



Dhanuyatra Of Bargarh: The Largest Open-Air Folk Theatre In The World

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Abstract:

Dhanuyatra of Bargarh is the oldest and the most famous one. Every year in the month of Pausa (December-January) it is celebrated for eleven days of the month from the 5th day of the bright fortnight till the full moon day. For this occasion, the town of Bargarh becomes the city of Mathura, the river Jeera becomes the river Yamuna and Ambapali situated on the other side of Jeera becomes Gopapura. For eleven days the entire Bargarh town transformed into a very big stage even though the story of Kansa, his ill-treatment to Krushna and his death are enacted in 14 main places at Mathura and 4 main places in Gopa. This mass festival, which came into existence in 1948 with the inertia of festive mood due to celebration of Indian Independence and victory over British rule, symbolically shows the victory of Lord Krishna, the embodiment of truth, justice and righteousness over Kansa who personifies arrogance and wickedness. This festival has earned its fame in the World as much due to the separate stage along with movable stage used to show the mythological story as also due to the special involvement of the entire populace in the process. Therefore, this festival is rightly called the greatest play in the world enacted in the biggest open-air theatre.

Key Words: Dhanuyatra, Bargarh, Mathura, Gopapura, Ambapali, Krishna, Kansa, Balaram, Jira

1.Introduction:

When Pausha arrives on earth, the Bargarh region becomes excited. The entire city dresses up as a newlywed and embarks on the dream journey of Dhanuyatra. Bringing an end to all expectations and anxiety, the journey of Dharma begins at the great sacrifice of the Shukla Panchami of the month of Pausha. Dispelling all dreams, the Jira takes the form of the blue waters of the Yamuna. Ambapali becomes 'Gopa' and Bargarh, a historic city rich in art, literature and culture, becomes 'Mathura'. The rule of Maharaja Kansa, who turned

from a villain to a hero, is here. Bargarh, the city of industry, returns to the Purana era. The entire city becomes a hub for eleven days.

Since 1948, this Yatra has been receiving immense appreciation. Today, this Yatra is known and discussed everywhere from Bargarh to Berlin, from Ambapali to America. Today, it has attracted the attention of the whole world as a world-famous Yatra performed on an open-air stage. That is why the number of foreign spectators and artists in this Yatra is increasing day by day.

The seed that was sown by the deep affection and sincerity of some art lovers who believed in the Bhagavata, has now sprouted and become a great tree. It is said that some enthusiastic youth, who were overjoyed at the joy of India's independence, made the first attempt to start it. Whether the story is logical or not, some Vaishnavas of that time decided to travel to Mathura and Vrindavan and, seeing how the surrounding areas of Bargarh were being neglected and the Dhanu Yatra being conducted in Bhatli, they decided to undertake such a journey in Bargarh. This is the Dhanu Yatra. The idea of Dhanu Yatra was based on the consciousness of Shri Krishna present in their cultural consciousness. It originated from the common people's devotion and religious thoughts integrated in the poetic works like Shrimad Bhagavat, Mathura Mangal, Rasa kalloka, and Harivansh. The Dhanu Yatra of that time, performed on a stage made of tree branches cut by coolies, illuminated by Petromax lights, and adorned with palm leaves and flower crowns, is still widespread today. Some information suggests that the first Dhanu Yatra was held in Bargarh in 1915. This Yatra was organized in 1915 and 1916 under the initiative of Gauntia Lakhpati Das. However, it is said to have been started again later under the initiative of Kangali Nayak, Dambaru Das, Dhan Pradhan, and Saraf. Another piece of information reveals that during the British rule in 1944, a special procession was held at Bhatli in Bargarh district and later stopped. After this, the yatra started again on the sixth day of the Shuklapahya month of the spring month of 1948. Eminent figures like Nilamani Pujari of Ambapali, Chandramani Gauntia of Bargarh, Chakradhar Nayak, Krishna Chandra Sahu and Lalit Sahu, in consultation with other friends, planned such a pilgrimage. Some people suggested celebrating the previously held Chandana Yatra with pomp and show; but on the advice of the Nilamani Pujari, the proposal to celebrate "Dhanu Yatra" was unanimously accepted. Earlier, this yatra was famous as Dhanu Yatra Mela, Krishna Mela and Kansavadha Mela. Hundreds of years ago, Krishna Lila was celebrated in this area with great devotion. Therefore, due to the sincerity of the people towards Krishna, everyone came forward to organize the Dhanu Yatra festival and since that day it has been held with devotion. It is reported from the elders of that time who were directly associated with the yatra that it was successfully held with great joy and enthusiasm for three years from 1948 to 1950. But whether it was due to administrative errors or due to lack of enthusiasm among the entrepreneurs, it was closed for two years and instead of 'Dhanu Yatra', some enthusiastic people organized 'Rudrayagya'. But people who were sincere about Dhanu Yatra repeatedly requested the entrepreneurs and suggested organizing Dhanu Yatra again. As a result, it was celebrated regularly from 1957 and again from 1960 to 1968 there was an eight-year break. But since 1969, it has been celebrated regularly, creating a stir in the country and abroad.

Initially, it started from the fourth day of the full moon of the month of Pausha, like today, and ended on the day of Pausa Purnima. But in 1960/62, due to the war between China and India, it was reduced to nine days on the instructions of the government. For a few years it was celebrated for nine days; but due to the devotion and devotion of the people, it was again celebrated for eleven days. On the instructions of the mother Kansa raja to see the Dhanu Yatra, the organizers decided to celebrate Pausa Purnima as the day of the festival, as it was the special attraction and the last day of the Mathura Yatra of Krishna-Balaram and the Kansa Vadha Yatra. Since it is a major festival of the Bargarh region, it is believed that the day Dhanu Sankranti considered Pausa Purnima as the last day of the festival.

