

Origins of Gayāvāla: Myth, Legend, and History

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*brahmaṣṭrakalpitān viṣṭrān havyakaryādinārcayet |
tais tuṣṭais toṣitāḥ sarvāḥ pīṭrbhiḥ saha devatāḥ ||
(Vāyu Purāṇa 2.43.21, 2.43.42, 2.49.92)*

1. INTRODUCTION

Gayāvāla is the *paṇḍā* (*tīrtha-purohita*) of Gayā, a sacred Hindu place in south Bihār. *Paṇḍās* are priests who provide lodging and food to pilgrims and facilitate ritual performances. In return for these services, pilgrims give *paṇḍās* gifts and monetary donations. According to L.S.S. O'Malley, 'Gayāvāla is probably a corruption of *gayāpāla*, and implies their position as guardians of Gayā' (O'Malley, 1903: 2). Modern Hindus identify Gayā as the best place for performing *śrāddha* rites in honour of ancestors. Many pilgrims explain that 'ancestors will attain salvation after *gayā-śrāddha*', the 'wandering and suffering soul will get repose through appeasement in Gayā', and '*gayā-śrāddha* is the last step in the process of funeral rites, and it is necessary to come here a few years after the parents' death'. The Gayāvālas have exclusive authority to receive gifts of ancestral rites in Gayā. They also insist that pilgrims' performances of *gayā-śrāddha* will be invalid without the Gayāvālas' permission to start the pilgrimage and their acknowledgement of the pilgrimage's accomplishment.

The current population of Gayāvālas is around 2,500.¹ All their residences are concentrated in an area called 'Andar-Gayā', most likely representing *antara-gayā* (i.e. the core of Gayā), which is demarcated by four gates (see Section 2.1). The Gayāvālas strictly practice endogamy to preserve the community's blood purity. If a child has even one parent who is not Gayāvāla, that child is regarded as an outsider and cannot act as a Gayāvāla priest.² In other words, the Gayāvālas attribute their authority and sacredness to their blood. This fact prompts questions of when, where, and how the Gayāvāla became established in Gayā and began the priestly work related to *gayā-śrāddha*.

A Gayāvāla, Kānhū Lāl Gurdā, narrates the history of the Gayāvāla in his book *Bṛhad Gayā Māhātmya aur Gayāpāl Śiśuśikṣak* (Gurdā, 1916:

100-9). According to Gurdā, Gayāvālas were created during a sacrifice performed by the God Brahmā, who bestowed the Gayāvālas with gold and silver mountains, milk rivers, and other gifts. Observing the Gayāvālas as greedy, Brahmā destroyed these mountains and rivers and cursed the Gayāvāla with being bereft of knowledge and satisfaction. The Gayāvālas appealed and propitiated Brahmā, who granted the Gayāvālas the sacred place of Gayā for their livelihood. Later, a king named Gaya released the Gayāvālas from Brahmā's curse.

Gurdā's account is mostly based on the *Gayāmāhātmya*, the last eight chapters of the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, which describes the origins of Gayā (see Section 3.1). He continues, 'then, they began to live in the land of Gayā (*gayā kṣetra*). One *krośa* [about 2 miles, equal to 3.22 km] is the area of Gayāsīras,³ wherein all the Gayāvālas built their residences. Even today they reside only in the Gayāsīras locality' (ibid.: 101-2). Nowadays the Gayāvālas identify themselves as *brahmakalpita brāhmaṇas*, meaning Brahmins created by Brahmā's *kalpanā* (imagination). Some Gayāvālas cite the *śloka* (which is quoted before the introduction section of this paper) to demonstrate their orthodoxy. The Gayāvālas trace their origins back to the time of Brahmā's sacrifice in the Satya-yuga.⁴ Gurdā also explains that 'Gayāvālas have been called *caudahsaiyā*, because there were 1,400 (*caudah sau*) *ghars* (families or houses) of Gayāvālas two thousand years ago' (ibid.: 102).⁵ He further informs that the seventh-century Chinese Buddhist pilgrim, Xuan-zang saw 'one thousand *paṇḍās* in Gayā', and describes the position of the Gayāvālas from the time of the Muslim invasion to the beginning of the twentieth century (see Section 2.1).

In addition to the Gayāvālas' account of their origins, researchers have offered alternative explanations for how the group came about. Without citing any historical evidence, F. Buchanan argues that Gayāvālas are probably descendants of the Dhanushkas or other aboriginal Indian tribes (Buchanan, 2013 (1936): 101). L.P. Vidyarthi, accepting the hypothesis most likely mentioned in an unpublished work of A.C. Kashyapa without any examination, explains that Gayāvālas are ex-Buddhist monks who were converted by Śaṅkarācārya in the eighth century CE (Vidyarthi, 1961: 68).⁶ Because these views regarding the origins of the Gayāvālas lack evidentiary support, it is difficult to consider these explanations valid.

R.L. Mitra, P.V. Kane, B.M. Barua, and C. Jacques trace the origins of the Gayāvāla back to the time of compilation of the *Gayāmāhātmya*. Mitra insists that Gayāsura (the demon named Gaya), the main character of the *Gayāmāhātmya*, represents Buddhism, and the subjugation of Gayāsura by the God Viṣṇu is an allegory of the success of Brahmanism over Buddhism (Mitra, 1878: 16). Mitra estimates that Hinduism replaced Buddhism as the dominant religion in the Gayā region within the second and fourth centuries CE (ibid.: 10). According to Mitra, the compilation

of the *Gayāmāhātmya* and the origin of the Gayāvāla can be traced back to this time. He refers to how Xuan-zang observed 1,000 families of Brahmins who were 'evidently the Gawāls' (ibid.: 20).

After summarizing the *Gayāmāhātmya*, Kane opines that the Brahmins of Gayā described in the *Gayāmāhātmya* possessed the same characteristics as modern Gayāvālas (Kane, 1973 (1953): 580). He places the date of the *Gayāmāhātmya*'s compilation between the seventh and tenth centuries CE (ibid.: 652). Barua, who considers the *Gayāmāhātmya* as 'a propagandist manual of the Gayāwāl Brahmins' (Barua, 1931: 64), proposes that the text did not take shape earlier than the thirteenth or fourteenth century CE. He argues that the *Gayāmāhātmya* must have been compiled for reconstruction of glory of Gayā and Brahmins during difficult times after the peaceful and prosperous Pāla period (ibid.: 60-3). Jacques affirms that there was a growing tendency to Vaiṣṇavism among accounts of Gayā in Purāṇic literature within the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries CE (between the *Smṛticandrikā* and the *Tīrthacintāmaṇi*), when 'Gayā, or better, its priests, became Vaiṣṇavite' (Jacques, 1980: 63). Then he mentions that Gayāvālas identify themselves as disciples of a Vaiṣṇava sect with reference to the O'Malley's research which informs the Gayāvāla's profession of 'the Vaiṣṇavism established by Drāviṛa Brāhmaṇa, Mādhavācāryya, in southern India during the fourteen century' (O'Malley, 1903: 4).

Though their accounts of the Gayāvālas' origins differ, Mitra, Kane, Barua, and Jacques all directly connect either the 'one thousand families of Brahmins' in Xuan-zang's record or the Brahmins described in the *Gayāmāhātmya* with the ancestors of the Gayāvālas. However, the identification of these Brahmins as the Gayāvālas' ancestors is debatable. Xuan-zang, who travelled in India from 630 to 645 CE, stayed in Bodhgayā and left a record describing Gayā: 'crossing the Nirañjanā river, we come to the town of Gayā. This town is naturally strong. It has but few inhabitants; there are about one thousand families of Brahmins only (惟婆羅門有千餘家); they are the offspring of a Ṛṣi. The king does not regard them as vassals and the people everywhere highly respect them' (Beal, 1983: 113). This is the oldest reference of Brahmins in Gayā among dated texts. Gurdā and Mitra, who identify these Brahmins with *paṇḍās* of Gayā or Gayāvālas, distort the word 婆羅門, which is just a transliteration of *brāhmaṇa*. The description of 1,000 Brahmin families in Gayā in Xuan-zang's record does not prove the existence of the Gayāvālas' ancestors in the middle of the seventh century CE.

To determine the origins of the Gayāvāla, the relationship between the Gayāvālas and Brahmins mentioned in the *Gayāmāhātmya* must be examined, specifically because one legend describes the immigration of the Gayāvālas' ancestors as occurring in the seventeenth century CE.⁷ Examination of this relationship is the main subject of this paper, which

attempts to describe the history of the Gayāvāla with the help of historical records as well as myths and legends. The discussion begins by describing the legend of the Gayāvālas' immigration to the centre of Gayā.

