

## RESEARCH NOTE

# THE LEGENDS OF 'GAYAḤBĀJYĀ' OF PATAN IN THE KATHMANDU VALLEY

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### Introduction

While collecting oral history of Patan in 1991, my attention was drawn to the legends of Gayḥabājyā (lit. 'Brāhman named Gaya' in Newar Language). Those legends suggest that there was a remarkable figure named Gayḥabājyā, who once lived in Sulimha, near Paṭaṇḍhokā. According to those legends he performed many unbelievable miracles in his day - these miracles compare favorably with the famous Jāmanā Gubhāju of Kathmandu<sup>1</sup> and Gunu Jhā of Mithilā<sup>2</sup>. In socio-topographic scene, there were a tantric heroes in the three medieval kingdoms of the Kathmandu Valley such as Gayḥabājyā of Patan, Jāmanā Gubhāju in Kathmandu and Siddhivanta Josi<sup>3</sup> in Bhaktapur. In this article, the most intriguing of the legends are documented together with an analysis of who Gayḥabājyā must have been. This contribution establishes the historicity of Patan counterpart.

### The Legends

All the legends are more or less connected with tantra which I have collected in Patan<sup>4</sup>. These legends play of life and death, magical spell, interaction between high and low castes and the relation between teacher and disciple, thus give a clear picture of the medieval Newar society of Patan. These legends are presented in the simple language of a children's story, evocative of the way in which these tales are told by locals<sup>5</sup>.

### The Story of Gayḥabājyā

The history of Gayḥabājyā. His name was not Gayḥabājyā. Actually his name used to be Gayapati. Gayḥabājyā was such a kind of person who did not have anybody except his mother.

He was by caste a Brahman so everyday he used to go for a bath. His place of bathing was Mṛtyuñjaya ghāt at Saṅkhamūl (confluence of the two rivers, Vāgmatī and Manoharā). One day, as he was crossing Kumbheśvar on his way for a bath, it started suddenly raining by cats and dogs. He looked for a shelter from the rain. There was only one house of a Poḍe (untouchable in caste). Being a Brahman he did not enter the house of that very Poḍe. He kept standing outside the house.

Inside the house one child was vexing his mother very much. And so, the mother became very angry and stabbed her son with the kitchen knife. The child died immediately. Then the mother started crying. After some time, the father of the child came home. When he knew the incident that had taken place, he told her wife not to cry for it. The father took the child into a separate chamber (room) and made the child alive.

Gayahbājyā became very much surprised to see that event. He started to wonder what sort of training this Poḍe had to make his dead son alive again. After finishing his bath he became very curious to know this secret training.

The Poḍe was a Tantric. So many people used to come to his house to consult about their problems. Gayahbājyā also started to go to that place, but he never went inside the Poḍe's house. He just used to stay outside. Whenever the Poḍe looked at him, he used to go for his bath. It was his routine since a long time.

One day, when Gayahbājyā was standing outside the house, the Poḍe came to him and asked, "Why do you come here everyday? Why are you spying on me?"

The Gayahbājyā immediately asked for the secrete training, saying "What you have, give me."

"You are a Brahman and I am poor in caste so how can I give you anything?" replied the poḍe.

"That you must give me" said the Brahman.

"If you insist I will help you. Please come after four days with one bunch of *belpatra* (wood apple leaf)," the Pode said.

After four days Gayahbājyā went to the Pode's with the bunch of *belpatra*. Then they went to the Mrtyuñjaya Ghāt. The pode asked Gayahbājyā to bath first. After finishing his bath Gayahbājyā wanted to come out from the river. But the Pode stopped him. The Pode went to the platform called *tūgaḥ* kept for *śrāddha* (death ritual) and sat on it. He began to write a mantra (magic spell) on each leaf of the *belpatra* and threw the *belpatra* into the river and asked Gayahbājyā to catch and swallow them. It was a miracle that when Gayahbājyā had caught and swallowed every piece of *belpatra*, he knew all of the mantras.

"You brought this much *belpatras*, so the mantras are also this much." The Pode said and asked Gayahbājyā to go back home. But Gayahbājyā asked, "Well, I have gained the mantras, but not yet all *siddhis*, the spiritual powers. You must give me these powers as well."