The first Dhanu Yatra, which started in the premises of today's Government Girls' High School in 1948, was performed by Prana Bandhu Kar (Bargarh) as the first Krishna, Murari Prasad Mishra (Kan Singha, Padampur) as the first Krishna, Bunde Rath (Deogaon, Bargarh) as the second Kamsa, Prahalad Kar (Tora, Bargarh) as the third Akrur, Dhanapati Dash (Bargarh) as the second Vasudeva and Gajapati Birjiya (Ambapali) as the third Devaki, thus making their names in the history of Dhanu Yatra in golden letters. There is a huge difference between the first year's Dhanu Yatra and today's Dhanu Yatra. Although some modernity has been introduced in this yatra to cater to the taste of the people, the entrepreneurs are careful to preserve its originality. It is still being celebrated with the help of unwritten manuscripts. Among the artists like Bunde Rath, Yudhishtir Satpathy, Gopal Sahu, Bhuvan Pradhan is now the leader of today's Mahanayaka. Apart from the royal court of Maharaj Kansa, 'Ranga Mahal' has been started since 2007 AD. Artists invited from different states of the country have increased the glory of the yatra by performing folk dances of their respective provinces. Therefore, it is a happy news for all of us that the Bargarh Dhanu Yatra is now being held with great interest and enthusiasm in various places of Western Odisha based on the tradition of Bargarh Dhanu Yatra.

2. Background of Dhanuyatra:

Dhanu Yatra, a renowned festival, was initiated in 1948 by Late Chandramani Dash and others, who drew inspiration from Mathura. According to Sri Sadananda Panigrahi, a senior organizer, the festival's preliminary stage involved several individuals, including Chakradhar Nayak (alias Kangali Nayak), Krushna Chandra Sahu, Tila Pradhan, Rushava Kar, Lakha Pradhan, Apariti Panigrahi, Brindavan Bishi, Bipin Sharaf, Gopal Sharaf, and Munu Barik. Simultaneously, Shada Shiba Sarangi oversaw the organization of Ambapali or Gopapura.

The festival was initially celebrated for 15 days but underwent changes over the years. It was discontinued from 1953 to 1954 but resumed in 1956, thanks to Sadananda Panigrahi's efforts. The celebration was shortened to 12 days in 1962 due to the Chinese invasion and further reduced to 11 days in 1964, following an all-Odisha students' strike. In 1974-75, a severe drought led to a curtailment of the festival to seven days. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited the area to assess the situation. Today, Dhanu Yatra is celebrated over

11 days, typically in January, showcasing its rich cultural heritage. Parallel enactment is a significant feature of this Jatra. From the second day, Parallel performances take place in both Bargarh town and Ambapali epitomizing Mathura and Gokul respectively. Krishna is born in the prison on the second day of the jatra. Basudev exchanges the child with the Nanda's newborn baby in Gokul. In this way, Parallel performances go on both in Mathura and Gokul. The timing of the enactment is prefixed by the organizers. It is 2 pm to 9 pm for Mathura and 1 pm to 6 pm for Gokul. When Kansa is busy with his city tour (during day time) and perpetrating atrocities.

According to Sadananda Panigrahi, selecting the main protagonist, Kansa, is an extremely challenging task. The inaugural Kansa was portrayed by Bundi Ratha from Degaon, followed by Bhimasen Tripathy. However, it was Yudhistir Sathpathy who truly popularized the character, delivering a remarkable performance as Kansa from 1961 and earning widespread acclaim. In 1983, five actors attempted to play Kansa but were ultimately replaced due to their super performances. The following year, 1984, Gopal Sahu, also known as 'Eli,' successfully secured the role through a rigorous interview process. Since then, he has excelled in the role, mirroring the fame and popularity of his predecessors. 'Krishna Leela' and 'Dadhinata' are two majors performing genera of Odisha, which are Krishna centered. Kansa comes occasionally; if at all the plot demand so. Krishna Leela is Operatic and Dadhinata is theatric in nature. But only in Dhanuyatra; both Kansa and Krishna get equal importance. In no other performances of Odisha, this unique feature Prevails.

3. Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the role of festivals in shaping historical significance.
2. To assess the potential of Dhanu Yatra in boosting evolution over time.
3. To find the historical and mythological perspective of the unique Dhanuyatra of Bargarh, Odisha

4. Methods of Data Collection:

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, gathering data from both primary and secondary sources.

Primary Data Collection:

Primary data was collected through:

1. In-depth interviews with festival organizers, local stakeholders, and residents of Bargarh to gather firsthand insights.
2. Observation method: Participant observation and field notes were used to record the festivities, interactions, and activities during Dhanu Yatra.

Secondary Data Collection:

Secondary data was sourced from:

1. Books and academic journals related to festival tourism, cultural tourism, and Dhanu Yatra.
2. Magazines, newsletters, and online publications focusing on tourism, culture, and festivals.
3. Existing research papers, reports, and documents from government agencies, tourism boards, and cultural institutions.

5. Results and Discussions

5.1. Celebration Process

After India gained independence, Dhanuyatra underwent a revival, with efforts to promote the festival's cultural and historical significance. Today, Dhanuyatra is celebrated over 11 days, attracting thousands of visitors and showcasing the region's rich cultural heritage. The eleven days festival is described below.

