



*Prof. Chittaranjan Mishra*

nobility. The author has prepared the basis of his life history on the works by close associates having clear insight and understanding.

Prof. Chittaranjan Mishra took his Master's Degree in Ancient Indian History and Culture from Patna University in 1960. He served the Post Graduate Department of History, Sambalpur University from 1975 to 1998. For his original piece of research on Freedom Movement in Sambalpur, he was awarded the Degree of Philosophy in History by the Sambalpur University. Being a keen student of Numismatics he is a member of the Numismatic - Society of India beside other prestigious bodies like Indian History Congress and the History Congress of Orissa.

Currently, he is a member in the Editorial Board constituted by the Government of Orissa for compilation of authentic chronicles of Freedom Movement in Orissa.

Nrusingha Guru was a superior man. He was many things in one - a freedom fighter, a nationalist, a social reformer, a moralist and a journalist. Sambalpur remembers him with devotions, strangers with surprise, friends with faith, conservatives with jealousy and critics with helplessness. He makes a fine picture as he stands in his own

**Nrusingha Guru**

● **Chittaranjan Mishra**

● **Sambalpur University**

# NRUSINGHA GURU

## The freedom fighter



**Chittaranjan Mishra**

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The freedom fighter

by  
*Chittaranjan Mishra*



**SAMBALPUR UNIVERSITY**

**NRUSINGHA GURU**  
*THE FREEDOM FIGHTER*

by : Chittaranjan Mishra  
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**FOREWORD**

Late Nrusingha Guru was born on the day of Dola Purnima in 1902 in a remote village named Gurupali under Sason police station of Sambalpur district. He was an excellent student and own scholarship. He evinced keen interest in the Indian National Movement being inspired by Mahatma Gandhi when he was a student of Class IX in Sambalpur Zilla School in 1921. In response to the call of Mahatma Gandhi he left Zilla school and joined the National School at Sambalpur. Shri Guru came in personal contact of Mahatma Gandhi and Smt. Kasturaba Gandhi when they visited Sambalpur in 1928. He was deeply inspired by the simplicity of Gandhiji and Gandhi's way of living and his principles. Since then until his death Shri Guru put on a Khadi dhoti, which never descended beyond his knees and put on a Khadi Chadar. Shri Guru walked and worked bare foot. He even used a bamboo umbrella. He was a true Gandhian.

Sri Guru did not eat sugar as this was prepared from molasses by using British Machines. He ate molasses. He joined the Salt Satyagraha, the Civil Disobedience Movement and went to jail in 1930. In 1942 he courted arrest and went to jail during Quit India Movement. He organized many meetings, processions and spread the message of independence even in remote villages of western part of Orissa. He was a true patriot and freedom fighter.

Although he was born to a conservative Brahmin family, and was deeply influenced by the spirituality of his parents, but took up constructive programmes for the upliftment of Harijans. He never believed in caste and spent considerable time and money in managing a hostel for the Harijan students in Sambalpur and always looked for their welfare. He spread the message on the demerits of drinking liquor and always thought that a self respecting man can not prefer to remain outside the prison under an unjust British Government. He believed in social reconstruction and worked for good communal relation between different castes and people of different religions. He was one of the leading lights in the annals of freedom fighters of Sambalpur zone. After independence he preferred to keep himself away from political activities and took up journalism as his profession. He was fearless and an investigating journalist who always wrote impartial and true information to 'Samaj' the leading Oriya daily. He made extensive tours of villages and always sent most authentic news.

He was a man of faith and was a link between the society, social reconstruction and the Government. He was a humanist, practical idealist, a social reformer and also made his mark as a journalist. He was rightly addressed by people of western part of Orissa with love as "Gandhi of Western Orissa". He breathed his last on 2nd January, 1984 away from Sambalpur in the house of his father in law in Sarangad, Madhyapradesh.

Although it is not a policy of the University to publish biographies yet the Publication committee of the University made an exception considering the eminence of late Shri Guru and for his signal contributions in different fields. I wish to record our appreciation of Prof. Chittaranjan Mishra for writing the biography of this eminent personality with a historical touch and bringing many new facts of his personality. I also hope that this publication will provide motivation to the future generation to work the cause of Indian values and for the Motherland.

*M. C. Dash*  
(M. C. Dash)

## PREFACE

This handy volume Nrusingha Guru is a portrayal concise and clear of the role the commanding personality played in the struggle for National Independence. It presents also his ideas on the socio-political system and on the National order. The reader is introduced directly to the contributions, rich and direct, in the particular field. The presentation has not been wedged by unnecessary details, descriptions and comments. The effort has been to pick up the grain without getting lost in the chaff. Observations emphasizing particular aspects have been of course made here and there.

Since Nrusingha Guru has been dealt independently, repeated reference to some of the common events, in relation to him, obviously were unavoidable. Also reference to the events had to be segmented due to the nature of work. To indicate the proper co-relation of events during the Non Co-operation Movement and Civil Disobedience Movement covering the national events indicating the impact on the freedom struggle has been provided for better understanding and clarity. It adds to narration a distinct comprehensiveness.

The Introduction, provides the reader a peep into the manner in which the political ideas were adopted in Sambalpur from time to time by different freedom fighters. Their impact on the general people has been specially emphasized.

Nrusingha Guru is based on the authentic material. The works I have drawn upon are by close associates having clear insight and understanding. I express my grateful thanks to them for the ideas and inspirations I derived from their works.

I am profoundly indebted to Prof. D.R. Naik, the then Vice-Chancellor, Sambalpur University for his active and united efforts, keen interest and constant endeavour. But for his encouraging words this handy volume would not have taken its present shape. I record my deep gratitude to Prof. M.C. Dash, Vice-Chancellor, Sambalpur University for his invaluable help. I am also thankful to esteemed Hemanta Kumar Mohapatra, Journalist New Indian Express and Bhagabat Prasad Nanda, erudite social worker for their ungrudging help to me. Among the well wisher and friend who encouraged me all along is Sri Durga Prasad Padhi, the Senator. I am grateful to him. I am confident that the reader will find this presentation useful and rewarding.

*Chittaranjan Mishra*

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### FOREWORD

### PREFACE

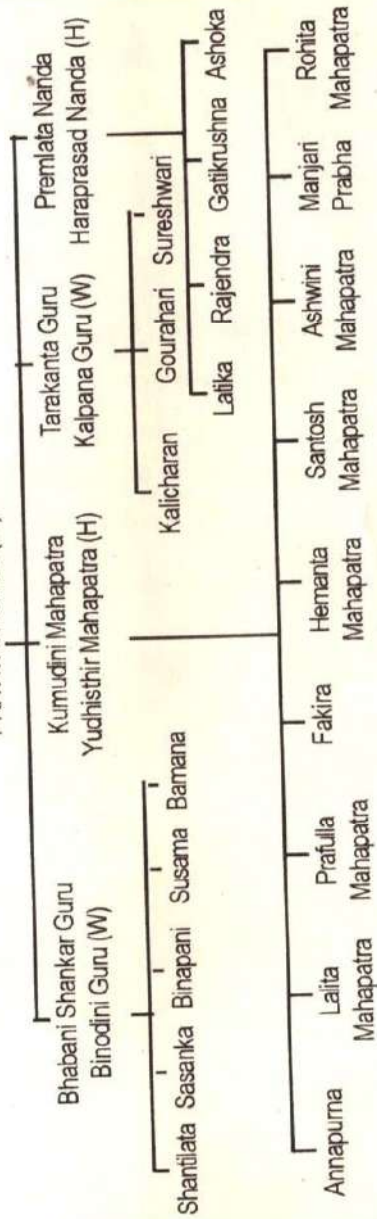
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## INTRODUCTION

Society, according to its moorings throws up the leaders; contemporary conditions provide them with action-pattern and together these enable them to appeal to the innermost self of the thinking people; and to attend the immediate requirements of the people. They are the individuals who weld the people into a purposeful strong unity. The leaders that made their influence felt during the course of the freedom movement in Sambalpur were of this make. They appealed to the innermost self of the thinking people and attended to the immediate requirement of the community. The influence of the Indian Nationalism had its impact on them; they accepted and adopted the political ideas and practices. They also drew upon the national heritage, with pride, used it to stimulate change in social outlook and to eliminate superstition from religion which in turn strengthened the national movement. They contributed in diverse manner, to the national main stream. To them patriotism was their religion. Then their do or die spirit, secured to the nation, their best.

The most distinguished amongst the distinguished leaders of Sambalpur was Nrusingha Guru. He came from diverse background. His contribution has been varied and distinct in several fields. He was the man of high idealism, in

## GENEALOGY

NRUSINGHA GURU  
PRIYAVATI GURU (W)

all matters adopted a matter of fact approach. He generated the national political tide as God's own man. As the potter or the wheel shapes the revolving clay after his ideas, so did Nrusingha Guru with human material available to him.

Nrusingha Guru worked on a well-prepared ground. By the time he appeared, political consciousness had come to the people, patriotism had sized the students; the importance of Swadeshi had come to be well realized and the idea of Independence had gained prominence.

The history of freedom movement in Orissa is the expression of force that constitute an integral parts of All-India struggle in the last act of the drama of political independence. The National Congress was the stage and Mahatma Gandhi the principal actor. The provincial actors looked up to Mahatma for light and guidance.

The freedom movement in Orissa passed through three well marked phases. The first phase (1803-85) witnessed the foundation of British rule in Orissa and the armed resistance of the people against the imposition of a system of government that was highly prejudicial to their interest. The second phase (1885-1920) saw the birth of National Institutions in the wake of the establishment of the Indian National Congress. This

resulted in the growth of political consciousness among the people who carried on agitation for securing civil rights in a constitutional way under the guidance of the Congress. The long standing grievances of the Oriyas about the Unification of all Oriya-speaking tracts under the administration emerged into limelight at this stage. Vigorous agitation was carried on for fulfillment of this aspiration of the people. This constitute a special feature of Orissa's activities during the second phase. The national activities in the third phase (1920-47) relates mainly to the Congress Movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi leading to the achievement of Independence of India Nrusingha Guru belongs to the third phase.

Though the Freedom Movement in Orissa in broad sense, begins with the establishment of the British rule in 1803, the struggle of the Oriya for liberation starts from the year 1568 when they lost their independence. There after they remained successively under the Afgans, Mughals and the Marathas during the year 1568-1803. During this period, specially under the muslim rule, Oriyas were subjected to much hardship, oppression and exploitation. They had to struggle against heavy odds. Thus the struggle of the Oriyas under the British rule is but a continuance of the same under the Muslim and Maratha rule. Though the complexion of the resistance movement was completely changed when directed against the



British assuming an Indian rather than a local character, we must not overlook the history preceding the establishment of foreign domination if we wish to judge the nature and scope of the Freedom Movement in Orissa in its true perspective.

Oriya nationalism in the form of resistance against the alien rule had really surfaced as early as 1817, that is, hardly fifteen years after the conquest of coastal Orissa by the British. The spirit of nationalism found a mighty upsurge in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. There were riots and revolts to unfurl the banner of independence and to herald a new order. Orissa had its distinguished share of the nationalist enterprise but it did not figure prominently until the resistance movement took the shape of conflagration in Sambalpur. While there were sporadic outbursts of enthusiasms in resisting the British Raj in other parts of Orissa, an organized attempt headed by the tribal chiefs in and around Sambalpur sent shivers through in the rank and file of the British administration.

We may briefly recapture a part of the previous history of Sambalpur. From Allahabad Pillar inscription it is known that Samudragupta in the 4<sup>th</sup> century defeated king Mahendra of Kosala which at that time comprised the present districts of Raipur, Bilaspur and Sambalpur. During 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Kosala was under the Sharbhapuriya dynasty.

The town Sarabhapura which was its headquarters is identified by some scholars with modern Sarabgarh in the Sundargarh District.

