

EPITHETS OF LORD MAHĀVĪRA IN EARLY JAINA CANONS

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There were many groups of the Śramaṇas, each of them having a leader. This fact is proved sufficiently by the Pāli *Piṭakas*. All such leaders are given the following common epithets in the Pāli canon.

“सङ्घी चैव, गणी च, गणाचरियो च, आतो, यसस्सी, तित्थकरो, साधुसम्मतो बहुजनस्स, रत्तञ्जू, चिरपब्बजितो, अद्घगतो, वयोअनुप्पत्तो” —दीघ सामञ्जफलसुत्त।

In addition to these common epithets in Pāli canon Lord Mahāvīra, the leader of the group of Niggaṇthas, was further given such epithets as; “निगण्ठो, आवुसो नाटपुत्तो सब्बञ्ज सब्बदस्सावी, अपरिसेसं आणदस्सनं पटिजानाति, चरतो च मे तिष्ठतो च सुत्तस्स च जागरस्स च सत्त्वतं समितं आणदस्सनं पच्चुपट्ठितं ति” —मज्झिमाय, देवदहसुत्तं.

In this paper I want to discuss the epithets of Lord Mahāvīra found in some of the texts of the Jain canonical literature. As these texts are not of the same time, I shall take them one by one according to their chronological order. This procedure will help us to know as to how a cluster of epithets was developed in the course of time, as to how the final one was arrived at, and as to how some of the common epithets became the property of a particular group-leader. The discussion will also make it clear that the epithets given to Lord Mahāvīra in the Pāli *Piṭakas* do not belong to the early period of time. Again it will prove the *Ācārāṅga* part I to be earlier than the Pāli *Piṭakas*. It will also be clear from the discussion that as time passed on, some of these epithets acquired the status of names having lost their status of adjectives.

The epithets, viz. Arihanta, Arhat, Buddha Jina, Vīra, Mahāvīra and Tathāgata were not the sole property of a leader of a particular sect whether Brahmin or Śramaṇa. But it seems that they became popular amongst the Śramaṇic sects especially for Mahāvīra, Gosāla and Buddha with the result that they were dropped by the Brahmin sects for their leaders. Similarly, the term Buddha (139, 177, 882, 204) was used for an intelligent person but after Gautama it became the sole property of Buddhism and became the special name of Gautama. The term Buddha, though used as an epithet in early days for Mahāvīra, does not denote him in later period. The terms, Vīra and

Mahāvīra were common for a heroic person, but we see that they have become the real names of Lord Vardhamāna; thus in course of time the original name Vardhamāna was thrown in background giving place to the terms Vīra and Mahāvīra. The terms Jina, and Arhat were common for all the leaders of Śramaṇas and we see that the word Jaina was not the property of the followers of Lord Mahāvīra alone. It should be noted that the followers of Buddha were known for a long time as Jainas, but now the case is not so and only the followers of Mahāvīra are denoted by the word. Same is the case with the term Tathāgata, and we now see that only lord Buddha is denoted by it.

In this way the denotation of these words, though broad in early days, has become limited in course of time. In this context I shall try here to collect the various epithets given to Lord Mahāvīra in the earlier canonical literature of the Jainas.

Ācārāṅga, Part I

The first part of the *Ācārāṅga* can be sub-divided in two sections. The chapters in the beginning giving the gist of the preaching is the first section and the last chapter, depicting the ascetic life of Lord Mahāvīra, is the second section. Let us now see the epithets used in them for Lord Mahāvīra.

In his mendicant life Mahāvīra calls himself a ' Bhikkhu ' (9. 2. 12.). He is also called ' Nāyaputta ' (9. 1. 10.) and Nāyasuya indicating his clan, but both of these terms have become his names also.

He is sometimes given an epithet ' Muni ' which is generally used for an ordinary ascetic or monk.

That even the Śramaṇas were using the term ' Māhāna ' (Brāhmaṇa) for their respected persons is well-known from the *Dhammapada* of the Pali canon as well as from the *Uttarādhyayana* of the Jaina canon. So it is but natural that Māhāna be used as one of the epithets of Mahāvīra (9. 1. 23; 9. 2. 16; 9. 3. 14; 9. 4. 1; 9. 2. 10; 9. 4. 3). He is also called Nānī (9. 1. 10) and Mehāvī (9. 1. 16) which fact indicates that he was not only a person of good character but was endowed with knowledge also. He is again and again given the epithet ' Mahāvīra ' (9. 1. 13; 9. 3. 8; 9. 4. 14; 9. 2. 1; 9. 3. 13) for his valour shown with regard to his ascetic life. And we see that it has become his real name. He is respectfully called Samāna Bhagavaṃ (9. 1. 1.) and the terms Bhagavam, Bhagavante, Bhagavayā occur so often that we can easily surmise that during the period he had become a highly venerable person amongst many such ascetics (9. 1. 4, 15; 9. 2. 5, 6, 15; 9. 3. 12, 16. 9. 4. 1, 3, 5; 9. 3. 7; 9. 4. 12; 9. 1. 23; 9. 2. 6).

