# A Historical Research on the Lakshmi-Varaha Jiu Temple of Ghoshpur, Panskura - A Field Study

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## ABSTRACT

The Panskura Police Station area of Purba Medinipur is full of temples. According to information and legends obtained through field studies and on-site investigations, most of these temples were constructed after the second half of the eighteenth century, when the area was under the rule of the zamindars of Kashijora and Mahishadal. The Panskura, Tamluk and Mahishadal region was under the authority of the Raja of Mahishadal. The history of the Mahishadal royal family reveals that Raja Anandalal Upadhyay, approximately from 1710 A.D to 1740 A.D, and later Rani Janaki Devi, were Vaishnavas. They brought many Salagram Silas from the Gandaki River and donated them to their Brahmin gurus. It may be presumed that the Lakshmi-Varaha Jiu Temple of Ghoshpur was a donation of that period. Apart from this, there are many other legends. This article attempts to investigate the history of the temple in the light of its historical elements, folk myths, social value and legends.

**Keywords:** Gandaki River, Lakshmi-Varaha, Salagram Sila, Ghoshpur, Rasyatra, Jhulanyatra, Dolyatra

### Objectives of the research article

- This is an attempt to investigate the history of the Dey family.
- This study focuses on developing an understanding of and collecting information about Salagram Sila.
- This study aims to investigate the history of the ancient relics present on Salagram Sila or on plaques made of touchstone.
- This study aims to write down and preserve the history of the Dey zamindars of Ghoshpur for future generations.
- This study employs to disseminate the scriptural significance of the Lakshmi-Varaha Sila.
- This study focuses to preserve the cultural unity of Ghoshpur village intact.
- This study aims to protect the authentic documented history of the temple, with written history and years and dates, from false or half-true claims.

## INTRODUCTION

Within the cultural corridor, the place-name Panskura occupies a significant position in the wider expanse of ancient Tamralipta. On the basis of conjecture as well as archaeological evidence, it may be said that the ancient port of Tamralipta may perhaps have first emerged at some location in Debra or Panskura. It is also seen that copper mines were located in the region immediately to the west of this place. Later, as the course of the river gradually shifted, the port also gradually moved away. The present Haldia Port City, situated at the present sea mouth, is an external manifestation of the gradual shifting away from the now-vanished ancient

port of Tamralipta. On the basis of archaeological evidence, it can be said that Tamralipta was one of the important centres of Buddhist culture. An ancient five-foot-long full-sized statue of the Buddha was found in Chanchiyara village of Panskura and is preserved in the Tamralipta Museum; this is an excellent proof of the fact. A Tamranagar port developed in the Loada region of Panskura. Steamers used to travel through Panskura and were moored at the Pashangara Ghat. That is, Panskura was an excellent centre of trade and commerce. Following this trade and commerce, in Bengali year 1130 (English year 1723 A.D), Muchiram De arrived at Ghoshpur in Panskura. This information has been obtained from oral tradition and the history of the family; there is very little information about it in official documents or English gazetteers. The Ghoshpur area of Panskura was then part of Kashijora Pargana. (During the Mughal period, the vast, jungle-covered Kashijora Pargana was received as a jagir by Ganganarayan Singh. He was the first person to construct houses in the Champadali village of Panskura.) In 1723 A.D, the Raja of Kashijora was Jitnarayan Ray. He was also imprisoned at Munger because he could not pay revenue to Nawab Murshid Quli Khan. After being released, he established a Jagannath Temple in Chanchiyara village in 1730 A.D. That is, when Muchiram Dey began trade and commerce in Ghoshpur in 1723 A.D, the zamindari of Kashijora Pargana was already an established kingdom approximately 140 to 150 years old. Later, Narnarayan Ray became Raja in 1744 A.D and Rajnarayan Ray became Raja in 1756 A.D. This royal dynasty began to decline due to debt and was put up for auction during the British period. Thus, the actual history emerges in the following manner in 1723 A.D, in the period following the Bargi raids; Muchiram Dey established a trading establishment at Ghoshpur for the trade of salt, rice and textiles through the Kansai river route. At that time, he was not a zamindar but a householder and a merchant.

