

## DHANUYATRA

**Late Prabhat Ku Mishra**

When Abdul-Baha was in London, in 1939 among his many callers was an actress who spoke to him of the theatre and of her work. "We also have a theatre", said Abdul-Baha. The actress immediately becomes all interest and enthusiasm. Yes, where is it? 'She said, 'I should love to see it. Can I play in it?'

"Our theatre, Abdul-Baha answered, smiling, is built in a country where there is eternal spring-time. The streets of that city are as clean as the surface of a mirror. The lights of that play house are the rays of the sun of reality, the actors of our drama are the Holy Manifestations of God, the audience is composed of pure and sanctified souls. They play their parts with power and potency. The stage of our theater is the arena upon which is played the sublimest tragedy, the most terrible drama, the most thrilling and heart-moving events of life".

"Come and join our company. You have acted all your life upon the material stage. Now come and act on this celestial stage. Your fellow actors will assist you, will coach you in your part and step by step you will become a star shining in the galaxy of those heavenly inspired dramatists.

When virtue subsides, noisome winds of Irreligion and lawless-ness blow in every crick and corner of the world-then God, in his resplendent glory, manifests through his chosen mouth pieces as Rama, Abraham, Krishna, Xoraster, Moses, Buddha, Christ, The Bab, Bahullah and the like. In every age, there is an agenda for the reconstruction of civilization. The Divine messengers, being the Heroes of such spiritual dramas, breathe new sprite in to the life of mankind. The world gets quickened of the operation of there animating energies. The children of man are thus delivered from the impending drawing at the appearance of these Holy Mariners.

If we look in the same back round, Lord Krishna, the lover Eternal, the Diving Flute-Player was born in Dwapara Yuga, some six thousand years back in northern India and effected a divine spring-tide to up hold righteousness and truth in Mathura, Kansa, his maternal uncle was a devil-incarnation. Underestimating the statin of Ugresan he had taken hold of the royal sceptre. His self-aggrandizement, his maddening after pelf and power and his turning away from godliness, made the citizens of Mathura reap an all-season's feeling of hellishness.

*"Abajananti Mammudham Manusimatanumashritam*

*Parambhaba majantau mamabhuta Maheswaram (Gita).*

As Krishna, the perfect image of the Great Being came in flesh and blood, in a moving from of dust, so Kansa, the ignorant one could not recognize his station, knowing not what he was doing. But Lord Krishna was no ordinary Mortal. He was not weak identity as defined by Kansa.

*"Na tatra suryobhanti Na Chandra Tarakam*

*Nema Bidyoo Bhanti Kutayomaginih*

*Tamebe Bhanta manu Bhanti sarvam*

*Tasya mesa sarvamida bibhanith"*

Kansa had, of course got scared hearing from Dedbarshi Narad about baby Krishna growing with life and vitality of Gopa, the realm of Nanda, a tenant-king. In order to put an end of Krishna's life, he had sent hundreds of devil-massagers and many newly born babes, In fact became martyrs. Was it not a spiritual drama? Krishna, too killed those demons in direct consequences of his wondrous powers. Out of wit when Kansa went into consultation with Akura, a great devotee, celebration of Dhanu Yatra (The festival of the bow of Lord Shiva) was a humble suggestion. Akura suggested him to invite thousands of yogi and rishis along with Krishna and Balaram. Breaking of the bow was, but a farce, a -pretension. On being convinced, Kansa thought to kill Krishna, on the spur of the moment. He reached Mathura.

However, Dhanu Yatra was arranged, Akrura Brought Krishna from Gopa with his chariot. Kansa couldn't face the countenance of Krishna blazing with the bhah (The Splendour) of god, surpassing the rays of thousands of suns shining of the sky, at a time. He fell down from the mancha (The lofty Gallery) and died. This episode is, just as a stirring subject in the minds of all Indians. Line by line, dot by dot.....it is painted in our eyes, till today, after so many centuries. This is purana as described in the vedic literature, the life blood of our culture, the current of the heritage of this race-eternal in the past and eternal in the future. Belief goes that the theatrical Krishna Lila (The divine play), is in vogue, in Bargarh since the closing of eighteenth century. Artist with grate interest, being possessed of spiritual bestowals were performing this art borrowing ideas from the ancient palm leaves written in Oriya language. But beginning of Birat Dhanu Yatra dates back to 1948 a year after the independence of India. Says sri Lalit Mohan Sahu, a veteran artist, "I have been associated with Dhanu Yatra since it's inception when I was just 22. Long days back, here at Govindpali, we have started solo Kunga yatra. Another time, we had started a yatra like puranic Aswa Medha Jagnya near dang. At last half a century ago, we thought of organizing Dhanu Yatra for an Experiment taking in to consideration the geographical set-up Bargarh".

