

wonder-worshiper or sorcerer along with Asita and Kaśyapa who later on transformed himself into Gayāsura.⁸⁰ According to the Vāyu Purāṇa,⁸¹ the city was named Gaya after an Asura, Gaya by name (Gayāsura). Viṣṇu killed this demon but granted him a boon that this city would be held highly sacred. According to R.L. Mitra,⁸² this story is an allegorical representation of the expulsion of Buddhism from Gayā which was the headquarters of the Buddhist faith. Aurnavābha in explaining 'idam Viṣṇur-vi Cakrame tredhā nidadhe padam'⁸³ in the Nirukta⁸⁴ holds that the three steps of Viṣṇu were placed on Samārohaṇa, Viṣṇupada and Gayaśiras. The Māhābhārata (III. 95 and VII. 64) describes the performance of sacrifices by Gaya⁸⁵ references to which⁸⁶ are also found in the Rāmāyaṇa,⁸⁷ Bhāgavata Purāṇa⁸⁸ Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa,⁸⁹ Agni Purāṇa,⁹⁰ Viṣṇu Purāṇa,⁹¹ Vāmana Purāṇa,⁹² etc. Aśvaghoṣa's Buddhacarita⁹³ (I or II cent. A.D.) speaks of the Buddha's visit to the hermitage called 'the city of the royal sage Gaya', who was later conceived as a great giant.⁹⁴

We can find evidence of the importance of Gayā growing in the period subsequent to A.D. 750. At Gayā while we have only one inscription belonging to the Gupta period, we get numerous inscriptions belonging to the Pāla period.⁹⁵ But these records are of not much use for the history of the town, they simply show that till the end of the twelfth century A.D. it was under the Pālas.⁹⁶

The city played no major role in politics at any period of history but it was certainly a centre of religious movements of Buddhist and the Brahmanical Hindus.⁹⁷ Gayā which was the headquarters of Buddhist faith passed to the Hindus between the second and fourth centuries of the Christian era and by A.D. 637 when Hiuen Tsang visited the city it had become a thriving centre of Hindu Brahmanical religion.⁹⁸

The religious importance of Gayā is met with in the Māhābhārata,⁹⁹ Rāmāyaṇa¹⁰⁰ and Purāṇas.¹⁰¹ The Gayā has a special religious importance with reference to the Śrāddha ceremony.¹⁰²

2. *Khād(ṭā)pāra*¹⁰³ (No. 29, L. 7) :

The inscription came from a place Dhanaidaha in the Natore subdivision of the Rajshahi district (in Puṇḍravardhana).¹⁰⁴