After the Sarabhapuriyas the Kingdom passed to the hands of Panduvamsi king. Tivaradeva sometime in 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. He was an ambitious monarch and maintained the Kosala portion of its empire intact. The present district of Sambalpur was very likely a part of that empire. Towards the last decades of 9<sup>th</sup> century, king Jamejaya I Mahabhavagupta (c.882 to 922 A.D.) consolidated the eastern part of Kosala comprising modern Sambalpur and Bolangir district under his rule, and from this time onwards the dynasty came to be popularly known as Samvamsi. The territory was further extended to the east and the south and a powerful kingdom was carved out. Jamejaya I declared himself the lord of Trikalanga. During the last part of the Samvamsi rule Sambalpur was occupied by the Kalachuris of Ratnapura. In the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century began the Ganga-Kalachuri conflict and continued for about a century. Finally it was decided in favour of the Gangas. From that time onwards the Sambalpur region was kept under Ganga governor.

The middle of 14<sup>th</sup> century was critical period for the Ganga rule in Orissa. It had to face a series of invasions

from the neighbouring kingdoms and amidst the chaos and confusion, Ramai Dev, a Chauhan Rajput laid the foundation of the Chauhan rule in western Orissa. It was under the Chauhans that the kingdom of Sambalpur was extended on all sides by war and conquests. Sambalpur grew from a struggling principality to a powerful kingdom during the reign of Baliar Sing, the fifth raja of Sambalpur. It was only after Chhatra Sai (1690-1725) who fortified the town, Sambalpur suffered from internal feud and weak administration. The subsequent kings were weak and indolent and the administration of the kingdom was completely left to the ministers. The record of T.Motte, the first European to visit Sambalpur (1768) for trade in diamond clearly reveals the political instability of Sambalpur towards the close of 18<sup>th</sup> century. Ultimately the fort of Sambalpur was occupied by the Marathas in April, 1800.

After the conquest of Orissa, the British wanted complete annihilation of the Maratha power and turned their attention towards Sambalpur, one of the major strong holds of the Marathas in Orissa. Sambalpur being located in a strategic place, the British were practically keen to bring it under their rule. The East India Company made alliances with the kings of Sambalpur, Baud and Sonapur, and finally it was occupied by major Broughton on 2 January 1804. But according to the Treaty of Deogan the Company had to cede Sambalpur to the

Marathas again. Finally, the Maratha power was destroyed and Sambalpur came under the British suzerainty in 1817.

Maharaja Sai, the last Chauhan ruler of Sambalpur died in 1827 leaving behind his widow Rani Mohan Kumari and two daughters. In order to continue the line the British government installed Rani Mohan Kumari on the Gaddi of Sambalpur. Though Sambalpur lapsed to the British government only in 1849 they were virtually the masters of Sambalpur since 1827 when Maharaja Sai breathed his last.

Rani Mohan Kumari though incapable of managing her own affairs and preserving tranquility with out the intervention of the British assumed power in 1827. This was resented by the people. Her administration was noted for favouritism, caprice and oppressiveness. She took away the rights of the Brahmins, Gands, Boinjhals who were influential landlords. They found their privileges threatened and their lands encroached upon and their tradition interfered with. The result was a sustained revolution for years by men with bows and arrows against fully equipped and trained soldiers with modern weapons. The rebellion mainly centred round the strongholds of Gond and Binjhal Zamindars who had a feeling that their powers would be usurped by the British Government. It may be stated that Sambalpur and its adjoining territories

were mainly inhabited by aboriginal tribes and most of the Zamindars were either Gonds or Binjhals. Since the secession of Sambalpur to the British Government by the Marathas, the Gond Zamindars and the Chiefs had petitioned for the restoration of their lands, but all the petitions had been disregarded with the exception of one by Maharaja Sai. Since then an urge for resistance had continued to smoulder among the Zamindars who had been reduced to a state of destitution.

The first man to confront Rani Mohan Kumari was Abdhut Sing, the tribal of Bessiekela in Padampur. As a result of his strong opposition to the Rani his estate had been usurped by her. His estate was the strong hold of the Gonds, who being deprived of all rights, opposed the East India Company, tooth and nail.

The rebellion broke out at once. Balaram Sing with his nephew Surendra Sai, Balabhadra Sing Deo of Lakhanpur, Ranjeet Sing, Bhupal Sing and Bhagwan Sing of Jharsuguda and Govinda Sing were on the forefront. The British Government took all repressive measures for putting down the rebels. Ultimately, the Government realized that there would be endless trouble so long as Rani remained in power. Accordingly, in 1833 one Narayan Sing was made the Raja of Sambalpur.

The rule of Narayan Sing was marked by gross favouritism. His was a period of weak administration consistent with his incapacity and feebleness. The accession of Narayan Sing caused a wave of protest throughout the state. Now, Surendra Sai being supported by Balabhadra Sing Deo was very active in resisting the authorities. Rebellion broke out and rebels made Barapahar hills their strong hold. But Surendra Sai was imprisoned; Balabhadra was killed and the rebellion was suppressed, with the help of the British. On 10<sup>th</sup> September 1849 Raja Narayan Sing died without any heir and the state was lapsed to the British Government.

The second phase of the war against the British started in 1857 when the great revolt occurred and it convulsed the country. Surendra Sai, then in Hazaribag Zail, was released by mutinous sepoy. He with his brother, entered Sambalpur towards the end of September 1857, and were given rousing reception by a large number of people. The tribal Zamindars and Gauntias who were groaning under the British tyranny rallied round him and promised to fight against the British Government under his leadership.

The rebellion of Sambalpur in 1857 was mainly a tribal rebellion. Almost all the tribal Zamindars and Gauntias joined in espousing the cause of Surendra Sai and they played

the significant role in it. They gave up comforts and restored to fugitive life. Their Zamindaris were confiscated, some of them were killed in the confrontation, some were arrested and hanged to death and many were imprisoned. Surendra Sai could challenge the mighty British Government relying solely in the strength and support of these tribal leaders.

The Zamindars of Lakhanpur, Ghens, Kolabira, Kodabaga, Bheden, Kharsal Paharsirgida, Patkulunda, Losinga etc. joined with Surendra Sai. The whole country in the neighbourhood of Sambalpur was in the possession of rebels. The British Government took stern measures to suppress the rebellion. Warnings were issued to the Rajas and Zamindars who supported and sympathized the rebels. Reinforcements were despatched to Sambalpur. Rebels were hunted down in all direction. Intense efforts were made in all directions to capture Surendra Sai but in vain. Towards the end of February, 1858, tranquility began to be restored in almost all the parts of the country. But the rebellion under Surendra Sai continued till 1864 when as a result of cunning strategy of Cumberledge, the Deputy Commissioner, he was arrested. Surendra Sai suffered great torments and died a martyr to the cause of freedom in the bleak cells of the fort of Asirgarh on 28 February, 1884.

There was a fresh popular movement in Sambalpur in the last part of 19<sup>th</sup> century when the authorities proposed substitution of Oriya by Hindi as the official language. The Language Agitation in Sambalpur and its subsequent amalgamation with the Orissa Division that followed in 1905 may rightly be considered as the foundation of the separate province of Orissa in 1936. The leaders like Chandra Sekhar Behera, Dharanidhar Mishra, Madan Mohan Mishra, Sripati Mishra and others launched a vigorous agitation from 1895 to 1901 to restore Oriyas as the official medium in area. The Sambalpur Hitaisini published from Bamanda championed the cause with great fervour and effectiveness. Along with the Sambalpur Hitaisini the language controversy was taken up by leading newspapers of Cuttack and Balasore, for example Utkala Dipika and Sambada Vahika.

The publication of the resolution No.237 dated 15<sup>th</sup> January 1895 which substituted Hindi in place of Oriya arose a sense of indignation in the hearts of the people of Sambalpur. Dharanidhar Mishra with his associates ventilated the popular grievance through the Oriya Association of Cuttack. He submitted a memorandum bearing signature of 2362 persons of the area in support of Oriya. But the memorandum was rejected. Not withstanding such reverses the leaders of the movement tenaciously pursued their objective. An opportunity

came to them to represent their case before the British Parliament with the proposed visit of Madhusudan Das to England in 1897. Madhusudan was authorized to be the spokesman of Sambalpur before the British Parliament.

The appointment of A.H.L. Fraser as the Chief Commissioner of Central Province in 1901 created better opportunity for the language agitation to achieve its goal. He expressed his full sympathy for the cause and prepared his famous note of 15<sup>th</sup> October, 1901 recommending restoration of Oriya language as the official medium. His views were upheld by the Government. The victory was celebrated with great enthusiasm by all sections of people throughout the district. A popular movement for a just cause had proved successful.

In spite of the restoration of Oriya in Sambalpur the administrative difficulty persisted because of the linkage with the Central Province. Sambalpur was reckoned as a penal district. It was but natural that the people of Sambalpur would think in term of amalgamating Sambalpur with the Orissa Division of Bengal Province. This amalgamation became a reality after Fraser's famous recommendation – "Sambalpur ought to be joined to Orissa to which it really belong's-bore fruit on 16 October, 1905. The bulk of the district was

transferred to Orissa and remained a part of the province of Bengal until 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1912 when the province of Bihar and Orissa was constituted. The language agitation of Sambalpur and its subsequent amalgamation with Orissa Division may rightly be considered a positive step towards the formation of separate province of Orissa in 1936.

Madhusudan Das the architect of Oriya nationalism observed the Sambalpur agitation very keenly and made up his mind that only a well organized joint endeavor with a great thrust could carry the aspiration of the Oriya people. The nationalist movement in this phase under his leadership brought into being the Utkal Union Conference in 1903. It was designed to bring into its fold all the Oriya in Orissa as well as the adjacent territories in other provinces. The first sitting of Utkal Union Conference was held at Cuttack in December, 1903. Sriramachandra Bhanja Deo, the enlightend ruler of Mayurbhanj was the President. By the time the third session was held, Sambalpur had come to Orissa and Damodar Kar was selected to welcome the people of Sambalpur on behalf of the Utkal Union Conference.

Sambalpur hosted the Utkal Union Conference in 1915. The conference with Lakshminarayan Singh, Raja of Kera, Singhbhum as its president emphasized the demands like proper

facilities for Oriya education in out lying tract, declaration of Oriya as Court language in Singhbhum, Phuljhar, Chandarpur and Padampur and a separate University for the Oriya tracts. It also put up a case for including an Oriya representative in the Imperial Court.

The Puri session of the Utkal Union Conference in 1919 was presided by Chandra Sekhar Behera. As per the decision for an Oriya Preservation Fund, a committee of ten was constituted consisting mostly of influential persons from different places and Gopabandhu Das was the secretary. This session attempted to draw the Utkal Union Conference closer to All India Congress and to augment a broader concept of nationalism.

Chandra Sekhar Behera carried on the this message in the 15<sup>th</sup> session where he pointed out that the conference should join shoulders with All India Congress and present the Orissan problem on their platform through regular representation. The result was that a different mood was in evidence and the Oriya mass appeared to be carried away by the ideal of the Congress.

On their way back from Nagpur Session Chandra Sekhar Behera, Dasarathi Mishra, Dharanidhar Mishra attended

the Utkal Union Conference at Chakardharpur on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1920. There, Chandra Sekhar Behera brought about a significant change in the programme of the Utkal Union Conference. The delegates adopted a resolution to join the national main-stream of Indian politics by eschewing regional programme. In the Nagpur session, Orissa was recognized as a separate province on linguistic basis. Hence forth, under the leadership of Gopabandhu Das and Chandra Sekhar Behera the Congress became a popular organization among the Oriyas.

Sambalpur displayed a new political consciousness and took an active part in the national movement since 1919. As has been already mentioned, under the leadership of Chandra Sekhar Behera, the Utkal Union Conference then accepted the Congress creed and Orissa could find a definite place in the political map of India. It was from this time onwards that Sambalpur plunged into the main stream of the National Movement and the people flocked under the banner of Indian National Congress with remarkable enthusiasm.

In 1921 the Non Co-operation Movement was launched through out the district of Sambalpur. The students of the Zila School, Sambalpur were pioneers. On January 2, 1921 the students of Zila School had a meeting at the foothill of Budharaja. It was attended by a large number of students.