The Pode said, "I can give you only mantras, not powers. If you need powers, go everyday early in the morning to Bhūḍī Gaṇeś (a deity of the eastern part of Patan who gives perfectness as people believe) and worship him". In this way Gayahbājyā used to go everyday to worship Ganeś. One day, after reciting his mantras there, the God appeared in front of him and asked, "What do you want?" Gayahbājyā replied, "I need *siddhi* (perfectness on the mantras)."

"If you want to achieve *siddhi*, go to Bālkumārī shrine on the night of the fourteenth day of dark fortnight (Pācahre) in March. The *ḍākinī* witches will come there at that night to prepare *mohani* (black shoot) during their tāntric puja. You must capture the black shoot at once," said Ganeśa.

Gayahbājyā went to Bālkumārī shrine at that night. After hiding himself, he waited. The *ḍākinīs* came to perform their puja. They placed three human skulls on the ground [as a fireplace] and on the

skulls a big earthen pot called *Ī bhegaḥ* was kept in opposite way. After lighting a big light in the middle of the skulls they began to collect black shoot on the bowl. During this tantric puja the goddess Bālkumārī became very pleased and appeared before them. Just as the dākinīs bowed down to the feet of the goddess, Gayahbājyā snatched up the pot covered with black shoot and ran away to his house.

When Gayahbājyā reached his house where his mother was waiting outside for him. As Gayahbājyā entered the house, his mother closed the door, fastening it with an iron lock called *sikrī*. Since the lock was made of iron it had the power to prevent witches and evil spirits from entering the house. The Dākinīs came there following Gayahbājyā, but they could not enter the house. They waited and waited outside hoping that they could get back the bowl with black shoot. By the morning they urged with Gayahbājyā for just a piece of earthen pot with black shoot. Gayahbājyā agreed. He gave them a piece of the pot and send them back.

After putting the black shoot from the bowl on his forehead, Gayahbājyā attained siddhi, and several kinds of powers and fulfillments. He became a great Tantric.

This first legend maintains that Gayahbājyā was just not a legendary figure but a historical figure as well. Although he was a Brahman but his guru was a Poḍe by caste. He learnt tantra from his Poḍe teacher and became a great tantric of his time. According to this story he is also known as Gajapati.

### **The Second Story of Gayahbājyā**

And so Gayahbājyā attained all kinds of power and siddhi and it was known to the people of Paṭukva quarter (one of the Vakanimha clan of the Rājopādhyāyas). The Paṭukva people talked about it and decided to give Gayahbājyā one of their daughters in marriage on the condition that the first son born be given to the Patukva clan.

After the marriage a child was soon born, and the boy was given to the Patukva clan and was named by Viśvanātha Upādhyāya. He later became the guru (preceptor) of King Siddhinarasimha Malla of Patan.

As Gayahbājyā was full of learning many people used to come to learn something with him. Gayahbājyā used to require his students always to bring a gift for their guru, whatever they wanted. And if they only had a stick, they should bring that to their guru, Gayahbājyā.

One day some of his young students went to collect firewood for his guru. They were playing along the way. When they reached on the Phulchokī Mountain they climbed a tree to collect firewood.

Just at that time in the middle of the day all the Aṣṭamātrikās (the mother goddesses from Harasiddhi dance and thus were also called Harasiddhigaṇ) gathered around the tree and started to perform their *nityakarma* (daily ritual) and dance.

When the goddesses finished their dances and left the children ran back home. But when they reached their home it was already dark so they could not attend their classes with their guru, Gayahbājyā.

The next day when Gayahbājyā asked them why they had missed their classes, they told him the incident took place yesterday. Then Gayahbājyā asked them to show him the place where the goddesses had gathered. They went there together and climbed a tree in wait for the Aṣṭamātrikās.

When the Aṣṭmātrikās goddesses appeared, Gayahbājyā placed a *tāraṇ* (a tantric invisible wall) around them. After performing their *nityakarma* and dance they could not leave that place because of the tantric wall.

“Who blocked our way?” asked one of the goddesses. Gayahbājyā said that it was he who had blocked their way, and then Gayahbājyā asked them who they were. When he heard they were mother goddesses he asked them to come with him to Patan.

The goddess answered, “If you can provide us a human sacrifice every step of the way, then we will come with you and stay with you until you die!”

Gayah̥bājyā agreed to this and began sacrificing his young students to the goddesses. But just as he sacrificed a student, Gayah̥bājyā would bring his student back alive with his *mṛtasāñjīvanī mantra* which was learnt from the Poḍe teacher. In this way Gayah̥bājyā brought the Aṣṭamātrikā to Pim̥bahāl in Patan.

