

## TĪRTHA PRIESTS IN MODERN HINDUISM: ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE GAYĀVĀLA

Tomoka Mushiga\*

---

**Abstract:** This paper is ethnography of Gayāvālas, *paṇḍās* or local priests of the Hindu sacred place Gayā in southern Bihar. The paper describes the situation of the Gayāvāla in 2010s and considers the changes that occurred across the sixty years after the monumental study by L.P. Vidyarthi (1961). Although there are economic and ideological differences among the present Gayāvālas, overall, they face the new individualised or secularised phase, in which the priestly work is slipping from the centre of their lives. Some Gayāvālas do not choose their priestly work as their preference. This tendency is given expression in the preference of biological links over inherited professional surnames which offer convenience to pilgrims. In addition to the analyses from the historical view, Gayāvālas' dietary habits; rites of passage (*samskāra*); their strict endogamy; the system of succession of lineage and property; and their relationship with pilgrims, Brahmin priests, monasteries, servants, Dhāmins who have insisted their position as another kind of *paṇḍā*; and the administrative organs are recorded based on twenty months of fieldwork.

### INTRODUCTION

In 1961, a study about the Hindu sacred place Gayā, written by L.P. Vidyarthi, was published. Some of its data and analyses have value even today, especially the outline of the hundred years of history of the Gayāvāla, the descriptions of their condition in 1950s, and seven Gayāvālas' biographies.<sup>1</sup> The Gayāvāla is the *paṇḍā* (*tīrtha-purohita*) of Gayā. They are local priests who provide lodging and food to pilgrims and arrange the *śrāddha* rite (ritual for ancestors). In return for these services, pilgrims give Gayāvālas gifts and monetary donations.

I conducted fieldwork in Gayā from August 2014 to April 2016. My room was located in the Gayāvāla's residential area, Andar-Gayā (*antara-gayā*, core-Gayā), demarcated by four gates and covering approximately 0.8 km east to west and 1.5 km north to south. The current paper is an ethnography of the Gayāvāla based on the fieldwork, and it takes into account the changes during the sixty years after Vidyarthi's report.

### THE RISE AND FALL OF THE GAYĀVĀLA AND THE DIFFERENCES AMONG THEM

Vidyarthi found the Gayāvālas' four types that had developed through time as well as coexisted at that time: folk, Sanskritic, feudalistic and proletarian. Folk priests are characterised by their folk belief and custom, Sanskritic priests stick to

---

\* Doctoral Student, Department of Ancient History, Culture and Archaeology, University of Allahabad. Email: [moka1349@gmail.com](mailto:moka1349@gmail.com)

the traditional religious life, feudalistic priests lead a luxurious life and proletarian priests are marked by economic, demographic and spiritual degeneration (Vidyarthi, 1961: 86-110). Vidyarthi properly described the condition of feudalistic Gayāvālas in the nineteenth century and points out the causes of decline down to the proletarian priests. Because of the improvement in legal security and transportation facilities, the number of pilgrims increased during nineteenth century. Gayāvālas monopolised the numerous gifts from pilgrims, lived in palatial buildings attended by many servants, enjoyed music and wrestling and received royal titles such as *rāy bahādur* (Vidyarthi, 1961: 90-96).<sup>2</sup> Such good times gradually ceased with the enactment of the Bihar and Orissa Pilgrim Act in 1920, the partition of India in 1947 and the abolition of the Zamīndārī system in 1950 (Vidyarthi, 1961: 98-101).

The Sanskritic, feudalistic and proletarian priests were observed in the 2010s. However, these types of priests cannot be applied to the whole community. Religious and economic differences exist among Gayāvālas. According to Vidyarthi's report, one family out of twenty accepted fish and goat, and liquor was taboo among a few families (Vidyarthi, 1961: 102-103). Currently, there are some Gayāvāla families who avoid even onion and garlic. I experienced being served lunch with raw onion salad in a Gayāvāla home, even though the family claimed that they did not eat onion and garlic. The elder man of this family drinks liquor secretly. I also realised the family members take *bhāng* (intoxicating hemp). Smoking *ganja* (marijuana) is habitual to a few male Gayāvālas. I have never given the opportunity to observe Gayāvālas eating meat or fish. It is said that Gayāvālas did not take food cooked by Gayāvāla women and South Indian or Marāṭhī women prepared food for them.<sup>3</sup> Nowadays, Gayāvāla women attend to their kitchens by themselves.

Their strict vegetarianism can be attributed to their position as disciples of a monastery of the Madhva sect, Uttarādimaṭha. In 1620, when Vidyādhiśa Svāmī (the head of Uttarādimaṭha from 1619 to 1631) visited Gayā, the Gayāvāla were initiated into the *maṭha* (Gurdā, 1916: 110; Pāṇḍuraṅgi, 2004: xvi, 288-290, 331). These days, every third or fourth year, the head of Uttarādimaṭha visits Gayā. He performs special rituals at the Viṣṇupada (the footprint of the god Viṣṇu) temple and visits Gayāvālas to consecrate them by putting heated stamps of conch and disk on their faces and bodies. In Gayā he moves around in a palanquin carried by Gayāvālas (Figure 1). A few Gayāvālas paint conch and disk on their faces and bodies by sandalwood paste every day. A representative of Uttarādimaṭha is deputed by the headquarters at Bengaluru to remain at the Gayā branch as its manager. This representative teaches Gayāvāla boys Sanskrit and the manner of rituals.

The economic gap among Gayāvālas is quite remarkable. In the morning, the Viṣṇupada temple is crowded by Gayāvālas who come there to earn pocket money. The Viṣṇupada temple is owned by the Gayāvāla community, and all Gayāvālas have a right to receive donations there. If an outsider slips in the temple to receive donations, he will be driven out soon. To pilgrims who come to the temple to throw



**Figure 1: Gayāvālas with their guru (This figure was offered by Mr. Vādirājācārya, a disciple of Uttarādimaṭha, Bengaluru.)**

*piṇḍas* (balls made by cooked rice or barely and offered to ancestors), Gayāvālas recite *mantras* and receive donations. A few Gayāvālas remain at the statues of gods in the temple complex and induce visitors to offer money. Such behaviours are not considered honourable or their primary work. Only poor Gayāvālas are obliged to do this small-income work. Vidyarthi also noticed Gayāvālas' such activities in the temple (Vidyarthi, 1961: 84).

There are examples of Gayāvālas who are economically suffering. A few young Gayāvālas lost their fathers early in their childhood and cannot secure economic assistance from their relatives because of the family's division. They are not educated and have no options but priestly work. They have to feed their small children and old mothers and come up with high-rate dowries for their unmarried sisters. One of them told me that he visited the railway station early in the morning every day to catch pilgrims. He and his little son were spotted at the Viṣṇupada temple on the day of Nirjalāekādaśī (eleventh day of *śukla pakṣa* in the Jyeṣṭha month, the day good for fasting without water) when many Hindus stay there throughout night and give donations. He stayed there for twelve hours and received donations from visitors. The day is in the hottest season. Wearing a *t*-shirt, he was dripping with sweat. He seemed to throw his pride of being a Gayāvāla priest. Another middle-aged Gayāvāla lost his *yajamāna* (pilgrims, see Section 3 and 4) because of his father's untimely death. His elder brother also passed away when he was young. This man is uneducated but clever. He manages a timber store and also earns some money from *yajamānas* succeeded from his son-less father-in-law to support his five children and wife.