Though he was not omniscient (*Choumattthe vi* 9. 4. 15) he was *akasāi*—without any defilement and was also *vigayagehī*—without any longing (9. 4. 15).

It is clear that though he is given an epithet like Bhagavaṃ, he is not called here in this portion Tīrthaṅkara. And as regards Bhagavaṃ we should note here that even in the later portion of the canon even the ordinary Śramaṇas and Sthaviras are called Bhagavanta (II. 71, 162). In fact, there was a rule that an ascetic should address even an ordinary woman as 'Bhagavati' (II. 134). This indicates that the term 'Bhagavaṃ' was not used for a leader or the head of a sect, and though a term for showing respect it did not had the meaning of an exalted person.

As a preacher and head of a sect

Now we turn to the preaching portion contained in the first eight chapters of the *Ācārāṅga* part I. Here in many places the terms 'Vīra' and 'Mahāvīra' are used but it should be noted that they do not refer to Lord Mahāvīra but to other persons who have shown valour in their ascetic life. (1. 172; 1. 185, 188; 1. 140). We should also note that though while describing Mahāvīra's ascetic life he is called 'Vīra' as well as 'Mahāvīra', as we have seen, we must conclude that there is the tendency towards the fact that Mahāvīra should become his name. This also is clearly established by the fact that the Pali *Piṭakas* mention Mahāvīra as Nigaṇṭha Naṭaputta and not as Mahāvīra. So we can conclude that Lord Mahāvīra became famous by that name after the time of Pali *Piṭaka*.

In this part Lord Mahāvīra is referred to as 'Nayapeetta' (8. 8. 12), 'Māhaṇḍa maimaya' (200, 206), भगव्या (1, 10, 15, 16, 23, 45, 52, 58, 90, 185, 214, 216, 220). Once he is referred to as भगव्या पवेइयं आसुपत्तेण जाणया, पासया (200). Here we see that he is called Asuprajna and also having नाण and दंसण. At other place he is called 'Kausala' (166). But nowhere he is referred to as Tīrthaṅkara. In *Dīghanikāya* etc. though he is given the epithet Tīrthaṅkara, it is significant that in *Ācārāṅga* part I nowhere he is referred to as such. This may signify that this portion of the *Acārāṅga* is anterior to *Dīghanikāya*.

Lord Mahāvīra in this part is called 'Muni' (153, 159) being ranked with other such 'munis'.

Here we find the use of 'Arahanta Bhagavanta' (126) and Jina (5. 5) which shows that there were many such persons who were called Arihanta or Jina and Lord Mahāvīra was one of them.

The epithet 'Arahā' was also used for the Buddha and the use of this term was not absent in the Vedic literature. But when this word was

used frequently for their leaders by the Śramaṇas the word was dropped by the Vedic writers.

Like Māhāna the term 'Veyavi' was also in vogue in ancient days for the learned and so it is used in such sense in the *Ācārāṅga* (139). Such is also the case with the terms *Aria* (146, 207, 187) 'Mahesi' (160) and *Medhāvī* (191). The term 'Jina' though used (162) in *Ācārāṅga* part I it is surprising that it is not used with reference to Lord Mahāvīra.

Sattha (188), though used only once for Mahāvīra, is frequently used for Buddha.

To conclude, we can say that here the terms *Muni*, *Māhāna*, *Naya-putta*, *Vīra*, *Mahāvīra* and *Bhagavan* were main epithets for Lord Mahāvīra. But we must bear in mind that here also the epithet *Tīrthaṅkara* is not used.

In Pāli *Piṭaka*, as we have seen, Lord Mahāvīra is referred to again and again by the terms *Savvaññū* and *Savvadassi*, but in *Ācārāṅga* we do not come across such terms; instead, we find the terms such as – अहिन्नाणदंसणे (9. 1. 11), आययचक्खू लोगविपस्सी (93), परमचक्खू (150), अविज्ज (3. 2. 9), सव्वसमन्नागयपन्नाण (155), Anelisamani (9. 1, 116). Some of these terms may convey the meaning of omniscience, but it is significant that the proper term *Savvapnu* is not used. We will see that this term is frequent in later Jaina literature so we may not be wrong if we conclude that this term is introduced in the period later than the time of the *Ācārāṅga* part I and this will show that the *Ācārāṅga* part I is earlier than the portions of Pāli-*Piṭakas* in which this term occurs.