The process through which their family acquired zamindari began when Nawab Murshid Quli Khan introduced the ijara system in Bengal for the collection of land revenue. The taluq or ijara was granted to the person who promised to pay the highest revenue. After earning considerable wealth, Muchiram Dey purchased a taluqdari from the local Raja of Kashijora or directly during the Nawabi period. Later, during the time of Lord Cornwallis's Permanent Settlement of 1793 A.D under British rule, that taluq was transformed into a zamindari. The influence of Muchiram Dey and his family as taluqdars began approximately between 1740 and 1750 A.D. Recognition as full-fledged zamindars came between 1760 and 1793 A.D during the rule of the English Company. In 1723 A.D, the British of the British East India Company were merely merchants. (In 1690 Job Charnock established a factory at Calcutta; in 1700 A.D Fort William was established; in 1717 A.D they obtained a farman from Mughal Emperor Farrukhsiyar allowing duty-free trade.) At that time, they possessed zamindari only over the three villages of Calcutta, Sutanuti and Govindapur. They had no political power. They conducted trade and commerce by paying revenue to the Nawab. Thereafter, British rule in Bengal began after the Battle of Plassey in 1757 through the acquisition of political power and the acquisition of economic power through the grant of the Diwani in 1765 A.D. In view of the above discussion, we can say that the second Governor-General of Bengal, Lord Cornwallis (1786-1793 A.D), introduced the Permanent Settlement on 22nd March 1793 A.D. This law stated that those taluqdars or zamindars that paid revenue according to the fixed Sunset Law would have zamindaris that would be permanent and hereditary. Therefore, although Muchiram Dey settled here in 1723 A.D, the zamindari of his descendants received legal recognition as a full-fledged zamindari in 1793 A.D during the time of Cornwallis. Therefore, an attempt has been made to search for the family's old deeds or pattas bearing the seal of Bengali year 1199 or 1793 A.D. Documents dating from after 1800 A.D have so far been found.

**Geographical Location of Ghoshpur Village:**

Muchiram Dey selected the Ghoshpur region in 1723 A.D for river-based trade because direct trade could be conducted through the Tamluk port via the Kansai River. Ghoshpur village is situated approximately 3/4 km southwest of the present Panskura Railway Junction, 1 km north of Haur Station and 4 km south of Bombay Road (NH-41), on the northern bank of the Medinipur Main Canal. At that time, passengers and goods were transported by ships and boats through the Kansai and Medinipur Main Canal. Travel by land was carried out with bullock carts and camel carts. There was a ship station at Ghoshpur on the waterway from Medinipur to Calcutta. Steamers and boats travelled through the Main Canal, which was constructed by digging a canal from the Kansai River at Medinipur. The creation of this waterway is an extraordinary example of engineering. From Medinipur, the canal passed along the southern side of Ghoshpur, through the middle of Panskura, and

again crossed into the Kansai River before flowing into the Rupnarayan River at Kolaghat. The navigable depth from Medinipur to the Rupnarayan was approximately 30 feet. Lock gates were constructed at Madpur, Balichak, Burashala and Panskura to regulate the difference in water levels and enable boats and steamers to travel. At Uluberia, boats and steamers again travelled over the Rupnarayan River towards Calcutta. Apart from transportation, irrigation was carried out over approximately 150,000 acres of land using water from this canal. Two kilometers east of Ghoshpur, on the way to Panskura, at Gotpata village, this canal has an aqueduct, constructed in imitation of the River Thames in London. The canal flows over this bridge, while the Kshiriai River flows underneath. It is a remarkable example of advanced engineering. At present, passenger and transportation services through the river route have ceased. Irrigation water is still being supplied as usual. It is in this extremely beautiful geographical setting that the Lakshmi-Varaha Jiu Temple was established within the zamindari of the Dey family of Ghoshpur. This article investigates its history.

**History of Lakshmi-Varaha Jiu**

The respected Shri Brajakishore Dey of the Dey family mentioned in a small nine-page pamphlet entitled "Ghoshpur Gatha" (1400 Bengali Era) that the fourth generation of the Dey family arrived here in 1192 Bengali Era, corresponding to 1885 A.D. According to him, the story of the appearance of Thakur Jiu was as follows: The Dey family had a large residential house in the town of Medinipur. There was a basati, or temporary lodging place, there for pilgrims and saints. Arrangements were made for the stay and food of the saints. On their way to Puri, saintly maharajas used to spend the night at Ghoshpur and Medinipur and were provided with food and other necessities. During the stay of a saint at Medinipur, the saint received a dream-command from Thakur Jiu that he would graciously bless the Dey family by coming to their house. At that time, the caretaker informed the Dey family at Ghoshpur. The fourth and fifth generations of the family at that time were respectively:

- Radhagobinda Dey (1276–1352)
- Shripaticharan Dey (before 1240)
- Rajkrishna Dey (before 1327)
- Nimaichand Dey (before 1319)
- Bharat Dey (before 1274)
- Premchand Dey (before 1309)
- Banamali Dey (before 1322)

Each of them belonged to the fourth and fifth generations of the Dey family. They went to Medinipur, brought Thakur Jiu to Ghoshpur, and established him by constructing a large two-storeyed brick-built temple and house. According to the book "Sila Tattvabodhini," this sila bearing various markings is known as Sri Sri Lakshmi-Varaha Jiu.