Installation of the Auspicious Pillar - The Auspicious Pillar of the world famous Bargarh Dhanu Yatra Festival is installed amidst great enthusiasm and excitement at a certain time in the month of pausa as determined by the priest. On this occasion, after the customary worship at the Samaleswari temple, a beautifully decorated procession with colorful garlands of lights, accompanied by the workers of the Yatra Committee, artists and various folk musicians, circumambulates the city and reaches the Sanchar Sangham Hall in Hatapada. There, Ganesh Puja, Ashtakulanag, Prithibi Devi, etc. are worshipped as per the priest's instructions. Finally, a coconut is broken and the Auspicious Pillar is installed. After installing the Auspicious Pillar, the priest ties the Yatra Committee workers with a sacrificial thread and wishes that the Dhanu Yatra will be celebrated as a needle.

Similarly, the Auspicious Flag is installed at Ambapali according to the prescribed ascendant. First, the priest of the Samaleswari temple at Ambapali worships Krishna Balarama, the child artist as per tradition. After this, a grand procession is taken around the village with traditional cultural groups and flags are hoisted in small temples. Finally, a special puja is performed at the Vrindavan field on the banks of the Jira River and the auspicious flag is hoisted on the Kadamba tree.

First Day – The world-famous Dhanu Yatra of Bargarh begins every year on the bright half of the month of Pausha. After the proper puja at the local Samaleswari temple, the artists performing in the yatra with Samparda, Sanchar, Ghoomura, Ghantabadya, and Bandbaja, take a procession around the city and arrive at the Dhanu Yatra stage at Hatapada. After the formal inauguration by the chief guest, the first day's program is staged. In this sequence, Maharaj Ugrasena is present at the royal court and consults with the ministers. Sitting on a decorated elephant, King Ugrasena goes to the Radhakrishna temple. There, the auspicious marriage of

Devaki Vasudeva is performed. While bringing Devaki Vasudeva, Yuvraj Kansa receives a divine message. Due to this, political instability suddenly arises in the city of Mathura. Yuvraj Kansa deposes the Mathura's king Maharaja Ugrasena and assumes the throne in a dramatic sequence of events. Kansa's reign begins in the city of Mathura.

On the orders of Kansa, who had seized the throne, all the royal powers of King Ugrasena were taken away. Ugrasena's bodyguards, ministers, servants, and other officials were all dismissed from royal service. After ascending the throne, Emperor Kansa appointed only his trusted men to all the important posts in the kingdom. He removed the minister Ugrasena and appointed Kesi as the great minister in his place. On the one hand, there was unrest in the kingdom because King Kansa had removed Ugrasena and taken the power into his own hands, and King Kansa used all his cunning to suppress it. It was a restriction that not even a letter could be moved without the king's orders. According to reliable sources, after killing the demon Drumila and conquering Digvijaya, Yuvraj Kansa returned to the city of Mathura. Meanwhile, Maharaja Ugrasena had fixed the marriage of his beloved daughter Devaki with Vasudeva, the son of the glorious king Devamidha. While preparations were being made for this with great pomp, Yuvraj Kansa returned from a victorious war. King Ugrasena was overwhelmed by Yuvraj's power and victory. Later, by chance, Yuvaraj Kansa goes as a charioteer to leave his sister-in-law and brother-in-law with Devaki Vasudeva. But on the way, a force suddenly appears from the void and blocks his path and suddenly utters a hollow voice that his sister's eighth child will be the cause of King Kansa's death. Hearing this hollow voice, Yuvaraj is disturbed and furiously arrests his sister-in-law from the scene and takes him to prison. When King Ugrasena protests this, he deposes him and Yuvaraj Kansa takes the rule of the kingdom into his own hands. Thus, from the first day, the rule of Maharaja Kansa begins in Mathura. The coronation of King Kansa, the ruler of Mathura, is performed on stage in front of thousands of spectators. On this occasion, cultural programs are organized by various invited dance groups.

Second day – After dethroning his father Ugrasena and ascending the throne, the powerful king Kansa, along with his ministers, circumambulates the city of Mathura, riding on elephants. During the circumambulation, he inquires about the good and bad news of the people of Mathura. But Kansa, terrified by the divine prophecy, runs to the prison of Mathura, which is located in the Samaleswari temple complex in Bargarh. There, he brutally kills the children of his sister Devaki, one by one, by crushing them with stones.

Meanwhile, Shri Krishna is born from Devaki's eighth womb. The dark night shines with light. The prison becomes bright. The prison door opens by itself. The chains attached to the bodies of Devaki and Vasudeva are loosened. On the night of the rainy season, Vasudeva walks to the Gopuram holding Krishna.

One of the wonders of the Bargarh Dhanu Yatra is the devotion to the deity. It is in this way that God is met. That is why it is said - "In this way, the dispute is far away" This is proven by the scene of the meeting of Ugrasena and Vasudeva in the Dhanu Yatra. When Vasudeva carries Lord Krishna in a basket and goes

towards Gopapura, on the way, he is met by King Ugrasena, dressed in a ceremonial attire. Vasudeva's touching encounter with Ugrasena, who is guarding the Bhajan ashram at the riverbank of Bargarh on the border of Mathura, takes place. It is there that Lord Krishna gives him a divine vision while he is playing the drums. Ugrasena, filled with devotion, says - "O Lord of the universe, you are Lord Narayana.