There at Pim̥bahāl the goddesses asked Gayah̥bājyā to provide them a place to perform their *nityakarma* and dance called *akhāḍā*. For that Gayah̥bājyā gave them the courtyard behind the Candesvari Temple. It came to be called Ākhānani.

After the death of Gayah̥bājyā the Harasiddhigaṇa returned to the same place at Phulcokī Mountain<sup>6</sup>.

The second legend tells us that Gayah̥bājyā, who was supposed to be the master over life and death, brought Harasiddhi goddess from Phulcokī Mountain to Patan. Išvarmaṇi Sinyā has written similar story in his article "Harasiddhi nṛty- ek paricaya" with slightly different facts<sup>7</sup>.

### Bringing Caṇdesvarī to Patan

It has been necessary to perform the Harasiddhi dances every twelve years on the twelve different squares in Patan since the time of Gayah̥bājyā. During one performance on the *dabū* (platform) of Ikhālaku square, the famous goddess Caṇdesvari of Banepā (about 20 km east from Patan) was present).

She was one head taller than anyone else on the audience. Gayah̥bā noticed this and started to wonder who it might be.

Meanwhile the goddess transformed herself into a snake, which Gayah̥bājyā noticed and immediately caught and put into his sleeve. He imprisoned the goddess for seven days and seven nights with a *tāraṇ*, a tantric spell for invisible wall to stop her movement.

On the seventh day the frustrated goddess told Gayah̥bājyā that if he freed her, she would stay anywhere he desired.

So Gayahbājyā established the shrine of Caṇḍeśvarī near his house at Sulimha. And at Ikhālakhu, where Caṇḍeśvari had watched the Harasiddhi dance, another shrine to Caṇḍeśvari<sup>8</sup>.

In this third tale, the goddess Caṇḍeśvarī was forced to remain in Patan near the house of Gayahbājyā.

### **Gayahbājyā and His Poḍe Guru**

Once Gayahbājyā was walking near the Patan Palace, when he saw his Poḍe guru (teacher) coming towards him. According to the social customs of that time, the pupil should bow down to a guru touching his feet with his forehead to show respect. Likewise, there was also another social custom that the Poḍes are untouchable for the clean castes like Brāhmaṇ and Kṣatriya. For a person like Gayahbājyā, who was Brāhmaṇ by caste to bow down to a Poḍe's feet would, certainly be considered a social offense. Since the street was full of people, Gayahbājyā cleverly acted as if he slipped on cow dung and fell down to his Poḍe guru's feet. It was his trick to bow down to his guru's feet. The guru understood the situation and became pleased with Gayahbājyā. Afterwards, the guru told him that it would not be necessary to bow down to his feet in front of other people as it was breaking social custom<sup>9</sup>.

The fourth story suggests that during the time of Gayahbājyā, caste system had already been imposed in the Newar society and it had strongly rooted and flourished in that society.

### **Another Story of Gayahbājyā**

Once Gayahbājyā was sitting in the rest house called Amāliguṭhī phalcā of Sulimha and smoking hubble bubble. Many people were running towards Mangal bazaar. He was surprised and asked one of them why they were running. One of the men said, "One foreign magician is showing a magic which is very interesting. We are going to see that magical show."

The magician was showing an item in which he kills a boy and takes out his heart and lungs. Then he claims proudly that only he can make the boy alive again.

At that time Gayaḥbājyā sent some of his students to fetch water in a *dokocā* (basket made of bamboo) from Maṅgahiṭī, fountain in Mangal bazaar. As a *dokocā* is a basket with a lot of big holes, it is not possible to carry water in it. Because of the power of the mantra of Gayaḥbājyā, however, it became possible. This was also a matter of surprising to the people, and many of them started gathering around them to watch the carrying of the water in the *dokocā*.

The magician thought that if it continued like this then there would be no charm to his magic, so he threw a small stone into the dokoca after casting a spell or mantra. As a result of this, all the water spilled out on the ground and it was not possible to keep water in the *dokocā* anymore. The followers of Gayaḥbājyā returned and told Gayaḥbājyā what had happened to them.

At that time a buzzard flew into Mangal bazaar and snatched the heart of the boy from the foreign magician's hands. Now this was a big problem for the magician. He wept because he could not make the boy alive again without the heart.

In the meantime it was suggested that the magician should consult Gayaḥbājyā about his problem.