**Lakshmi-Varaha Jiu in the Light of Folk Myths or Legends**

According to folk myths or popular tradition, the establishment of this temple dates back approximately 300 years. There are two stories regarding the establishment of the temple.

**Connection with the Mahishadal royal dynasty**

According to one story, approximately in the eighteenth century, a king of the Mahishadal royal palace was childless. On the advice of his Guru, he brought a Varaha Salagram from the Gandaki River and began worshipping it. After the king was blessed with a son, he donated the Sila to his Guru, whose house was in Ghoshpur. The family of that Guru was the first to establish this Jiu.

**Found in the river**

According to another account, during a flood in the Kansai River, a farmer threw fishing net into the river and found this Sila, which looked like a black stone. At night, he dreamt of a man with the face of a boar saying to him, "I am Varaha, the remover of the burden of the earth; worship me together with Lakshmi." The next day, the villagers collectively established this Sila as Lakshmi-Varaha Jiu. Thus, the central point of both stories is that this is a self-manifested Salagram Sila, and not an idol fashioned by an artisan.

**Lakshmi-Varaha in the Light of the Puranas and Literature:**

Varāhakṛti cakraṃ ca daṃṣṭro'nnataṃ bhaved yadi.

Lakṣmī-Varāhaṃ taṃ vidyāt sarvābhīṣṭaphalapradam.

Dve cakre ekato dṛśye vanamālā ca suśobhanā.

Suvarṇabindu saṃyuktaṃ bhū-Lakṣmī sahitaṃ Harim.

**Characteristics of the Lakshmi-Varaha Sila:**

According to the 'Salagram Kosha', the above Sanskrit explanation has been mentioned by Professor S. K. Ramachandra Rao in his "Shalagram Kosha," Volume-I, pages 145-148. According to the above verse, Lakshmi-Varaha is basically egg-shaped, flattened on one side and resembling the face of a bore. The Varaha chakra is raised outward like the tusk of a bore. Another small chakra is located immediately below or beside it. Both chakras can be seen through the same face or opening. It is deep black-blue in colour, but the Vanamala, meaning the yellow-golden line near the chest, is very distinct. If there is a golden dot on the body, it is called Svarna-Varaha; this is the rarest variety. S. K. Ramachandra Rao has provided descriptions of three Lakshmi-Varaha Silas from his own collection. Inside the large chakra there are markings resembling the spiral of a conch. One large one is the symbol of Bhudevi, and one small one is the symbol of Lakshmi. If both faces are directed towards the same side, it is called Akhand Lakshmi-Varaha. An idol of this type is considered highly auspicious for a householder. 'Meru Tantra' is an ancient Tantric text. It is one of the oldest Sanskrit original texts. Yogendra Sharma wrote it, and a new edition with Hindi translation was edited in five volumes by Srinivas Sharma, with commentary by Kapil Devnarayan (Varanasi).

The 'Meru Tantra' states that in the Gandaki River of Nepal, black-coloured stones bearing hand-like and chakra marks are Salagrams, and worship without examination is prohibited. Their chakras, faces, Vanamala and dots particularly white dots are considered extremely auspicious. According to the chakra, twelve types have been named: Vasudeva, Lakshminarayan, Achyuta, Janardan, Panchamukhi Vasudeva, Pradyumna, Sankarshan, Purushottama, Navavyuha and Apanta. Above all, a black, small, smooth and heavy Sila is considered most auspicious. A Sila whose face has a conch-like shape is called Lakshmi-Janardan. A Sila that has a golden-like brilliance inside it is called Hiranyagarbha; it is said to provide inexhaustible wealth through worship. Broken, cut, cracked, rough and red-coloured Silas are unsuitable for worship.

The 'Meru Tantra' clearly prohibits their worship in this regard. According to the Puranas, particularly by combining the Garuda Purana, Brahma Vaivarta Purana, Skanda Purana and Agni Purana, a total of 89 types of Salagram Silas are mentioned. No single Purana mentions all 89 types together. The most authoritative list is considered to consist of 12 types according to the number of chakras and 77 types according to their physical characteristics. The Salagram Sila of Lakshmi-Varaha Jiu of the present Dey family of Ghoshpur is number 33 among the 89 types (according to information examined by A.I.). The complete names of the 89 types of Salagram Silas are mentioned below.