2. THE GAYĀVĀLAS' IMMIGRATION AND PROFESSION DURING MUSLIM RULE: LEGENDS OF THE GAYĀVĀLAS' ANCESTORS

2.1. A LEGEND RELATED TO THE GAYĀVĀLAS' CHIEF LINEAGE

By the beginning of thirteenth century, the Turkish Muhammad Bakhtyār Khaljī invaded south Bihar. Tibetan scholar Dharmasvāmī recorded the prevailing panic in the Magadha region during the period from 1234 to 1236 (Diwakar, 2001 (1959): 325). During the Turco-Afghan period and Mughal rule, Bihar was under the control of Muslim governors. Mostly, these governors ruled indirectly through local chiefs. Gurdā explains that under Muslim rule, 'Gayāvālas left the town and started to live in some nearby villages such as Kurkihār, Paroriyā, Mahābodh, and Dubahal. The town of Gayā turned into ruins and the number of pilgrims declined considerably' (Gurdā, 1916: 102). Consequently, some titles used by the Gayāvālas derive from the villages where they took refuge, including Pahādī, Kaṭariyār, Baḍhiyā, Dubhaliyā, and Kohḍaurī.⁸

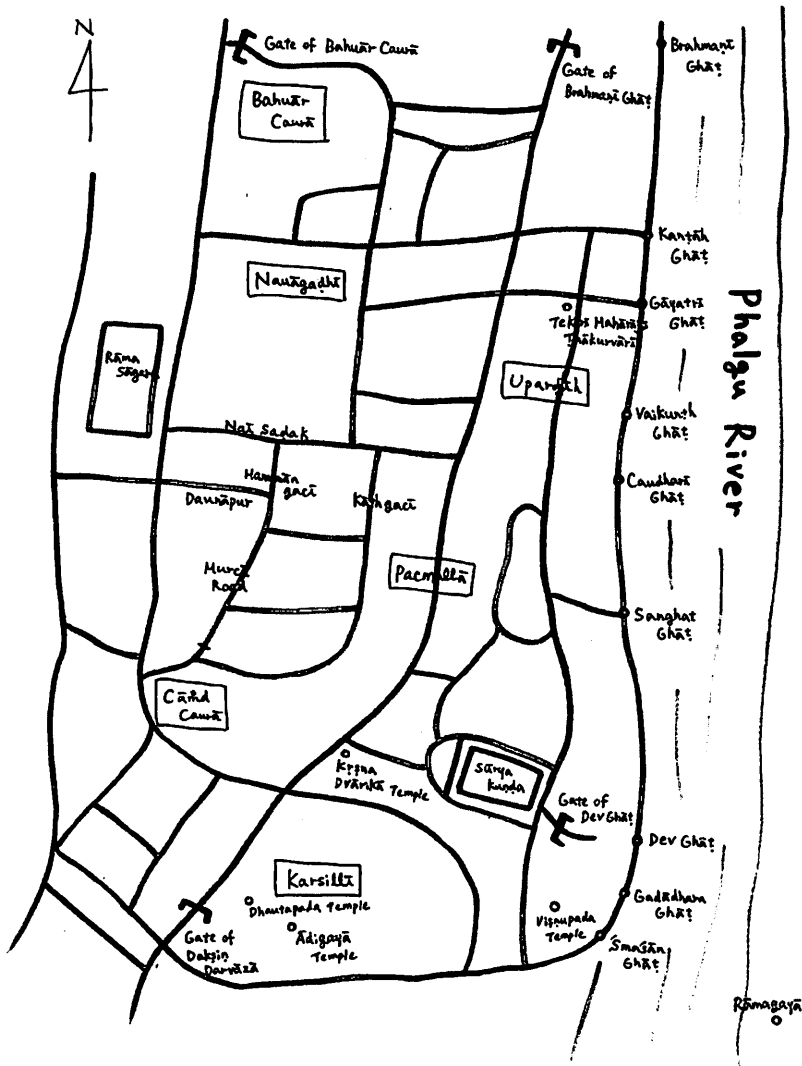
Gurdā describes what happened after the Gayāvālas fled and how they eventually returned to the centre of Gayā (ibid.: 102-6). This story has been handed down among Gayāvālas as history and is still told today. The story is worth recounting because Gurdā's book is not easily available even to Gayāvālas. Roy Chaudhury describes the story as history after over-simplification (Roy Chaudhury, 1957: 92-3).

The sons of Sītārām Caudharī Gayāpāla were Śaharcand and Meharcand. The elder Śaharcand was fond of the wife of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. One day, when Śaharcand was sitting near her, Aurangzeb came and asked his wife who Śaharcand was. She replied that he was just like her son. Then, Aurangzeb asked his wife whether Śaharcand would eat if he gave Śaharcand something to eat. She replied that Śaharcand would eat. Aurangzeb offered some sweets, and Śaharcand ate them. Pleased with this outcome, Aurangzeb asked Śaharcand what he wanted. Śaharcand requested 4,000 *bighā* of land in Gayā. Aurangzeb gave Śaharcand a fief and wrote the proof. The southern border of this fief was the Vaitaraṇī pond, the northern border was Nādirāganj, the eastern border was the eastern bank of the Phalgu River, and the western border was Ciraiyāntāṇḍ.

After receiving the fief, Śaharcand started living in Gayā, and other Gayāvālas lived there as his tenants. Soon, he constructed four gates and ditches around the town. He had become a Muslim convert and separated himself from his family. Gayāvālas called on pilgrims from all over India and gave a part of their income to their master, Śaharcand, whose grave is located near the Dhautapada Temple.

Before his conversion, Śaharcand was already blessed with a son named Śaṅkar Lāl Caudharī, who married Pūrṇā Caudharāin. They had a daughter

FIG. 1: MAP OF ANDAR-GAYĀ



named Virmā (Birmatā), who was married to a Gayāvāla who lived in a fortress of the Paroriyā village. After the death of Śaṅkar Lāl, Pūrṇā Caudharāin became the head of the family. She always possessed weapons and was protected by 70 foot soldiers from the Murārpur village.

Nawāb Sujāvājir Khān [*sic*] was the governor of Bihār Subah (province). He had Bādśāhi (imperial office) in Gayā as well. Caudharāin removed the Bādśāhi from Gayā so that no Muslim could live in a sacred Hindu place. The person in charge of the Bādśāhi reported the matter to the Nawāb. Sujāvājir marched onto Gayā with 4,000 cavalymen and some foot-soldiers and stayed at Lakhībāg on the eastern bank of the River Phalgu. He sent a messenger to the Gayāvālas. The

Gayāvālas discussed the gravity of the situation and went to meet the Nawāb with weapons. The main members among them were Risāl Bhaiyā, Gayā Sen, Candan Ahir, Johar Hal, Mihaṛ Hal, Kapūrā Bārik and Nāgar Cāmar [*sic.*]. The Nawāb treated them in a friendly manner and offered 10 rupees to each Gayāvāla. He compromised with the Gayāvālas by establishing an imperial office at Lakhībāg.

After some days, the Gayāvālas held a secret meeting at Daunāpur quarter in Andar-Gayā. They unanimously resolved that the Caudharāin was the one creating troubles for them and thus deserved a beating. They believed that if the death of only one person may bring benefits to many, it should be done. They asked Nāgar Cāmar, whose son had married Virmā, to invite Caudharāin. At 4:00 p.m., Caudharāin reached the Cāmar's house with five soldiers, including Deyānat Khān, Śer Khān, and Asmerī Khān as well as a maidservant named Sityā. When Caudharāin exited the vehicle and began heading toward the entrance, Risāl Bhaiyā of Gautam *gotra* struck her with a short sword, and Gayā Sen, Candan Ahir, Johar Hal, Mihaṛ Hal, and Kapūrā Bārik cut her into pieces.

The maidservant rushed back and narrated to Virmā what had happened. She marched with cavalymen and foot-soldiers to the town from the Paroriyā village. The first battle took place at Dev ghāt, the second was at Pacmallā. Caudharāin's 700 soldiers joined Virmā's troop. The third battle broke out at Dakṣiṇdarvājā, where the Gayāvālas met with defeat. Ultimately, Virmā occupied the Akṣaya-vaṭa. The Gayāvālas bowed down, presented Virmā with yellow clothes, and applied for a compromise to which Virmā agreed. She stopped the fight and ordered the Gayāvālas to build graves for her soldiers at the exact spots where they died.⁹ The Gayāvālas complied with her orders. After the death of Pūrṇā Caudharāin, Virmā succeeded her. The Gayāvālas were obliged to give her a part of the income they received from pilgrims, just as they had been required to do before with Caudharāin. After some time, this custom of obligatory tribute came to an end, and the Gayāvālas attained independence.