On the other hand, there are Gayāvālas who are not seen in temples or public places. All the services for pilgrims are attended to by their servants, except for the Gayāvāla's primary role, that is, giving pilgrims *ājñā* (the permission of starting the pilgrimage in Gayā) and *suphala* (the acknowledgement of the pilgrimage's accomplishment) (Figure 2). A middle-aged brother-less Gayāvāla from one of the richest families has a luxurious life, much like as a feudalistic priest. He is an expert in Hindustani classical music and enjoys singing and playing musical instruments with a few music-loving Gayāvālas in the large hall of his palatial house every night. He also owns an *akhādā* for wrestling bouts in his large residence.



Figure 2: A Gayāvāla, giving *suphala* to his *yajamāna*

The above situations can be explained by the Gayāvāla's types Vidyarthi described. However, the past sixty years have given Gayāvālas the opportunity to be another type of priest. For some Gayāvālas, their side businesses are necessary for their livelihoods, such as the abovementioned Gayāvāla who manages a timber store. This situation should belong to the proletarian priests. In these days, however, some Gayāvālas don't choose their priestly work based on their preference and determination. All Gayāvālas don't have to go into the family business, but there are Gayāvālas who find other profane jobs. This type can be named the individualised or secularised priests. The priestly work is no longer a necessary requirement for being a Gayāvāla.

In the 1950s, when Vidyarthi conducted his survey in Gayā, the Gayāvāla community was declining steadily. He reported that the average number of pilgrims

per year varied from 50,000 to 80,000 (Vidyarthi, 1961: 97) and compared these figures to those of the beginning of the twentieth century (300,000 in 1906). On the other hand, now the number of pilgrims has increased from the time of Vidyarthi. Only in the sixteen days of the *pitṛ-pakṣa* festival in 2015, according to the district administration, 600,000 pilgrims visited Gayā. Group tours through travel agents have increased dramatically. Pilgrimages to Gayā have become easier and more casual than before. Vidyarthi supposed that one of the reasons for the decrease of Gayā pilgrimage was a new consciousness among educated Hindus, who had begun to think it somewhat superfluous to spend money in ‘the name of the dead and gone’ (Vidyarthi, 1961: 99). But now, abundant donations made by rich pilgrims seem to be the symbol of wealth. Thus, although priestly work flourishes compared to the time of Vidyarthi, some Gayāvālas need to earn more from side businesses, and a few Gayāvālas prefer profane jobs to priestly work.

According to Vidyarthi, only two people were engaged in non-priestly work, and Gayāvālas preferred priesthood over other commercial jobs (Vidyarthi, 1961: 61, 64). He also reported two examples of vehement criticism of those who tried to open shops (Vidyarthi, 1961: 109–110). However, the situation has changed. A female Gayāvāla whose husband works as a trader of bed sheets told me that many Gayāvālas are engaged in non-priestly work for better income. According to her, when her husband started the job, his family members subjected him to severe criticism. But now, his family members don’t prevent her sons, who are not interested in the priesthood, from preparing examinations for civil services. She grumbled that her sons have a disadvantage in interviews for government jobs because they may be identified as Gayāvālas because of their address and surname. Although some Gayāvālas are proud of their status as *paṇḍās* even today, others, especially young Gayāvālas, feel ashamed of their roots.

The increasing non-preference for the priesthood is linked to the changes in education. According to Vidyarthi’s survey, ‘in 1953, out of 321 Gayāvālas of school-going age, only 80 boys had got admission into the schools, and very few of them attended regularly’ (Vidyarthi, 1961: 85). He also reported Gayāvālas’ negative view of the modern system of education (Vidyarthi, 1961: 64). On the other hand, in modern times, most Gayāvāla youth go to school. Among the five children of the one poor Gayāvāla man, his first and second sons go to an inter college after having passed the tenth class while his two daughters don’t go to school. A few Gayāvāla girls are admitted into bachelor courses at local universities. One Gayāvāla married his son and daughter to people in families of other castes and left (or was expelled) from the Gayāvāla community. He lives in Bodhgayā and teaches Japanese, taking advantage of his experience of staying in Japan for a few years. Although some Gayāvālas look down on his decision, there are quite a few Gayāvālas who are proud of the presence of such an educated member in their community.



Though there are economic differences and diversities in their way of life and thinking, the unity of Gayāvālas remains. While there are continuous conflicts over pilgrims among Gayāvālas,<sup>4</sup> once a conflict with other communities occurs, all Gayāvālas unite (see Section 5). Vidyarthi enumerated seven associations of Gayāvālas that had been defunct, save for one association (Gayāvāla Sankīrtan Samāj), because of the internal rivalry, mutual suspicion and factional jealousy (Vidyarthi, 1961: 104–105). An association named Viṣṇupada Prabandhkāriṇī Samiti has been around for decades. Eleven Gayāvālas are elected members of the association by all Gayāvālas. The election is held every third year. Although its main purpose is the management of the Viṣṇupada temple, selected members attend meetings as representatives of the community in the district administration. An association named Tīrtha Vṛddhi Sudhāraṇī Sabhā exists even today, while Vidyarthi informed the same name association had functioned from 1930 to 1952 (Vidyarthi, 1961: 104). Its original purpose was protecting the welfare of the Gayāvāla, but nowadays, it manages the holy spots (*vedīs*) in Gayā. The new association named Gayāpāla Yuvā Saṃgha started in July 2015. It was founded for reinstating the Gayāvālas' lost privileges and protecting their right against brokers (*dalāl*).

### GAYĀVĀLAS' LIFE AND LIFESTYLE<sup>5</sup>

As stated in the previous section, some poor Gayāvālas are obliged to adjust their lifestyles to the pilgrims' needs. Others who employ servants don't have to rush to the railway station or temples, but they also change their schedules according to the seasons when the number of their *yajamānas* increases. Even Gayāvālas who are engaged in non-priest work help their family business during the seasons. In the busy periods, Gayāvālas employ many priests and servants; however, only pedigree Gayāvālas can give *ājña* and *suphala*.

Although Gayā is the most crowded during the *pitṛ-pakṣa* (*kṛṣṇa pakṣa* of the Āśvina month, i.e., September to October), pilgrims from different regions come there at different times. During the *pitṛ-pakṣa*, remarkable increasing is found in the number of those who belong to Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan. Many pilgrims from Nepal come to Gayā in the *kṛṣṇa pakṣa* of Pauṣa month (December to January). In the cold season until Makara-sankrānti (15th January), the hill area people, like those who are from Himachal Pradesh, Panjab, and Jammu & Kashmir, are observed in Gayā. Many Pilgrims from Maharashtra also come to Gayā in this season. For pilgrims from South India, spring and summer are their seasons, which start from Śivarātri. The *kṛṣṇa-pakṣa* of Caitra month (March to April) has the same tendency with the *pitṛ-pakṣa*. Crowded seasons in Pauṣa and Caitra months are called by locals as “mini *pitṛ-pakṣa*.” The summer is off season in Gayā except for pilgrims from South India. From Śrāvaṇa to Bhādrapada month (July to September), the number of pilgrims increases gradually. Many people from Gujarat come to Gayā in Bhādrapada month. In an intercalary month, Gayā is

crowded by pilgrims from north Bihar. Bengali pilgrims come to Gayā throughout the year, especially their number increases after *pitṛ-pakṣa* to Kārttika month. Among the total number of pilgrims to Gayā, Bengali pilgrims seem to occupy the first position.