Bhawani Sankar Mishra, Abdul Mazid, Krutartha Acharya, Chandra Sekhar Panigrahi, Mahammad Hussain, Nrusingha Guru, Benimadav Gufu and Jagannath Mishra addressed the students. The meeting came to an end with a firm decision to boycott the classes. According to the decision the students did not attend their classes. According to the decision the students did not attend their classes on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, the day for re-opening the school after X'mas holidays. They in a procession went round the town and called for a complete Hartal. It was found on the day that the walls of the school were filled with posters bearing slogans like 'Don't go to school'. In the evening a meeting was organized in front of Somnath Temple at Balibandha where the leaders like Chandra Sekhar Behera, Dasarathi Mishra, Ladabhai Thoria, Ratan Sing Bhoi etc called on the students to join the national movement. It is to be noted that the students Zila School were the first to adopt the Non Co-operation Movement in Orissa. Sambalpur was the torch bearer of the movement as was admitted by Syamsundar Chakrabarty in his paper, "The Servant". It was also conceded by Gopabandhu Das.

The strike spread to the other parts in a short time. There were strikes in the townships of Bargarh and Jharsuguda. Chaturbhuja Sharma of Bargarh, Daptari Nayak of Attabira, Dasarathi Mishra of Kuchinda, Ghanasyam Panigrahi of

Bheden, Hazari Patel of Padampur took up the cause and organized the movement in the rural area. With the initiative of Chandra Sekhar Behera a National School was established in 1921 and Nilakantha Das joined as its Headmaster. Both the teachers and the students went about spreading the creed of the National Congress in the rural area and a new weekly Seva, was launched from Mishra press at Sambalpur.

Sambalpur being one of the most important centres of the Non Co-operation Movement drew into the region leaders like Chittaranjan Das from Calcutta, Mazhrul Haq, the founder of Sadakat Ashram, Gopabandhu Das the Oriya leader and others in 1921. A sense of unity prevailed among the Hindu and Muslims. The National Movement spread like wild fire. Babu Bishnuprasad Sing was in charge of Katarbaga Police Station. With the efforts of Mahavir Sing, Jharsuguda became a hot bed of nationalism. Khadi and Charkha movements were organized, literacy and prohibition drives were made. Laxmi Narayan Mishra, Bhagirathi Pattanaik, Chintamani Pujari, Achyutananda Purohit, Ghanasyam Panigrahi and others made vigorous efforts against untouchability and spread education amongst the Harijans.

Sambalpur, in 1922 headed the Khadi and Charkha Movement. Centers were opened in Bargarh, Remanda, Barpali,

Jharsuguda and Talpatia. Mahavir Sing opened a khadi centre at Jharsuguda. Likewise Nrusingha Guru also opened a centre at Samasingha Sasan. Further Krutartha Acharya in Bargarh and Mahadev Sathya in Remunda, took up the cause and centers were duly opened up there. By the end of 1922 most of the leaders in Orissa had been arrested and put inside the prisons. A kind of lethargy naturally overtook the masses elsewhere. But Sambalpur kept up the fire by joining the Nagpur Satyagraha Movement.

Mahatma Gandhi visited Sambalpur on 23 December 1928. He was accompanied by Kasturba Gandhi and Devadas Gandhi and stayed at the house of Chandra Sekhar Behera. Gandhiji visited Swadeshi Vastralaya of Dayasagar Bohidar at Mohantipara and was impressed with its activities. A mass meeting was held in the Mahanadi bed near Brahmapura temple which Gandhiji addressed.

In the Resistance Movement of the preceding century, the concept of nationalism was in a nebular stage. But with the birth Indian National Congress and rapid growth of political ideas, a new wave of national consciousness swept across the country which got proper expression through the goals set by Mahatma Gandhi. It became truly nationalistic in character, demanding unequivocal terms the liberation of India

from foreign rule. The Non Co-operation programme percolated to the level of common men to become a struggle of the masses. The policy of armed struggle adopted by Veer Surendra Sai and others earlier was chewed in favour of a peaceful struggle of non-violence and Civil Disobedience.

Sambalpur played an important role during the Satyagraha Movement in 1930. The students of the Zila School again took the lead, On 11<sup>th</sup> March, 1930 a meeting was organized near the Budharaja hill and the students took a firm decision to boycott the school on 12<sup>th</sup> March the day fixed for salt Satyagraha. Despite the serious warning from the authorities it was found that the national flag had been unfurled on the school building and all the students had abstained from classes on the day. Biswambar Mishra, the Headmaster struck off the names of the students, thus inviting the wrath of the public. The students held a meeting at Bohidar Math and took an oath to wear Khaddar.

The Satyagraha Committee under the Chairmanship of Ghanasyam Panigrahi and with Dayanand Satpathy and Harihar Behera as secretaries, sent four batches of Satyagrahis to defy salt law and to prepare contraband salt at different places in costal Orissa. The first batch comprising the Satyagrahis like Sudhansu Sekhar Gupta, Durgaprasad Guru and



Ramprasad Sahu left Sambalpur in the beginning of April 1930 and joined the party led by Gopabandhu Choudhary of Cuttack. The second batch of Satyagrahis like Dayanand Satpathy, Premsankar Patnaik and Bhagirathi Pattnaik left for Cuttack to join the training camp there and to prepare themselves for undergoing the hardship of Satyagraha movement. Mahavir Sing, Siv Deo Maharaj and few others formed the third batch of Satyagrahis. They toured the villages and collected group of volunteers for the Civil Disobedience Movement. The fourth batch was led by Ghanasyam Panigrahi who along with Laxman Giri, Gauranga Meher and eight others left for Balasore on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1930. They walked down the distance from Sambalpur to Jharsuguda.

The Satyagraha Movement was carried on vigorously. Places like Bargarh, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda, Barpali, Remenda, Panimora, Samalaipadar witnessed large scale agitation. It is significant that several ladies also joined the movement. A batch of 10 ladies on their way to Balasore, reached Sambalpur on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1930. They were taken in a procession to Sambalpur Railway Station. Despite police warning the dedicated nationalists proceeded to Balasore for joining the salt campaign there.

The Government had to promulgate a series of special ordinances against every possible and impossible form of anti Government activities. The Congress Working Committee had been declared unlawful. Most of the members were arrested and put in prison. Most of the leaders of Orissa level and had been arrested. The salt campaign, because of the approach of rainy season, was coming to an end.

Civil Disobedience Movement was carried on energetically. The nationalist restored to picketing. The police arrested Sudhansu Sekhar Gupta, Durgaprasad Guru, Binaya Padhi, Bhagirathi Pattanaik, Prafulla Kumar Pattaniak and others. In the court they were asked to apologise but they refused. Ultimately, because of Gandhi Irwin pact they were released and the movement continued to spread. Two Congress workers namely Prafulla Chandra Pattanaik of Barpali and Pranab Pradhan of Bargarh went to the sub-divisional officer in the court and asked him to vacate the chair. Both of them were arrested. The authorities took all kinds of repressive measures to curb the movement, but to no avail. Bhagirathi Pattanaik and his wife Jambobati Devi engaged themselves in arousing the consciousness of the people by distributing leaflets which condemned the Government as villainous and encouraged the people to join the peaceful fight.

The Civil Disobedience Movement was revived in Jharsuguda in August 1932. Kastaram Ganda an old political worker, worked vigorously along with others under the leadership of Mahavir Sing of Jharsuguda. Leaflets were distributed in the market of Talpatia, some seven miles away from Jharsuguda. They incited the public to boycott the foreign goods. They were arrested and prosecuted.

The Campaign of Individual Satyagraha started on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1933. Bhagirathi Pattanaik of Barpali, who had been released from the Patna Campjail on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1933, took an active part and the movement gained a new momentum under his leadership. On 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1933, he along with his son Prafulla Kumar Pattanaik and wife Jumbobati Devi picketed the foreign liquor shop at Bargarh. The husband, wife and son were arrested and sentenced respectively to six, five and four months rigorous jail.

Gandhiji visited Sambalpur for the second time on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1934. He was pleased to see the activities for himself and proceeded towards Bamur on his way to Angul.

Bodhram Dube started the Individual Satyagraha at Nandapara of Sambalpur on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1940. His old mother garlanded him with blessings. Bodhram Dube with a

Charkha in hand gave the national slogan and was arrested. He was taken to Sadar Jail and was sentenced for 9 months. Fakir Behera had his Individual Satyagraha at Larri junction of Bargarh on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1940. At 12 noon he gave the anti-war slogan amidst a crowd who were present to congratulate him for the occasion. He was arrested by the sub-inspector and was taken to Sambalpur where he was prosecuted and convicted. He was sentenced for six months. Subsequently Manglu Pradhan also courted arrest for three months with a fine of Rs. 75. He was put in Bargarh sub-jail. Prahallad Rai Seth courted arrested on 3<sup>rd</sup> December. He was sentenced for 8 months and was declared as 'A' class prisoner. Besides, Ghanashyam Panigrahi, Upendra Panigrahi, Baikunthanath Padhi, Padmalochan Behera, Prabhavati Devi, Brajaraj Sahu, Gangadhar Saraf, Bhagirathi Pattanaik, Mahesh Chandra Sahu, Dasarathi Mohapatra and many others courted arrested for having Individual Satyagraha.

The Individual Satyagraha Movement started on a very small scale. Those who took part in it, violated some formal orders and were arrested and were awarded prison terms. Members of the Working Committee led the way and the number gradually mounted up. In a very short time thousands were behind bar. The presence of such Satyagrahais in the jails in remote areas like Sambalpur was a signal that India would not submit to foreign domination any more.

## Chapter – II

### *Family, Environment and Upbringing*

The personality of Nrusingha Guru was built on the rock foundation of piety, truthfulness, service and sacrifice. The religious vows and fasts of his mother, her sense of service, the spirit of sacrifice and her simplicity influenced him the most. The domestic environment in which he sprang up was religious: the recitation of the religious texts, the piety and truthfulness had the ratifying effect on all and not less on the young Nrusingha Guru. Discipline was dominant in the family. This stimulated the inner motivation of the springing boy.

His sense of observation, analysis even at a comparatively younger age gave him a distinct mental quality and approach to the matters he faced. For this the religious scriptures like 'Geeta' and others had its own impact on him. Being neither a determinist, nor a fanatic bookish or dogmatic, he had his own analysis. In this spirit he received Geeta and the Upanishads and got familiar with the best that these scriptures produced; he drew the best of these. Need less to say, he was contemplative and receptive. Different factors, which are always present to influence, do not act the common way. He lived according to his conscience; always looked for more. He did not challenge till he understood the object of challenge.

He had his own decision; he pursued, executed and accepted. He lived by 'Gyana', 'Karma' and in 'Bhakti' – an ideal 'Karmayogi' he was.

Nrusingha Guru was born of Ganesh Ram Guru and Laxmi Devi at Gurupali, a village near Sasan of Sambalpur in 1902 on the full-moon day of Falguna. Of his father, Nrusingha Guru used to say; he was "truthful", brave and generous. Being 'incorruptible', he had earned a good name for strict impartiality in his family as well as out side". And, about his mother he said she "was deeply religious. She would not think of taking her meals without her daily prayer". She was orthodox and believed in the current social taboos. Her ignorance of scriptures, disabled her from cleaning the doubts and misgivings of her introvert and thoughtful son. Her insistence, for example, not to touch the untouchable was very strange to the young boy. His deep sense of introspection used to make him restless. Possibly such situation and circumstances filled in him a sense of sympathy and sensation for the downtrodden of the society and he could be the champion for the cause of the Anti-Untouchability Movement later on.

**The Village :** The history of the village Gurupali can be traced as back as mid eighteenth century. A flock of orthodox Brahmins at the invitation of Ajit Sing the eighth

Chuhan Raja of Sambalpur, migrated from the southern part of Orissa and settled in a village donated to them which became known as Ajitpur Sasan. It represents the present Sasan some twelve kilometers from Sambalpur on Jharsuguda road. Consequently, during the reign of Abhaya Sing, the son and successor of Ajit Sing, Sandasingha the adjacent village was donated in favour of one Dologudi (temple) with the chieftainship of the Dandasena community of Sambalpur. Later on, because of internal feud and dissention, the village was seized and passed on to Guru family who being authorized asserted themselves as the Gountia of the village. The Guru family in order to mark their distinction from the Gond community of the village started, with some of their associates, a separate establishment in the vicinity of the village Sandasingha. In course of time it was developed to a full-fledged habitat and became known as Gurupali after the surname of Kasinath Guru, the grand father of Nrusingha Guru. He had the credit to take initiative for the first settlement of the village. Because of a wishful prayer by the grandmother, Radhika Devi to Nrusinghanath, the famous deity of Western Orissa the first grand male child, it was believed, was born. He was named after the name of the Lord Nrusingha, as Nrusingha Guru. Subsequently Nrusingha Guru and his brother Durgaprasad Guru settled and lived respectively in Gurupali and Sandasingha as Gountias.