2.2. VERIFICATION OF THE LEGEND

The legend of Śaharcand Caudharī and his descendants should not be regarded as factual history. Most likely, the Gayāvālas immigrated into the centre of Gayā from the suburbs sometime during Muslim rule, while there is no evidence that the Gayāvālas had lived in Gayā originally. However, some parts of the story may reflect historical facts.

Buchanan, who visited Gayā between 1811 and 1812, recorded that the town of Gayā consisted of two parts: the residence of the priests called old Gayā (i.e. Andar-Gayā), and the residence of lawyers and tradesmen called Sahebganj (Buchanan, 2013 (1936): 94). He also describes some historical facts regarding Gayā's defensive infrastructure:

When Sahebgunj was built, there no longer existed an occasion for fortifications, but old Gaya had been often attacked, and sometimes plundered. The sanctity of the place would have been no security against Mahratta rapacity; and, when these invaded the district, the priests boldly formed themselves into 14 companies, to each of which was entrusted the defence of an entrance of the town. Except at these entrances the houses and a few walls formed a continued

barrier, and the projecting angles, and small windows of the houses formed a strong defence, so that the Mahrattas were on all occasions repulsed. (ibid.: 96)

From Buchanan's account, it is clear that the fortification of Andar-Gayā had already been complete before the invasion of the Marāṭhās. The fourteen groups of priests that appear in Buchanan's description correspond to the fourteen *gotras* of Gayāvālas, a part of which survives today (see Section 3.3). Peśwā Bālājī Bājī Rao's invasion of Bihār occurred in early February 1743 CE. From Vārāṇasī, he entered the Magadha region by way of Sāsārām, Daudnagar, Ṭikārī, Gayā, Mānpur, Bihārśarīf, and Muṅger (Sarkar, 2003(1948): 459).

Therefore, at least early in the eighteenth century, the construction of Andar-Gayā was complete. It can be postulated that the immigration of Śaharcand and other Gayāvālas to Gayā and the establishment of the town Andar-Gayā started in the latter half of the seventeenth century CE. Andar-Gayā is demarcated by four gates: Brahmaṇī ghāt in the north, Dakṣiṇdarvājā in the south, Dev ghāt in the east, and Bahuār caurāhā in the west. Except for the Bahuār caurāhā, these gates still exist today. No Muslim has ever lived in the Andar-Gayā. Some locals of the area explain that there were four gates, sixteen doors, and thirty-four windows in Andar-Gayā.

After recording the legend, Gurdā says that the story was narrated to some Gayāvālas by a man who died 50 years before. He was alive for a little more than 100 years and was already born when the murder of Caudharāin and subsequent battles occurred. Gurdā refers to a document of vs 1807 (or 1750 CE) with the signature of Pūrṇā Caudharāin, which was used as a proof at the Gayāvālas' meeting in vs 1907. He explains that the document was prepared 156 years before, so Gurdā wrote this account in 1906 CE (1750+156). Gurdā believes that Caudharāin died a little less than 150 years before, that is, he guesses that Caudharāin was killed a few years after 1756 CE (1906–150). Gurdā also informs that a proof, which a Gayāvāla from the Bhaiyā family possessed, shows that Pūrṇā Caudharāin sold land to Risāl Bhaiyā in vs 1769 (or 1712 CE) (ibid.: 118).

The Risāl Bhaiyā family tree has been preserved by an existing Bhaiyā family. The descendants of Risāl Bhaiyā and those who inherited his family property exclusively have performed ceremonies every evening and night at the Viṣṇupada Temple, the most important sacred spot in Gayā, to atone for the sin of murder. The existence of Risāl Bhaiyā cannot be doubted, and he would have killed the former chief of Gayā who collected tribute. If Risāl Bhaiyā is regarded as the first generation of the Bhaiyā family, the existing members belong to the 9th and 11th generations. A member of the 5th generation in the family tree, Choṭe

Lāl Bhaiyā, is mentioned in the report of Virasvāmī, who visited Gayā in 1831 CE (Pillai, 1973: 130).

Given this evidence, the date of Caudharāin's murder can be estimated as occurring by the middle of the eighteenth century. This corresponds with the reign of Śujā-ud-Dīn Muhammad Khān (1727-39), the Nawāb of Bengal, who is referred to as 'Sujāvajir Khān' and compromised with the Gayāvālas just before the murder of Pūrṇā Caudharāin in the legend. Even though Virmā's troops won a battle against the Gayāvālas, the custom of giving a share of income from pilgrims to her eventually ceased, most likely when the Muslim rule in Bihar was sealed by the Battle of Buxar in 1764.

The episode of the legend in which Śaharcand Caudharī visits Aurangzeb and directly receives the land of Gayā as a fief only by eating sweets cannot be accepted as factual history. It is possible that Śaharcand Caudharī is not a Gayāvāla, but someone else who received a fief from the Mughal court. The Caudharī lineage continued to be connected with Islam, even though Gurdā explains that the son of Śaharcand, Śaṅkar Lāl, had been born before Śaharcand became a Muslim. For example, before the murder, Caudharāin came with Muslim soldiers to the Cāmar's house. And Gurdā explains that the granddaughter of Śaharcand, Virmā, was married to a Gayāvāla who lived in a fortress of the Paroriyā village located about 10 km south-east from the town of Gayā, near the Bandhuā station. Her husband was the son of Nāgar Cāmar. In this area are the remnants of two buildings, which some villagers call a fortress and a mosque. However, there is no written record of these buildings nor their functions. Gayāvālas and other local people identify a small Hanumān shrine in front of the Ādigayā Temple as the grave of Śaharcand. Gurdā places the grave of Śaharcand near the Dhautapada Temple, located a little north-west from the Ādigayā Temple. It is said that the Hanumān shrine was reconstructed over a *mazār* (grave of a Muslim) about 80 years ago.

2.3. THE GAYĀVĀLA COMMUNITY'S PROFESSION OF THE MADHVA SECT

The Gayāvālas' relationship with the Madhva sect provides crucial information regarding the origins of the Gayāvāla community. Gurdā informs that Vidyādhīśa Tirtha Svāmī came to Gayā in vs 1687 (or 1620 CE) (Gurdā, 1916: 110). Vidyādhīśa was the head of the Uttarādimaṭha, one of the *maṭhas* (monasteries) of the Madhva sect of Vaiṣṇavism, from 1619 to 1631.¹⁰ The biography of Vidyādhīśa tells that the Gayāvālas' initiation in the sect occurred when he came to Gayā (pp. xvi, 288-90 and 331). The Gayā branch of Uttarādimaṭha exists at the front side of the Viṣṇupada Temple. It is said that this branch was established at the time of Vidyādhīśa. His statue is located in the shrine of the building.

Since the time of Vidyādhīśa, the Gayāvālas have respected the head of Uttarādimaṭha as their *guru*.¹¹ Every three or four years, the head of Uttarādimaṭha visits Gayā, consecrates the Gayāvālas by putting heated stamps of conch and disk on their faces and bodies and performs special ceremonies at the Viṣṇupada Temple. A disciple of the Uttarādimaṭha is deputed by the headquarter at Bangalore to remain at the Gayā branch as its manager. He offers food (*bhoga*) every noon to the god in the Viṣṇupada Temple. He teaches Sanskrit to Gayāvāla boys at the branch every evening.