Gayāvālas have divided the whole of India and Nepal, including modern Pakistan and Bangladesh, into small areas and assigned the pilgrims from every area as each *yajamāna*. They keep many pilgrim records (*bahī*) with detailed indexes. Looking at the pilgrim's name of village and caste, Gayāvālas can show the pilgrim their ancestors' records. The oldest paper records that I could access were written in 1870 CE. These were records of royal families. It is said that a few Gayāvālas have records written on copper plates, which are older than the paper records. They are proud of their contact with royal families.

During the off season or immediately before the pilgrimage seasons, some Gayāvālas tour their assigned areas for recruiting new *yajamānas* and for meeting and accepting donations from *yajamānas* who had already visited Gayā.<sup>6</sup> For example, a mid-thirties Gayāvāla visits the assigned areas in Gujarat in June to July and December to January. Sometimes, his young servant represents him. A middle-aged Gayāvāla makes an annual three and a half months tour to Kanpur, Kolkata and Bengaluru starting in the latter half of January. He informed me that he has a room in each city and leaves some furniture and daily goods in each room. A Gayāvāla over the age of fifty stays in Himachal Pradesh after Caitra month (March to April) until before *pitṛ-pakṣa*. He has a room in the house of his *yajamāna*.

However, most of the work for escorting pilgrims is now taken over by travel agents. Large tour buses from every part of India flock to Gayā throughout the year. Some travel agents contact the same Gayāvāla regularly, while other agents negotiate with several Gayāvālas for a hefty commission. The role of these travel agents has influenced the area-wise assignment among Gayāvālas. And these days, pilgrims prefer staying in hotels with good facilities instead of Gayāvālas' lodges. A few Gayāvālas have their own websites to attract new pilgrims, disregarding the assigned area. In this way, the ties between Gayāvālas and their *yajamānas* have become weaker than before.<sup>7</sup>

There are some unique points in rites of passage (*saṃskāra*) of the Gayāvāla. As other Hindus, Gayāvālas celebrate *chaṭhī* (*ṣaṣṭhī*) on the sixth day after birth. *Annaprāśana* (called *mujūṭhī* in the local language, a weaning ceremony) and *nāmakaraṇa* (ritual of naming a child) are also performed. *Vidyārambha* (ritual for the beginning of study) is rarely performed today. Ideally, *muṇḍana* (tonsure) should be performed when a person is two or three years old. Vidyarthi reported that *upanayana* (initiation by investing sacred thread) was performed between the ages of seven and nine (Vidyarthi, 1961: 58). But the situation is different in modern times. *Muṇḍana* and *upanayana* need the ritual called *ghṛtadārī* (offering clarified butter) to the gods of the lineage (*kula devatā*) and decorate the house and

prepare food for a number of guests (most of them are Gayāvālas). The ritual takes about five hours, and all the preparations are too costly. Therefore, many Gayāvālas set *muṇḍana* and *upanayana* at the time of their relatives' marriage ceremonies, which also require the *ghṛtadārī* ritual and such preparations. Three sons of a poor Gayāvāla took their *upanayana* together. Generally, *muṇḍana* and *upanayana* are held later than the ideal age.

The Gayāvāla's marriage ceremony traditionally has three processes: *tilak* (giving and receiving dowry), *śādī* (marriage ritual) and *vidāī* (bride's farewell for departure to the house of her in-laws).<sup>8</sup> If the bride is young or studying, *vidāī* is conducted a few years after the marriage ritual. The Gayāvāla's marriage procession (*barāt*) starts from the residence of the bridegroom to that of the bride both on *tilak* and *śādī* traditionally, while in the Hindu tradition, the procession of *tilak* starts from the residence of the bride. The procession is too luxurious. Gayāvāla men from the house of the bridegroom parade with loud sound of a musical band, fireworks, crackers and guns. The dressed bridegroom rides on a horse. It takes more than three hours to reach the house of bride located at only for the ten minutes walking distance from their house. A middle-aged woman of another caste, living in the neighbourhood of Gayāvālas from her childhood, commented on the Gayāvālas' marriage ceremony as 'competition'. Even after the start of suitable time for marriage in the Kārttika month, Gayāvālas don't set marriage before celebrating the marriage of Rāma (*rāmavivāha*) on the fifth day of *śukla pakṣa* in the Mārgaśīrṣa month. Rāma's marriage is celebrated luxuriously under the sponsorship of the Viṣṇupada Prabandhkāriṇī Samiti (Figure 3).



Figure 3: The marriage of Rāma celebrated in the Viṣṇupada temple



The Gayāvāla observe the rule of endogamy strictly. The usual form of their marriage is *golak śādī* (circle marriage), where both families exchange brides for avoiding the payment of dowry. Sometimes, a small girl must be married at the time of her elder brother or cousin's marriage and continues to live with her parents until she comes of age. B.P. Shome reported the marriageable age of Gayāvāla boys from 17 to 19 and that of girls from 3 to 9 years (Shome, 1904: 14). Currently, child marriage is uncommon among the Gayāvāla. Remarriage is not prohibited if one marries again with the partner from the Gayāvāla community. But I have never heard about remarriage for Gayāvāla women.

When a Gayāvāla marries with a person who belongs to other caste, he or she is expelled from the Gayāvāla community. He and his descendants are not allowed to work as Gayāvāla priests and are regarded as 'fake (*naklī*)' Gayāvālas. Some of them leave Andar-Gayā, while others still live there and continue the priesthood as Gayāvālas despite the severe criticism. One such person married a woman from another Brahmin caste and married his son and three daughters into other Brahmin castes. He insisted that the tradition of endogamy should be ceased to prevent the Gayāvāla lineages from extinction. He and his family are not in contact with the Gayāvāla community, but they live in their ancestral house in Andar-Gayā. On the gate of his home, there is a sign mentioning him as an authorised Gayāvāla. Another case I found is four brothers whose father married a woman from another caste. Their *yajamānas* were inherited by another Gayāvāla family. The four brothers work under that family and receive a small share. As far as I know, there are two cases of concubines, but this number may be more (Cf. Vidyarthi, 1961: 95).

The dead people from the Gayāvāla community are cremated at the Gadādhara ghāṭ located a little north from the cremation grounds of other Hindus. Bones are collected on the fourth day after the cremation and are brought to Allahabad by a few members of the family to throw into the meeting point of the two rivers Gaṅgā and Yamunā. A simple ritual is held every day until the tenth day, when all men belonging to the family are tonsured. On the eleventh day, the funeral priest (*mahāpātra*), who directs all the rituals after death, is fed and given gifts, including a bedstead, bed sheets, a pillow, vessels, a pair of sandals, umbrella and so forth (*śayyādāna*) by the family. Only one *mahāpātra* family has a relationship with all Gayāvālas. The house of the family is located inside Andar-Gayā. On the twelfth day, at the Viṣṇupada temple (for Gayāvālas who live in the southern part of Andar-Gayā) or the Brahmaṇī ghāṭ (for Gayāvālas who live in its northern part), they cook milk-rice using earthen vessels and make *piṇḍas*. The ritual for uniting the dead and his ancestors of three generations (*sapiṇḍīkaraṇa*) is also performed. On that day, the dead person's daughters' husbands and sons are fed and given small gifts (such as vessels) as respectable Brahmins. On the thirteenth day, they give them gifts of *śayyādāna*, even though all the rituals of the twelfth day are directed by the Gayāvālas' family priest (*kula purohita*),<sup>9</sup> who is given the gifts per the

general Hindu tradition. On the thirteenth day, all Gayāvālas and neighbours are invited to the feast. And the next day, the person who lighted the funeral pyre is adorned with a turban (*pagḍī*). This ritual symbolically makes him the new leader of the family. All the family members eat rice on this day. Shome reported that the Gayāvāla continue funeral rites for twelve months (Shome, 1904: 25). Today, main rituals are finished by the fourteenth day after cremation, and sometimes within twelve months, Gayāvālas break the mourning, during which auspicious rituals are prohibited. Gayāvālas also perform *gayā-śrāddha* (*śrāddha* rites in Gayā). It is the husbands or sons of the daughters who receive the gifts of *gayā-śrāddha* and give *suphala* as their Gayāvāla.