### *The Village Pathasala :*

Nrusingha Guru had his early education in the village Chatasali (elementary school). He was both brilliant and plodding. He had the demonstrative traits also. Nrusingha Guru had his ability and in a very short time he could finish the alphabet learning and writing. Besides, the individual discipline, elementary arithmetic, practice of writing and reading were included in the curriculum. Apart from this he had to undergo the rigid and rigorous tradition observed in the family by having evening prayer and so on. The environment, the strict discipline in the family could infuse in him a sense of confidence and self-reliance which helped him immensely in the later life.

After completing the initial education in the village Nrusingha Guru was admitted into the upper primary school located at Sasan. Sagar Padhi, the Headmaster of the school was immensely pleased and satisfied to see the brilliant performance of the boy in the entrance test and awarded him two bronze coins. He could prove his worth and every body was astonished. Madan Mohan Mishra, the class teacher could take all possible care for grooming up the boy at the initial stage. He was very much interested for putting the boy in right perspective, but there was communication hazards between the two villages. The school used to have two sitting a day and it

became improbable on the part of the boy Nrusingha Guru to cover a distance of three kilometers and to attend the school due to communication difficulty. Subsequently, he was sent to Saranda, his maternal village and was admitted in the local upper primary school. Jagadish Hota, the founding father and the Headmaster of the school was his maternal grand father. Nrusingha Guru was put in his stewardship and all possible amenities were provided for study. In fact Jagadish Hota was the moving spirit who used to imbibe in him the spirit of sacrifice and service to the country. It was duly reflected in the life of Nrusingha Guru, when he was a student of Zilla school, Sambalpur. Needless to say Nrusingha Guru had his talent and he was promoted to class III after passing the examinations of class I and II together at a time. He studied for two years more and was selected for the Scholarship Examination which was conducted at Bargarh.

Nrusingha Guru, while appearing the scholarship examination had the opportunity of coming in contact with Kabibususan Swapneswar Das, the Headmaster of Remanda Middle Vernacular School and the close associate of Jagadish Hota. During the examination he at the suggestion of Swapneswar Das, stayed at 'Dora Dharmasala' along with the students of Remanda Middle Vernacular school. Incidentally, in the early morning of the day of the science examination,

Swapneswar Das, because for the sincerity and seriousness of Nrusingha Guru for the said examination, showed him along with one co-examine the Pole Star and the Great Bear appearing in the sky and properly explained them about the objects. To the utmost satisfaction and surprise of the boys it was set in examination Nrusingha Guru was qualified and was awarded the scholarship.

For further study, Nrusingha Guru joined the Middle English School of Patnaikpara at Sambalpur. Here, he showed himself a hard working student. He drew the attention of the teachers. Purna Chandra Das, the Headmaster and the editor of 'Shakti', Brundaban Dani, the Head Pundit used to pay utmost attention for his study. The Headmaster could arrange for him free meal and tiffin in his own mess and accommodated him there quite for sometime. Nrusingha Guru to the expectation of the teachers, could excel and was awarded the scholarship for the third time.

After completing his education in Patnaikpara Middle English school he, for further study, joined the Zilla School, Sambalpur and stayed in the school hostel. During his stay in the hostel, he came in contact with Krushna Chandra Sengupta, the Superintendent of the hostel. Being deeply cultured and highly educated he had the deep impact on the

young Nrusingha Guru. Being a nationalist he used to advise the hostlers for sacrificing their interest for the cause of the country. Nationalism was a way of life and the young boy was deeply influenced. He could learn from him the use of Swadeshi, and other elements of nationalism. Further, because of K.C. Sengupta he was put in the line and could excel in essay writing and so on which establishes a student in right perspective.

Ultimately, Nrusingha Guru, then a student of class XI, joined the Non Co-operation Movement in 1921 and got himself associated in the national movement.

#### *Studentship :*

Nrusingha Guru, as a student, was brilliant and plodding. He had demonstrative traits. He had the ability and used to win prizes from his very childhood. He maintained the sprit throughout his careers as student in different schools.

Nrushingha Guru as student was deeply influenced at the bubling spring of the ancient heritage of spirituality as embodied in the religious scriptures. From his childhood, he had listened to their rendering and recitation as it was the daily routine in the Guru family. From these he got his lesson in humanism and universalism. The teaching of the ancient thinkers were, to him, the soul of infinite sanctity which "cleans

the earth of her stains". In their teachings, Nrusingha Guru saw the best fulfilment of Hinduism. He used to believe "God is within in your heart where you will find him easily. The simple and spontaneous recitations of religious scriptures are said to have influenced his thinking. The heritages of the ages had left impact on him. He detested formal religion, sectarianism and the castism.

Nrushingha Guru, as student, had hereditary influence. He came from a noble parantage with an intact family tradition. His father was known for his piety, religiousness and truthfulness. His contribution to the intellectual growth and to the spiritual modeling of his son was significant. His grand father, Kasinath Guru had left behind him high tradition of humane service to inspire anyone; his house was a centre of religious activities. The environment was highly conducive to all who devoted themselves to the services of others.

Nrushingha Guru, while a student, came in close contact with the meek and helpless peasantry and the down trodden. They had been over the time denied everything and deprived of everything. He saw them in bone and skin, laid low in material adversity; hedged in superstition, bound by circumstances living in an annihilated social consciousness. This

painful sight and this odd experience did kindle in him the rich humanism. He, successively adopted measures to help them out of this distress.

Above all a group of devoted and dedicated teachers moulded and regulated the life of Nrusingha Guru from the very childhood. The teachers like Jagadish Hota and Swapneswar Das could infuse in him a trail of idealism. They could provide the young Nrusingha Guru the cultivated environment to stimulate his motivation and to prop his efforts in the later phase. He was very much influenced by them. The teachers of the Patnaikpara Middle English school became the models of Nrusingha Guru. The deep understanding of Purna Chandra Das and Brundaban Dani, the erudite teachers of the school gave great strength and insight to Nrusingha Guru; they perfected his character which made him a man of action; he had the only aim the honesty of purpose. He acted in selfless way. Lastly during the studentship in the Zilla school, Nrusingha Guru came in touch with Krushna Chandra Sengupta, the preceptor and the idealist. The teacher was always full of deep concern for the helpless and hungry. He came face to face with stark poverty of peasants and the downtrodden and initiated reforms based on the principles of self-help. Nrusingha Guru with the close association of the teachers vowed to take up the cause and to relieve the distress. He with the initiation of Krushna Chandra

Sengupta could imbibe in himself with the creative impulse and gained his fullness by taking up the sufferings of the downtrodden in the society. Krushna Chandra Sengupta had deep love for the national heritage and for the country. He wanted every student to be so strong as to stand on his own. He loved all men irrespective of their racial labels. Nrusingha Guru was deeply influenced by his teacher and was determined to fight against wrongs and suffer for the cause of righteousness. He vowed in doing the right thing for the country and humanity. Henceforth he identified himself with all humanity; he joined the national main stream.

Nrusingha Guru, as a student, was simple, serious and sincere. He was also brilliant and studious. But remained satisfied with only passing the matriculation. Education, to him must attend to the cultural, aesthetic and economic development. Literacy or capacity to read and write is not education. It is only a means to it. Education must be the development of body, mind and spirit. It must forge an individual to realize great aims and must enable one to draw the best out of ones self. It was with this context Nrusingha Guru never gave a second thought and joined the Non Co-operation Movement initiated by Gandhiji in 1921.

## Chapter – III

### ON THE POLITICAL STAGE

#### *The Non Co-operation Movement*

Mahatma Gandhi the selfless man, that he was, had established complete identity with the political problem which he was determined to resolve, and, no less, to Nrusingha Guru, Gandhiji was the model. He accepted him as the "Indian leadership, Indian style". Gandhiji had perfected his character and he was now preparing to appear on the national stage. Nrusingha Guru though tender in his age, was a man of action and believed in truth. His commitment to Swaraj was uncompromisable; it aimed at complete independence. He acted in the selfless way which kept him honour bound.

In September, 1920 Gandhiji presented to the Congress a Non Co-operation programme. It consisted of boycott of British established institutions such as the legislative council, courts and schools, and of the British manufactured goods such as textiles. Decision to this effect was taken at the special session at Calcutta and same was confirmed at Nagpur session in December, 1920. Gandhiji now emerged as the prime mover on the national stage.

It was during the Chakradharpur session in 1920 Chandrasekhar Behera introduced one important change in the

outlook of the Utkal Union Conference : it accepted the principle that although unification of all Oriya-speaking tracts was a vital issue with the Oriyas, Utkal all the same cannot move separately from other parts of India in tackling her problems but should move with the Congress under its direction and instructions. Chandra Sekhar Behera put forward the resolution for accepting the spirit and ideology of Indian National Congress. The Utkal Union Conference under the president-ship of Jagabandhu Singh accepted the Congress Creed and Orissa, thus for the logic and emphasis of Chandra Sekhar Behera, could get a positive place in the political map of India. It was from that time onwards Sambalpur actively joined the National Movement of India and the people flocked under the banners of Indian National Congress with remarkable enthusiasm.

In 1921, the Non Co-operation Movement was launched throughout the district of Sambalpur. The students of the Zilla School, Sambalpur were the pioneer in the movement. Nrusingha Guru, then a student of class eleven of the school plunged into the national stream of the National Movement and subsequently got engaged in political activities. To serve the country in the battle of freedom was considered a honour enough. To serve her under a leader like Mahatma Gandhi is doubly fortunate.



On 2 January, 1921, the students of the Zilla School held a meeting at the foot hill of Budharaja. It was attended by most of the students. Bhawani Sankar Mishra, Abdul Mazid, Kuthartha Acharya, Chandra Sekhar Panigrahi, Arun Das, Mohammad Hussain, Nrusingha Guru, Benimadhav Supkar and Jagannath Mishra addressed the students. According to the decision most of the student didn't attend the classes on 3 January, the day for the reopening of the school after the X'mas holidays. They with the active participation of Nrusingha Guru went round the town and called for a complete 'Hartal'. It was with the initiation of Nrusingha Guru poster with the slogans like 'don't go to school' filled the walls of the school. In the evening a meeting was organized in front of the Somnath temple in Balibandha where the leaders like Chandra Sekhar Behera, Dasarathi Mishra, Ladabhai Tharia, Ratan Singh Bhai, Seth Rampratap, Janardan Supkar, Anandiram Sukla, Ramkrushna Behera and Mahendranath Barma called on the students to join the cause of National Movement. The move of the students, as directed, was intimated to leaders of Orissa level as well as the national leaders by Nrusingha Guru.

It is to be noted that the students of the Zila School were the first to adopt the Non Co-operation Movement before it spread any where else. Generally it is accepted, Bengal is the land where the light of any movement is kindled, but in this

case Sambalpur become the touch bearer. Shyam Sundar Chakrabarty admitted in his paper 'The Servant' where he had all the praise for the students of Sambalpur. Gopabandhu Das addressed the student of his own Satyabadi School.

'I received the letter that the students in Sambalpur have boycotted the classes, but no body here is aware of it. Be cautious, your successors will think ill of you, if you don't take any incentive at this right opportune moment.'

The strike of Sambalpur being spear-headed by Nrusingha Guru spread to other parts of the district in a fluke of time. There were strikes at Bargarh and Jharsuguda. Chaturbhuj Sarma of Bargarh, Deptari Naik of Attabira, Dasarathi Mishra of Kuchinda, Ghanashyam Panigrahi of Bheden, Hazari Patal of Padampur took the cause of National Movement and organized it in rural area.