You are the one who saves this captive from the clutches of the unjust and oppressed Kansa." Ugrasena prostrates himself in a very emotional manner, weeping. The scene of a large number of spectators touching Vasudeva's feet with devotion represents the eloquent performance of Dhanayatra. After Vasudeva meets Ugrasena, Ugrasena allows Vasudeva to go to Gopapura. On the way to Gopapura, the Yamuna (jeera) river splits in two due to Krishna's magic. Rain pours down from the sky in torrents, lightning trembles with thunder. The sky. Fearing that Krishna will get wet in the basket, the newly born Krishna tender will come into contact with the water, Nagaraj emerges from the Yamuna to covers Krishna with a vast expanse. Not even a drop of water falls into the basket. Safely Vasudeva crosses the Yamuna. While the queen of the Nanda king of Gopapur, Yashoda, is asleep, he places Sri Krishna in her lap and takes the young girl and enters the prison of Mathura.

Meanwhile, after Vasudeva reaches Gopapura, Gopapura (Ambapali) returns to that mythical era. From that day on, the villagers of Gopapura give up eating Amish and observe it with great devotion and devotion until Krishna Balaram goes to Mathura. Every house is limed and the songs of the Gopis for Shri Krishna are written on the walls. Flowers, mango trees and banana trees are used to make an entrance in the village. The whole of Ambapali laughs. "Ah my Nanda Kole Govinda, Veji Shankha Veri turi Bhuvan Anand, Nanda Kole Govinda" the residents of Gopapura wake up in the morning with the song. Even though the two boys playing the role of Krishna Balaram are village boys, everyone directly feels the form of God in him and worships him.

Third Day – On the third day of Dhanu Yatra, while the Gopapura festival is in full swing with the appearance of Krishna, the scene of King Kansa attempting to kill the lightning girl and being disturbed by the words of the goddess is played out in the city of Mathura. King Kansa visits the local Samaleswari temple and performs Rudrabhishekam to please his beloved deity, Mahadev.

Entering Mathura prison, he tries to kill his sister Devaki's eighth child because it is the cause of his death. Devaki begs her brother Kansa not to kill her because the eighth child is not a son but a daughter. The conversation between King Kansa and Devaki becomes very touching. Finally, rejecting his sister's request, King Kansa tries to kill the child born, when the lightning girl slips out of Kansa's hand and flies into the sky, warning King Kansa, "Re-re-Kansa, you will kill the one who grows in the Gopa." Hearing this prophecy from the lightning girl, King Kansa becomes sad and to relieve his sadness, he enters the Ranga Mahal and loses himself in dance and songs for a while. At that point, the Gopapura becomes a place of celebration. The Nandotsav begins. After the news of Krishna's birth spreads in the house of Nanda Raja, a wave of joy spreads

among the people of Gopapura. A huge crowd, young and old, gathers at the house of Nanda Raja to have a glimpse of the newborn Krishna. The people of Gopapura celebrate Nandotsav amidst immense joy and enthusiasm. A beautifully decorated swing is made in front of the Nanda temple to dangle. Which makes the entire atmosphere emotional. The people of Gopapura are amazed by the unique beauty of Krishna and sing, "How fortunate is it that Nanda has become the son of Yashoda, and we are madly in love with Narayana, come and see Gopapura, Lord."

The audience is mesmerized by the devotion of the people of Gopapura. Thousands of spectators are mesmerized by such lively performances. The village is immersed in spiritual contemplation with the Rasa dance, Nagara Kirtan and Sri Krishna's tour of Gopapura. The spectators experience a natural joy as they tour Gopapura chanting the name of Hare Krishna. The entire Gopapura (Ambapali village) is filled with joy. On this occasion, a large coconut tree is installed in front of every house in the village and the sky is shaken by the sound of Haribala.

On the other hand, Kansa is disturbed by the news of Devaki's eighth child in Mathura. He goes to the prison (Samlei temple) and strikes the girl with lightning and, being convinced by the divine message, consults with his ministers in the royal court. He orders the demons Putana, Shakta, Baka, Trina, Beha, Dhenu to go to Gopapura and kill the infant, Krishna. The audience from the state and outside the state enjoy the program of Gopa and Mathura.

Fourth Day – On the fourth day of Dhanu Yatra, King Kansa is disturbed after the prediction of the lightning girl about the death of King Kansa. He consults with his trusted minister Shakrajita about the truth of the empty words in the court. After this, he orders the demons Putana and the demons Baka, Shakta, Dhenu, Beha, Kesi to appear in the court. All the demons appear before Kansa. He goes to Gopapura and orders them to kill the breastfed infant, Krishna.

On the orders of the Daitya raja, the Daityas travel to Gopapura. There is a lot of joy and excitement in the bustling Gopapura. Putana takes this opportunity to enter the house of Nandaraja in disguise. Unbeknownst to everyone, she tries to kill the baby Krishna by drinking poisoned milk from her breast. But Lord Krishna kills Putana by sucking her blood while she is drinking milk from Putana's breast. Putana dies with a terrible sound. Hearing the screams, Nandaraja and Yashoda run to the baby Krishna. The huge dead body of the demon Putana lies there. Krishna is playing nearby. Yashoda and Nandaraja are stunned by this sight. Later, the demons Sakata, Truna, Baka, Sanda and Dhenu sent by Kansa come to oppress the people of Gopapura in various magical forms and are killed by Krishna Balarama. Among other scenes of Gopapura, the beautiful scenes of Krishna and the cowherd boys stealing milk, grazing cows etc. are also depicted. In this episode, Kansa's atrocities in the city of Mathura increase manifold. Greed for life and terror of death make Kansa even more cruel. He becomes bloodthirsty. Hearing about religious deeds, he bursts into anger.