### THE PRINCIPLE OF SUCCESSION OF LINEAGE AND PROPERTY IN THE GAYĀVĀLA COMMUNITY

For discussions about the Gayāvālas' lives and lifestyles, the system of their succession of lineage and property must be introduced. Gayāvālas' surnames express that their life has been controlled by the priestly work, but this situation is changing slowly, as explained in the previous two sections.

Gayāvālas have several surnames. Their surnames not only indicate their kin, but also serve as symbols for pilgrims. It is not easy for pilgrims to find the precise Gayāvāla responsible for their native place. Before coming to Gayā, pilgrims ask their relatives or neighbours about the surname of their Gayāvāla. A Gayāvāla family facing extinction turns over own *yajamānas* to another Gayāvāla with other properties; then, the successor and his family bear the surname of predecessor as well as their original one. A Gayāvāla who belongs to lineage A introduces himself with title B to pilgrims from one area and with title C to pilgrims from another area. Interestingly, with the passage of time, the boundary between a surname of their original lineage and inherited titles might become ambiguous, and sometimes, the original lineage may be forgotten. The professional titles for convincing *yajamānas* become Gayāvālas' identities. Their unique custom has not been well-known to people outside because their succession system of lineage and property has not yet been studied.<sup>10</sup>

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a Gayāvāla, Kānhū Lāl Gurdā, prepared a list that included all the contemporary Gayāvāla families (Gurdā, 1916: 127–158). One hundred and three families (“*ghar*” in his terms) were described by him, giving the names of ancestors and moving processes of properties. To reveal the changes over the hundred years of each family, I started collecting the Gayāvālas' family trees. There are few written records, and most parts of the survey owe to oral interviews. Gayāvālas recognise their own relatives as *gotiyā* (those belonging to the same *gotra*) or members of the same *khāndān* (lineage), while they call inherited surname their *gaddī* (seat). They apply the word *ṭāiṭil* (title) to both lineage name and inherited *gaddīs*.

Gurdā's descriptions give higher priority to inherited title than kin, for he created his list so that pilgrims could easily find their own Gayāvāla (Gurdā, 1916: 127). The important thing for pilgrims is not the blood relationships among Gayāvālas, but rather the information about the Gayāvāla family that has the jurisdiction over their native place. In short, Gurdā recorded 103 *gaddīs*, not lineages. However, I revised his descriptions and prepared the new list based on blood relationships rather than inherited properties not only to ensure the consistency of the list, but also to take into account the Gayāvāla's customs.

Gayāvālas belonging to the same lineage continue their relationship as relatives, even though they are known by each inherited title, live in each inherited residence and work separately for inherited *yajamānas*. Here, a lineage named Pāṭhak is cited as an example. At the time of Gurdā, Śyām Lāl Pāṭhak and his son Pañcam Lāl were heads of this family. Pañcam Lāl had six sons, Śaṅkar Lāl, Bālī Lāl, Baijū Lāl, Bihārā Lāl, Govind Lāl and Jay Kiśun. Baijū and Bihārā had no son. Śaṅkar Lāl succeeded the *gaddī* of his father-in-law Kanhaiyā Lāl Pāṭhak Bhaiyā, and Bālī Lāl succeeded that of his uncle Rām Lāl and Baldev Lāl Golīvār. Govind Lāl succeeded his father, that is, *gaddī* of Pāṭhak, and Jay Kiśun succeeded that of his father-in-law Śyām Lāl Gupt Agnivār. The descendants of these four are living and known by inherited titles (Pāṭhak Bhaiyā, Golīvār, Gupt Agnivār), except for the descendants of Govind Lāl. They live in different places in Andar-Gayā and work separately. However, their relationship remains intact and becomes evident at times of mourning. When anyone belonging to this Pāṭhak lineage dies, these four groups hold mourning in common for ten days. For relatives by marriage, the mourning period is four days. They also observe the period of impurity caused by birth.

I found another example demonstrating the priority of blood relationships over property. Motī Lāl and Kiśan Lāl were the sons of Baijū Lāl Meharvār. Motī Lāl succeeded the *gaddī* of Rāmā jī Golīvār, and Kiśan Lāl succeeded that of Meharvār as well as his father-in-law Kiśan Lāl Parvatiyā and Pannā Lāl Bhaiyā. At the time of Gurdā, they were the head owners of each *gaddī*. Today, Motī Lāl's descendants are known by the title Golīvār. Kiśan Lāl had only daughters, and one of their sons, Bihārī Lāl Gurdā, succeeded his property. Bihārī Lāl's sons are alive, bear the name of Meharvār, live in the house of Meharvār, and are responsible for Meharvār's *yajamānas* from Punjab and Himachal Pradesh, but they still belong to the Gurdā lineage. The descendants of Motī Lāl live in the house to which they succeeded from Golīvār but visit the house of Meharvār, where Bihārī Lāl Gurdā's sons live, to worship their ancestors.

The 103 *gaddīs* on Gurdā's list can be converted to fifty-nine lineages. Members of the same lineage mentioned separately in Gurdā's list are integrated into my new list, keeping the numbers assigned by Gurdā. With the help of Gurdā's descriptions and interviews from the present Gayāvālas, the new list was completed, including the male Gayāvālas' names of eight to eleven generations in each lineage and the

moving process of *gaddīs*. I concluded that the number of existing lineages is thirty-five.

Biological links, however, are not fixed permanently. A leader of the Gayāvāla community, who belongs to the above Pāṭhak lineage and is the great-grandson of Pañcam Lāl, shared that the passage of seven generations makes the division of lineage possible, but this remains optional.

Not only to pilgrims, but also within the Gayāvāla community, some families became known by their inherited titles and sometimes cannot even determine their original lineage. For example, in the above Pāṭhak lineage, no one has information about the title Kauḍilā and its *gotra* although they should belong to the Kauḍilā lineage. According to Gurdā's account, the father of Śyām Lāl Pāṭhak was Hari Kauḍilā and Śyām Lāl just succeeded the *gaddī* of Pāṭhak. Similarly, the Ḍarrā lineage is acknowledged by its members and others as Bhaiyā (No. 3 in my list), the Mahato lineage as Bhaiyā (No. 9), the Baḍhiyā lineage as Kaṭriyār (No. 33), the Mahato lineage as Ṭāṭak (No. 38), the Sijuār lineage as Garāī (No. 47), the Gupt lineage as Gāyab (No. 55), the Bhogtā lineage as Dhokḍeśār (No. 63–64), the Larhā lineage as Kaṭriyār (No. 81), the Caudharī lineage as Nakphophā (No. 97) and the Pāṭhak lineage as Bārik, which has become known as Viṭṭhal, a derivative of their ancestor's first name (No. 90). Accepting the original lineage as Mahato, a member of the No. 38 family insisted they have become 'pure (*śuddh*) Ṭāṭak' with the passage of time.