The magician went to Sulimha to meet Gayaḥbājyā, but he was not there. Only the wife of Gayaḥbājyā was present there. She was cooking rice using her own leg as a wood for the fire.

After introducing himself, the magician asked if he could meet Gayaḥbājyā. The wife of Gayaḥbājyā told him to go to Lagankhel forest where Gayaḥbājyā was tending his cows.

So the magician went to Lagankhel. There Gayaḥbājyā was feeding his cows, bending the branches of the trees with his tow so that the cows could eat the leaves. When he saw Gayaḥbājyā the magician apologized for throwing the stone in the *dokocā* of Gayaḥbājyā's students. He asked Gayaḥbājyā to pardon him and to give back the heart of the boy.



Gayahbājyā smiled and then gave back the heart of the boy which he had taken disguised as a buzzard.

This fifth myth is the most popular myth of the Kathmandu Valley. Not only Gayahbājyā but also Mañuvajra Vajracharya performed this type of miracle<sup>10</sup>. This Vajracharya is also known as Jāmanā Gubhāju of Kathmandu from the time of King Pratap Malla. Another Mañjudeva from Cukabahāl, Patan is also credited for this type of miracle who was from the time of King Siddhinarasimha and his son King Śrīnivāsa Malla<sup>11</sup>.

### The Story of Impossible Eclipse of the Black Moon

Could there be an eclipse of the moon at night when there is no moon? Yes, and Gayahbājyā not only could predict it, but he could also make it possible. For this he was famous.

Once one of his pupils, a Jośī by cast (astrologer) who was also a *yajamāna* (client) of Gayahbājyā, mistakenly predicted such an impossible eclipse in the writings which were posted publicly on a black board called *gvalah*. Everybody was very surprised to hear of the notion of an eclipse on the night of the black moon. Especially those who knew a little about astrology began to laugh at the Jośī.

This news even reached to the king, who summoned the Jośī to inquire about the incident. But the Jośī was not ready to admit his mistake. He insisted the king that there would indeed be an eclipse on the coming night of the black moon. The king then decided that if the Jośī was deceiving him he would punish him severely.

Now the Jośī had a big problem and he went to Gayahbājyā to help him and to solve it. After listening to the whole story Gayahbājyā said to the Jośī, "Do not worry, what you have written will certainly come true. The moon will eclipse on the black moon night."

On the evening of the black moon, the king and all of his subjects gathered in Lagankhel to watch what would happen. Gayahbājyā also came there, having brought with him two *catāmarīs* (round bread made of rice flour).

Gayahbājyā then threw one of the *catāmarīs* into the sky. He cast a spell (*mantra*) and the *catāmarī* turned into the moon. In this way the moon was seen even on the night of the black moon.

Then he threw another *catāmari* into the sky, one which he had taken a bite out of. This became the black part of the moon. And the part which he had eaten became the brighter part of the moon. Consequently, the moon eclipse was obviously seen by all, including the king and the subjects who had gathered at Lagankhel<sup>12</sup>.

The previous legend suggests that there was a close connection between Gayahbājyā and his client a Joshi or astrologer. In Gayahbājyā's Sulimha, there is an esoteric shrine, which is said to be connected with Gayahbājyā, and is still in the hands of descendants of Gayahbājyā. The Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇs of Sulimha Square and the Joshis of Nāgbahāl dispute ownership of the property.

### Gayahbājyā and Lāmā of Lhāsā

After having renovated Gujibahā [one of the main Buddhist monasteries of Patan situated near Sundhārā] and set up a system of rules, Vaiśradeva performed the tonsure ceremony of his two sons, Candra and Sūryadeva. [In that tonsure ceremony] Vaiśradeva acted as a guru and his elder brother, Gayobhāju [Gayahbājyā], acted as a preceptor (Upādhyāya). [In this way] the two brothers accomplished all the necessary rituals.

Afterwards, an esoteric shrine (*āgama*) was built and the icons of Śrī Hevajra and Nairātmā were installed inside by Vaiśradeva. [Whereas] Śrī Harasiddhi [a goddess] was established by Gayo bhāju ('bhāju' is a respective word in Newar language like Mr. in English). [Later on, the elder brother] Gayo bhāju donated his share of ancestral property to the goddess Harasiddhi. [The younger brother] Vaiśradeva donated his share of property to his esoteric god (e.g. Hevajranairātmā).