Fifth day - On the fifth day of Dhanu Yatra, Kansa is shocked by the death of the demons Putana, Baka, Sakata, Truna, Dhenu, Sandha, Kesi etc. at the hands of Krishna in Mathura and calls a meeting with dignitaries and royal persons to discuss the situation. The demonic demon Durmila comes to the court and fights with Kansa and dies. Jarasandha invites the brave Kansa to fight. A fierce battle takes place between the two and the scene of Jarasandha being defeated is also depicted. Later, peace is established between the two.

On the other hand, all the scenes of Gopapura seem alive and real. Krishna is growing up day by day. Along with his brother Balaram and Gopal, the boy Sudama, Sridama, Govinda, Trinath, Madhumangal and Vishwanath go to eat forest food and graze cows. When Sri Krishna goes to graze cows, the companions sing songs to each other.

Come, brother, come, let's go and graze the cows. Today, Shri Vrindavan is dancing, singing, playing happily, and walking along the riverbank.

The entire environment is filled with the dance songs of the Gopal boys. When does Shri Krishna enter the hut and steal butter, sugar, and milk with his friends? Sometimes he breaks the butter pot of which cowherd. Every day, the cowherds walk in front of Yashoda's house. Who is complaining about breaking the butter pot of Krishna and who is complaining about eating butter? Hearing this repeatedly, mother Yashoda becomes angry. Yashoda gets tired of telling elder brother Balaram to stop Krishna but Krishna's wickedness increases and his name does not decrease. Still, he is everyone's favorite. All the gopis of Gopapura are delighted with his love. Everyone's favorite is Krishna. Since childhood, Kansa has been a victim of anger. Many demons, including Putana, Baka, Shakta, Truna, and Sandha, have come to kill him. But Nanda Kumara has lured everyone away. But Mother Yashoda does not understand the mind of Mother Yashoda. From the greedy eyes of the demons, she will hide Kanhai in the open field. Mother Yashoda does not agree to let him go from the immediate vicinity. But Krishna, wants to graze the cows. Without informing his mother, he goes into the forest with the cowherd boys to graze the cows.

While playing with his friends in the forest, the ball falls into the kalindi lake. While fetching the ball, Krishna encounters the evil Kaliya snake. Krishna breaks the Kaliya snake's pride. The Kaliya snake leaves the lake after promising not to create any obstacles there. A large crowd gathers to watch the Kaliya Dalana scene performed at the Fakira band on the banks of the Jira River; where the spectators each portray the character of a Gopapura resident. On that day, apart from Kaliya Dalana, the story of Yamal arjuna's breaking is also performed in Gopapura. Two Gandharvas named Nalakuber and Manigriva, who were cursed in their previous birth, are transformed into two trees. They pray to God throughout their lives for liberation. It is predicted that they will be liberated only through Maulikrishna, and that is what ultimately happens in the sequence of events. Krishna, who is joking, teasing, and doing evil things in the name of Gopal, is tied to that tree by his mother, Yashoda. But Krishna is a child who is obedient. The mother's anger is more affectionate

towards him. When he tries to escape from there, two trees fall down and they are immediately freed from the curse.

In Mathura demon Kansa, hearing the news about Krishna Balaram Benibhai's supernatural powers, roars. Can a boy growing up in a cowshed really be the cause of death? Ha ha, the sky of Mathura trembles with the king's laughter. He calls a special meeting of the royal officials on how to kill Krishna Balaram. A discussion is held in the royal court about this. The ministers, the chiefs, inform the king about various strategies.

In consultation with them, King Kansa takes the initiative to organize a Rang Sabha (a gathering of kings from various kingdoms). Apart from this, cultural programs are conducted every evening by invited cultural institutions.

Sixth day - "Putana, Sakata, Truna, Bika, Beulah, Dhenu etc. are invisible to the Maya-like deities, whose torment makes gods, humans and even animals and birds tremble, he killed them as a mere child. The terrible poisonous snake took his life alone. What can be done with him? How can this ordinary milk-fed child be killed?" The powerful King Kansa, busy and agitated, takes his place in the court, making such a roar for Krishna. Sometimes he becomes helpless and overwhelmed with worry. Then, thinking of himself, he drowns his doubts in self-confidence. Looking at his own feet, he loses himself in alcohol. In the bedroom, in the court, in the mirror, in the pot filled with sweets, and wherever he goes on the path to victory, the face of the child Krishna appears before him. Krishna's smiling face shines. It is as if he is beckoning the Mathura king. He mocks his helplessness in the face of his fear of death. Demon King Kansa takes the stage and suddenly stops and becomes silent.

On the other hand, while the cowherds are selling butter in Gopapura, the people of Gopapura are enchanted by Krishna's presence with the other cowherd boys and are enthralled with Krishna's love.

While the cowherds were selling curd, Krishna and the other cowherd boys hid in a bush and broke the cowherd's bowl. When the cowherds went to bathe in the Yamuna (Jira River), they took all their clothes from the riverbank and kept them under a Kadamba tree, where Krishna sat and played the flute. The gopis were shocked by the magic of Krishna's flute. But when they returned to their kingdom at the right moment, they saw Krishna sitting under a Kadamba tree, playing the flute, and keeping their clothes with him. Kadamba flowers and colorful saris and veils with lace and glittering colors came down from the green leaves of the tree and the branches of the tree. The gopis, ashamed, could not go out into the open and begged Krishna to return the clothes. They were proud. Their anger is filled with deep love for Krishna. The scene of the conversation between Shri Krishna and the Gopis is truly vivid and heart touching.