After visiting Vārāṇasī, Vidyādhīśa reached Gayā. According to his biography, when he came to Gayā with his fellow Brahmins, a quarrel between them and the Brahmins of Gayā occurred. Vidyādhīśa and his followers stayed in a house at Rāmagayā on the eastern bank of the Phalgu River. There was a jujube tree with dried branches in the middle of the house's open yard. The story continues as follows:

tasyām tu patitāḥ tīrthadāne śāṅkhodabindavaḥ | yatra yatra prapatitāḥ sañjātāḥ tatra pallavāḥ || 40 || dinaiḥ katipayaiḥ sarvāḥ kramād vrkṣā babhūvire | drṣṭvā tad adbhutaṁ karma svāmināṁ mahatāṁ tadā || 41 || gayāvīprāḥ samāgatya praṇamyātha yayācire | svāmibhiḥ kṣamyatām asmadaparādhāḥ kṛpālubhiḥ || 42 || vayaṁ śīṣyā bhaviṣyāmaḥ taptamudrādīdhāraṇaiḥ | adyaiva viṣṇupādasya darśanārthaṁ hi gamyatām || 43 || evaṁ samprārthitāḥ taiḥ te vidyādhīśamuniśvarāḥ | kāmścid dviṣṇā vaiṣṇavāṁś ca¹² kṛtvā viṣṇupadaṁ gatāḥ || 44 || śrāddhāni kārayitvātha sarvāḥ prītipurassaram | svayaṁ daṇḍodakaṁ datvā yayur badarikāśramam || 45 || (p. 331)

(40) When [Vidyādhīśa] offered the oblation at the bank of river, drops of water filled in a conch-shell fell to it (the dried up jujube tree). Wherever the drops fell sprouts came forth there. (41) After some days, all the sprouts became trees. Seeing this extraordinary deed of the great Svāmī (Vidyādhīśa), (42) Brahmins of Gayā came together, saluted and entreated him, 'our offence should be pardoned by merciful Svāmī. (43) We will be your disciples by bearing branded marks and others. Today you should visit the Viṣṇupada for *darśan*.' (44) Thus requested by them, the lord of sages Vidyādhīśa made some Brahmins Vaiṣṇavas, and went to the Viṣṇupada. (45) While he caused all of them to perform the *śrāddha* rites with great pleasure, he himself offered water with his stick and he proceeded to Badrikāśrama.

This episode suggests that the Gayāvālas had already controlled the sacred field of Gayā and the Viṣṇupada Temple when Vidyādhīśa visited, while the time of their immigration to Gayā is estimated as occurring in the latter half of the seventeenth century CE. According to the introduction of his biography, they were not Vaiṣṇava priests before the consecration by Vidyādhīśa (p. xiv). It may be supposed that Vidyādhīśa came, or was called, to Gayā immediately before the Gayāvālas' immigration to the town. It may have been necessary for the Gayāvālas to strengthen their unity and position as Vaiṣṇava Brahmins before moving to Gayā and settling there as priests.

After the latter half of seventeenth century, the town of Andar-Gayā started to be inhabited, and by the middle of the eighteenth century, the

Gayāvālas seized the Andar-Gayā and received the right to earn a living exclusively through priestly work. Before 1783 CE, the reconstruction of the Viṣṇupada Temple by a Marāṭhā queen Ahilyā Bāi Holkar reached completion (Cakravartī, 1975: 18). Her *purohita* was a Gayāvāla lineage titled Meharvār. Unfortunately, because of the extinction of the Meharvār lineage, no record related to her is available. However, the division of area-wise priesthood among the Gayāvālas had been completed by that time. The condition of the Gayāvālas today is the same as that of the Gayāvālas in Buchanan's description of 1811 to 1812.

3. BIRTH OF THE *BRAHMAPRAKALPITA BRĀHMAṆA*: ANALYSIS OF PURĀṆAS WITH THE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE DHARMANIBANDHAS

While the ancestors of the present-day Gayāvālas can be traced back as far as the time of Vidyādhiśa Tīrtha Swāmī, the Gayāvālas identify themselves as *brahmakalpita brāhmaṇa* in relation with the myth told in the *Gayāmāhātmya*. As aforementioned, many researchers have also connected the Gayāvālas with Brahmins appearing in the *Gayāmāhātmya* without any examination. By collecting descriptions of the Brahmins of Gayā in Purāṇas, this section examines the meaning of *brahmakalpita brāhmaṇa*, the date of the concept's formation, and the clue to determining the relationship between the Gayāvālas and Brahmins in the Purāṇic literature.

Before the time of the Purāṇas, the oldest description of the Brahmins of Gayā among the Sanskrit literature was found in the *āraṇyaka-parvan* of the *Mahābhārata* (3.93.9-27).¹³ When Pāṇḍavas reached Mahidhara (i.e. Gayā) and decided to perform Cāturmāsya there, hundreds of Brahmins assembled and started telling stories. These Brahmins were rich in religious austerities and had knowledge of the Cāturmāsya. Their role was different from that of the Gayāvālas, who conducted priestly work related to *gayā-śrāddha*.

There are many Purāṇas that mention Gayā. However, accounts of Brahmins of Gayā are found in only four Purāṇas, which have long descriptions about Gayā: *Garuḍa* (1.82-6, 208 ślokas), *Vāyu* (2.43-50, 590 ślokas), *Agni* (114-7, 220 ślokas), and *Nārada* (2.44-7, 346 ślokas).¹⁴ Jacques states, 'that from *Vāyu Purāṇa* is the most important quantitatively. It is also the most read and, to my knowledge, the only one of which there are separate editions. Everybody agrees on the other hand in saying that it forms a whole, which has been integrated into the *Vāyu Purāṇa* only later' (Jacques, 1979: 27).¹⁵

The dated Dharmanibandhas help in determining when the Purāṇas were compiled. The texts in Table 1 by eight authors have accounts of Gayā. Jacques properly analyses that the description from the *Garuḍa*

TABLE 1. LIST OF DHARMANIBANDHAS

Title	Author	Date	Note: (+) existing / (-) absent
<i>Śrāddhakāṇḍa</i> (pp. 30-40), <i>Tīrthavivekanakāṇḍa</i> (pp. 163-74) of <i>Kṛtyakalpataṛu</i>	Lakṣmidhara Bhaṭṭa	1100-1150 CE	(-) the legend of Gayāsura, description about Brahmins of Gayā
<i>Śrāddhakāṇḍa</i> (pp. 145-53), <i>Āśaucakāṇḍa</i> (pp. 194-203) of <i>Smṛticandrikā</i>	Devāṇa Bhaṭṭa	1200-1225 CE	(+) the rule of feeding a Brahmin (p. 196), mention of B-Brahmin with a quotation from GP 1.83.64cd-66ab (pp. 199-200), (-) the legend of Gayāsura
<i>Tīrthacintāmaṇi</i> (pp. 268-338)	Vācaspati Miśra	1450-1480 CE	(+) the legend of Gayāsura with a quotation from GP 1.82.1-14 (pp. 268-70), detailed process of pilgrimage in Gayā, totally based on VP 2.48-9 (pp. 283-325), mention of B-Brahmin (pp. 321, 324, 325) (+) mention of B-Brahmin with a quotation from GP 1.83.64cd-66ab (p. 40) (-) the legend of Gayāsura
<i>Tīrthasāra</i> of <i>Nṛsimhaṇprasāda</i> (pp. 30-43)	Dalapati Rāja	Some years after <i>Tīrthacintāmaṇi</i>	
<i>Tristhalīsetu</i> (pp. 316-79)	Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa	1540-1570 CE	(+) the legend of Gayāsura with a quotation from GP 1.82.1-14 (pp. 325-6) and with quotations from VP and AP (pp. 333-5), detailed process of pilgrimage in Gayā, based on VP and AP (pp. 352-68), mention of B-Brahmin (pp. 351-2), the rule of feeding a B-Brahmin with a quotation from AP 114.39cd-40 (p. 367)
<i>Tīrthaprakāśa</i> of Viramitrodaya (pp. 384-453)	Mitra Miśra	1600-1640 CE	(+) the legend of Gayāsura with a quotation from GP 1.82.1-14 (pp. 387-8), mention of Brahmin of Gayā (p. 397) by a quotation from AP 114.39cd-40, detailed process of pilgrimage in Gayā, totally based on VP 2.48-49 (pp. 401-21), the rule of feeding a B-Brahmin (pp. 420, 446-7) (-) the legend of Gayāsura, description about Brahmins of Gayā
<i>Tristhalīsetusārasaṅgraha</i> (pp. 36-40)	Bhaṭṭoji Dikṣita	c. 1625 CE	
<i>Tīrthenduśekhara</i> (pp. 54-9)	Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa	c. 1700 CE	(+) the rule of feeding a B-Brahmin with a quotation from AP 114.39cd-40ab (p. 59), (-) the legend of Gayāsura

Purāṇa is the oldest one, the second oldest is that of the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, and the third oldest is that of the *Agni Purāṇa* (Jacques, 1980: 43-4). This view is, supported by each of the Dharmanibandha's descriptions shown in the Note of the Table 1. The *Nārada Purāṇa* is a borrowing from a text of a later period, the *Tīrthacintāmaṇi* (ibid.: 39). In the Table 1, *Mahābhārata*, *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, *Vāyu Purāṇa*, *Agni Purāṇa*, and *brahma-prakalpita brāhmaṇa* are abbreviated as MBh, GP, VP, AP, and B-Brahmin, respectively.