**According to the Garuda Purana, 13 types of Salagram Silas are mentioned according to the chakra:**

- Sudarshana - 1 chakra,

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- Lakshmi-Narayana - 2 chakras,
- Achyuta - 3 chakras,
- Chaturbhuja/Janardan - 4 chakras,
- Vasudeva - 5 chakras,
- Pradyumna - 6 chakras,
- Sankarshana -7 chakras,
- Purushottama - 8 chakras,
- Navavyuha - 9 chakras,
- Dashavatara/Dashatmaka -10 chakras,
- Aniruddha - 11 chakras,
- Dvadashatmaka/Ananta - 12 chakras,
- Paramatma - more than 13 chakras (Ananta).

**According to the Brahma Vaivarta Purana (Prakriti Khanda, Chapter 21), 24 special types of Salagram Silas are mentioned:**

- Lakshmi-Janardan
- Raghunath
- Dadhi-Vamana
- Sridhar
- Damodar
- Ranaram
- Rajarajeshwar
- Madhusudan
- Gadadhar
- Hayagriva
- Narasimha
- Lakshmi-Narasimha
- Vasudeva
- Hrishikesha

- Padmanabha
- Keshava
- Madhava
- Vishnu
- Trivikrama
- Lakshmi-Varaha
- Varaha
- Vamana
- Narayana
- Govinda.

**According to the Skanda Purana, Brahma Purana and Hari-Bhakti-Vilasa, the remaining 52 types of Salagram Silas are mentioned below:**

- Matsya
- Kurma
- Hari
- Krishna/Narugopal
- Ramarebubir
- Parashurama
- Balarama/Balabhadra
- Buddha
- Kalki
- Ananta-Shesha
- Shesha-Naga
- Garuda
- Kapila
- Hiranyagarbha
- Parameshthi

- Chaturmukhi
- Vaikuntha
- Jane Udhari
- Surya
- Upendra
- Adhokshaja
- Ayuta/Ayut
- Purushottama
- Shyamsundar
- Sri-Narayana
- Sankarshana-Narayana
- Lakshmi-Gopal
- Radha-Krishna
- Radha-Govinda
- Lakshmi-Gopinath
- Gopinath
- Dadhi-Vamana (small)
- Bala-Gopal
- Madan-Gopal
- Shalagram-Shiva Linga (Harihara)
- Ganesha-Shalagram
- Bhuvaneshwar
- Yogeshwar
- Yoga-Narayana
- Mahayogi
- Pundarikaksha

- Vishvayoni
- Janardan (second form)
- Dattatreya/Trimurti
- Rupi-Narayana
- Sudarshana (second form)
- Nara-Narayana
- Sanatana
- Narahari
- Mahavaraha
- Lakshmi-Hayagriva
- Aniruddha-Gopal

Again, some people say that the scriptures mention 173 types of Salagram Silas. This has not yet been investigated. The number 173 is mentioned in popular tradition. Scripturally, it is said that a single-chakra Sila has approximately 19 types, a two-chakra Sila has approximately 80 types, and if there are more than 25 chakras, it is called Vishambhar. There are also descriptions stating that there is no further name beyond this. Therefore, in brief, it can be said that the original the Puranas mention 12/24 types, detailed Tantric compilations mention 108, and the largest compilation mentions 173 types. All of them are the same fossilized stones from the Gandaki River of Nepal; only their names differ according to the chakras and markings.

**Architectural Style of the Lakshmi-Varaha Jiu Temple**

The worship of Varaha is very ancient throughout the entire region of Panskura, Moyna, Pingla, Sabang and Debra. In particular, it may be said that these represent the distinctive Vaishnava tradition of undivided Medinipur. Under the influence of the religious flood that spread throughout lower Bengal as a result of the Gaudiya Vaishnavism of the incarnation of divine love and Acharya Sri Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, almost all the zamindars and kings of Medinipur were influenced. As a result, almost all of them constructed new temples and installed idols of Radha-Krishna or Salagram Silas and conducted worship and rituals. The Lakshmi-Varaha Jiu Temple of Ghoshpur follows the architectural style of Bengal's zamindari mansion architecture, with pillars and arches, a domed pinnacle, and thick pillars in the Corinthian or Tuscan style. These are essentially European influences. The original architecture of this temple is like a courtyard Durga-Dalan. In its initial form, the temple was constructed using the stucco technique with lime-surki and small bricks. There is no terracotta ornamentation here. It is a living temple integrated with the residential house. The grandeur of the zamindari has disappeared and the plaster has fallen off, but the structure still carries the old courtyard-dalan pillars and the semi-circular khilan or arch architectural form. At present, the exterior of the temple has been renovated. However, the original sanctum continues to bear authentic evidence.