Chandra Sekhar Behera, with the co-operation of some local people arranged accommodation of the students in a private house located at Jharuapara. Ultimately in 1921 it was turned into a National School and was housed in the building of Frasher Club. It was at this stage Nrusingha Guru could come in contact with a band of eminent teachers like Sankar Prasad Padhi, Sayad Abdulla and Balabhadra Bohidar who

shouldered the responsibility of imparting training to the students. Hence forth Nrusingha Guru wished every individual to be strong in his own place. The National School, being a pilgrimage for Nrusingha Guru impressed upon him to take steps for the reconstruction of the society. The worst aspect of the society then was its dependence on the government he wished, not the state but the society to be the centre of power. Accordingly he suggested his fellow students to take the charge of some village and organized it. In this context Gandhiji's idea, "India lives in her villages" is duly reflected and designed in him. In 17 January, 1921 Pandit Nilakantha Das, who was then professor in Calcutta University came to Sambalpur and joined the post of Headmaster of National School. Bhagirathi Mishra, then a law student in Calcutta also joined the school.

In the evening of 17 January, 1921 a meeting was organized at Balibandha under the presidentship of Dharanidhar Banaprastha. There was a large gathering. Nilakantha Das addressed the audience and the people took oath to be abided by the rules and regulations of the Congress. The meeting was concluded with the formation of District Congress Committee.

As many as two hundred students took admission in the National School. Majority of the teachers worked on an honorary capacity and only few of them were getting some

nominal pay. Very soon the National School became pilgrimage for those who had the intention of enhancing the cause of Non Co-operation in the district. Ambica Prasad Patnaik, Balamukanda Mishra, Anantaram Behera, Kamal Prasad, Bagawan Prasad Rewani and Nilamani Mahakud joined the school as teachers in different curriculumns. The students received general education along with craft training. Spinning, weaving and carpentry etc. were included in curriculum and there was also provision for Hindi teaching. Ganes Prasad Padhi and Chandra Sekhar Panda, then engineering student in Bihar gave up their education and joined the National School at Sambalpur. Subsequently Jangli Mistri and Gauranga Meher were appointed for making Charkha and loom respectively. Later on Kunjabehari Meher from Bolangir joined the school. Chandra Sekhar Behera provided the furniture for the school.

Both the teachers and students of the National High School were spreading the message of the Indian National Congress in the rural area of the district. Janardan Supakar, Gokul Chandra Pujhari volunteered their services for spreading the message in rural areas. Jharsuguda became an important centre and Nrusingha Guru was incharge of that centre. Trilochan Sah Deo of Ranchi took active role in spreading the National Movement. Laxminarayan Mishra, Chandra Sekhar Panigrahi and Arun Das were also deputed to the rural areas for

the purpose. Mahavir Sing the contractor of Jharsuguda accepted the Creed and his house was converted into Congress office. Subsequently it became the meeting place of all the congress workers and leaders who used to congregate there under the banner of National Movement. Nrusingha Guru with the co-operation of his associates was engaged in recruiting the members for the Congress Organization. In the same year, out of the total of four thousand eight hundred, some two thousand were recruited from Jharsuguda. Further at the initiation of Chintamani Pujhari, Panchpara and Bhalupatra in Laikera Police station become two important Khadi centers. Mohan Sing of Belpara was also a great supporter of the Congress and showed a great zeal in spreading the Non Co-operation in his locality.

The teachers and students of National School dedicated themselves to the cause of the development of the society. The social reconstruction programme of Nrusingha Guru included the destruction of social barrier. Along with it should be under taken the construction work in the midst of the masses. The social system, according to him depends upon mutual obligation upon ethical idea accepted by all people. Accordingly Nrusingha Guru along with a group of students used to tour the neighbouring villages for social services like helping the destitute, nursing the people suffering from cholera. The students with the association of Nrusingha Guru took keen

interest in the vicinity of Sambalpur. For augmenting the Congress Creed the necessity of a paper of its own was felt very much by the National School. Besides the two regular weekly, Utkala Sevaka and Sadhana another weekly 'Seva' was published from Mishra press of Sambalpur from 18<sup>th</sup> May, 1921. Nilakantha Das, being the editor of the paper could establish contact with the remote places, through this paper. Nrusingha Guru being deeply associated with paper could gain the initial ground for journalism which became his most prestigious profession in later life.

The National School, however, took very active part and the Movement was launched at Bargarh, Jharsuguda, Talpatia, Rampella and several other parts. It was in course of the movement that Gopabandhu Chaudhury who was the Deputy Magistrate at Bargarh resigned his job in order to take leadership in the movement. Purna Chandra Das, Head Master of Patnaikpara Middle English School, Pitambar Dey, Assistant teacher of Zilla School, Govinda Sachidananda Rao clerk of the office of Political Agent resigned the job and Joined the National Movement. Purna Chandra Das returned to Puri, his native place, and started editing the weekly "Shakti". Mahendranath Barma, the advocate gave up his profession and engaged himself in Congress work.

The National Movement at Sambalpur attracted the attention of Desabandhu Chittaranjan Das who deputed from Calcutta two Congress men Satischandra Dasgupta and Syamsundar Chakravarti to study how the movement so rapidly spread there.

The government adopted a series of repressive measures to stop the work the Congressite in Sambalpur town. Efforts were made to foil the Hartal to be held on the eve national week from 6<sup>th</sup> April to 13<sup>th</sup> April. The leaders were harassed and the people of the rural area were threatened. Dharanidhara Mishra was fined Rs.25/- because he in his press printed the national song 'Swaraj bhaya albat Hoga' composed by Nilakantha Das. The excise vendors were humiliated in the office as they were no more prepared to go for tenders. In 19<sup>th</sup> April, 1921 a protest meeting was organized by Nrusingha Guru and others for condemning the repressive measures taken by Government. In a subsequent meeting it was decided that efforts would be made to raise funds for 'Tilak Swaraj Fund' and to prepare Charkha for augmenting the Non Co-operation Movement. The target was to collect one crore of rupees for 'Tilak Swaraj Fund and one crore enrolment for the Congress. Nrusingha Guru with other leaders was determined to have the share due to Sambalpur and accordingly, divided Sambalpur Sadar sub-division amongst themselves. Ramnarayan Mishra

remained in charge of Munde and Dhama. Achyutananda Purohit and Bhagirathi Mishra for Katarbaga and Rampella. Natabar Gadia for Mura, Chandra Sekhar Behera, Ratan Sing Bhai for Sadar and Sason; Nrusingha Guru and Anantaram Behera for Jharsuguda and Ambika Madhab Patnaik, Mahavir Sing and Janaki Das Agarwal for Laikera.

On 8<sup>th</sup> May a counter meeting was organized by the authorities at Rampella where Sankar Prasad Mishra tried to persuade people not to support the National Movement. The Rampella Gauntia, his father-in-law also went against the activities of the Nationalists. However the meeting had no impact on the people Subsequently counter meetings were organized at Attabira, Bijepur, Dhama, Sason and in many other places. But the meetings were ineffective and the people in large number got themselves enrolled in the Congress.

Madhukar Sai, Zamindar of Rajpur opposed the Nationalists in his estate and baffled Dasarathi Patjoshi, the active worker of the locality. On 13<sup>th</sup> June, 1921 Nilakanth Das, the Headmaster of the National School; Chandra Sekhar Mishra, Secretary, District Congress Committee, Mahavir Sing, Nrusingha Guru and Trilochan Sahay the organizers convened a protest meeting in Rajpur. But they were asked to vacate the place. In spite of the threatening, the people being inspired by

the organizers condemned the attitude of the Zamindar. Ultimately the Zamindar's Agents assaulted the people and created confusion. But, Nrusingha Guru and others could organize the meeting in an open space outside the village and the people in large number got enrolled in the Congress. Further meetings were organized at different places for enrolling the congress members. On 18<sup>th</sup> June Gajraj Das, Gangadhar Dora, Govinda Sachidananda Rao organized a meeting at Katapali and got 87 people enrolled in the Congress. Nrusingha Guru, in fifteen days made intensive tour in Tukra, Nuapali, Govindapur, Bhatli, Kusunpur, Kanakbira, Sareipali, Ruchida, Ambabhona, Kutharpali etc. and enrolled successfully member for the Congress. On 19<sup>th</sup> June Gananath Panigrahi and Satyabadi Nanda held a meeting at Kusunpur and explained the people the Congress Creed. On 20<sup>th</sup> June a meeting was held at Sunaripada of Barpali, the people showed great interest to be enrolled as the members of the Congress.

Sambalpur being one of the most important centers of the Non Co-operation Movement drew into the region leaders like Chittaranjan Das from Calcutta, Mazhrul Haq the founder of Sadaquat Asram, Gopabandhu Das the Orissa leader and others in 1921. A sense of unity prevailed among the Hindu and Muslim. In a meeting held on 18 June, 1921 in 'Samatamali Garden' under the leadership of Dharanidhar

Mishra Banaprastha, the leaders addressed the audience present in thousands and explained to them about the Non Co-operation Movement and the Congress Creed. In spite of heavy rain the people gave a patient listening Speech, the no co-operator, who also accompanied Haq appealed to the people for donation to the National Movement and there was good response to his appeal. A charkha woven cloth prepared by National School was put for auction and it was sold at Rs. 25/-. Barrister Mazhrul Haq at the initiation of Nrusingha Guru visited the National School and was deeply impressed by its activities. In the same evening they left for Chakradharpur.

By the 1<sup>st</sup> week of July 1921 Nrusingha Guru to his credit could enroll 5934 Congress members, Rs.2878/- for the Tilak Swaraj fund and 7000 charkha working through out. The Sambalpur Youth's deserved the credit to bring Sambalpur to the fore front. At Gandhiji's siren call with Nrusingha Guru's efforts these youths en-block at one stage left Colleges and Schools and became active non co-operators. Despite all hurdles put up by authorities, they flocked under the banner of National Congress with great enthusiasm. During the hey day of Non Co-operation Movement public meetings were held almost daily at different parts of the Sambalpur district. Nrusingha Guru with others was preaching to the people on spinning, giving up liquor, withdrawing students from Schools and

Colleges, dissociating from Law courts, establishing Panchayat for amicable settlement of dispute and so on.

The non co-operators under the instructions of Gandhiji and the guidance of Nrusingha Guru were not defending themselves nor were they taking any part in the trial proceedings whenever there was cases against them. They were also no cross examining prosecuting witnesses nor adducing any defense except making a statement of their own stating the true facts regarding the allegation against them. Hence, there was no wonder that it facilitated the prosecution and final conviction was easy. Thus the non co-operators were daily convicted in dozen for the slightest offences though magnified and naturally population in the jails rapidly grew.

Consequent upon the difference of opinion between the president and the members of Utkal Provincial Committee, Nilakanth Das could not pull on well with his co-workers in the National School at Sambalpur. In October 1921, Nilakantha Das left Sambalpur to champion the cause of National Movement in Puri and Cuttack. He before leaving Sambalpur admitted that the National Movement in comparison to other parts of the then Orissa had been firmly established and Sambalpur was much ahead than others.

The Crown Prince of England was supposed to visit India on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1921. The All India Congress Committee on the eve of his visit called for a complete Hartal through out the country. In response to its call Nrusingha Guru arranged for a Hartal in Sambalpur and other places. Accordingly the students and teachers of National School closed down the school at 3.30 P.M. On 16<sup>th</sup> November 1921 and went round the town in a procession. They held a meeting at 6.00 P.M. in the Gandhi Ghat and requested the people to observe 'Hartal' on the following day. The Hartal being spear headed by Nrusingha Guru was a success. The latrines in the town were not cleaned; the sweepers did not join their duties. The conveyances were completely disrupted. The market was completely closed and there was pin drop silence in the business centres. From this day onwards, as a counter move, the rigour of the British Administration grew simultaneously. Intensive searches by the police were made in all the Congress offices and as the document were seized and taken away. On 12<sup>th</sup> December 1921, the authorities for two months induced 144 on Dharanidhar Mishra, Ganesh Prasad Padhi, Bhagirathi Mishra, Laxminarayan Mishra, Mahavir Sing and Nrusingha Guru. On 14<sup>th</sup> December 1921, Mahavir Sing was arrested in Jharsuguda. On 25<sup>th</sup> a protest meeting organized by Nrusingha Guru was held near Narmadeswar temple and the British attitude was condemned. Further, it was resolved that nobody would

join in any of the services sponsored by the Government and full non co-operation would be adopted against the Government. In Panchapara also the people, organized by Chintamani Pujari supported the cause.

