



Gunanidhi Dash : The cultural ambassador of Bargarh

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Gunanidhi Dash popularly famous in Bargarh as “Guna Okil” is an advocate of reputation and the cultural ambassador of Bargarh. In cultural activities he is not an individual rather an institution. His career throws remarkable light to the events of Bargarh in the 2nd half of 20th Century.

Born on 23rd Dec. 1930 in the Gauntia family at Talipara, Bargarh, he was the worthy descendent of his ancestors Balki Dash and his son Narayan Dash. His mother was Jambovati Devi and father was Raghunath Dash.

Genealogical Table (Only his direct line)

Balmiki Dash (Balki Dash)



(Five sons)

remained as the gauntias of 5 areas viz. Bargarh, Kantapali, Talsrigida, Mahada (Bhatli) and Guesar.



Narayan Dash



Damodar Dash (Had Five sons)



Manbodh Dash (had four sons)



Raghunath Chandrasekhar Harishankar Basanta



Gunanidhi Dash

Gunanidhi Dash began his schooling at the Basti School, Bargarh. It was followed by Guru training School at Sambalpur. At that time Shiva Prasad Dash, the author of “Sambalpur Itihas”, who was also related to his family was headmaster there. After passing class V from Guru training school he took admission at George High School Bargarh. He passed Matriculation in 1948, J.A. in 1952 from G.M. College, Sambalpur, B.A. in 1955 from the Same G.M. College and LLB in 1957 from

Madhusudan Law College, Cuttack. At that time G.M. College was also under Utkal University.

Guna Dash has many qualities feathered to his credit. Of them his glory as a singer is the most glorious. It was in the Guru training school this quality got manifested. He was recognized as a singer of worth. Of course, as told by him the teacher of Guru training School Ramachandra Mishra injected inspirations in this regard. Inspiration given by father Raghunath Dash was also not less important. Raghunath was a lover of song. He had possessed a gramophone and 400 to 500 records on different songs. Probably it was the only gramophone in the area during that time. It reveals the love for song and music in the family. Father’s inspiration to son is known from an event. While in class VIII the voice of Guna Babu took a new shape on account of adolescence. He disappointedly stopped singing. His father knowing it talked to his mother to inspire him for singing. He purchased a Harmonium and a sitar for his son. Udayanath Samal a teacher of George High School also inspired the quality of singing in him. Credit also goes to Anantaram Saraf music teacher of G.M. College Sambalpur. But true to his own words at that time the singers of the area were not giving stress on the tune in music. They were singing on the basis of the time or measure in music. Guna Babu learned Swara lipi and Hindusthani song form Surya Singh an eye specialist from Benaras coming to Bargarh once in a year for eye operation. In G.M. College he stood first twice in music competition.

As a singer artist he was recognized by all India Radio (AIR) Cuttack in 1954 in Odissi, Sambalpuri folk, Champu, Palligita, Oriya adhunik and Hindi and Oriya Bhajans. He was the first artist of Western Orissa recognized by AIR Cuttack. As told by him, Harmonium was not allowed in the Radio Station. Artist had to sing through tanpura. It created a little difficulty for him. His first broadcast was a Hindi Bhajan which attracted many. The year 1958 was glorious for him. His Sambalpuri folk song “Kiego Kanduchha ghora vane...” composed and sang by him was





broadcast from AIR Delhi in a national programme. He has composed a number of Sambalpuri folk songs. One of his song “Tebha talen Kaen rasavati jhaen jhaen karuchhe....” Sang by late Akshya Mohanty brought glorious popularity. He felt sorry for giving credit to Arun Seth by a writer Manoj Meher for the song composed by him (Jhum Jhum baze mor jhumka paenri) in the picture Sadhana by Sarat Pujhari. In 1960 along with others he started a Kala Vikash parisad for the development of art activities. It was the first of its kind in undivided Sambalpur District.

He has a number of prestigious positions and awards to his credit as a singer artist. He was the member of audition board of All India Radio Cuttack and later on Sambalpur; advisory body member of Doordarshan, Orissa. He has been honoured by different organizations and institutions like “Katha ar Kathani” – monthly Sambalpuri literary magazine, 5th Sambalpuri writers’ Association, Kosal chetana Sambalpur, Nuakhai Bhetghat, 2006 by Govt. of Orissa, Bargarh Lok Mahotsav 2007, Saukhin Kalakar Sangha, Bargarh, Utkal Gauraba Kalakar Sangha, Baula Jhupa Bargarh cultural Association, Pragati Sangha Sambalpur etc.

Guna babu also had his contribution towards freedom fighting during student life, although he was not arrested and sent to jail. While he was in class VI at George High School Bargarh, his senior class students like Shankar Agrawal, Radheshyam Dash, Laxmi Narayan Mishra, Bibhuti Shatpathy once in 1942 (Quit India Movement) came out from the class shouting slogans like Vande Mataram, Bharat Mata ki Jay etc. Guna Babu with other students of his class also walked out and participated in the protest. The School remained closed. According to his words, “Geeta Mzumdar, wife of S.D.O., Mazumdar Babu instructed them how to give inspiring slogans. Mr. Dash, here expressed his dissatisfaction that he was not arrested though wanted to be so and ready to go to jail. As seems to him, probably thinking him as minor the police was not arresting him and others.

Guna Babu is a famous advocate. He began his profession from 1957 at Bargarh Bar. To him during that time people with good knowledge and finance were attracted towards law profession. They wanted to give right justice to the people. Now it has changed. People are not getting justice rightly. He was the president of Bargarh Bar Association for several times. One of the important achievement of his presidentship was the bringing back of witness house (Sakhigar) from the Govt. It was previously made sub registrar office. But when the new building was constructed for sub registrar office, in 1985 as the president of the Bar Guna Babu requested the S.D.O. to return it for the purpose used previously. The S.D.O. agreed but later on did not return. So the Bar started a vigorous strike and finally became successful.

Guna Babu is also a politician of reputation. Of course now he is out from this track. But in the past he was councilor for two times and Chairman of Bargarh Municipality in 1968. One of the notable achievements done by him during his tenure was the abolition of holding tax and Laterine tax from the people.

He is a man of culture. He has always taken keen interest in Dhanuyatra, Dramas, Music, Play of Harmonium, Tabla, Flute stitar etc. He is associated with many cultural organisations. Twice he was the president of Dhanuyatra Committee to conduct Dhanuyatra the largest open air drama of the world. He has remained as the advisor of Dhanuyatra committee for the last 40 years.

He is the man always working for social welfare. He raised his voice and made strike for the removal of wine shops near to town. He is working for the protection of environment. Even in this age he is busy in social & cultural activities, composing song etc. Now he is happy with his family i.e. wife shakuntala Devi (daughter of Rusabha Kar, Bargarh) three sons viz. Late Dr. Gati, Advocate Diti and Jati and grand sons and daughters.

V.S.S. Nagar,
Bargarh