In the Purāṇic literature, accounts of Brahmins in Gayā are found in the following three contexts.

3.1. BRAHMINS WHO JOINED THE SACRIFICE OF BRAHMĀ IN THE LEGEND OF GAYĀSURA

The legend of Gayāsura is told in the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* (1.82.1-14), *Vāyu Purāṇa* (2.44.1-86), *Agni Purāṇa* (114.1-40), and *Nārada Purāṇa* (2.44.7-19).¹⁶ The most famous and detailed account appears in the *Vāyu Purāṇa*.¹⁷ After performing a terrible penance, Gayāsura was given a boon by Viṣṇu and received a body holier than all the gods and sages. Everyone who touched his body went to the city of Viṣṇu immediately. The troubled god Yama along with Brahmā went to Viṣṇu, who advised them to ask Gayāsura to give his body to perform a sacrifice. Accepting the offer from Brahmā, the demon laid down his body. When the sacrifice began, the demon's body started shaking. To keep the demon in place, Yama put a stone on the Gayāsura's head. Even when all the gods came and stood on the stone, the demon's body would not stop shaking. Viṣṇu, in the form of Ādigadādhara (the first mace-wielder), stood on the stone and got the demon to calm down. Being asked by Viṣṇu, Gayāsura requested that all the gods stay on his body and that his descendants who would perform *śrāddha* rites would attain heaven. His wishes were granted. After this legend, the *Vāyu Purāṇa* narrates the origin of the stone placed on Gayāsura's head (2.45) and explains the origin of Ādigadādhara (2.47.1-13). The legend from the *Agni Purāṇa* inserts the origin of the rock in 114.10cd-22 and of Ādigadādhara in 114.26cd-28ab. In the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* and the *Nārada Purāṇa*, on the other hand, Gayāsura was killed by Viṣṇu. After that, knowing the reputation of Gayā, Brahmā performed the sacrifice.

The descriptions of Brahmins of Gayā in the legend of Gayāsura are found in three locations in the *Vāyu Purāṇa*: 2.43.6-7, 2.44.33cd-42, and 2.44.73-84. These are rarely quoted in the Dharmanibandhas. Only the *Tristhalīsetu* quoted 2.44.79 in its description of the Brahmins of Gayā (p. 335). It is the story of Gayāsura of the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* that is mostly quoted in the Dharmanibandhas to explain the origin of Gayā. The *Garuḍa Purāṇa* mentions the Brahmins of Gayā (1.82.9-14), which is borrowed by the *Nārada Purāṇa* (2.44.14-9).

The Brahmins who came to the Brahmā's sacrifice as priests (*ṛtvij*s) are mentioned briefly in the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* (1.82.9). The *Vāyu Purāṇa* provides details of these priests:¹⁸

brahmā sambhṛtasambhāro mānasān ṛtvijo 'srjat |33cd| *agniśarmāṇam amṛtaṁ śaunakam yāñjaliṁ mṛdum | kumuthiṁ vedakaunḍilyaṁ hārītaṁ kāśyapaṁ kṛpaṁ* |34| *gargaṁ kauśikavāsiṣṭhaṁ munim bhārgavam avyayam | vṛddhaṁ pārāśaraṁ kaṇvaṁ māṇḍavyaṁ śrutikevalam* |35| *śvetaṁ sutālaṁ damanaṁ suhotraṁ kaṅkaṁ eva ca | laukākṣiṇ ca mahābāhuṁ jaigīśavyaṁ tathaiiva ca* |36| *dadhipaṇcamukhaṁ vipraṁ ṛṣabhaṁ karkaṁ eva ca | kātyāyanaṁ gobhilaṇ ca munim ugramahāvratam* |37| *supālakaṁ gautamaṇ ca tathā vedaśirovratam | jaṭāmālinam avyagraṁ cāṭuhāsaṇ ca dāruṇam* |38| *ātreyaṁ cāpy aṅgirasam aupamanyuṁ mahāvratam | gokarṇaṇ ca guhāvāsaṁ śikhaṇḍinam umāvratam* |39| *etān anyāṁś ca viprendrān vedhā lokapitāmahaḥ | parikalpyākarod yāgaṁ gayāsuraśarīrake* |40| (*Vāyu Purāṇa* 2.44.33cd-40)

(33cd) After collecting together the necessities, the god Brahmā mentally created the priests: (34) Agniśarman, Amṛta, Śaunaka, Yāñjali, Mṛdu, Kumuthi, Vedakaunḍilya, Hārīta, Kāśyapa, Kṛpa, (35) Garga, Kauśika, Vāsiṣṭha, the sage Bhārgava, Avyaya, the senior Pārāśara, Kaṇva, Māṇḍavya, Śrutikevala, (36) Śveta, Sutāla, Damana, Suhotra, Kaṅka, Laukākṣi, Mahābāhu, Jaigīśavya, (37) The Brahmin Dadhipaṇcamukha, Ṛṣabha, Karka, Kātyāyana, Gobhila the sage performing the religious acts for the god Rudra, (38) Supālaka, Gautama performing religious acts prescribed in the head of the Veda, deliberate Jaṭāmālin, terrible Cāṭuhāsa, (39) Ātreya, Aṅgiras, Aupamanyu performing the great religious acts, Gokarṇa dwelling in a hiding place, and Śikhaṇḍin performing the religious acts for the goddess Umā. (40) After contriving these and the other Brahmins, Brahmā, the grandfather of the worlds, performed the sacrifice on the body of Gayāsura.

The *Garuḍa Purāṇa* (1.82.10-14), *Vāyu Purāṇa* (2.44.73-84), and *Agni Purāṇa* (114.33-40) narrate what occurs after the sacrifice, which can be summarized as follows:

1. After the sacrifice, the Brahmins received many special gifts from Brahmā, such as the land of Gayā, and rivers of milk and clarified butter.
2. The Brahmins received gifts in the Dharma's sacrifice even though Brahmā prohibited them to receive any gifts ever.
3. The Brahmins were cursed by Brahmā. The milk and butter rivers and mountains filled with food were destroyed.
4. The Brahmins propitiated and asked Brahmā for livelihood. The god granted them the right to act as priests of *śrāddha* rites in Gayā.

The legend of Gayāsura demonstrates how the Brahmins of Gayā received the right to be worshipped and receive gifts from those who perform *śrāddha* rites in Gayā. Brahmins in this legend are expressed by the words *brāhmaṇa*, *dvija*, *vipra*, and *ṛtvij*. Although there is no mention of the phrase *brahmaṇa* *prakalpita* *brāhmaṇa*, Brahmins in this legend were created and appointed as receivers of gifts by Brahmā (i.e. *brahma-prakalpita*).

3.2. BRAHMINS WHO ARE FED IN THE PROCEDURE OF *GAYĀ-YĀTRA*

The expression *brahmaprakalpita brāhmaṇa* appears in accounts regarding the procedure of pilgrimage in Gayā. The four Purāṇas introduce some *upatīrthas* (sub-holy spots), explain the benefits of performing rituals at each spot, and describe procedure of pilgrimage in Gayā. Here, the depictions of the Brahmins of Gayā in these descriptions can be examined.

The following *ślokas* are quoted frequently in the Dharmānibandhas: the *Śrāddhakāṇḍa* (p. 152) and *Āśaucakāṇḍa* (pp. 199-200) of the *Smṛticandrikā*, the *Tīrthasāra* (p. 40), and the *Tristhalīsetu* (p. 352):

yadi putro gayāṃ gacchet kadācit kālāparyaye |64cd| *tān eva bhojayed viprān brahmanā ye prakalpitāḥ* | *teṣāṃ brahmasadaḥ sthānaṃ somapānaṃ tathaiva ca* |65| *brahmaprakalpitaṃ sthānaṃ viprā brahmaprakalpapitāḥ* | *pūjitaḥ pūjitaḥ sarve pitṛbhiḥ saha devatāḥ* |66| *tarpayet tu gayāviprān havyakavyair vidhānataḥ* |67ab| (*Garuḍa Purāṇa* 1.83.64cd-67ab)

(64cd) If a son goes to Gayā after a certain lapse of time [after the father's death], (65) he should feed Brahmins only who were appointed by Brahmā. Their place is Brahmasadas¹⁹ and their drink is Soma. (66) The place was created by Brahmā and the Brahmins were appointed by Brahmā. If they are honoured, all the gods together with ancestors are honoured. (67ab) The pilgrim should satisfy Gayā's Brahmins with oblations to both gods and ancestors according to the rule.