At this time, at the invitation of Kansa in Mathura, kings from various states join the meeting held in the king's court. Among the invited royal congregation, Kansa's father-in-law and the king of Magadha,

Jarasandha, the emperor of Kalinga, Bajra Sen, the king of Salakya, Nirbacha Kavacha, the king of Karindra, the king of Paundika, the king of Sonitpur, the king of Chedi, the king of the king of Chedi, the king of Jyotishkapur, Narakasur, the king of Shakalya, the king of Markata, Dwividha of Kanwar, the king of Udanga, the king of the flying, Vajranabha, the king of Manikunda, Sandas and Saudas, are prominently present and sing the praises of King Kansa.

Instead of killing Krishna and Balaram in Gopapura, the royal family thinks that it will be easier to kill them if they can somehow bring them to Mathura. Therefore, a plan is unanimously made to organize a Dhanu Yatra in Mathura and invite Krishna and Balaram. Taking the advice of King Mitra, Kansa orders to organize the Dhanu Yatra. It is decided in the meeting to send the minister Akrura to invite Krishna and Balaram. The Demons burst into laughter as they have found a way to kill Krishna and Balaram. Dance songs are played happily in the court. A chitau is prepared for the invitation of Krishna and Balaram, based on the Odia medieval poetic literature 'Kansar Chitau'. Everyone gets drunk on Sura and Saki. Dance songs are also organized in the Ranga Mahal.

Seventh Day – On the seventh day, a letter is prepared for the invitation of Krishna and Balarama to the Kansa court. In the presence of Akrura, a letter is prepared and arrangements are made to send him to Gopapura. While Akrura, a devotee of Krishna, is waiting to have the look of Krishna, he gets emotional after receiving the order of King Kansa. Remembering Krishna, he becomes overwhelmed with devotion and his throat is filled with tears. He forgets everything in the hope of seeing Krishna.

On the other hand, the scenes of the Gopis' dancing and Krishna's navel-gazing are performed in Gopapura. The scenes performed at Mana bandha (pond) become very lively, which is enjoyed by viewers or devotees from far away. Sitting on the navel, Krishna and Radha are seen dancing around the pond, and the sky is shaken by the roar of the crowd. The sight of people washing Radha Krishna's feet, drinking water from their feet, showering flowers on him, offering money, etc. is very touching. It creates a spiritual atmosphere and reminds us of the Dwapar Yuga.

Eighth day – As per the orders of King Kansa, at nightfall, Krishna, harnessed to the chariot of the Akrura, leaves the city of Mathura for Gopapura to invite Balarama to the Dhanuyatra festival. While singing the name of Shri Krishna and passing the Haribol (praise lord hari), tears of joy flow from Akrura's eyes. Even though it was ordered by King Kansa, he considered himself blessed because he had the opportunity to see lord and get freedom from the all bondage. Overwhelmed with devotion to Krishna, he closed his eyes and recalled all the pastimes of Govinda in his mind. "Gopi Mohan Hey Ghanashyam..." he walked ahead, saying in between. Akrura becomes very happy after seeing Krishna's feet in the Yamuna (Jira) river. Seeing the pastimes of lord Krishna, he expresses his devotion. He considers himself blessed to have seen Shyam (Krishna) due to the merit of his hundred births. Before the Gopapura, he meets Krishna Balaram and explains to him about Kansa's invitation. Akrura forgets himself in the Jira River at the feet of Shri Krishna. Later, in the name of Krishna,

he meets the Nanda king and queen. The Nanda king and queen complain that there is some conspiracy behind this invitation of King Kansa. Then Akrura explains to him that, Krishna and Balarama are not ordinary boys. They are incarnations of the Lord and run this world only by the will of the Lord. Therefore, accepting this as the Lord's play and the will of the Lord, he fearlessly persuades the Nanda king and queen to send Krishna Balarama to Mathura. Then the Nanda king asks for time to think about this and invites Akrura to his house as guest. Akrura is delighted to meet the Lord.

On the other hand, King Kansa is anxiously awaiting the arrival of Krishna Balarama in Mathura. The king is worried about when he will come and when he will kill him. Dancing girl drinks liquor from his hand. Shields eyes, wobbly feet. Sleep has disappeared from the eyes. The sleepless night is spent only in thoughts. While sleeping and sitting, the image of Shri Krishna dances before the eyes. With a flute in his hand, graceful, smiling, and thoughtful, the image of Shri Krishna appears and disappears again like a picture on a screen.

The little child has really made the king's life difficult. So that the ordinary child is mocking the might of the mighty king of the Bhoja dynasty, Rajadhi Rajeshwar Viradhi Birvar.

The king is confused - Vasudeva is standing with Devaki. The boy Krishna is nearby. Sometimes he goes with Devaki and sometimes he rides on Vasudeva's horse. He comes in front of Kansa and makes fun of him. In his dream, the king is running to kill him but he cannot be killed. How helpless. He is becoming helpless. Sometimes he feels weak and gets depressed. Seeing Krishna repeatedly in his dream, he becomes busy and agitated. Suddenly, the king's mind returns at the call of the minister. He describes the events of the dream to the minister. No matter how much the minister explains that the dream does not come true, the king is reluctant to obey. He is terrified. Even though he is a boy, what an enemy he is! He anxiously waits to kill him. Engrossed in the minister's assurances and the dance and song organized by him, he momentarily gets lost, forgetting about Sri Krishna.