Afterwards, Suryadeva (the second son of Vaiśradeva) went to Lhāsā (the capital of Tibet) accompanying a celibate monk of Ibahī, Patan. After some time, they reached Lhāsā, where they stayed to serve and please a learned lāmā. They learned (Buddhism) from him. [After their

graduation] the monk of Ibaḥi asked his Lāmā teacher to leave [Lhāsā]. He also talked with his friend Sūryadeva and came back [to Patan]. In the mean time, Sūryadeva sent a letter through the monk to his father Vaiśradeva [about his future plan].

After his arrival in Nepal, the monk gave the letter of Sūryadeva to Vaiśradeva and also told him what was going on there [on his son's mind]. After reading his son's letter, Vaiśradeva did the necessary preparations to establish icons of gods at his place [as per the letter].

When Sūryadeva came back to his house walking day and night from Lhāsā, he bowed down to his parents' feet and had a pleasant meeting with his family. He also went to bow down to his uncle Gayo bhāju's feet in respect.

[While walking on a street,] suddenly, Gayobhāju was feeling anxious himself and started worrying that something bad could happen in the future while [his nephew] Sūryadeva was ready to establish the icon of Śrī Trailokyavijayā goddess brought from Lhāsā inside the esoteric shrine of Gujibahāl where the icons of Śrī Hevajra and Nairātmā were already established. Meanwhile, when Gayo bhāju arrived at Sihatāphu, the Lāmā of Lhāsā also arrived there. They met together and started talking about religion (Dharmaśāstra). In the meantime, while they were talking Vaiśradeva performed installation of the icon of Śrī Trailokyavijayā goddess in his viḥāra. This incident was known by the Lāmā through his insight (*antardhyān*). Consequently, the Lāma became very angry and condemned Vaiśradeva and Gayobhāju as well as their descendants, warning them that if they ever visited Lhāsā they would meet with harm. And the Lāmā went back to Lhāsā<sup>13</sup>.

Although Gayahbājyā was a Hindu, this legend connected with his younger brother Vaiśradeva who was converted into Buddhism shows his great respect towards Buddhism. During every five-year-Samyakdān-festival of Patan, a member of the lineage of Gayahbājyā has to participate there representing Lord Brahmā reciting the Yajurveda and Sāmaveda. For this, he receives *dāna* (donation) from the devotees.

### **The Dyaḥmaṛu Phalcā of Candēśvari**

Inside the temple of Candēśvari there is an empty niche without an icon of a god which is connected with the story of Gayāḥbājyā.

Once Gayāḥbājya wanted to attain *samādhi* while taking refuge in his house in Sulimha. He told his family not to disturb him for six months and went down into the room which was underground. He also asked his family to cover him up and wait for six months before exposing him. He said if he received spiritual powers and fulfillment, called *siddhi*, during this time an icon of him should be established in the empty niche of the Candēśvari Temple.

Unfortunately, however, on exactly the last day of the six months, one of his daughters went to see him. As the days were not completed, she saw Gayāḥbājyā in a form half stone-half human. His upper body above the stomach was pure human flesh, but his lower part was stone. Gayāḥbājyā cried to her to cover his body immediately. He condemned her and her descendants.

In this way the niche in the Candēśvari temple remained empty until today.

According to the legend Gayāḥbājyā wanted to be a *siddha* and stay with the god inside the temple in a separate chamber for ever as an immortal being. But, as it happens with impossible dreamers, he failed. Satyamohan Joṣī comments in his article that Gayāḥbājyā's conceit to be installed beside Ganeś failed<sup>14</sup>.

### **Bringing Harisiddhi Back**

As it was promised by the goddesses of Harasiddhigaṇa to Gayāḥbājyā, the goddesses all left Ākhānani for their home at Phulcokī Mountain after the death of Gayāḥbājyā.

This was known by Viśvanātha, the son of Gayabhajya, so he went to Phulcokī Mountain to try to bring the Harasiddhi goddesses back to Patan.

Vaśvanātha found the goddesses performing their daily ritual. He interrupted them to tell him of his wishes to bring them back to Patan.

In the past it had been necessary to sacrifice one human being for every step which the goddesses took to come back to Patan. Whereas Viśvanātha was able to convince the goddesses to accept only a goat for each step in place of the human sacrifice. The goddesses, however, said they would only keep walking to Patan until the first cry of a cock was heard.

Under these terms Viśvanātha started to bring the Harasiddhigaṇa towards Patan, but very soon the cry of a cock was heard. The goddesses settled in that place, which came to be called Harisiddhi.