The Brahmins of Gayā appear most frequently at the end of the pilgrimage procedure, where the Brahmins are fed under the Akṣayaṇa (undecaying Banyan tree): *Garuḍa Purāṇa* 84.31cd-32ab (mentioned as *vipra*), *Vāyu Purāṇa* 2.43.42 (*vipra*, *brahmaprakalpita vipra*), *Vāyu Purāṇa* 2.49.92-5 (*brahmaprakalpita vipra*, *vipra*, *gayātīrthapurodhas*), *Agni Purāṇa* 115.70cd-72 (*vipra*, *brāhmaṇa*), *Nārada Purāṇa* 2.47.1cd-2 (*brahmaprakalpita vipra*), the *āśaucakāṇḍa* of *Smṛticandrikā* p. 196 (*vipra*), *Tīrthacintāmaṇi* p. 325 (*brahmaprakalpita brāhmaṇa*), *Tristhalīsetu* p. 367 (*brahmaprakalpita brāhmaṇa*), and *Tīrthaprakāśa* of *Vīramitrodaya* p. 420 (*brahmasthāpitavipra*). The *Vāyu Purāṇa* narrates the most detail:

brahmaprakalpitān viprān havyakavyādinārcayet | *tais tuṣṭais toṣitāḥ sarvāḥ pitṛbhiḥ saha devatāḥ* |92|²⁰ *kṛte śrāddhe kṣayaṇe annenaiva prayatnataḥ* | *pitṛn nayed brahmalokam akṣayaṃ tu sanātanam* |93| *vaṭavṛkṣasamīpe tu śākenāpy udakena vā* | *ekasmin bhojite vipre koṭir bhavati bhojitā* |94| *deyaṃ dānaṃ ṣoḍaśakam gayātīrthapurodhase* | *vastram gandhādibhiḥ putraiḥ samyaksampūjya yatnataḥ* |95| (*Vāyu Purāṇa* 2.49.92-5)

(92) One should worship the Brahmins appointed by Brahmā with oblations to both gods and ancestors. Through their satisfaction all the gods along with ancestors will become satisfied. (93) If the *śrāddha* rite with food at the Akṣayaṇa is effortfully performed, one will lead the ancestors to the undecaying and eternal world of Brahmā. (94) If one feeds one Brahmin with vegetables or water near that Banyan tree, it is as fruitful as feeding a crore [of Brahmins]. (95) Sixteen types of gifts including clothes with scents, etc., should be presented by sons with proper honour to the priest of Gayā with effort.

Brahmins who are fed and worshipped in the procedure of the Gayā pilgrimage are called *brahmaprakalpita vipra*. This concept suggests that these Brahmins were created as priests by Brahmā at the sacrifice and were appointed as receivers of gifts from pilgrims of Gayā. Thus, the concept of *brahmaprakalpita vipra* is based on the legend of Gayāsura.

According to the Dharmanibandhas' descriptions shown in Table 1 and Sections 3.1 and 3.2, the date of formation of the Gayāsura legend and the *brahmaprakalpita brāhmaṇa* concept can be determined. The *Kṛtyakalpataṛu* and the *Smṛticandrikā* do not contain the legend of Gayāsura. In both the *Śrāddhakāṇḍa* and *Āśaucakāṇḍa* of the *Smṛticandrikā*, however, the quotation from the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* appears (1.83.64cd-65ab), including the phrase *viprān brahmaṇā ye prakalpitāḥ*. Thus, it is likely that the legend of Gayāsura was almost complete by the beginning of the thirteenth century CE. Jacques hypothesizes that the legend was becoming established around the beginning of the twelfth century because of the omission of king Gaya's sacrifice of the *Mahābhārata* (see Section 3.3) in the *Kṛtyakalpataṛu* (Jacques, 1980: 46-7). The *Tīrthacintāmaṇi* mentions *brahmaprakalpita brāhmaṇa* as the Brahmin who should be fed, not just in quotations from the Purāṇas but also in the author's original explanations (pp. 321, 324, 325). At least until the latter half of the fifteenth century, the concept of *brahmaprakalpita brāhmaṇa* must have been firmly established.

3.3. BRAHMINS BELONGING TO FOURTEEN GOTRAS, AS TOLD IN THE KING GAYA'S SACRIFICE

The last chapter of the *Vāyu Purāṇa* narrates the story of king Gaya's sacrifice:

yajñaṇ cakre gayo rājā bahvannaṃ bahudakṣiṇaṃ | yatra dravyasamūhānāṃ saṃkhyā kartuṃ na śakyate | 1 | ... naiveha pūrve ye kecin na kariṣyanti cāpare | 4 | praśaṃsanti dvijās tṛptā deśe deśe supūjitaḥ | gayam viṣṇvādayas tuṣṭā varam brūhīti cābruvan | 5 | gayas tān prārthayām āsa hy abhiśaptās ca ye purā | brahmaṇā te dvijāḥ pūtā bhavantu kratupūjitaḥ | 6 | gayāśrāddhavidhānāya dvijā mūrtās caturdaśa | teṣāṃ vākyaṃ prakurvīta yadi brahmā svayaṃ bhavet | 7 | gautamaṃ kāśyapaṃ kautsaṃ kauśikaṃ kaṇvaṃ eva ca | bhāradvājaṃ hy auśanaśaṃ vātsyam pārāśaram tathā | 8 | haritkumāramāṇḍavyaṃ lokākṣiṇ lokasaṃmaha²¹ | vāsiṣṭhaṇ ca tathātreyam gotraṇy eṣāṃ caturdaśa | 9 | (*Vāyu-purāṇa* 2.50.1-9)

(1) King Gaya performed a sacrifice with numerous food items and gifts. The number of the collected materials could not be counted. . . (4) No one in the past has done like this, no one in future will do like this. (5) Brahmins who were satisfied and well-honoured praise so in various regions. Viṣṇu and others who were pleased spoke to Gaya, 'ask the boon you wish to choose'. (6) Gaya requested them, 'may those Brahmins who were cursed by Brahmā formerly become sanctified, being honoured in rituals'. (7) For the performance of *gayā-śrāddha* fourteen Brahmins are embodied. Their command should be accomplished even by Brahmā himself. (8) Gautama, Kāśyapa, Kautsa, Kauśika, Kaṇva, Bhāradvāja,

Auśanasa, Vātsya, Pārāśara, (9) Haritkumāra, Māṇḍavya, Lokākṣi highly honoured in the world, Vāsiṣṭha, Ātreya. These are their fourteen *gotras*.

As aforementioned, the *Mahābhārata* 3.93.9-27 describes the arrival of Pāṇḍavas at Mahidhara and the assembly of Brahmins who are familiar with religious austerities. These Brahmins started discussing. During the assembly, a Brahmin named Śamaṭha narrated the story of king Gaya's sacrifice, which is the prototype of Gaya's sacrifice found in the *Vāyu Purāṇa*. While the description of the sacrifice with sumptuous food and gifts and its reputation are found in both texts, the version of the *Vāyu Purāṇa* includes two additional points.

While the legend of Gayāsura was evidently established after the *Mahābhārata*, the story of king Gaya's sacrifice in the *Vāyu Purāṇa* considers the events told in the Gayāsura legend, specifically how the Brahmins were cursed by Brahmā. Moreover, the Brahmins' fourteen *gotras* described in the *Vāyu Purāṇa* (2.50.8-9) are not found in the *Mahābhārata*. These fourteen *gotras* have survived in the present-day Gayāvālas. Gurdā, whose work belongs to the beginning of twentieth century, explains that 'among the fourteen *gotras* there is no Gayāvāla whose *gotra* is Lauṅgākṣi or Māṇḍavya now' (Gurdā, 1916: 111). According to my survey in 2015, the lineages belonging to six *gotras* remain (Gautama, Kāśyapa, Kauśika, Kaṇva, Bhāradvāja, and Vātsya).

It should also be noted that no Dharmanibandha quotes the Gaya's sacrifice from the *Vāyu Purāṇa*. Some Dharmanibandhas mention the story of Gaya's sacrifice briefly, but as a quotation from the *Mahābhārata* (*Tīrthavivecanakāṇḍa* of *Kṛtyakalpataru* p. 172, *Tīrthacintāmaṇi* p. 279, *Tristhalīsetu* p. 321).