The annual session of the Congress at Ahmedabad, because of the arrest of Chittaranjan Das was presided by Hakim Azmal Khan. A large number of delegates from Orissa had attended the Congress that year. From Sambalpur some sixteen delegates Ganesh Prasad Padhi, Bhagirathi Mishra, Ambika Prasad Patnaik, Hari Ram, Ram Dev, Raghunath Bhagal, Rampratap Agrawala, Shankar Prasad Padhi, Laxminarayan Mishra, Karanja Das, Arjuna Kunwar, Jangli Mistry, Debiprasad Patnaik, Sudarsan Bag, Hadu Mistri and Mahavir Sing who was released from the jail before the expiry of his term attended the session.

Shankar Prasad Padhi, Mahavir sing and few other delegates from Sambalpur met Mahatma Gandhiji and requested him to pay a visit to Sambalpur. Gandhiji agreed to come as and when time would permit.

#### *National Movement its Progress*

The people of Sambalpur found from actual experience that the adoption of non-violent, non co-operation

the country had made great advance in fearlessness, self-sacrifice and self-respect and felt the country was rapidly progressing towards 'Swaraj'. The District Congress Committee in order to put more life, decided to have three sessions at Jharsuguda, Sambalpur and Bargarh on 21, 22 and 23 January 1922 respectively. Gopabandhu Das was to address the people on all occasions. In spite of all the restrictions put by the authorities, Nrusingha Guru with other nationalists like Anantaram Behera (teacher of National School) Ananta Madhab Patnaik left no stone unturned to make the meetings successful. Despite the 144 Gopabandhu Das was given a warm reception and the meeting was held with the presidentship of Mohan Bartia. The message of Gopabandhu Das was read out by Nrusingha Guru and the people pledged for spinning with Charkha putting on Swadeshi cloths and to raise a volunteer corps for social work.

The volunteers under the instruction of Nrusingha Guru carried the message of the Congress to the interior of the district. Leaflets preaching non co-operation were distributed. Enrolment for the Congress was carried in Jharsuguda, Barpali, Bargarh with all spirit. The students of National Schools co-operated with the work and used to collect fund for Tilak Swaraj Fund. It was with their efforts tailoring was introduced and became an additional curriculum of the National School. The

National Movement was in progress Literacy and prohibition drive was undertaken by Nrusingha Guru in many parts of the district. He with many distinguished persons of the town along with the teachers of Nation School visited 'Harijan Bustee' and joined them in 'Bhagavat' recitation. The Harijan took solemn oath not to take liquor and beef. They with all zeal and enthusiasm took oath to spin daily in the 'Charkha'.

On 8<sup>th</sup> April campaign was launched against the untouchability. Nrusingha Guru, the true replica of Gandhiji was the pioneer. A meeting associating the untouchables was convened. The people took oath to give up liquor and beef. Jua Dank of Melchamunda convened on 9<sup>th</sup> April a meeting of the Gaudas in Melchamunda. Some hundred of Gauda Chiefs from ten villages were present in the meeting. They put up their signatures in paper and were determined to give up liquor. They accepted the Congress Creed and declared to spin in Charkha. Nrusingha Guru also convened a meeting for the Harijans at Sambalpur on 10<sup>th</sup> April, 1922 at 8.00 P.M. The leaders explained the people about the demerits of the liquor and persuaded to give it up in the same night a meeting of the Marwadis was held at Ramji temple. A Marwari from Raipur who had come for the occasion preached for non co-operation and appealed to the Marwadi of Sambalpur to join the Congress. The meeting took the following resolutions :

- i. Drum beating for the untouchable was prohibited
- ii. Beef was not to be taken.
- iii. The Harijan ladies will work with honour.
- iv. He, who defies would be exiled.

Gandhiji was now thinking of initiating mass Civil Disobedience Movement. But before that could be initiated there occurred the Chauri Chaura (a small village in Gorakhpur, U.P.) incident on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1922. Gandhi could not reconcile with the violence that brokeout there. He felt that in miscalculating the preparedness of the nation a non-violent movement, he had made "Himalayan Miscalculation". Thus instinctively on February 24<sup>th</sup> he suspended the mass civil disobedience movement. He was soon arrested on the charge of sedition, and imprisoned for six years.

In spite of the suspension of all subversive activities by the Non Co-operators after the arrest of Gandhiji, the Government continued its repressive policy in some localities. This gave rise to a feeling that the Congress should resort to Civil Disobedience. The All India Congress Committee which met at Lucknow on 7<sup>th</sup> June 1922, there upon requested the President to nominate few eminent people to tour round the country to review the present situation. The Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee reported that the country was not prepared



at present to embark upon general Mass Civil Disobedience. This undoubtedly gave a fillip to the views of the council-entry but majority were against it. This led to a split in the Congress rank.

The question came to a head at the annual session of the Congress at Gaya in December 1922. The President Chittaranjan Das made, in his presidential address, a vigorous plea for Council-entry but the motion of Raj Gopalachari in support of continuing the boycott was carried by the large majority. Chittaranjan Das resigned the Presidentship.

The delegates from Sambalpur, Ladabhai Thoria, Mahavir Sing, Nrusingha Guru, Kunjabihari Meher had joined the Gaya Session. They returned home with a new spirit the spirit of Civil Disobedience.

Consequent upon the difference of opinion between the Sambalpur District Congress Committee and the members of Utkal Provincial Committee the congress leaders of Sambalpur became firm and pleaded for an independent recognition of the Sambalpur Unit. Nrusingha Guru worked in close co-operation with Laxmi Narayan Mishra, Chintamani Pujari and Bhagirathi Patnaik. Subsequently Dayananda Satapathy joined them. The 'Big Five', as they were known,

spear headed Sambalpur in the National Movement. They formed a parallel District Congress Committee. They protested the apathetic attitude of Provincial Committee. Bhagirathi Patnaik was sent to attend the Belgaon Congress, December 1924 with a representation written in hand by Chintamani Pujari. The representation was cyclostyled and was circulated among the leaders in the Congress at Belgaon. Ultimately Gopabandhu Das intervened and promised for a rapprochement. Bhagirathi Patnaik with drew the representation and Sambalpur was again in the main stream of National Movement.

Nrusingha Guru had the good fortune to get Mahatma Gandhi at a close quarter when the Father of the Nation, at the invitation of Achyutananda Purohit, paid a visit to Sambalpur on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1928. The impending visit of Gandhi created quite a stir in the official and non-official circle. Chandra Sekhar Behera, Chairman of Sambalpur Municipality, Achyutananda Purohit and Gouri Sankar Mishra, two leading members of the local bar and Laxminarayan Mishra took charge of reception of Gandhiji. Above all, Nrusingha Guru was in charge of the food centre.

Mahatma Gandhi visited Sambalpur on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1928. He was accompanied by Kasturba Gandhi and Devdas Gandhi. Gandhiji was welcomed by all the sections of people; he stayed with Chandra Sekhar Behera.

Gandhiji visited Swadesi Bastralaya of Dayasagar Bohidar at Mohantypara. He was quite impressed with the activities of the Swadeshi Bastralaya and encouraged the people for more efforts in the field of Khadi and Charkha. A mass meeting was held in the Mahanadi bed near Brahmapura temple. The district council and the Municipality presented a joint address to Gandhiji and it was read out by Dr. Janardan Pujari. The address presented by the public was read by Manoranjan Banerjee, a leading advocate of the town. Gandhiji in his speech explained the people about the utility of Khadi. Charkha alone would help the people in eradicating their poverty. He requested to open more and more Khadi centres and to support the cause with full spirit. At the end of it, the people were requested to donate for the cause of Khadi and within a short time a sum of Rs.1790/- was raised for the purpose. Nityananda Behera, son of Chandra Sekhar Behera donated his gold ring and it was very much appreciated by Gandhiji.

The women of Sambalpur organized a separate meeting to receive Mahatma Gandhi. He addressed the gathering and reminded them of the responsibility they owned for spinning Charkha. The women folk were very much encouraged and pledged to spin everyday. They also donated for the Khadi Movement. The two daughters of Chandra Sekhar Behera

initiated and donated their gold rings. Gandhiji appreciated the spirit very much. Krishna Devi, who came on that occasion, visited Bargarh where the women of that Sub-division received her in a large public meeting. By that time a two storied building donated by Fakir Charana Behera of Bargarh had become the Congress Office and that was opened by Krishna Devi. A Congress Committee with Kapileswar Prasad Nanda as President was formed. Dayanand Satpathy who resigned his teachership in Bamra, became the Secretary. Besides Rajiblochan, Arkhita Patel, Gopal Chandra Panigrahi, Dasarath Naik, Chandra Sekhar Panigrahi from Bamanda and Prafulla Chandra Patnaik and his mother Jambuvati Devi were taken as workers in the Congress Office.

In the resistance movement of preceding century, the concept of nationalism was in a nebular stage. But with the birth of Indian National Congress and rapid growth of political ideas a new wave of national consciousness swept across the country which got proper expression through the goals set by Mahatma Gandhi. It became truly nationalistic in character, demanding in unequivocal terms the liberation of India from foreign rule. The non co-operation programme percolated to the level of common men to become a struggle of the masses. The policy of armed struggle by Veer Surendra Sai and others earlier was eschewed in favour of a peaceful struggle of non-violence and Civil Disobedience.

## *II. The Civil Disobedience Movement*

The year 1930 was the year of action for the Congress. Gandhiji making the best of the psychological situation commenced the Civil Disobedience Movement on March 12<sup>th</sup> at 6.30 A.M. when he began from Sabarmati the 24 miles march to Dandi on the sea coast, to break the salt law. He declared that he would not return to the Ashram, till the Salt Tax was repealed. The movement gained steady momentum. Gandhiji was jailed on May 5, 1930, at Karadi a village near Dandi. This generated enthusiastic protest and stimulated the Satyagraha further more.

### *The Salt Campaign :*

Sambalpur played an important role during the Salt Satyagraha Movement of 1930. Unlike many other places, the students of the Zilla School took the lead. On 11<sup>th</sup> March 1930 a meeting was organized near the Budharaja Hills and the students took firm decision to boycott the school on 12<sup>th</sup> March the day for Salt Satyagraha. Despite the serious warning from the school authorities it was found that the National Flag had been unfurled in the school building and the students did not attend their classes on that day. Biswambar Mishra, the Head Master, struck the names of the students and for this act he was vehemently criticized by the public. Nrusingha Guru, who has already joined the Civil Disobedience after resigning his post

from Sambalpur municipality could recount his own experience during the Non Co-operation in the same school and tried in vain to induce the Headmaster to withdraw the action. However, at his initiation the students held a meeting in the Bohidar Math on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1930 and took an oath to put on Khaddar, And for this act they were taken to task.

On 16<sup>th</sup> March, with the participation of Nrusingha Guru a huge meeting was organized in the Balibandha Ghat of the town where Laxminarayan Mishra was supposed to address the gathering. Being served with the notice of 144 Laxminarayan Mishra rushed to the neighbouring municipal field for conducting the meeting. He delivered a speech condemning the Government attitude and inspired the people to join the Satyagraha Movement. Subsequently on 17<sup>th</sup> March another meeting was held at Sen Park where Laxminarayan Mishra exhorted the audience to observe Hartal on 18<sup>th</sup>. Despite the threat of the authorities a procession with the active participation of Nrusingha Guru was organized and ultimately all the meetings were banned for five months. Ultimately Laxmi Narayan Mishra was arrested.

A Satyagraha Committee under the Chairmanship of Ghanasyam Panigrahi and with Dayananda Satpathy and Harihar Behera as secretaries sent four batches of Satyagrahis to defy the Salt Law and to contraband salt at different places in

coastal Orissa. The first batch comprising the Satyagrahis like Sudhansu Sekhar Gupta, Durga Prasad Guru and Ramprasad Sahu left Sambalpur in the beginning of April 1930 and joined the party led by Gopabandhu Chaudhury of Cuttack. The second batch of Satyagrahis like Dayananda Satpathy, Prem Sankar Patnaik and Bhagirathi Patnaik left for Cuttack to join the training camp there to prepare themselves for undergoing the hardship of the Satyagraha Movement. Mahavir Sing, Siva Deo Maharaj and few others formed the third batch of Satyagrahis they toured the villages and collected groups of volunteers for the Civil Disobedience Movement. The fourth batch was led by Ghanasyam Panigrahi. He along with Laxman Giri, Gauranga Meher and eight others left for Balasore on 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1930. They walked down the distance from Sambalpur to Jharsuguda.

