīṣiṣṭaparva-Hemacandra, sarga 8/339.*
b. *Laghuposālika paṭṭāvalī, Nāgapurīyatapāgaccha
paṭṭāvalī* (ed. Jinvijaya 1961) and *Himavanta
Therāvalī* also acknowledge that Chandragupta
Maurya ascended to the throne 155 years after the
Vira Nirvāṇa.
8. It is remarkable that the year of the *Vira 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 *Vira Nirvāṇa* era. If the date of his
accession is accepted to be the year 155 of the *Vira
Nirvāṇa*, then we should accept 467 B.C. to be the date
of the *Vira Nirvāṇa*.
9. Jacobi, H., *Parīṣiṣṭaparva* : year 1891 : P. introduction
p. 5; He considers the reference of the *Parīṣiṣṭaparva* of
Hemacandra to be authentic according to which 155
years after the *Vira Nirvāṇa*, Chandragupta Maurya's
accession took place, and on this only basis he
determined the date of the *Nirvāṇa* of Mahāvira.
10. Charpentier, 1992 : 13-16; He also based, his arguments
of Hemacandra and considered that the *Nirvāṇa* of
Mahāvira took place 155 years before Chandragupta
Maurya.
11. Shastri, A. Shantiraj : *Anekānta* 1941, Vol. 4, No. 10;
He considered the Śaka Saṃvat to be the Vikram
Saṃvat and accepted that 605 years before the Vikram
Saṃvat Mahāvira 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
Mahāvira.
13. Venkateshwar, 1917, p. 122-130; His opinion is based
on the Anand Vikram Saṃvat. This is vague 10
years after the Vikram Saṃvat.
14. Mukhtar : 1956 : p. 26-56; On the basis of various
arguments he confirmed the tradition accepted theory.

15. Muni Kalyana Vijaya : *Vikrama Saṃvat aur Jaina
Kālagāṇanā*, 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 Tiṣyagupta which took
place during the 16th year of the attainment of Lord
Mahāvira with the event of drying the Bodhi tree by
Tiṣyagupta and event of schism in Buddha Order during
the reign of Aśoka.
17. Smith : 1969 : 141 He accepted the common popular
theory.
18. Narman, K.R. "Observation on the Dates of the Jina
and Buddha" in Bechert, H. *The Dating of the Historical
Buddha*, a Pt. I. p. 300-312 Gottingen.
19. *ajjataropikho rājāmacco rājānaṃ māgadhaṃ ajātasatt-
uṃ vedhiputtāṃ etadavoca "ayaṃ, deva, nigaṇṭho
nātaputto saṅghi ceva gaṇi ca gaṇācariyo ca, nāto,
yasassi, tiṭṭhakarō, sādhusammato bahujanassa, ratta-
ññū, cirapabbajito, addhagato, vayoanuppatto. Dīgha-
nikāya, Sāmaññaphalasutta. 2/1/7.*
20. *evaṃ me sutāṃ. ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā sakkesu
viharaṇi vedhāññā nāma sakyā tesāṃ ambavane pāsāde.
tena kho pana samayena nigaṇṭho nātaputto pāvayaṃ
adhunākālāṅkato hoti. tassa kālāṅkariyāya bhinnā
nigaṇṭhā dvedhikajātā bhaṇḍanajātā kalahajātā vivādā-
pannā aññamaññaṃ mukhasattihi vitudentā viharanti-"
na tvaṃ imaṃ dhammavinayaṃ ājānāsi, ahaṃ imaṃ
dhammavinayaṃ ājānāmi, kiṃ tvaṃ imaṃ dhamma-
vinayaṃ ājānissasi? micchāpaṭipanno tvamasī, ahaṃ-
smi sammāpaṭipanno. Sahitaṃ me, asahitaṃ te. pureva-
caniyāṃ pacchā avaca pacchāvacaṇiyaṃ pure avacca.
Adhiciṇṇaṃ te viparāvattaṃ āropito te vādo. niggaḥito
tvamasī. cara vādappamokkhāya. nibbettehi vā sace
pashosī' ti. vadho yeva kho mañña nigaṇṭhesu nātapu-
tṭiyesu vattati. ye pi nigaṇṭhassa nātaputtassa sāvaka
gihi odātavasanā te pi nigaṇṭhesu nātaputtīyesu
nibbinnarūpā virattarūpā paṭivānarūpa-yathā taṃ
durakkhāte dhammavinaye duppavedite aniyyānike
anupasamasāṃvattanike asammāsāmbuddha-ppavedite
bhinnathupe appaṭisarane.*
21. It is noteworthy that almost all the *Śvetāmbara
Paṭṭāvalis* mention the same period.
22. It is noteworthy that the original Ms. of the *Himavant-
asthvirāvalī* is not available after its Gujarati
translation; its Gujarati translation by Pnadi Hiralal
Hansraj of Jamnagar, is the only base, It shows that

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 Samvat 1987 : 137; Note that Muniji's effort to accept the period of Maurya to be 160 instead of 108, considering "*muriyānamatṭhasayam*" as "*muriyānam*"

satṭhasayam". is not a historical fact.

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

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