In this chapter, descriptions of Brahmins of Gayā in the Purāṇic literature were traced. As seen in Sections 3.1 and 3.2, the concept of *brahmaṇḍapraṇāṭha brāhmaṇa* had appeared by the beginning of the thirteenth century (*Smṛticandrikā*) and had been firmly established no later than the latter half of the fifteenth century (*Tīrthacintāmaṇi*). The story of Gaya's sacrifice told in the *Mahābhārata* was modified and inserted in the last chapter of the *Gayāmāhātmya*, which takes into consideration the legend of Gayāsura. There the ancestors of the Gayāvālas appear in the form of *gotra* (see Section 3.3).

4. CONCLUSION

This paper discussed the history of the Gayāvāla by examining legends that are regarded as history by the Gayāvālas as well as some historical evidences and myths of the Purāṇic literature. As seen in the Section 2.3, the origins of the Gayāvāla community can be traced back to those who were initiated into the Madhva sect in the 1620.

The inscription of vs 1516 (1459 CE), found on the wall of entrance to

the Gayeśvarī Temple in the north of the Viṣṇupada Temple, is a pilgrimage record of Sūryadāsa (Cunningham, 1873: 129-32, plate XXXIX). He gifted 1,010 cows to Brahmins in front of the image of Gadādhara. It proves the existence of Brahmins who received gifts from pilgrims in the middle of the fifteenth century. According to the biography of Vidyādhiśa Tirtha Swāmī, when he visited Gayā in the 1620, the Gayāvālas already existed in Gayā and had authority to manage the Viṣṇupada Temple. On the other hand, the legend of the Caudharī lineage informs that the Gayāvālas took refuge in the suburban villages of Gayā during Muslim rule (see Section 2.1). It is possible that the Gayāvālas only came to Gayā during the day to manage the sacred place.

Not only Gayāvālas themselves but also many researchers have regarded the Gayāvālas as *brahmaṇḍaprakalpita brāhmaṇas* mentioned in the Purāṇas. Is there real continuity between the Gayāvālas and the Brahmins described in the Purāṇas? The fourteen *gotras* mentioned in the *Vāyu Purāṇa* (2.50.8-9) have survived in the present Gayāvālas (see Section 3.3). As seen in the Section 3.1, the *Vāyu Purāṇa* has another list of priests, who were created by Brahmā for performing the sacrifice (*Vāyu Purāṇa* 2.44.34-9). The following Table 2 shows that there are some similarities between the names of the priests and the fourteen *gotras*, even though these are explained in quite different places and contexts.

TABLE 2. COMPARISON BETWEEN THE NAMES OF
PRIESTS CREATED BY BRAHMĀ AND FOURTEEN *GOTRAS*

Only in the list of priests (<i>Vāyu Purāṇa</i> 2.44.34-9)	Agniśarman, Amṛta, Śaunaka, Yāñjali, Mṛdu, Kumuthi, Vedakaunḍinya, Kṛpa, Garga, Bhārgava, Avyaya, Śrutikevala, Śveta, Sutāla, Damana, Suhotra, Kaṅka, Mahābahu, Jaiḡṣavya, Dadhipaṇcamukha, Ṛṣabha, Karka, Kātyāyana, Gobhila, Supālaka, Jaṭāmālin, Cāṭuhāsa, Aṅgiras, Aupamanyu, Gokarṇa, Śikhaṇḍina
Only in the fourteen <i>gotras</i> (<i>Vāyu Purāṇa</i> 2.50.8-9)	Kautsa, Bhāradvāja, Auśanasa, Vātsya
Appearing in both spots	Hārīta (Haritkumāra), Kāśyapa, Kauśika, Vāsiṣṭha, Pārāśara, Kaṇva, Māṇḍavya, Laukākṣi (Lokakṣi), Gautama, Ātreya

More importantly, the list of priests is replaced by the fourteen *gotras* in two manuscripts of the *Gayāmāhātmya* which Jacques consulted. The date of one manuscript is 1830 CE. Another doesn't inform the date, but was acquired by the Mackenzie Collection in 1825 CE (Jacques, 1962: iv). These two narrate that the god Brahmā mentally created the Brahmins of fourteen *gotras*. Jacques gives interesting suggestion that the enumerated

names of the priests intimate the influence of Pāśupata Śaivism in Gayā (ibid.: 42). It is not impossible that the replacement of the priests' name by the fourteen *gotras* may have happened after the Gayāvālas' profession of the Madhva sect. On the other hand, the *ślokas* of fourteen *gotras* are not found in the story of king Gaya's sacrifice told in four manuscripts of the *Gayāmāhātmya* as well as most of the manuscripts of the *Vāyu Purāṇa* on which two editions (Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series and Bibliotheca Indica) are based (cf. ibid.: 263). The origin of the Gayāvāla might become revealable only after the examination of the difference and the relationship among various manuscripts and editions of the *Gayāmāhātmya* in the *Vāyu Purāṇa* and the independent *Gayāmāhātmya*.

Other crucial questions remain for determining the origin of the Gayāvāla. Who became the *brahmaṇḍapralpita brāhmaṇas*? Who were accorded the status of Brahmins, who received gifts from pilgrims of Gayā, by someone represented by the god Brahmā in the legend of Gayāsura? Inscriptions of the Pāla period are available in Gayā, which refer to some renowned Brahmins or a ruling class of Gayā.²² It is possible that these Brahmins may have been granted the status of *brahmaṇḍapralpita brāhmaṇas*. This topic also serves as another area for future research.

There are still many unsolved questions regarding the origins of the Gayāvāla. However, this paper provides some useful materials to progress the discussion on the origin of the Gayāvāla as well as the date of the *Gayāmāhātmya*'s compilation, by indicating misunderstandings in former researches, which often connect the Gayāvālas with Brahmins in Purāṇic literature directly without any examination.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Gayāvālas for their cooperation during my 20 months of fieldwork in Gayā. I especially would like to thank Kiśan Lāl Bhaiyā and Raghunāth Jhaṅgar, for providing the valuable information related to this paper. I sincerely hope that this paper's discussion and conclusion will not be a threat to the position or authority of the Gayāvālas. I also wish to thank the Heiwa Nakajima Foundation for their substantial financial help in conducting this research.

NOTES

1. The Lodging House Committee of the district administration issues ID cards to Gayāvālas for *pitṛ-pakṣa* (fortnight for ancestors) from September to October every year. According to the committee, in the *pitṛ-pakṣa* of 2015, 987 Gayāvālas applied for ID cards, which are only available for male Gayāvālas above the age of 18. Adding adult females, children, and those who did not apply for issuance, the number of Gayāvālas is estimated at around 2,500. One of the leaders of the Gayāvāla community informed me that the population of Gayāvālas is between 2,500 and 3,000.