The ambiguity between lineage and *gaddī* also manifests in the following fact: when one family's property transfers to another, its *gotra* can be inherited along with its title. *Gotra* is equal to a clan, a kinship group based on the purported descent from a common ancestor traced through the male line.<sup>11</sup> Some Gayāvālas have several *gotras*. For example, a Gayāvāla who belongs to the above Pāṭhak lineage and owns the *gaddī* of Golīvār told me that he belongs to the Kauśik *gotra* as Pāṭhak and to the Kāśyap *gotra* as Golīvār. Inherited *gotras* are useful at engagements. Marriage within a *gotra* is regarded as incest. If a man receives an offer of marriage to a woman in the same *gotra* group, he can marry her by using another inherited *gotra*. Gayāvālas, though, do not take a positive attitude toward such inner-*gotra* marriages.

Although the succession of *gaddī* without changing their lineage is more popular, adoption is sometimes carried out with little boys. Adoption requires a special ritual called *kuśa-pānī*. Reciting *mantras*, the adopted boy takes water (*pānī*) in his hand with *kuśa* grass in front of the Viṣṇupada and changes his original *gotra* to the adoptive lineage's *gotra*. Gayāvālas, however, perceive fewer differences between adoption and simple inheritance than might be imagined.

Thus, a lineage becomes just a *gaddī*, and sometimes, a *gaddī* converts into a form of lineage. This flexibility is the reason for the view given at the beginning of this section: Gayāvālas' surnames are good examples that show the priestly work has

occupied their lives. Today, however, there seems to be a clearer distinction between lineage (*gotiyā* and *khāndān*) and *gaddī*, according to the interviews with the present Gayāvālas. This change might be related to the changes explained in the previous two sections: the priestly work is slipping from the centre of the Gayāvālas' lives, and the ties between Gayāvālas and their *yajamānas* have weakened. The importance and necessity to declare the titles of *gaddīs* are not as important as before.

This is an example of an adopted son who retained his relation with his original lineage in modern times. The son of Rām Kiśun Lāl Gupt, Viṣṇu Lāl was adopted by Sarasvatī Dāī, the wife of Bulak Lāl Kaṭṛiyār. He lives in the inherited house of Kaṭṛiyār and wears the Kaṭṛiyār title for his *yajamānas*. However, he clearly stated that he enters mourning when a member of his original lineage dies. He is referred to as Viṣṇu Lāl Gupt (not Kaṭṛiyār) by many of Gayāvālas. Although it contradicts the rule of adoption, he told me that he belongs to the Kaṇv *gotra* (Gupt) as well as the Kāśyap *gotra* (Kaṭṛiyār). It seems that he has just an ownership of Kaṭṛiyār *gaddī*, while blood relationship with the Gupt lineage remains apart from its inheritance, even though he was adopted by the Kaṭṛiyār lineage. On the other hand, one hundred years ago, *gaddī* was not just an ownership of property. There was a very rich *gaddī* of the Sen lineage. The son of Lāl jī Bhogtā, Bālgovind succeeded the *gaddī* of Motī Sen. There is a record of V.S. 1970 (1913 CE) in the Viṣṇupada temple that mentions Bālgovind being the son (*putra*) of Motī Sen (Figure 4). It can be hypothesised that the Gayāvāla gradually are becoming inclined to assign more importance to biological links than categories based on inheritance.

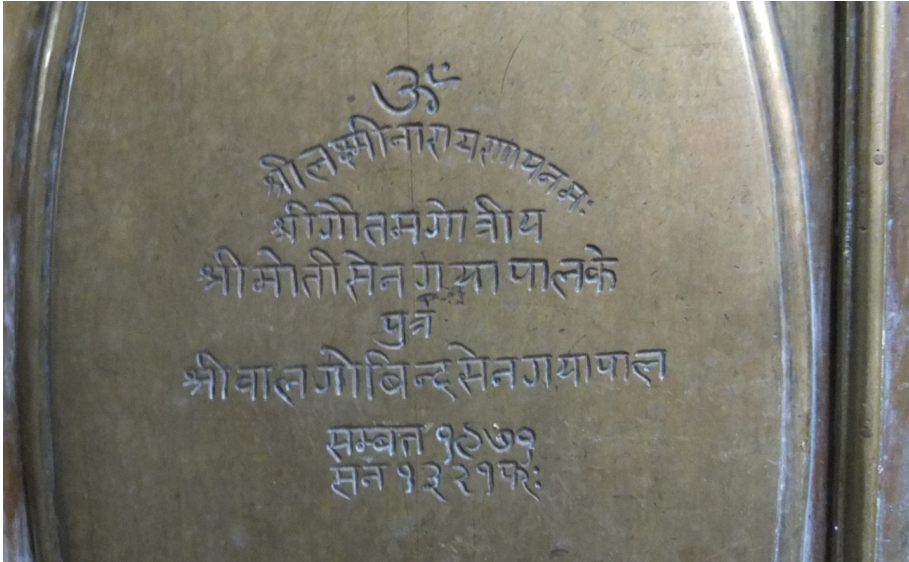


Figure 4: The lines from third to sixth are romanised as '*śrī-gautama-gotrīya śrī-moff-sen-gayāpāla ke putra śrīvālgobind-sen-gayāpāla*'



## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GAYĀVĀLA AND OTHER COMMUNITIES

As represented by their strict endogamy, the Gayāvāla remain in their exclusive space. They are proud of their status as the owner of Gayā and insist on their exclusive authority to give *ājña* and *suphala* to pilgrims. On the other hand, pilgrimage in Gayā cannot be accomplished only by the help of Gayāvālas; it needs various assistances from other communities. Brahmin priests (*paṇḍita*, *ācārya*) visit holy spots in and around Gayā with pilgrims and conduct their *śrāddha* rites. Servants (*naukar*) bring pilgrims from the railway station and arrange materials for making *piṇḍas*. Gayāvālas employ clerks (*munṣī*) for the writing and maintenance of pilgrim records and a barber (*nāī*) for tonsuring pilgrims. Brahmin priests and servants have worked under the same Gayāvāla family for several generations. As Vidyarthi pointed out, hereditary service is not as strong with the Brahmin priests as it is with their servants (Vidyarthi, 1961: 79–81). I observed that a servant boy had his head shaved on the tenth day of the funeral rites of a member of his master Gayāvāla family. He told me that he had no blood relation with the Gayāvāla family, but he took food with them on that day.

Gayāvālas use a kind of argot called Eksirāhī.<sup>12</sup> *Eksirāh* means Gayāvāla in this argot. They talk to each other in Eksirāhī before pilgrims to share information related to the quality of the pilgrims. For example, *dakhnār laḍhor* or *dhānī laḍhor* means a *yajamāna* who may give large or small donations, respectively. If a Gayāvāla calls a pilgrim *barār laḍhor*, another Gayāvāla can understand that the *yajamāna* is clever and that he should treat him carefully. *Caukaḍ* also means ‘difficult to treat’. Brahmin priests and servants also understand this argot. In front of pilgrims, Gayāvālas give orders to priests and servants in Eksirāhī. There are some words representing the materials of rituals and gifts.<sup>13</sup> The number vocabulary developed so that they could talk about the amount of donations in the presence of pilgrims.<sup>14</sup> Gayā’s locals know this argot to some extent. A local informed me that they could get meals at local restaurants if they asked a waiter to bring ‘*jaknī*’ (food in Eksirāhī). The comprehension of Eksirāhī represents the degree of intimacy with Gayāvālas.