The previous myth suggests that Viśvanātha Rājopādhyāya, the preceptor of the founding king of Patan, Siddhinarasiṃha Malla (1619-1952 AD), followed the path laid by Gayahbājyā. It also indicates that Gayahbājyā was an important figure in the religious history of Patan.

### The Social Topography of Gayahbājyā's World

Even today the myth of Gayahbājyā lives on and the places where he worked his wonders can still be visited. There is a house of Gayahbājyā at Sulimha where his descendant Sūryanātha Rājopādhyāya is residing. Inside the house, there is still a room, Gayahbājyā's room, which remains locked still. Besides the house, there is an *āgama* housing the esoteric shrine of Gayahbājyā. The Sulimha Rājopādhyāyas, one of the six branches of Brāhamans in Patan, are worshipping there in the *āgama*.

A little south west of Sulimha square nearby Pim̐bahāl *pukhu* (pond) there is found a temple to Caṇḍeśvarī, a three story pagoda. One of the ground floor chambers is dedicated to Ganes, the other remain empty ("dyaḥ maru" literally "no god"), as Gayahbājyā did not become *siddha*. Between the two chambers there are three holes, the triangular one representing Caṇḍeśvarī or Nasaḥdya, the others representing Bhairava and Bhairavī. Just on the backside of the temple of Caṇḍeśvarī there is Ākhānani, the courtyard where Gayahbājyā is said to have brought Harasiddhi.

In the middle of Sulimha square, there is a temple of Ratneśvara with a Śiva-liṅga, a two-storied pagoda which is connected to the esoteric shrine of Gayahbājyā. The wood-carving of the temple is remarkably fine. In front of the Ratneśvara temple, there is a *phalcā* (rest house) of Āmaliguthī, established by the Jyāpus of neighboring Mikhābahāl. Once a year during the

month of Maṅsir *āmalī* fruits and beer used to be offered here to the untouchable Podes and children.

Niels Gutschow comments on the place of Gayahbājyā which is worthful to cite here:

“One must remember that the entire ensemble at Sulimha, together with the Ratneśvara temple in the middle, arose at precisely the time when the figure of Gayahbājyā was ripe to become a legend. It was a commemorative architecture and one which lives on”<sup>15</sup>.

Not only that, geography of the Gayahbājyā's legends extends beyond his own northwestern quarter of the city touching many parts of Patan. There is still Mṛtyuñjaya ghāt at Śaṅkhamūl where Gayahbājyā used to bathe daily. There are also the woods at Lagankhel where he used to tend his cows. Poḍe tol of Kumbheśvara is still there where his guru's house was. We have Bhūḍi Ganeśa shrine on the eastern side of Patan where he observed penance, and the awe-inspiring shrine of the mother goddess Bālkumārī at the eastern end of the city where he worshipped and outfoxed the frightening *dākini* witches to acquire magical powers. There is Ikhālakhu Square and Caṇḍeśvarī shrine in Patan where Gayahbājyā imprisoned the goddess Caṇḍeśvarī. We have Gujibahā near Sundhārā where Vaiśradeva, the younger brother of Gayahbājyā once resided. Not only that we also have a stone marker at Phulcokī Mountain from where the Harasiddhi dance was brought by Gayahbājyā.

### **A Report on the Excavation of the Ground-floor-room of Gayahbājyā**

According to Satya Mohan Jośī, an excavation of the ground floor room of Gayahbājyā's house was held on a day before Lakśmīpūjā festival in 1950 AD<sup>16</sup>. The excavation, however was unscientific, done by the locals under the leadership of Pt. Chandrakānta Rājopādhyāya. For this purpose, a Jośī (astrologer) had declared a *sāit* (an auspicious time). On the auspicious time Brahmans performed their rituals of *Nāga Sādhanā* (worshipping of snake-god) before trenching. Hundreds of people gathered there to see the consequences. While digging they found an underground passage and a room. They also found several things inside the room but they could not find the stone statue of Gayahbājyā which they were searching for. In the last, the trench was filled with underground water and the searching was stopped.