All the Satyagrahis and volunteers suffered ill-treatment of the police and several of them like Sudhansu Sekhar Gupta, Mahavir Sing and Dayananda Satapathy courted arrest.

The Salt Satyagraha was carried so vigorously in the district of Sambalpur. Nrusingha Guru, Mahavir Sing and Fakira Behera assumed the leadership of the movement in Sambalpur, Jharsuguda and Bargarh respectively. The town of Sambalpur and Bargarh became the hot beds of national agitation. Besides Bargarh and Sambalpur, people of many others places joined

the Satyagraha Movement with great enthusiasm. It is significant that several ladies also joined the Movement. A batch of ten ladies on their way to Balasore reached Sambalpur on 20<sup>th</sup> April, 1930. They were received by all section and were taken in a procession to Sambalpur railway station. Though the police served them with notice, they with national slogan proceeded to Balasore for joining the salt campaign there.

The British authorities had at first believed the reports of the optimistic quarters that the struggle had reached its highest point and then bound to subside. But the Government had really been led to this wrong belief by these optimists and so when they realized this, they had to promulgate post haste a series of special ordinances against every possible and impossible form of anti-Government activities. Ultimately the Congress Working Committee had been declared unlawful, its funds were confiscated, offices sealed and most its members arrested and put in prison. Most of the leaders in Orissa also had been arrested. The remaining workers without leaders, were practically not doing much and the salt campaign, because of approach of the rainy season, was coming to an end.

#### *Civil Disobedience Movement*

The movement of Civil Disobedience was not confined to the Salt Satyagraha only. Foreign-cloth shops and

liquor shops were picketed and foreign clothes were burnt. Hand spinning was taken up with earnestness. India's women answered Gandhiji's appeal to help the movement through this and other means. British Schools, Colleges and services were boycotted. The people joined forces, sharing feeling of patriotic pride in their common undertaking.

The Civil Disobedience Movement in Sambalpur under the leadership of Nrusingha Guru was carried on energetically. The Congressites restored to picketing before the Ganja and Liquor shops; organized public meeting and toured the interior villages for spreading the Creed.

On 9<sup>th</sup> March, 1931, much before the expiry of the term, Laxminarayan Mishra was released from the jail. A heroic reception was given to him and a meeting under the presidentship of Krushna Kumari was organized. After the speech of Chintamani Pujari and Dayananda Satpathy it was decided to observe the 'Dandi Day'. Again on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1931 a public meeting was arranged near the Budharaja Hills. The meeting was intended for the literacy and prohibition drive and the people in hundreds from the depressed class, being persuaded by Nrusingha Guru, attended the meeting. In the midst of the meeting the police arrested the organizers Sudhansu Sekhar Gupta, Durga Prasad Guru, Binayaka Padhi, Bhagirathi Patnaik

and Prafulla Patnaik. Amidst cheers of people they were taken into custody and produced before the Court. Accordingly they were asked to apologize but they refused. Ultimately, because of Gandhi Irwin Pact they were released. Laxminarayan Mishra and Nrusingha Guru who were fortunate to escape the arrest were present at the jail gate to receive them.

On 12<sup>th</sup> March, 1931 the 'Dandi Day' was observed in Sambalpur. At 4.00 P.M. on that day a number of Congress workers and volunteers including Nrusingha Guru and Krushna Kumari moved round the town in a procession shouting national slogans. The procession was received by all classes of people at Gandhi Ghat with all enthusiasm and spirit. A mammoth meeting under the presidentship of Krushna Kumari was held at Gandhi Ghat. In the beginning all the people had a silent prayer for two minutes for the success of Gandhiji. Laxminarayan Mishra explained the people about the significance of the day with an appeal to boycott the foreign clothes and wear khaddar. The other leaders like Dayananda Satpathy, Sudhansu Sekhar Gupta, Bhagirathi Patnaik delivered speeches emphasizing the need for the spread of Khadi, prohibition drive etc. The meeting came to an end after the presidential speech by Krushna Kumari. The following persons were elected to attend the annual session of the Congress to be held at Puri this time :

1. Sudhansu Sekhar Gupta
2. Dayanand Satpathy
3. Nrusingha Guru
4. Durgaprasad Guru
5. Arun Das
6. Mahavir Sing
7. Janki Bai
8. Krushna Bai
9. B.B. Sing
10. Ram Suchit Mishra
11. Laxman Giri

Pandit Nilakanth Das, for encouraging the Civil Disobedience Movement reached Sambalpur on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1931 and stayed with Chandra Sekhar Behera. He met almost all the leading persons and advised them to work more vigourously. Gopabandhu Choudhury and Acharya Harihar Das also visited Sambalpur on 11<sup>th</sup> April, 1931. Gopabandhu Choudhury being received by Chandra Sekhar Behera and Nrusingha Guru was quite satisfied with the activities of the local students. After having a detail discussion with local leaders both of them agreed to depute Rama Devi, Uma Devi, Malati Devi to work for the Congress at Sambalpur. Further, at the request of Nrusingha Guru, it was agreed and decided to open a training centre for the volunteers at Sambalpur. On 12<sup>th</sup> April 1931 the leaders left for Cuttack.

In May 1931, Nilakantha Das, Sasibhusan Rath, editor of Asha, Harekrushna Mahatab visited Sambalpur in connection with the annual session of the Congress to be held at Puri. It was proposed to enroll four thousand members for the Reception Committee of the Congress and some seven hundred would be the share of Sambalpur. The membership fees was Rs.25/-. Accordingly the appeal was made in the Utkal Sevaka, published on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1931 and the people readily responded. Accordingly a Committee for enrolling members was formed with Chandra Sekhar Behera, Nrusingha Guru, Dr. Janardan Pujari, Dr. Ramachandra Mishra, Gokula Chandra Babu and Bodhram Dube as members.

Rama Devi visited Sambalpur in December, 1931 and addressed the people in several meetings in various places of the district explaining the necessity of men and money for the Puri Congress. At her initiation the ladies also volunteered to enlist themselves as the members of the Reception Committee of the said Congress and got prepared to wear Khaddar and to give up ornaments. There was also, at her call, wider response from other important places like Bargarh, Padampur Rama Devi was helped in her mission by Raghunath Mishra, Dayananda Satpathy, Dasarathi Naik, Nrusingha Guru and Narasingha Chow Patnaik who also accompanied her in the meetings that were organized for her. She too received warm support for her cause from Chandra Sekhar Behera and Ramanarayan Mishra.

A Sub-Divisional Congress Committee functioned during the period in Bargarh Sub-Division with Fakira Behera as its President and Kapileswar Nanda as Vice-President. Both of them helped the organization of volunteers for the Puri Congress. A number of volunteers collected from Sambalpur, Rampella, Jharsuguda, Katarbaga and Bargarh on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1932 and left for Puri. About this time the Government declared the Congress and other allied association unlawful. The volunteers could not reach Puri. The Volunteers like Gopal Chandra Panigrahi, Rajib Lochan Patel, Chandra Sekhar Panigrahi, Dasarathi Naik, Arakhit Patel, Nityananda Padhi, Brahmananda Pujari were arrested at Cuttack. The Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police, Sambalpur took vigorous measures to check the activities of the Congress. A declaration making Congress and other organizations unlawful was widely circulated and a notification prohibiting all procession and meetings without prior permission was promulgated throughout the district.

In the second week of January, 1932 the houses of Laxminarayan Mishra and Bhagwan Prasad were searched by the Police and a lot of literature dealing with Congress activities dating from 1921 were seized by them. At this time some leaflets connected with Congress propaganda were being circulated in Sambalpur. Nrusingha Guru and Brundaban Guru were

arrested, being held responsible for the circulation of the leaflets. The contents of the leaflets distributed by them ran as follows :

“Message of Mahatma-A self-respecting man cannot prefer to remain outside the prison under an unjust Government”.

On 26<sup>th</sup> January 1932 a number of Congress workers and volunteers headed by Dayananda Satpathy paraded the streets of Bargarh carrying the national flag and shouting national slogans. They called upon people to observe the Independence Day and to join the main national streams. The leaflets distributed by them stated.

“Every one should harass the Government, no one should pay tax, the courts should be boycotted and that every one should join the Congress and work against the Government.”

The agitators were promptly arrested, one of them being Dayananda Satpathy and other youngmen were of the age of about fifteen years. They refused to participate in the proceeding of the court. They were tried and convicted. Two young volunteers were told that they would be released if they apologized. They were, however, sent to jail as they declined to tender an apology. Soon after this, the Congress Office at Bargarh was seized and locked up by the police.

*Civil Disobedience – The Second Phase*

The Government reacted to the second phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement with most severe measures of repression that it yet had restored to. Congress was again outlawed and more than a lakh of persons were arrested. The inhuman treatment meted out to men, women and children need not be detailed here. One may sum up using the words of a report compiled by an Independent English Organization.

“In 1932 the Ordinances and now the Acts recently passed deprive the Indian people of the rights of personal freedom and safeguarded which, most British people believe, exist under British Law every where.”

The Civil Disobedience Movement, even after the arrest of Nrusingha Guru and others, worked with greater force. The workers through out the district distributed leaflets instigating the people to disobey the ordinances. Manuscripts, leaflets were pasted on the walls of the temples and market places asking people to boycott foreign clothes and use Swadesi goods. Bhagirathi Pattanaik, a prominent worker of Barpali and a close associate of Nrusingha Guru, his wife Jambubāti Devi and Premsankar Pattanaik engaged themselves in arousing the consciousness of the people by distributing leaflets which condemned the Government as villainous and encouraged the

people to join the peaceful fight under the Congress banner and to boycott all British clothes and foreign staff.

During the second week of July, 1932 three Congress workers under the leadership of Fakira Behera broke open the Congress Office at Bargarh which had been seized and locked up by the police. They were immediately arrested. A tri-colour flag and one sign board with “Congress Bhavan” written on it were seized from them by the police. There after the Congress workers resorted to picketing in Ganja and Liquor shops of the town. Batches of volunteers went upto such shops and started picketing there. They were arrested in large number and sent to jail by the authorities.

The Civil Disobedience Movement was revived in Jharsuguda in August 1932. Kastaram Ganda, the old political worker and the disciple of Nrusingha Guru worked vigorously with others under the leadership of Mahavir Sing of Jharsuguda. Leaflets were distributed in the market of Talpatia, seven miles away from Jharsuguda. The leaflets were published from the ‘Revolution Bulletin Press, Cuttack. They incited the public to boycott foreign goods and British clothes and threatened to picket the shops of those who were dealing in British goods. Kastaram and Mahavir were arrested and prosecuted.



Nrusingha Guru was released from the Jail on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1932 and immediately kept himself engrossed in the constructive work of the Congress and move against partial exclusion of the district of Sambalpur. He accompanied Sarala Devi who visited Sambalpur on 30 August 1932 in connection with the collection of fund for the Congress. She along with Nrusingha Guru went to Bargarh with the same mission. When she returned from Bargarh and continued her activities in the town, the local authorities warned the Sambalpur public not to respond to her. But the appeal of Nrusingha Guru along with Sarala Devi worked as a magic and the Sambalpur public both Government servants as well as the pleaders helped the Congress with contribution. The Anti-Untouchability Movement already started earlier assumed a new dimension with the leadership of Nrusingha Guru towards the end of 1932. It has been dealt separately in the next Chapter.

The campaign of Individual Satyagraha already started from 1<sup>st</sup> August 1932 could assume a vigorous shape with the coming up of Nrusingha Guru.