Gayāvālas don’t want Brahmin priests to work independently but always to stay under their control. There are two kinds of Brahmin priests who conduct *gayā-śrāddha* for pilgrims. One group are the priests who belong to a Gayāvāla family and can perform *gayā-śrāddha* only. Another group are the priests who have the whole knowledge of Hindu rituals and perform *gayā-śrāddha* when they are requested by Gayāvālas. Sometimes, pilgrims contact with the latter priests directly, but for getting *ājña* and *suphala*, they have to bring the pilgrims to the Gayāvāla family who has the jurisdiction over the pilgrims’ native place. Even in the case where pilgrims come along with their own priests to Gayā, they still should visit a Gayāvāla family too.

In modern Gayā, there are some priest families whose ancestors hailed from other areas of India. They perform *śrāddha* rites in their languages and offer pilgrims accommodations and food. Nowadays, most of them bring their pilgrims to Gayāvālas. There is a family from Maharashtra and three families from Karnataka (Mysore and Mangalore). In addition to these priest families, there are some monasteries that are not specialised in pilgrim needs but offer them all the necessities, including an introduction to the proper Gayāvāla. A famous priest from Bengaluru runs a training centre for priests (*gurukula*) at his residence. A few Gayāvāla boys attend it. Sometimes, he is requested by Gayāvālas to perform rituals at the Viṣṇupada temple. Another eminent priest, who passed away in December 2015, founded the Rāmānujamaṭha of Gayā branch around forty years ago. Many pilgrims have contacted this monastery to perform *gayā-śrāddha*. There is another lodge that offers all the services for pilgrims from South India, especially from Tamil Nadu. The owner of this lodge is a local family. A fixed Gayāvāla family is called at the lodge for giving *suphala* at the last stage of the *gayā-śrāddha* procedure. In the same way, pilgrims coming to Kāncīmaṭha, Uttarādimaṭha and Gauḍīyamaṭha are turned over to a fixed Gayāvāla family related to each monastery.

Bhārat Sevāśram Saṃgha is crowded by pilgrims throughout the year. In 1924, the founder of this religious organisation, Yugācārya Svāmī, established the Gayā branch for the development of the sacred place and protection of pilgrims. At that time, severe conflict between the organisation and Gayāvālas occurred.<sup>15</sup> Even today, the relationship between these two is not cordial. Gayāvālas can identify all sixty to seventy priests employed by this branch and ask them the native place of their pilgrims when they bring pilgrims to the Phalgu River and the Viṣṇupada temple.

These priests and monasteries don't try to work independently without Gayāvālas' knowledge, at least currently. However, Gayāvālas are dissatisfied with this situation. They regard these priests and monasteries as brokers and want them to stop their activities. Travel agents are also called brokers by Gayāvālas. A Gayāvāla insisted that, 'these brokers earn money by working as *paṇḍās*, even though they are not authorised. We Gayāvālas are not their servants. Why are we obliged to get only a small part of the donation from pilgrims?'

There are temple priests or owners, who have been persuaded to transfer each temple's ownership to the Gayāvāla community. In modern times, it is believed that there are forty-five main holy spots for *gayā-śrāddha*. Although most of these spots belong to the Gayāvāla, other caste communities or families control some spots. Dharmāraṇya, located at the south end of the sacred precinct of Gayā (*gayākṣetra*), is owned by Krauñcadvīpī Brahmins living in the nearby village. Their surname is Pāṇḍe, and all of them belong to the Vatsy *gotra*. They also worship the head of Uttarādimaṭha as their *guru*. A Brahmin of this community said that Gayāvālas were their *guru-bhāts* (fellow disciples). Sometimes, they are asked for performing the *śrāddha* rite for Gayāvālas' *yajamānas*, or they introduce pilgrims who contacted

them directly to Gayāvālas. The Gayākūpa temple, standing near the Viṣṇupada temple, is managed by a Brahmin family. On the eastern bank of the Phalgu River, a temple named Sītakuṇḍa stands, and Rāmagayā is at the top of the small hill. The Sītakuṇḍa is owned by a Bhūmihār (land-holder) caste family, while the Rāmagayā belongs to the Gayāvāla community.

Five of these forty-five spots have been under the control of the Dhāmin community: Pretaśilā, Brahmakuṇḍa, Rāmaśilā, Rāmakuṇḍa and Kākabali. Dhāmins have insisted their position as another kind of *paṇḍā* of Gayā and have contested against the Gayāvāla. All Dhāmins have the title Pāṇḍe, but some motivated Dhāmins introduce their title as Dhāmī Paṇḍā. Although Gayāvālas regard Dhāmins as their ex-servants, Dhāmins deny this as a made-up story. Buchanan, who visited Gayā from 1811 to 1812, reported that Dhāmins gave one-fourth of their profits to the Gayāvāla (Buchanan, 1936/2013: 107), but nowadays, this custom is not observed. Though Vidyarthi introduced Dhāmins' low-caste customs and emphasised their non-Brahmin origin (Vidyarthi, 1961: 82–83), there is no definite evidence. At present, Dhāmins are living in the area named Dhāmī Ṭolā in the biggest market in Gayā, located 2 km north from the northern end of Andar-Gayā. I suspect that Vidyarthi's report showed that Dhāmins lived in the rural setting of the foothill zone of Pretaśilā in 1950s because some of Dhāmins' houses in Dhāmī Ṭolā are old buildings.

Dhāmins also control other temples: Śītalā temple next to Uttaramānasa, Sūrya temple in front of the Sūryakuṇḍa, Gadādhara temple behind of the Viṣṇupada temple (a half share belongs to a Gayāvāla family titled Dhokḍeśar) and Brahmayoni mountain. The temple of the goddess Sankatā, located a little south from the Viṣṇupada temple, belonged to the Dhāmin, according to narratives of the current priest of the temple. He informed me that his father bought the temple from Dhāmins. The Kṛṣṇadvārikā temple, which belongs to a Gayāvāla family titled Jhaṅgar (known as Dhokḍī as well), is said to have been owned by the Dhāmin. There are inscriptions assigned to the Pāla period in the Kṛṣṇadvārikā, Gadādhara and Śītalā temples (Banerji, 1915: 82–83, 95–97; Sircar, 1970). The Gadādhara temple had another inscription dating back to 1420 CE (Cunningham, 1873/1966: 129). The Sūrya temple has two inscriptions, whose dates are 1176 CE (Indraji, 1881) and 1374 CE (Kielhorn, 1891). Brahmayoni mountain had been one of the most important spots in Gayā. It was called Gayāsīsa (the head of Gayā) in old Buddhist literature.<sup>16</sup> In this way, the origins of many temples owned by the Dhāmin can be traced back to the older ages.

The relationship between the Gayāvāla and the administrative organs should also be recorded. Vidyarthi reported that 'in spite of the vehement opposition of the Gayāvāla, the government enacted the Bihar and Orissa Places of Pilgrimage Act of 1920 which curtailed the monopolistic role of the Gayāvāla in dealing

with the pilgrims' (Vidyarthi, 1961: 100). Based on the act, the Lodging House Committee (LHC) was established in Gayā for improving the accommodations of pilgrims. Only licenced lodges became able to accommodate pilgrims. The Gayāvālas' identity cards have been issued by the LHC since 1941 (Patna High Court, AIR1964Pat98: 2).