Ninth Day – Akrura takes Krishna and Balaram with him and finally starts his journey towards Mathura. This important day of the eleven-day long Dhanu Yatra brings a surge of emotions in Gopapura and a moment of separation for the Gopis. The people of Ambapali (Gopapura), who have been creating an emotional and spiritual atmosphere with the cowherd boys for a week, are reluctant to leave Krishna and Balaram. Suddenly, a cloud of sadness forms in Gopapura, which is filled with laughter and joy.

At this moment of farewell, not only Radha, Yashoda, Nanda or the Gopis cry, as the dust of the Gopapura streets is scattered for the two brothers. The scattered again are the Kunjaban, the trees and the water of the Gopapura. The uproar created by the arrival of Akrur gradually brings Kansa's conspiracy to the minds of the people of Gopura, doubling the fear. Through the songs of Mathura Mangala, the Gopanganas sing –

Oh Akrur

Do not be so cruel as to take away our Gopura's black secrets.

How can the Meen Chatak live without water? Whether he lives or not, the dense Go Barjabandhu.

Nanda-Yashoda sing

Oh Babu Shyamghana, you have gone to Madhubhan

Whose face will I live for?

The dusty streets of Gopuram are filled with the sweet melody of many such songs. Some people worship the two brothers Krishna and Balaram, while others embrace them and kiss them. Since the evil-natured uncle Kansa lives in Mathura, Nanda and Yashoda are angry to leave them there. Friends, gopikas, and Radha are crying and shedding tears. Radha faints frequently. At this time, Lord Krishna sings for his friends:

I will come to Mathura one day, so that I can graze in Vrindavan. Say goodbye to the cows, O brother, I have come to you.

Wiping away the tears of Radha and Yashoda, Benibhai sings again -

Look, we are coming on the bow, our mother, with tears in her eyes, and with this love, give us a blessing. The time is ripe.

After worshipping Benibhai at home, he is buried with Akru in a mournful atmosphere. Finally, Krishna Balaram arrives in Mathura, accompanied by his beloved Gopal friends. After reaching Mathura, Akru, with Benibhai, stays at the house of Adimata in Amrotota, Mathura. A Chhatrapati of Mathura, no one dares to rise against Maharaj Kansa, but seeing the demonic power sent by Maharaj to Sule, Shri Krishna, who was not afraid to fight, Maharaj Kansa himself becomes worried. Public opinion in Mathura starts to change against Maharaj. In Mathura, where the scepter is given in the name of Shri Krishna, there Krishna is seen coming to Mathura to give him power. The scene is played of the sages praising Lord Vishnu in Amrotota of Govindapali, who, having heard that the sages were praising Lord Vishnu in Amrotota of Govindapali to oppose the illegal actions of Maharaja Kansa, reaches Govindapali with his ministers, demolishes the sages' hut, beats them mercilessly and takes them to the royal court for punishment. He praises Shiva to kill Krishnabalaram, conquering the abyss of death and death, and asks for the Rudra arrow (Divyastra) to kill his brother. Shiva gives him his

Later, after receiving news from the spy about Akura's arrival in Mathura with Krishna Balaram, he gets up in joy, thinking that his plan has been successful. He goes to the 'Rang Mahal' with his ministers and enjoys dancing and singing with Minister Satyajji.

Tenth day - Oh, what a change. Where Ranadunduvir's head, Kansa's tyranny has taken hold of Dulukuthula, why is there such a crowd today? Why is there a Gopuram hall on the streets of Mathura? Rows and rows of women holding kalas, murulas, and flower garlands on the village streets, a long queue. How is this abode where blood gushed out with Kansa's footsteps? Narada Muni's house in Madhuban -

Who is there, caught in a dance, caught in a dance, the crowd dances here and there .

The sound of Sahanai and Dulduli is heard everywhere, everyone's face is filled with the joy of Vrindavan Bihari, the joy of Krishna Balaram

Vrindavan Bihari Shri Krishna arrives with his brother Balaram to Mathura. To see the Dhanu Yatra organized by his uncle Kansa Maharaj. The cowherd boys arrive with this Benibhai. The Mathuradand falls in love with their stick play and dance. The Madhuban Tota in Khajuratikra, the Chale Puja of Krishna Balaram at Adimata Matha. The elder Adimata Sindhurani feeds Krishna Balaram with the Arisa Kakara cakes prepared by her own hands. Truly, all the viewers are mesmerized by seeing such a deep affection. After spending the night there, the scene of Krishna-Balaram being hung on a swing is very enjoyable. After this, the Rajaka rescue scene is performed. Benibhai needs clothes to see the Dhanu Yatra organized by Kansa Maharaj. They go to the Rajaka and ask for clothes. This Rajaka is only for the king. But who will give clothes to these Gaud children? Then the Rajaka is surprised to know that he is Krishna and Balarama. Seeing their vision, he is overcome with emotion.

After this, the charioteer greets Benibhai with palm leaves and eats sweets. Later, the Krishna-Sudama Mali meeting is performed there. This scene is very touching. Sudama's long wait, who used to bring garlands to the Kansa court despite her reluctance, comes to an end. On meeting Shri Krishna, she considers life blessed. While Sudama Mali is decorating Shri Krishna with garlands of flowers, after dressing Krishna, Sudama Mali is wearing a garland and taking a piece of hair, some people want to see Kesharaju's hair, the moon or the throat of the goddess.' It creates an emotional scene. The meeting of the Lord and the devotee. Blessings and love are not visible. This is why the world-famous folk drama Dhanu Yatra of Muktakash is called. After this, Krishna and Balarama set out to travel to other parts of Mathura. On the way, they see Kuchula at the Kali temple and wrap their hands around her back in kindness. Immediately, the woman who was carrying a basket of rice turns into a beautiful young woman. Seeing the transformation of her body, she falls at the feet of Shri Krishna. The audience present is overwhelmed by the extraordinary sight of the said Lord. To welcome the two brothers, a large number of kumbhs, incense sticks and flowers are showered on the streets of Mathura, and a crowd of spectators is seen on both sides of the road to pay their respects.