### Who is Gayahbājyā and When Did He Live?

Although there are some articles written about Gayahbājyā, the identification of Gayahbājyā is still a problem. Satya Mohan Joṣī writes Gayahbajyā's formal name is Yogendrananda, a poet of that time<sup>17</sup>. In support of this assertion he has not provided any reliable documentation in his article. He also describes in his article that Gayahbājyā actually was a "gvājyo bājyā" (literally "foolish Brahman") and only latter on became a scholar. This is why people started surprising him and by calling out "gayo bājyā" (literally "what sort of Brahman!") instead of "gvājyobājyā". In one legend, the introduction of Gayahbājyā is given as such: "His name was not Gayahbājyā. Actually his name used to be Gajapati (Gayapati)". Here, the name of Gayahbājyā is spelled as Gajapati. In Nepali language, the letters 'ya' and 'ja' are interchangeable such a *yajña* or *jajña* and *yuddha* or *juddha*. Thus, the name of Gayahbājyā seems to be either Gajapati or Gayapati.

Dr. Gutschow who has researched on this topic believes Gayahbājyā did live once and must have been remarkable figure<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, he comments:

"The key story at Mrtyuñjaya Ghāt where Gayahbājyā seeks power over death suggests the central theme of the Gayahbājyā legends, the quest for immortality. The setting at Mrtyuñjaya, which literally means "conquering death", echoes the theme of the plot. It is the epithet of Śiva who overcame death, whom Gayahbājyā seeks to emulate when he asks the untouchable at Mrtyuñjaya Ghāt to grant him siddhi-tantric powers. The powers over death are not easily gained. However, after having learned mantras from the untouchable Gayahbājyā must still outfox the frightening *dākinī* witches in order to acquire magical powers. In another story when a travelling magician exhibits similar powers over life and death, Gayahbājyā must clearly demonstrate the superiority of his own unbelievable and hard-earned powers. The magician resigns never to come back to Patan, the city of Gayahbājyā.

... This history of a great tantric, the master over life and death, who was able to outwit the Gods and force his will upon them, although he ultimately failed in his attempt for the highest perfection, the transcendence of this life. This occurs in his unsuccessful attempt of attain *Siddhi* (fulfillment) by closing himself up in his house in state of *samādhi*. But perhaps this failure is important to his myth-it gives his mortal flaws. He is not worshipped as a god at the temple of

Caṇḍeśvarī and the temple room reserved for Gayahbājyā remains empty. We understand that he was still mortal like you or I”<sup>19</sup>.

Three independent historical documents make reference to Gayahbājyā and seems establishing him as a historical personality not only as a legendary person. Most significantly in a document of NS 589 (1468 AD) published by Mahesh Raj Panta<sup>20</sup> preserved in Reel no. E 1887/16 of NGMPP (Nepal German Manuscript Preservation Project), the name and address of Brahman Gayapati is clearly written: “...Śrī Solahanimha dvijavara Śrī Gayapati...” (Brahman Gayapati who lives at Sulimha). This is supported by Mahesha Raj Panta’s published colophon of a drama named ‘Caturāṅka Mahābhārata’ written by Gayapati of Patan<sup>21</sup>. This drama with four episodes was written on the occasion of *Suvarṇa Tulādāna* held at Pasupati on the name of prince Rāya Malla who was at his age of two years and nine months, in NS 573 (1452 AD) during the reign of Śrī Jayayaksa Malla<sup>22</sup>. In that colophon Brahman Gayapati describes about his lineage, “The Sun of lotus like Tejobarddhan lineage, there is an *agnihotrī* (worshipper of fire) Śrī Tejahaṛṣa who is the son of Śrī Tejarāma, who worships *pañcāgni* (five types of sacrificial fire), who knows the (four) Vedas well. His (Tejahaṛṣa’s) son is Rudradāsa. His (Rudradāsa’s) younger brother is Paṇḍuka. His (Paṇḍuka’s) younger brother is scholar Gayapati. This was made (written) by him (Gayapati)<sup>23</sup>. In addition, the colophon continues that Gayapati was a scholar of Dakṣiṇa Vihār Court of Patan. At his time the three Mahāpātras (nobles), Udaya Siṃha Malla Varmā, Jñāna Siṃha Malla Varmā and Dharma Siṃha Malla Varmā, were ruling Patan. These nobles asked Gayahbājyā, in front of other petty kings of Nepal, to write a drama on mahābhārata and to present it during the *tulādāna* ceremony of (prince) Rāya Malla at Pasupati<sup>24</sup>.

Another stone inscription dated N.S. 572 (1451 AD) lying close to the temple of Narayana in Lubhu, two miles east of city Patan also mentions that Gayapatiju (‘ju’ in Newar language is a respective form like Mr. in English), as a priest who had established the temple<sup>25</sup>.