The chairperson of the LHC is Gayā's district magistrate, and two officers belonging to the district administration serve as its secretary and director. Five Gayāvālas were appointed to be the LHC's members in 2000, but two of the five have passed away. At that time, two renowned locals were also nominated. Seven people were working as assistants and lodge managers, and forty-two staff members were employed as drivers, sweepers and security guards before the LHC's temporary closing in March 2015.

Nowadays, issuing lodge licences and Gayāvālas' identity cards is carried out only for the *pitṛ-pakṣa* festival, when many fake *paṇḍās* appear in Gayā. The purpose of the issuing of identity cards is to distinguish between real *paṇḍās* and fake ones. Although Gayāvālas insist on the exclusive religious authority to manage the *gayākṣetra* and pilgrims, during the *pitṛ-pakṣa*, they cannot contact their *yajamānas* without the LHC's identity cards. Identity cards have been issued for Dhāmins as well. It is interesting that Dhāmins, who are regarded as fake *paṇḍās* by Gayāvālas, get an official guarantee as real *paṇḍās* by the LHC. The district administration maintains the pilgrimage sites so that hundreds of thousands of pilgrims do not face any problems during the festival.

In the *pitṛ-pakṣa* of 2015, 987 identity cards were issued for male Gayāvālas more than 18 years old, and sixty-three cards were issued for Dhāmins by the Gayā Town Council (*nagar nigam*). The LHC was ordered by the Patna High Court to close down temporarily on 11 March 2015. The plaintiff of the case was a few Gayāvālas. The leader of the plaintiffs sued the LHC on November 2012. On 10 February 2015, the Patna High Court asked the LHC's chairperson to answer these questions: whether transit duty is applied to Buddhists or Muslims,<sup>17</sup> the sum of tax collected from 2012 to the present and the facilities prepared for pilgrims using the collected tax. The chairperson submitted that only Hindus payed the transit duty, and the sum of tax from 2012 to 2014 was 8,711,465 rupees. On the 14th of February, the chairperson ordered the collection of transit duty to stop. The judgment of the High Court on the 11th of March was as follows: The LHC will not be allowed to collect taxes except for parking fees. The Pilgrim Act of 1920 would no longer be enforced. The state government should form a committee for the management of pilgrimage sites of Gayā with the help of the Bihar State Board of Religious Trusts (BSBRT), established by the Bihar state government under the Bihar Hindu Religious Trusts Act of 1950.<sup>18</sup> The LHC should hand over the collected tax for three years to the committee.

The plaintiff Gayāvāla was not satisfied with this judgement and appealed in the Supreme Court. He criticised the judgement of the High Court because of its insufficiency in questioning the nature of Pilgrim Act. However, the Supreme Court rejected the plaintiff's appeal and allowed the LHC's continuance on 28 September 2015. The secretary of LHC and other Gayāvālas supposed that the final appeal was brought because the plaintiff was afraid that the LHC would come under the BSBRT.

The Viṣṇupada temple is owned by the Gayāvāla community. The temple has been one of the important sources for Gayāvālas to earn their livelihoods. In 1998, the BSBRT fought against Gayāvālas over the ownership of the temple. The Gayā district court rejected the BSBRT's claim because the Viṣṇupada temple was the private property of the Gayāvāla who received their authority from the god Brahmā. A media report informed in July 2011 that the BSBRT intended to plead to the Patna High Court (Mishra, 2011), but no further news has come of it.

This paper has recorded the situation of the Gayāvāla in the 2010s with changes after the Vidyarthi's report. As the times have changed, Gayāvālas have been obliged to change their lifestyles. Some Gayāvālas seek ways to survive as *pandās*, while others try to adjust the trend of the times by choosing non-priest work. The circumstances around Gayāvālas are changing faster than before. How will they adjust to further changes? Keeping an eye on their developments for other decades will be of great interest.

### Notes

1. Although Vidyarthi's data and analyses about the Gayāvāla are valuable to some extent, his descriptions about the geography of Gayā and rituals performed there are not worth referring to. This is because of his insufficient fieldwork and the lack of knowledge of Sanskrit. And he should be censured for plagiarism. Appendix II (Vidyarthi, 1961: 118-140) is a copy of the booklet (Miśra and Prasād, 1954). Although Vidyarthi mentioned 'Baldeo Prasad' as the one who prepared a list of holy spots of Gayā in footnote 14 (Vidyarthi, 1961: 17), it should have been repeated in Appendix II. He copied the details of the Gayāvāla's fourteen *gotras* from (Gurdā, 1916: 112) in Appendix IV without any mention of Gurdā's book.
2. The descriptions of the Gayāvāla as the feudalistic priests are also available in other sources (MacDonald, 1890: 43; O'Malley, 1903; Shome, 1904: 13-32; O'Malley, 1906: 64-69, 217-218).
3. Vidyarthi conjectured that Marāṭhī women were employed for preparing *kacchā* food (food without frying), and other Brahmin women were for *pakkā* food (food with frying) (Vidyarthi, 1961: 54, 96). In relation to this matter, it is worth mentioning that food offerings (*bhog*) in the evening for the Viṣṇupada had been prepared by a Marāṭhī Brahmin woman until recently. Because she became old and sickly, two offerings, both at noon and in the evening, have been prepared by Uttarādimaṭha. Anyway, Gayāvālas don't prepare the offering for the god by themselves, even though they have exclusive ownership of the Viṣṇupada temple.
4. There are many conflicts among relatives. Ordinarily, these conflicts are like cold wars, but sometimes, these come to blows. Some locals belonging to other castes informed me that