**Nature of the Sanctum and the Deity**

The main temple is rectangular in shape, with a length of 69 feet and a width of 52 feet. The main sanctum is square, with a length of 21 feet and a width of 21 feet. The plot of land on which the temple stands measures 8 decimals. Inside the sanctum, there is a clear and divine form of the Salagram deity of Lakshmi-Varaha Jiu. This Sila is actually a Salagram with a Varaha chakra. The natural chakra present in the middle of the black

stone is the symbol of the Varaha incarnation. A white sandalwood tilak, representing the mark of Varaha, is placed on the Sila, and it is adorned with a golden or gold-made crown and garland. It is placed upon a throne and a red seat. Essentially, it continues the tradition of the Folk and Living Tradition of Vaishnav Culture. That is, alongside the ancient Buddhist religion, the Vaishnava tradition has also survived equally in this region. Essentially, the deities in the main sanctum, apart from the Salagram Sila, include Srimati Radharani, dressed in a green sari, and Sri Krishna, on the right side, wearing blue clothes and a garland of marigolds. According to the Vaishnava scriptures, Varaha is an incarnation of Vishnu and Lakshmi is His Shakti. In Vrindavan, Vishnu is Krishna, and Lakshmi is Radha. Therefore, in many villages of Bengal, Radha-Krishna is affectionately called Lakshmi-Varaha Jiu. The small idol below, with folded hands, is Garuda, the vehicle of Vishnu. Above the head is a large silver disc (chamar or umbrella) and behind it is a brass throne. In front of the main sanctum there is a chaubandi dalan veranda. On the right side of the dalan is a red Tulsi platform with a dome; the small platform is the Tulsi altar. We know that without Tulsi, food offerings are not made in a Vaishnava temple. Essentially, one matter is particularly important: the sanctum of a dalan temple should be dark, small and sacred. Therefore, the deity remains inside, while the offerings, homa and arati - all these take place in the outer courtyard.

**Jhulan Temple and Rasamanch**

On the plot of land situated in front of and to the east of the present houses of Vishnupad Dey and Tarapad Dey, on Plot No. 279, this temple was constructed by Nimaichand Dey and Parimoni Dasi in the month of Asharh of (Shaka) year 1808 A.D, that is, in the English year (1808 +78) = 1886 A.D. In Bengal, large-scale Jhulan festivals in zamindar families or houses began at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Essentially, this happened after the Bargi disturbances, when the zamindars had become settled. That is, approximately 140 years after the Bargi invasion (1740 A.D). The Jhulan Temple was built in the dalan style. Its architectural style carries the special characteristics of a mixture of domes from the Islamic period and European influences. Researchers claim that it is a "flat-roofed temple [that] came up in the 19th century." The Rasamanch is situated on Plot No. 257, on the southern side beside the rural concrete road and to the west of the Ghoshpur Gram Panchayat Office. The combined area of the main stage and the Rasamoydan is 13 (thirteen) decimals. The Rasamanch is not a brick pyramid like the large Rasamanch of Bishnupur; it is a completely rural-style dalan Rasamanch. It is presumed to have originally been made of lime-surki, although at present it has been newly plastered and painted. Particularly during Jhulanpurnima, Dolpurnima and Raspurnima, this stage becomes beautifully decorated.

**Construction of the Lion Gate**

At that time, for the protection of the zamindar families, lion gates were constructed along the rural road running east-west, on the southern side and to the north of the kachari houses. The Lakshmi-Varaha Jiu Temple of Ghoshpur in Panskura is invaluable as a living museum of rural Vaishnava culture.

## CONCLUSION

For the people of the village, it is not merely a temple; it is a legitimate open space for the people of the village and surrounding areas and a festival ground. During the Jhulanyatra, Dolyatras and Rasyatras, the arrival of many people creates an unparalleled atmosphere in the religious and social sphere. Much of its archaeological beauty has been lost. In fact, the lime-surki Staco and terracotta work have almost disappeared as a result of the renovation of the temple. Therefore, this temple should not be regarded merely as a temple made of brick, lime-surki and wood; it is nearly 150 years of living history. Moreover this temple provides shelter during the times of the flood. It also shares shelter for the homeless nomads. It also serves food to the homeless people. This temple feeds a large number of people forgetting their religion and creed during the festival times. This temple shares a bonding among the people of those regions. It becomes a center of faith and bonding since the past years. It is symbol of unity in diversity. It reflects local culture and their unity. Therefore, in the history of temple-filled Panskura, the Lakshmi-Varaha Jiu Temple of Ghoshpur has established a living example of the Vaishnava tradition. I believe that at least to some extent, its history has emerged through the field study presented in this article.

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