Sūtrakṛtāṅga, Part I

In *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* part I we see further development. Here we can have the common epithets like *Samana* and *Māhāna*, but many more are added, and some of the early epithets have become names in this part of the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*. In *Ācārāṅga* *Vīra* and *Mahāvīra* were simple epithets but in *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* they have become the names (1. 1. 1; 1. 1. 27; 14. 2. 22; 1. 9. 24; 1. 14. 11). For the first time Mahāvīra is given an epithet of 'Niggaṇṭha' (1. 14. 11) which appears in Pāli-*Piṭakas* as *Nigaṇṭha*, *Nāṭaputta*. *Nāya*, *Nāyaputte* and *Nāyasuye* are also used in *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* (1. 1. 27; 2. 3. 32; 2. 3. 31; 6. 26. 14, 23; 6. 21, 24). Like Mahāvīra now he is 'Mahāmuni' (1. 9. 24; 2. 2. 15; 2. 1. 14). In *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* Kāsava indicating his *gotra* is added (2. 2. 7; 2. 2. 25; 2. 3. 20; 3. 3. 2. 3. 4. 21; 11. 5, 32; 15, 21; 5. 12; 6. 7). Showing his relation to Vaisālī he is also known as *Vesalic* (2. 3. 22). The previous tradition of *Jina* and *Araha* and *Bhagava* is also continued (2. 3. 19; 2. 3. 22; 6. 26; 6. 29; 2. 3. 22; 16. 1; 2. 3. 14). In *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* it is quite clear that there was an order or

religion known as Jinasāsana (3. 4. 9) or Jināna Dhammaṃ (6. 7) or Bhagavānusāsana (2. 3. 14); and we find the mention of Jinavajana (14. 13) and Jinahiya (9. 6). The terms Buddha and Tathāgata are also not absent (11. 25; 11. 36; 12. 16; 12. 18; 15. 18; 13. 2; 15. 20) but as mentioned above later on they indicated only the Buddha and not Mahāvīra. Here also as in *Ācārāṅga* the term Savvannū is absent, but we find न नायपुत्ता परमत्थि नाणी, (6. 24), Anantacakkhū (6. 6; 6. 25), Savvadamiśe abhibhūya nāṇī (2. 5), dāmsaṇa-nāpasīlo (6. 14); Apantapāpādamsī (9. 24) and evaṃ se udāhu aputtaraṇāṇi aputtaradamsī anuttaranāpādamsanadhare arahā-Nāyaputte bhagavaṃ Vesālie (2. 3. 22), Tilogadamsī (14. 16) and Jagasavvadamsiṇā (2. 331).

A technical term for an omniscient person is used here for the first time. — पुच्छिसह केवलिसं महेसी-५. १. १, एवं केवलियो मयं ११. ३८, केवलियं समाहि १४. १५.

The following *gāthā* is curious because there is no mention of Jñāna varāṇa:

जमईयं पडुप्पन्नं लागमिस्सं च नाधओ सव्वं मन्नइ ते ताई दंसणावरणंतए । १५. १

The following traditional terms are also present in *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* :— Niggaṇṭha (9. 24); Māhāna (11. 1; 9. 1), Mahesī (6. 26), परममहेसी (6. 17); Muṇi (6. 7), पभू (6. 28), समंणं (6. 14, 23). But it should be noted that the term तिथयर is not used.

Ācārāṅga, Part II

In the second part of *Ācārāṅga* the life of Mahāvīra as a householder is given (2. 175). It should be noted that nothing of the kind is found in the *Ācārāṅga* part I and also in *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*. Here he is depicted as Śramaṇa Bhagavān Mahāvīra (2. 175). The original name Kumara Vardhamāna given by his parents is mentioned (2. 176).

The tradition that the epithet 'Mahāvīra' was given by the gods seems to have been established here for the first time (2. 1. 177). Here the whole varnaka for Mahāvīra is thus : *Samane Bhagavam Mahāvīre Nae Nāyaputte Nayakalanivatte Videhe Videhadinne Videhajacce Videhasumale* (2. 179). Here we can see the tendency of depicting him with the epithets derived from his parental names. We are sure that his mother was called Videhadinnā (2. 177). The epithets which were well established such as Jina (2. 179), Jinavara, Vīra (2. 179) etc. are also found here. But here for the first time the element of mythology enters into the field in the form that the gods performed the Tithayarābhisea (2. 176) and also that he was requested by the gods that : *titham pavattehi* (2. 179), which can be compared with such a request to the Buddha by the Brahma.