- fight among Gayāvālas have decreased. As far as I know, at least two big fights happened during my stay in Gayā. A few fights, including attempted murders, have been reported in court records. (Ex. Criminal Miscellaneous No. 29646 of 1999, Patna High Court, ‘Gopal Lal Sizuar vs. State of Bihar on 3 August, 2010’, Criminal Miscellaneous No. 9109 of 2007 Patna High Court, ‘Ranjit Lal Bhaiya vs. State Of Bihar on 3 March, 2009’.)
5. See (Vidyarthi, 1961: 58-59) for the information about the ideal daily routine of the Gayāvāla.
  6. Vidyarthi describes large-scale tours with many attendants to *yajamānas*’ villages which were necessary because of the limitation of transportation facilities for pilgrims. These tours had already ceased by the time of Vidyarthi (Vidyarthi, 1961: 76-77).
  7. Vidyarthi reported the *rozgariyā-panḍā* relationship that replaced the traditional *panḍā-yajamāna* relationship. *Rozgariyā* is equal to *dalāl*. According to his informants, more than seventy per cent of pilgrims came through *rozgariyā* (Vidyarthi, 1961: 107).
  8. See (Shome, 1904: 15-22) for the details of the Gayāvāla’s traditional wedding ceremony.
  9. Formerly, a Marāṭhī Brahmin family was the Gayāvāla’s family priest who was appointed by the head of Uttarādimaṭha. The family have also been disciples of the Uttarādimaṭha. After the eldest man of this family died and his two sons started non-priestly work, they turned over the status of the Gayāvāla’s family priest to a local Brahmin family. This Marāṭhī family had taken on the responsibility of preparing the offering for Viṣṇupada in the evening until recently (see Note 3). Still, this family takes care of the Jagannātha temple inside the Viṣṇupada temple complex. A few Gayāvāla families give donations for funeral rites to this family too.
  10. ‘The study of Gayawal’s lineage and clan (gotra) provides an interesting problem in the research. It is especially interesting because of their custom of local caste endogamy. For the present purpose, however, I have said enough to bring note the significance of lineage’ (Vidyarthi, 1961: 72).
  11. Fourteen *gotras* are recognised among the Gayāvāla in the *Gayāmāhātmya* (*Vāyu-purāṇa* 2.50.8–9), but only six exist today (Gautam, Kāśyap, Kauśik, Kaṇv, Bhāradvāj and Vātsy).
  12. Compared with the argot of *panḍās* of Banāras (Mehrotra, 1977: 19–52), there is little similarity between their argot and that of Gayāvālas.
  13. *Murhī: piṇḍa*, *saphedī*: milk, *leī: ghī*, *dhanaiyā*: money, *bhojī*: gifts at the *suphala*, *piyarkā*: gold, *ujarkā*: silver, *utrī*: clothes, *goḍāgī*: sandal and shoes, *kauaiṭī*: vessel, *mudrikā*: ring, *chatarī*: umbrella, *carkī*: watch, *cārgodhvā*: cow, *jaknī*: food.
  14. The counting system of Eksirāhī is quinary. *sāṅg*: 1, *jognā*: 2, *siṅghāḍā*: 3, *kisor*: 4, *barmāt*: 5, *barmāt sāṅg*: 6, *barmāt jognā*: 7, *barmāt siṅghāḍā*: 8, *barmāt kisor*: 9, *jognā barmāt*: 10, *jognā barmāt sāṅg*: 11, *jognā barmāt jognā*: 12, ..., *siṅghāḍā barmāt*: 15, *siṅghāḍā barmāt sāṅg*: 16 ..., *kisor barmāt*: 20, *barmāt sāṅg barmāt*: 30, *barmāt siṅghāḍā barmāt*: 40, *ṭālī*: 50, *ṭālī jognā barmāt*: 60, *ṭālī kisor barmāt*: 70, ..., *sāṅg akūr*: 100, *sāṅg akūr ṭālī*: 150, *jognā akūr*: 200, ... *barmāt akūr*: 500, *sāṅg pathar* or *sāṅg guḍaknā* or *būḍhā akūr*: 1000, *sāṅg ṭālī*: 1.5, *jognā ṭālī*: 2.5.
  15. The main purpose of the establishment of Bhārat Sevāśram Saṃgha’s Gayā branch was the protection of pilgrims from Gayāvālas. In 1913, after being initiated in Gorakhpur, when Yugācārya went back to his village in the present Bangladesh, he visited Gayā to perform his father’s *śrāddha*. He noted how Gayāvālas troubled pilgrims. This story was narrated by a monk belonging to the Gayā branch.

16. Dhāmins introduce the Brahmayoni mountain as Gayāsīsa to Buddhist pilgrims. They explain that Buddha gave several sermons at the Gayāsīsa to 1000 monks after the enlightenment at Bodhgayā. Many Buddhist pilgrims visit the Brahmayoni from January to February. For information about textual sources, see (Jacques, 1979: 21–23).
17. Transit duty called ‘service fee’ had been collected by LHC from pilgrims at the three points on the roads leading to Gayā town since 2001 to February 2015 (Kumar, 2015).
18. ‘As soon as possible after this Act comes into force, there shall be established by the State Government for the State of Bihar a Board to be called the Bihar State Board of Religious Trusts to discharge in regard to religious trusts other than Jain Religious Trusts the functions assigned to the Board by this Act’ (The Bihar Hindu Religious Trusts Act, 1950, Chapter II, 5.1; Das, 2003: 396).

### *References*

- Banerji, R.D. (1915). ‘Pālas of Bengal’, *Memories of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 5(3): 43–113.
- Buchanan, F.H. (1936/2013). *An Account of the Districts of Bihar and Patna in 1811–12, Vol. I*. Patna: Department of Art, Culture & Youth.
- Caturveda, V. (ed.), (1983). *Vāyupurāṇa*. Delhi: Nag Publishers.
- Cunningham, A. (1873/1966). *Archaeological Survey of India: Report for the Year 1871–72, Vol. 3*. Varanasi: Indological Book House.
- Das, I. (2003). *Religionsrechtliche Normen Indiens, Rechtspolitisches Forum: Legal Policy Pirum 16*. Institut für Rechtspolitik an der Universität Trier.
- Gurdā, K.L. (1916). *Bṛhad Gayā Māhātmya aur Gayāpāl Śiśuśikṣak*. Gayā: Lakṣmī press.
- Indraji, B.L. (1881). ‘An inscription at Gayā dated in the year 1813 of Buddha’s Nirvāna, with two others of the same period’, *The Indian Antiquary* 10: 341–347.
- Jacques, C. (1979). ‘Gayā Māhātmya -Introduction etc.’, trans. by Giorgio Bonazzoli, *Purāṇa* 21(2): 1–32.
- Kielhorn, F. (1891). ‘Gaya stone inscription of the reign of Sultan Firuz Shah: the Vikrama Year 1429’, *The Indian Antiquary* 20: 312–315.
- Kumar, A. (2015). ‘Ban on service fee collection’, *The Telegraph*, 24 February 2015. Available at [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1150224/jsp/bihar/story\\_5158.jsp#.VkHpWLfhAgs](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1150224/jsp/bihar/story_5158.jsp#.VkHpWLfhAgs)
- MacDonald, K.S. (1890). *Patna, Gaya and Benares: Buddhism and Hinduism*. Calcutta: Traill & Co.
- Mehrotra, R.R. (1977). *Sociology of Secret Languages*. Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study.
- Mishra, A. (2011). ‘Gaya’s Vishnupad temple under spotlight after Padmanabhaswamy’, *Hindustan Times*, 10 July 2011. Available at: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/patna/gaya-s-vishnupad-temple-under-spotlight-after-padmanabhaswamy/story-eWdM4g6VzPA28THWxu0TfL.html>.
- Miśra, B. and Prasād, B. (1954). *Gayā ke Prācīn Tīrthon kā Nām*. Gayā: Standard Printers.
- O’Malley, L.S.S. (1903). ‘Gayā Śrāddha and Gayāwāls’, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 72(3): 1-11.
- O’Malley, L.S.S. (1906/2007). *Bengal District Gazetteers: Gaya*. New Delhi: Logos.
- Pāṇḍuraṅgi, S.R. (2004). *Vidyādhīśavijayaḥ*. Bengaluru: Dvaitavedāntādhyayana Saṃsodhana Pratiṣṭhānam.

Patna High Court (2015). CWJC No. 16187 of 2012, 11 March 2015.

Shome, B.P. (1904). *Old Gaya and the Gywals with an Incidental Notice of the Image of Buddha and Buddha Gaya Temple*. Calcutta: S. C. Auddy & Co., Booksellers and Publishers.

Sircar, D.C. (1970). 'Inscriptions of two Brahmana rulers of Gaya', *Epigraphia Indica* 36: 81–94.

Supreme Court of India (2015). Civil Appellate Jurisdiction, Civil Appeal No. 8207 of 2015, 28 September 2015.

Vidyarthi, L.P. (1961). *The Sacred Complex in Hindu Gaya*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.

Note: All the court records of Patna High Court mentioned in this paper except for CWJC No. 16187 are available at <http://indiankanoon.org>.