Eleventh and final day -The final day of the journey is Upanit. King Kansa is worried. Time has passed in hope and fear. Those two boys who killed the great warriors will soon reach the palace. He will definitely kill them if he finds them in his arms. He has called them by trickery to show that he is going on an archery expedition, when he has warned everyone to achieve his goal. There is a tight guard everywhere. Warriors

like Attumulla and Kubalaya elephant are ready. This time, he will not let Gopal Benibhai pass. Where will they go? Death is certain. Sometimes he is happy thinking about all this, and sometimes he is shaken by terror and fear. However, he drives all kinds of fears away from his mind by laughing. Even if Attumulla and Kubalaya elephant are defeated, he is still there. He is the brave, powerful, and majestic Kansasur. To him whose name Vasudha trembles, the throne of the gods' trembles, will these two ordinary children be sacrificed? He will surely kill these two children. He will live a life free from harm, proving the prophecy false. He will be immortal, the lord of the sky and the entire world. In this way, while Bhavana is lost in the palace in the kingdom, Benibhai Krishna Balaram, after traveling to Mathura, arrives to see the Dhanayatra. What a unique beauty. Incomparable beauty. Bright face. How he captivates the whole world with his attire. Seeing him coming, the elephant Kubalaya came running. While fighting with Benibhai, he is killed by them with the strength of a hundred lions. Then there is a fight with Attumulla.

In a moment, the eight are captured. Then the bow breaks and the stage is filled with a fierce battle. King Kansa with Krishna, Balarama. He was killed by the hands of those whom he considered to be an ordinary breastfed child. Who will write the letter? Whose death was so prepared, so cunning, so deceitful, but everything turned upside down. While he was going to kill him, he himself died. Waves of joy spread all around. The city of Mathura trembled with the sound of fireworks and arrows. Along with Mathura, heaven, earth, and hell were freed from the cruelty of Kansa. After the death of King Kansa, thousands of men and women uttered the words - "Kansa is the family of the king, let us eat Kansa's dead body." While the weeping of the sages who were saddened by the death of Kansa continued, the sword was distributed among the people present. Krishna and Balarama establish peace in Mathura by coronating Ugrasena, freeing Devaki Vasudeva and with that the long eleven-day folk drama comes to an end. The Lord, who takes birth for ages to establish truth, religion and justice and frees us from the burden of sins, is celebrated in Bargarh Dhanu Yatra.

The famous line of the poet Radhanath Raya – “No one remains, no one will remain under this glorious land, everything will return after its own performance as time goes by”. In this law, the merger of powerful and far-reaching rulers like Kansa takes place. Kansa becomes the past. But Kansa is immortal. But it has no end. Just as there is good with evil, there will also be Kansa with blackness. If there were no contradictory principles such as truth, falsehood, good and evil, one would not know the difference between all the nonsense. It is impossible to describe the greatness of Krishna without the character of Kansa. Therefore, even though Kansa dies every year during the Dhanuyatra of Bargarh, he is reborn the next year

Dhanuyatra has demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability, evolving over the centuries in response to changing social, economic, and political contexts. The festival remains a vital part of Bargarh's cultural identity, preserving traditional practices, music, and art forms. Dhanuyatra generates significant revenue for the local economy, supporting small businesses, artisans, and hospitality services. Despite its importance, Dhanuyatra faces challenges such as commercialization, cultural dilution, and infrastructure

constraints, which need to be addressed to ensure its sustainability. Efforts are needed to preserve and promote Dhanuyatra's cultural and historical significance, including documentation, research, and community engagement initiatives. Dhanuyatra's ancient origins and medieval patronage reflect the region's rich cultural heritage and historical significance. The British colonial powers' influence on the festival highlights the complex dynamics of cultural exchange and appropriation. The festival's revival and promotion in the post-independence period demonstrate the importance of preserving cultural heritage and promoting national identity.

6. Conclusion:

Dhanuyatra of Bargarh is a unique and vibrant festival that showcases the rich cultural heritage of Odisha, India. This conceptual study has examined the socio-historical perspective of the festival, exploring its historical context, evolution over time, and impact on the local community. The study highlights the festival's socio-cultural significance, its role in promoting social harmony, and its contribution to the preservation of Odisha's cultural heritage.

Dhanuyatra of Bargarh, Odisha, India, is a distinctive and dynamic festival that vividly showcases the state's rich cultural legacy. This conceptual study undertakes an in-depth examination of the festival's socio-historical context, tracing its evolution over time and assessing its profound impact on the local community. The study delves into the historical context of Dhanuyatra, exploring its origins, development, and transformation over the years. It analyzes the festival's cultural significance, highlighting its role in promoting social harmony, community cohesion, and cultural preservation.

One of the primary findings of this study is the festival's socio-cultural significance. Dhanuyatra serves as a vital platform for the local community to come together, celebrate their shared cultural heritage, and reinforce social bonds. The festival's inclusive nature, which brings together people from diverse backgrounds, fosters a sense of unity and social harmony.

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