2. See (Vidyarthi, 1961: 50-110) for further information about the Gayāvālas' identification and exclusiveness in relation to other communities.
3. Gayāśīras, literally meaning the head of Gayā, is one of the oldest sacred spots in Gayā (see n. 13). Gurdā regards Gayāśīras as Andar-Gayā. According to the Buddhist tradition, on the other hand, a Gayāśīśa is the Brahmayoni mountain. The *Vāyu Purāṇa* defines the geographic extent of Gayāśīras as 'from Nāga, Janārdana, Brahmayūpa to Uttaramānasa' (2.49.51ab). Presently, there is a temple called Gayāsir near the Viṣṇupada Temple.
4. According to the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, Brahmā performed the sacrifice at Gayā in the Śveta-Vārāhakalpa (2.43.7cd).
5. Many Gayāvālas and locals explained that there were 1,484 *ghar* of the Gayāvālas in ancient times, without a precise definition. O'Malley also refers to this account (O'Malley, 2007(1906): 217). The ambiguous word *ghar* means house as well as family. On the other hand, some Gayāvālas interpret 1,484 (*caudāh sau caurāśī*) as *caudāh se caurāśī*: 'from fourteen [*gotras*] eighty-four families [were created].'
6. Vidyarthi also notes that 'other scholars (Kashyapa, 1952; Mitra, 1878: 10) have attempted to prove that the name, Gayawal, was given by Shankaracharya to those Buddhist monks who accepted Hinduism and adopted the profession of shraddha priesthood under the persuasion of Shankaracharya' (Vidyarthi, 1961: 89). Because Mitra does not describe the conversion of Buddhist monks by Śaṅkarācārya, this hypothesis may be exclusively Kashyapa's. I visited the Gayā College to which Prof. Kashyapa belonged, but his unpublished work could not be found. D.C. Ahir insists wrongly that Viṣṇupada was Buddhapada and the Gayāvālas were originally Buddhist monks using quotations from Mitra and Vidyarthi's works (Ahir, 1994: 55-62).
7. J. Lochtefeld provides a general description of *paṇḍās*: 'usually, *paṇḍās* have lived in these places for many generations, but may have originally migrated from the surrounding region' (Lochtefeld, 2011: 241).
8. Gurdā describes 57 titles and their origins (Gurdā, 1916: 234-7). Vidyarthi records 58 titles and their origins with the help of information from Gurdā's book and his own fieldwork (Vidyarthi, 1961: 141-4). According to my survey in 2015, there are only 24 types of titles, whose lineage members exist, while the other 30 titles remain as inherited property.
9. A Hanumān shrine located in the Pacmallā quarter was built over a *mazār* in the middle of the twentieth century. Another *mazār* remains in front of Tīkāri Mahārāj's Thākurvārī (the house of god) in the Upardih quarter. It is possible that these are graves of soldiers who died in the battle between the Gayāvālas and the former Muslim fief holder.
10. The biography of Vidyādhiśa describes his period from 1619 to 1631 and mentions his visit to Vārāṇasī on a pilgrimage where he faced inimical opposition from an ascetic named Brahmendra. This incident seems to be reliable based on the descriptions of Brahmendra Sarasvatī, the leader of Śaiva Saṁnyāsins mentioned in the *Kavīndracandrodaya*, a collection of Sanskrit praises that commend Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī for convincing the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (1628-58) to rescind a pilgrimage tax on Vārāṇasī and Prayāga (Allahabad). Brahmendra is mentioned in this document as '*yatīndravṛndamukhya* (head of the group of noted *yatis*)' (p. 24), while in the biography of Vidyādhiśa he is referred to as '*yatīndra*' (p. 286).
11. According to the biography of Caitanya, he visited Gayā to perform *śrāddha* rites for his father in 1508 CE. He met a Madhva teacher named Śvara Purī and took initiation from him (Majumdar, 1969: 130, 133). Vidyarthi regards Śvara Purī as

- 'evidently the jati-guru of the Gayawal' (Vidyarthi, 1961: 69). However, Śvara Puri cannot be the head of Uttarādimaṭha because the heads of the *maṭha* use *tīrtha* (not *puri*) at the end of their names. Also his name doesn't figure in the available list of Uttarādimaṭha chiefs.
12. The original text records the unmetrical *pāda* 'kāścit u dvijān vaiṣṇavāṃś ca.'
 13. The oldest mention of Gayā as a sacred place goes back to Yāska's *Nirukta* (12.19), which was written before the time of Buddha and does not contain any description regarding the Brahmins of Gayā. It mentions that 'according to Aurnavābha, Viṣṇu places his foot on the Samārohaṇa, Viṣṇupada, and Gayaśiras' in the commentary on the *Ṛgveda* I.22.17.
 14. All the data of the Purāṇas follow the editions of Nag Publishers. In addition to 590 *ślokas*, the *Gayāmāhātmya* of *Vāyu Purāṇa* has three *pāṭhāntara* (additional verses), which include 44 *ślokas* in total.
 15. R.C. Hazra also explains '*Gayāmāhātmya* did not really belong to the Vāyu. In many Mss of the Purāṇa, this Māhātmya has been omitted. On the other hand, it is often found to appear as an independent text in Mss as well as in printed editions. That this appendage was attached to the Vāyu earlier than 1400 CE, is certain, for Vācaspatimiśra quotes numerous verses from chap. 105 and 111-112' (Hazra, 1975(1940): 17).
 16. The *Skanda Purāṇa* tells the story of the demon in Gayā without using the exact name of Gayāsura: *evaṃ vyāsa gayātīrthaṃ purāvantyām pratiṣṭhitam | paścāt tu kaikaṭe jātaṃ yatra saṃnīhito 'surah | 10 | tadārabhya dvijaśreṣṭha gayā tatra pratiṣṭhitā | gadādharapadāghātair mahāsuro nipātitaḥ | 11 | tatpade ca mahimānaṃ janārdanasamarpitam | 12 |* (*Skanda-purāṇa* 5.1.59.10-12).
 17. The summary of the legend of Gayāsura in the *Vāyu Purāṇa* is found in (Mitra, 1878: 10-14), (Barua, 1931: 26-9), (Kane, 1953: 656-7), and (Vidyarthi, 1961: 114-17).
 18. It is difficult to decide which word is the priest's personal name and which is an adjective. Among the words which are interpreted as personal names, Ayyaya and Mahābāhu may be adjectives. However, these two words are also mentioned as personal names in the Sanskrit-Wörterbuch of Böhtlingk & Roth and the *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* of Monier-Williams.
 19. It is also possible that Brahmasadas may be a specific sacred spot for bathing in Gayā, which is mentioned in the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* 83.24cd. The more popular name Brahmasaras appear in the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* 84.19, *Vāyu Purāṇa* 49.37-40ab, and *Agni Purāṇa* 115.38-39ab.
 20. The *śloka* of 2.49.92 also appears, as given at the beginning of this paper, at 2.43.21 and 2.43.42 in the *Vāyu Purāṇa*. On the other hand, the other Purāṇas never mention this *śloka*. Only the *Tristhaṇīsetu* quotes it (p. 351).
 21. All the fourteen names should be masculine, because these names represent *gotras*. Therefore *lokasaṃmahat* should also be understood as masculine accusative, though grammatically wrong. Instead of '*lokākṣiṃ lokasaṃmahat*', two manuscripts adopt '*atha golākṣisattamam*' (Jacques, 1962: 43).
 22. The inscription found on the wall near a hall called Sorahvedī in the Viṣṇupada Temple complex is the oldest existing inscription in Hindu Gayā. It was inscribed in the seventh year of Nārāyaṇapāla (the middle of the ninth century CE), and it informs the establishment of an *āśrama* (abode) for ascetics by Bhāṇḍadeva. Starting with praises of Viṣṇu and Nṛsiṃha, it describes the lineage of Bhāṇḍadeva. The 11th verse states that only ascetics who are not deformed and are respectable should stay in the *āśrama*, and it should be observed by the pure

and the most pleasing Brahmins of Gayā (*amalaiḥ priyatamair viprair gayāvāsibhiḥ*) so that there would be no transgression of this rule.

There exist five inscriptions from the middle of the eleventh century CE located at the Kṛṣṇadvārikā Temple, the shrine of Nṛsimha in the Viṣṇupada Temple, the shrine of Vaṭeśa under the Akṣayaṇa, the Gadādhara Temple, and the Śītalā Temple. These inscriptions inform the establishment of statues and temples by Viśvarūpa (or Viśvāditya), who was the son of Śūdraka and the grandson of Paritoṣa, and by the son of Viśvarūpa, Yakṣapāla. According to D.C. Sircar, Śūdraka was recognized as a ruling chief by the contemporary Pāla king of Gauḍa. The epithets *nṛpa* and *narendra* applied in these inscriptions to Viśvarūpa (or Viśvāditya) and Yakṣapāla respectively were granted to even small landowners in this period (Sircar, 1970: 82). This family was expressed by the name *mahādvijarāja-vamśa*. *Mahādvija* may mean Brahmins who work in relation with funeral rites. Sircar states 'it is therefore not impossible that Paritoṣa was a Gayāla Brāhmaṇa' (ibid.: 83).

The inscription dated vs 1232 (1175 CE) appeared near the Gadādhara Temple (Cunningham, 1873: 125, Plate XXXVIII; Sircar, 1966: 233-8). This informs that a Brahmin named Vidyādhara fed Brahmins in v.s. 1232, the fourteenth year of the last Pāla king Govindapāla. The names of witnesses to the feeding in verses 2 and 3 are Padma, Viśvarūpa, Nṛsimha, Śrīdhara, Devadhara, Allī, and Padmanābha. They were from Tapovana. The names Rāghava, Śrīkara, Asūka, Dāmodara, Hīdhara, Bhikha, Devanidhi, and Dharmin are mentioned in verse 4 as protectors of endowment made by Vidyādhara. There is one line of writing in the left margin along the border of the inscription. It states that Someśvara and *gayādvija* Padmānābha endorsed the endowment.

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