



The Dhanu Yatra Comes the month of **Pausa** (winter, the first half of January), the sleepy town turns festive, the whole town of Baragarh District becomes stage where people depict mythology into a religion. The uniqueness of the festival lies in the fact that all the episodes of '*Kansa Vadh*' (The killing of Kansa) takes place in different parts of the town making it the largest open air theatre in the world.



Interestingly, the people in the state as well as inside their houses become artist, the satellite settlements near by villages, rivers and buildings takes on classical names, as they were known in the age of Mahabharat. A visitor at this time may be pardoned for thinking that he has, by mistake got into a time machine that has transported him backward.

During the festival Bargarh awakes to the vibrations of drums, bugles and shehenais. Bargarh becomes *Mathura Puri* as it was called some 5,000 years ago. The neighboring *Amapali* village becomes “Gopa Pura” the place Krishna immortalized with the “Bala Lilla”. The Jira, which flows between Bargarh and Amapali, becomes “Yamuna” for the time being.



The mood takes over thousands from near by villages who throng the streets of Bargarh to enjoy and participate in the cultural drama. The main attraction is Kansa whose characterization dominates the festival despite people viewing him as a demon.

Interestingly the festival not only re-enacts mythology but also provide amusements to the people. As Kansa goes around the city the people regardless of, whom they are bow before him. The District Collector and Magistrate, Superintendent of Police and other administrative officials who visit Kansa Darbar are treated as the King’s subordinates and local MLAs, MPs as well as Ministers are projected as his representatives. The festival begins with enactment of the grand wedding of Devaki and Vasudeva, the birth of Krishna’s Balalila and climaxes with the Death of Maharaja Kansa.

The unique extravaganza boasts of a cast that involves virtually everyone in Bargarh. The



Panchayat Motel turns in the royal palace of Kans and the Durbar is a pandal erected at Hatpada in the heart of the Bargarh town. The local Radha Krishna temple serves as the prison house of Vasudeva and Devaki. The most remarkable feature of the Yatra, which hopes to find a place in Guinness Book of World Record, is that there are no spectators; rather all are participants in the epic play.

Kansa, astride a decorated elephant, goes on a Nagar Parikrama every morning. During the tour, he imposes fines on businessmen as well as government departments for violation of rules. He also holds a durbar to listen to the grievances of his subjects and reprimands or awards officials, including the Collector and Superintendent of Police, who become his court officials during the festival.

In short, anyone who dares to cross his path gets the royal rap, no one is spared. The king, from Chief Minister down to the poor and landless labourers, can haul anyone.

According to scholars, the origin of “Dhanu Yatra” is obscure. Some say it was very popular in the 18th century while others argue that it started in the 16th century. It is also believed that the yatra was restarted during the British regime.



How to reach Bargarh

By Train



- ⇒ Bhubaneswar - Raipur intercity Express - Dep. 7.15pm from Bhubaneswar (Daily).
- ⇒ Bhubaneswar – Bolangir intercity Express – Dep. 6.45am from Bhubaneswar (Daily).
- ⇒ Puri – Hatia (Tapaswini Express) – Dep. 10.20pm from Bhubaneswar (Daily).

By Bus



- ⇒ Private as well as OSRTC (Hi-Tech Buses) are available from Bhubaneswar to Bargarh.

By Air



- ⇒ Nearest Airports – Raipur (Chhatisgarh State) and Bhubaneswar (Orissa State).