*Rolamba* has published a photograph of the colophon of a book on Harasiddhi dance written in N.S. 653 (1532) mentioning that the book belongs to Gayahbājyā was given *dāna* (donated) to the priest by himself in NS 709 (1588 AD)<sup>26</sup>. Unfortunately, this (second) part of the colophon of the book was added later in a different ink and handwriting, thus, the colophon seems not to be reliable to our study.



In sum, I want to call attention to the above submitted both oral and written evidences on Gayahbājyā. Both pieces of evidence corroborate each other, testify and identify him as a scholar and master of tantra of 15th century, because of the similarity of the name, by caste and locality given in the historical documents and legends as well. So, a suggestion can be made in this article that the scholar, Gayapati, was called "Gayahbājyā" (literally "Brahman Gaya") by the local people of the then Patan. He was indeed an influential person of his time.

### Notes

1. Devendra Vajrācārya (ed.) *Jāpa tum ek cinārī*, (Kathmandu: Jāpa Tum Sahaoga Samitī, nd.), pp. 12-14.
2. Ram Dayal Rakesh, *Folk Tales from Mithila*, (New Delhi, Nirala Publication, 1996, pp. 55-103.)
3. Siddhivanta Jośī was a famous tantric astrologer of the 9th century who suggested the king of Bhaktapur: "If one gathers sand from Lakhu Tirtha of the River Visnumati on an auspicious moment would turn into gold" This famous legend is connected to the introduction of Nepal Era. Although the name of Siddhivanta Jośī is not mentioned by the chronicles, the legend from Bhaktapur told by Śrī Girindraraj Sharma mentioned his name. For detail story see (a) Daniel Wright, ed, *History of Nepal*, reprinted (Delhi: Low Price Publication, 1990), pp. 110-112 and (b) Deviprasāda Lamsāla, ed., *Bhāṣā Vamśāvalī*, II part. (Kathmandu: Nepal Rāstriya Pustakālaya, 1976), pp. 24-25.
4. Nutan Sharma (com.), *Stories of Gayahbājyā*. Commented by Niels Gutschow, (Kathmandu: Patan Conservation and Development Programme 1991). pp. 1-2. and see also: (1b) Nutan Sharma, "Water and Immortality", *Bagmati* (an ecological project of the Goethe-Institute, March 1993), pp. 46-47.
5. Thanks goes to Mr. Erich Theophile for editing the stories in such a simple way.
6. For the summary of the story see: Satya Mohan Jośī, "Pulāmha kavi yogendrānanda 'gayo juju'", *Nepāla* bi-monthly (year 3, issue 3, 1953), pp. 18-22.
7. Ísvaramān Sinyā, "Harasiddhi nr̥tya—ek paricaya", *Rolamba* (vol. 11, no 1, 1991:), pp. 16-20.
8. For the summary of the story see: Jośī, *op.cit.* (fn no. 6).
9. Told by Śrī Ananta Jvālānanda Rājopādhyā of Paṭukva.

10. Vajracārya, op.cit. (fn no. 1)
11. Ratnavajra Bajrācārya, *Bumgadyoyā ratha yātrā khā*, (Lalitpur: Author himself 1979), pp. 115-120.
12. For the summary of the story see: Jośī, Op.cit. (fn no. 6)
13. This is the author's translation includes additional explanatory information by the author see: Hemarāja Shākya, *Divyadivākara saṃskārita śrī vaiśravarṇa mahāvihār gujibahāyā saṅkṣipta itihāsa*, (Lalitpur: 2529 da Buddhajayanti Samiti-Gujibahā 1985), pp. 1-3.
14. Jośī, Op.cit. (fn no. 6).
15. Sharma, op. cit (fn no. 4)
16. Jośī, Op.cit. (fn no. 6)
17. Ibid.
18. Sharma, op. cit. (fn no. 4)
19. Ibid.
20. Mahes Raj Panta, "Newārarājya ra Brāhmana", *Purīmā* (year 22, issue 1, 1993), pp. 9-40.
21. Mahes Raj Panta, "Cādabāḍa jātrāmātrāmā khelaiekā nepālimā banaiekā kehī saṃskrt nātak", *Purnimā* (year 9, issue 4, 1977), pp. 294-308.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. D.R. Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, part III, (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1966), pp. 69-71.
26. ..., "Itihāsakā kurā", *Rolamba* (vol. 2, no. 4, 1982), pp. 23-24.