I have born witness to the great industrial fair of Gwalior in 1987-88 and the great karouli fair of Rajasthan in 1989. I have also seen the great Adivasi fair of rajim and kanker. But my experience of Bargarh Dhanu Yatra for the last two years, makes ample difference. In unison with Sri Santanu Biswal, a journalist of EPA group, I can say, "Dhanu Yatra at Bargarh is a global festival. It stands unique its dream and reality", it is, not only a huge congregation, but also co-terminus with the ideals of National integration, and culture and heritage of a blessed state like Orissa.

Like the Car festival of Puri the Bali yatra of Cuttack, the Kumbha mela of Prayag-Dhanu Yatra at Bargarh, also arrests global attention. It is no denying the fact that Dahanu Yatra provides a big venue for exchange of mutual devotions in a life so dull and prosaic. For one looking beneath the surface, it better awakens such nobler sentiments that cold rationalization of the life style of the country, gentry and peasantry. Despite all odds and imponderables, our people have a mania for observing festivals, even though bereft of the means of fulfilling their minimum biological needs. Save pleasure, existence is out of

question. From pleasure, people strive for deserving pleasure. For that reason, They perform several rituals and acts of ownership and visit different pilgrimages. Dhanu Yatra and the Yatras of its like bring joy to the life of gloom and monotony, a joy which had been the obsession of the minds of the saints and philosophers of Greece and Rome and India. For generations and centuries, this has taken the concept of a pretty long relay race-Isn't it?

Forgetting that they are moving round a vicious circle, people of Bargarh, no matter, a pauper or a prince, a Hindu or a non-Hindu, illiterate or elite-every one appears as a mini-Biswakarma. From John to Pau, from Yusuf to Iqbal, from Rikku to Raja every one joins hands of cooperation for a period of eleven days, terminating on Pausa Purnima with the so-called death of Kansa at his Hatpada Gallery.

Ambapali village, two kilometers away from the city with its green belts of mango and guava groves (Just as Madhuvan or Brudavan) becomes Gopa and Bargarh Municipality, the sole dictatorial state of Kansa (Mathura). In between, there is a river let Jira that becomes Jamuna.

The entire play gets played in an open arena. Even Anwar Hussain, brother of the famous Hindi Film actress Nargis, once, while passing through Bargarh, got stricken with wonder on seeing such a drama so lively staged, the like of which found no where in the world.

During the festival, all mythological performances like Nabakeli, Bastraharana, Kaliya Dalan, Dahi Chori, Putuna Badha, Visit of Akrura etc. get openly staged in Ambapali. One can not count the heads of the visitors, indeed, the devotees from far and wide gathered around there. Every one bows down before the holy presence of the actor Krishna. This is what we define as the spirituality of the Indians. Sri Rakdhaballav Mishra, a senior Advocate of Bargarh says, "In the year 1948, we were students of class eight. Being in scouts, we are busy maintaining law and order with scars around our neck and sticks in hand to control the onrushing movement of the crowd".

Here at Bargarh, Kansa in a royal style, seated on a well adorned elephant goes around the main street. Every one is bound to obey his high command. Sri Biju Pattnaik, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Orissa had to pay an amount of one Lakh rupees on being fined. Anwar Hussain had also paid an amount of five hundred rupees to decades back. Sri Rabindra Chhakraborty, a skillful art man of Bargarh remarks, "When we see the current

Kansa, at least, we become alert of the test and sufferings of people in Dwapara Yuga. This century should be free from such tragic fetters”.

Most of the organizers, who first gave Dhanu Yatra a move, are now the denizens of the realm on high. Among them are remembered Kangali Naik, Nilamani Pujari, Siba Sarangi, Basudev Podh, Duti Sahu, Sindhu Kumari Das, Parna Bhandhu Kar, Kunduru Sahu, Raghmani Das, Tila Pradhan, Ghasi Mohanty and Brindavan Bisi.

Bundi Rath had first acted as Kansa, Then Bhimsen Tripathy and Radhaeshyam Gountia. But Judhistir Satpathy, a multifarious genius when acted as Kansa, Dhanu Yatra had attained its zenith. People still brood over the passing away of Sri Satpathy. For the last two decades Sri Gopal Sahu(Eli), the A.S.I of Police Department has been appearing as Kansa. He is no doubt successfully coming his portion.

We make anti thesis of thesis, again crazing to make out of that a synthesis which neither profits us nor the system, in which we live. Says the theatre-maestro, Sri Hare Krushna Pujari, “The objective of Dhanu Yatra is to display the consequence of Kansa hood and Krishna hood alike. If the proto-type of the idea is not rescued of this area will be buried into oblivion”.

Beyond the outer wills of time, Dhanu Yatra at Bargarh is lotous bloom of Culture, a common man’s share. It does not tolerate monopoly. Hence calling to memory Abdul Baha’s replay to the Londoner, “Come and join our company”.

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