For the first time he is called here the Titthayara (2. 179), and also Savvannū, the epithet by which he is known in Pali *Piṭaka* as *Bhagavaṃ Arahaṃ Jīṇe Kevali Savvannū Savvabhā-vadarisī* (2. 179). And here we find 'Kevalipannatta dhamma' (2. 179) and again and again 'Kevali buyā' (2. 13, 17, 26, 36, 48, 115, 116, 146, 152, 179) which shows that due to his being an omniscient person his preachings were to be accepted.

Sūtrakṛtāṅga, Part II

On the authority of the Nirukti (6) on *Ācā*. we are sure that the second part of *Ācārāṅga* was added in later times. But such is not the case with the second part of *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*. Yet we can say that the second part of *Sū.* is later, because even the epithets for Mahāvīra establish this fact. We can prove that it is not earlier than even the second part of *Ācā*. There is no mention of 'twelve āṅgas' in the *Ācā*. but the *Sū.* mentions the *Ganipitaka* (2. 1. 11). In *Sū.* we find the mention of Dhammatittha (2. 1. 8) and Titthayara (2. 7. 11). The mention of *Coyae pannaṇavagāṃ evaṃvayāsī* (2, 3. 2) and 'Ācārya āha' (2. 4. 2, 4) definitely goes to prove its later date. The traditional epithets such as Samāṇa (2. 6. 1), Māhāṇa (2. 6. 4), Samāṇe Nāyaputte (2. 6. 19), Nāyaputta (2. 6. 40) are found. And we also find the Buddha (2. 6. 42), Muni (2. 6. 42) etc. which are of the same type. Here even the pupil of Mahāvīra, is called Bhagavaṃ (2. 7. 4). The knowledge of the Lord is called *Kevalena punṇena nāṇena* (2. 6. 50). The teaching of Lord Mahāvīra is described as Niggantha Dhamma (2. 6. 42) and Nigganthepavayana (2. 2. 23; 2. 7. 2.) the epithet which is found in Pali *Piṭaka* also. Here for the first time we have the mention of three Jewels viz. Jñāna, Darśana and Cāritra (2. 7. 14). We are further told that the followers of Pārśva were known as Nigganthas and they were specified as 'pāsāvaccijja' (2. 7. 4.)

In other Āṅgas and non-Āṅgas

In the Āṅgas which are later than *Ācārāṅga* and *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* generally we find Samāṇe Bhagavaṃ Mahāvīre. But we must take note of a Varnaka which was well established during canonical period – समणे भगवं महावीरे ¹ आइगरे तित्थयरे सहसंबुद्धे पुरिसुत्तमे ² पुरिससीहे पुरिसवरपुण्डरीए पुरिसवरगन्धहस्थीह ³ लोगुत्तमे लोगनाहे लोगोप्पदीव लोगपज्जोयकरे अभयदए चक्खुदए मगगदए सरणदए ⁴ धम्मदेसए धम्मसारहा धम्मवरचाउरन्त - चक्कवट्ठी अप्पडिह्यबरनाणदंसणधरे वियट्ठछाउमे जिणे जवए बुद्धे बोहए मुत्ते मोयए संवणू संवदरिसी । भगवती सू० ५

1. In *Mahāvīyutpatti* one of the name of the Buddha is Vīra.
2. In the *Mahāo* Buddha is called Narottama and Sakyasimha.
3. Bodhisattva is called – Gandhahasti – *Mahāo* 704.
4. In *Mahāo Saranya* and *Sarana*.

Here we may remember the importance of Puruṣa since the *Rgveda*. In various names of Viṣṇu we find Puruṣottama, Puruṣapūṇḍarīka and Puruṣa-
vara. Gandhahasti is an epithet of the powerful elephant and Gandhagaja
is found in *Caraka*. Lokanātha is also used for Viṣṇu, etc. Lokapradīpa is
used for the Buddha in *Buddhacarita* of Aśvaghoṣa.

with this Varṇaka we may compare the well-known Varṇaka of the
Buddha which is explained in *Visuddhimagga* (p. 133)– ‘सो भगवा अरहं
सम्यासंबुद्धे विज्जाचरणसंपन्नो सुगतो लोकविदू अनुत्तरो पुरिसदम्मसारथी सत्था देवमनुस्सानं बुद्धो
भगवा’—अंगुत्तर ३. २८५