The Individual Satyagraha campaign, that was conducted now had quite novel features and was sharply distinguished from the mass Satyagraha conducted at other times. Those individuals who fulfilled all the required points demanded

by Gandhiji could be enrolled as active Satyagrahis. They were expected not to possess any financial or domestic obligations. The Satyagraha was absolutely individual. The Individual Satyagraha in any other shapes was totally disallowed by Gandhiji. The Satyagrahis were strictly required to be refrained from any speech-making and not to combine their Satyagraha programme with any public utterances. They were only to sought slogans while offering Satyagraha and thus court arrest.

On 1<sup>st</sup> August 1933 both Gandhiji and Kasturba courted arrested individually. Following the arrest of Gandhiji the campaign started in all provinces. In Orissa also the leaders courted arrest at different places. Acharya Harihar Das and Pandit Krupasindhu at Puri, Bipin Bihari Mohanty at Jajpur, Binod Kanungo, Surendra Pattanaik, Dolagovinda Mohanty at Cuttack courted arrest.

The Individual Satyagraha Movement in its new spirit was started with all earnestness by the Congressites in Sambalpur. Nrusingha Guru fresh from the imprisonments deemed it proper to co-ordinate and combine the Satyagrahis rather than to participate individually. He was a campaigner and organizer Bhagirathi Pattanaik the prominent Congress man from Barpali who was released from Patna Camp jail on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1933 took a vigorous part in such activities and the

movement gained new strength under his leadership. He along with Nrusingha Guru visited the interior of Bargarh and inspired the non co-operators. Bhagirathi Pattanaik sent a notice to the Deputy Commissioner, Sambalpur communicating his intention to start picketing in the shop at Bargarh. On 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1933 he along with his son Prafulla Pattanaik and wife Jambubati Devi picketed the foreign cloth store of Marwaripara and excise shop of Bargarh. The husband, wife and the son were arrested as picketers and sentenced respectively 6,5 and 4 months rigorous imprisonment.

*Move against the Partial exclusion of the district of Sambalpur*

Nrusingha Guru needles to say was a protestor and social workers. He played a prominent role in the Move against the partial exclusion of the district of Sambalpur.

Ever since the inception of the district of Sambalpur in the new province of Orissa it suffered a good deal in enjoying its privileges and in furthering her prospects. Its status has been lowered. In 1874 according to the Scheduled District Act, Bodasambar, Kolabira and Rampur of Khariar estate of Sambalpur were declared to be "Scheduled State" while the district formed the part of Central Provinces it had the privileges of being recognized as a full fledged district like other district of the province. Had it not been the language question

the district would not have lost its sanctity. The Central Provinces Government could not administer the district with efficiency as Oriya was the court language for which the officers had to face many difficulties in running the administration of the district. It was Andrew Fraser who suggested an alternative proposal. He asked the people whether they would like to remain in the Central Provinces with Hindi as the Court language or to go to Bengal to be included in Orissa and to retain their own language. The people agreed to go to Bengal and to maintain their prestige as an Oriya race. Before the inclusion of Sambalpur in Orissa, the Phuljhar and Chandarpur tracts belonged to the district of Sambalpur. These tracts having been included in the district of Raipur and Bilaspur respectively enjoyed the right of a full-fledged district where as Sambalpur was declared to be a partially excluded area. The decision taken by the authority was unreasonable. In cultural, social, political, agricultural and industrial activities, the people of Sambalpur were in no way inferior to those of the districts of Bilaspur and Raipur, which enjoyed the privileges of a full-fledged district.

Sambalpur was declared to be a partially excluded area because of the existence of aborigines in the district. The census figures which had classed the 'Dhobis', 'Bonds', Kants 'Pabs' and 'Saharas' and others such castes as aborigines were defective and not at all reliable. All these people were Hindus. They knew reading and writing and knew fully, being

agriculturist, to assert their rights over their lands and were accustomed to the laws which were in force in the district of Sambalpur.

The proposal of the Simon Commission making Sambalpur a partially excluded area was strongly resented by all sections of people in Sambalpur District. Chandra Sekhar Behera along with Nrusingha Guru condemned the government attitude openly. They organized the people to put the strongest resistance against the authorities. Chandra Sekhar Behera declared publicly to forego one meal a day till the time the proposal was withdrawn. Nrusingha Guru could organize a meeting in the Town Hall, Sambalpur on 14<sup>th</sup> December 1935 under the auspices of the Sambalpur District Association where an emphatic protest was recorded against the humiliating proposal of the Simon Commission. Resolutions at the initiation of Nrusingha Guru, were passed in the meeting moving the Government to place the district under the administration of Legislative Council and Assembly. It was also resolved in the meeting that eleven members should be selected for the Council from the district as its population was about 10 lakhs.

Chandra Sekhar Behera, the architect, died on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1936. A condolence meeting was held at Balibandha on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1936 to mourn the death of Chandra Sekhar Behera, Speakers including Laxminarayan Mishra, Bodhram

Dube and Nrusingha Guru eulogized late Chandra Sekhar Behera and advised the people to follow his example by abstaining from drink and following the path leading to the Independence.

The people of Sambalpur, still, strongly agitated over the inclusion of Sambalpur among the scheduled area. A meeting was held at Balibandha of the Sambalpur town on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1936 which was addressed by Laxminarayan Mishra and Nrusingha Guru. The speakers advised the audience not to hold any illumination on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1936, the day for a separate province of Orissa as a protest against the inclusion of the district in the scheduled area.

Orissa became a separate state on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1936. A meeting of the Congress supporters along with the people was held at Balibandha Ghat of the Sambalpur town on the same day. The speakers including Laxminarayan Mishra and Nrusingha Guru criticized the Government policy in excluding Sambalpur from normally administered area of Orissa and demanded that the people of the district should fight to remove stigma of being in an excluded area. Subsequently at the instance of Laxminarayan Mishra a 'Youth Conference' was organized with an object to lay the grievances of Sambalpur before the Government in a constitutional manner and convince the Government that Sambalpur was fit to take its place in the ordinary administration of the rest of the province. The pleaders

of Sambalpur town were keenly interested in the Conference and made earnest efforts for its success. The 'Youth Conference', initially with five members, became known as 'Yuvaka Sammilani' on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1936. Ultimately in a meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1936 fresh members were taken including Nrusingha Guru, Secretary of Harijan Sangha then and different duties were allotted to each of the members. It was with the efforts of 'Yuvaka Sammilani' a weekly news paper entitled 'Jagarana' was started in Sambalpur with Nityananda Bohidar as its editor. Nrusingha Guru, through his forceful writings in 'Jagarana' could successfully establish an out-let for the grievances of the people of district against the administration of Government.

Nrusingha Guru, now took up the cause of the tenants whose suffering was acute in Sambalpur district as well as in other adjoining states. Meetings were organized at Bheuria in Padampur and it was reckoned as 'The Conference of the Tenants'. There were other meetings held at Barpali, Bhatli, Kamagaon and Attabira where Nrusingha Guru played a leading role in rousing the consciousness of the people in regard to the evils of the existing administration and called on the people to stand united in the cause of the National goal. Various resolutions were passed in different meetings and sent to the Government.

- I. Government to be moved to reduce the land revenue in the areas affected by poor crop.
- II. The Government should stop realizing fees, ploughing fees etc.
- III. Zamindars should not realize subscriptions for festival from Gauntias paying land revenue below Rs. 250/-.
- IV. The Central Province Tenancy Act in force should be replaced by Orissa Tenancy Act.
- V. Government should restore Sambalpur to the same level as other Orissa districts instead of including it in the scheduled district.

The Independence Day was observed in different places of the district of Sambalpur on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1937. The Day was celebrated at Sambalpur under the leadership of Nrusingha Guru who read out a pledge in the meeting saying that the ultimate aim of the Congress was to attain Swaraj by all legitimate and constitutional means. In a meeting held on the occasion at Barpali, Bhagirathi Patnaik attempted to defy the Government orders by reading the pledge. He was served with a notice by the Sub-Divisional Officer, Bargarh prohibiting him to read the pledge. There upon he refrained from reading the same and addressed the audience on the constructive programme of the Congress. The Congress workers of

Jharsuguda were prevented from holding meeting and reading the pledge as the Magistrate on duty at the place issued an order under section 144 and thereby disallowed them to carry out their programme with the observance of the Independence Day.

Nrusingha Guru, because of the formation of Congress Ministry in Orissa where Bodhram Dube from Sambalpur was a member, still continued with zest and vigour to remove the stigma of partially excluded area in case of Sambalpur. Bodhram Dube at the invitation of Nrusingha Guru exhorted the people in a meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1938 to make united efforts to spread the agitation to the interior. It might impress the Government that stigma of partial exclusion of the district agitated the mind of everyman in the district. He, too enlightened the public regarding the fact that a committee was formed by the ministry for the proposed changes of the district.

The people of Sambalpur under the guidance of Nrusingha Guru were now broadly agitated over two main issues namely the removal of the ban of partial exclusion of Sambalpur and the amalgamation of the dismembered Oriya speaking tracts with Orissa. The Congressites as well as the public and the spirited members of the educated class carried on vigorous propaganda throughout the district and exhorted the people to

present a united front to the Government for the solution of two burning problems which affected every living soul of the district.

Acharya Harihar Das convened a meeting at Padampur on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1938 where the question of amalgamation of Phuljhar with Orissa was discussed. Accordingly, the leading persons of Sambalpur held a meeting at Fraser Club on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1938 where the problem of amalgamation of Phuljhar, Chandarpur with the district of Sambalpur, the removal of the stigma of partial exclusion of the district and the reduction of the rent of land were seriously considered. Further, meetings of the local public were held in Fraser Club on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> October 1938 in connection with the said question. The Yuvaka Sangha of Sambalpur took up the cause with right earnest and allotted different duties to its members who were directed to proceed to the different centers of the district with the object of arousing consciousness among the masses. Achyutananda Purohit a leading pleader of Sambalpur was elected as the president of the 'Yuvaka Sangha' to fill up the seat vacated by Bodhram Dube. Leaflets were distributed among the people to observe 30<sup>th</sup> day of October as 'Hastamudi Day' and zealous efforts were made by the members for carrying on district-wide agitation in the cause.

Accordingly, the Hastamudi Day was observed in Sambalpur on 30<sup>th</sup> October 1938. The members of the 'Yuvaka Sangha' paraded the town in a procession and held a meeting in the Town Hall attended by some five hundred people. Achyutananda Purohit, the president of the Reception Committee explained the audience the stigma of Sambalpur being treated as a partially excluded area and exhorted the public to give evidence by protesting against the stigma before enquiring committee that was to visit Sambalpur towards the end of the year. Consequent upon the observance of 'Hastamudi Day' several meetings were held in different parts of the district. A mammoth meeting was held at Balibandha of Sambalpur town on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1938 under the presidentship of Brajamohan Panda, a leading figure of the public. Nabakrishna Choudhury made a speech in the meeting advocating the removal of Sambalpur from the stigma of partially excluded area. He too condemned the action of the Political Agent in the affairs of the State. A meeting was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1938 in the village of Remanda. Laxminarayan Mishra and Nrusingha Guru spoke to the people about the significance of the 'Hastamudi Day'. The meeting in the village Mura on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1938 was presided by Benimadhab Supkar. It was attended by three thousand villagers of the neighbouring area. Unanimously it was decided that Sambalpur should be free from the stigma of being treated as partially excluded area.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the campaign of individual Satyagraha in Orissa started on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1940.

Bodhram Dube started Individual Satyagraha at Nandpara of Sambalpur on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1940, and was arrested. He was taken to Sadar jail and was sentenced for 9 months. Fakir Behera offered Satyagraha at Larri Junction of Bargarh on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1940. He was arrested by the Sub-Inspector and taken to Sambalpur where he was sentenced for six months. Subsequently Manglu Pradhan, Prahllad Rai Seth, Ghanasyam Panigrahi, Upendra Panigrahi, Baikuntha Padhi, Binayak Padhi, Padmalochan Behera, Prabhavati Devi, Brajaraj Sahu, Gangadhar Saraf, Bhagirathi Patnaik, Mahesh Chandra Sahu, Dasarathi Mohapatra and many others courted arrest by undertaking Individual Satyagraha.

The presence of such Satyagraha in the jails in remote areas like Sambalpur was a signal that India would not submit to foreign dominion anymore.

#### *Efforts for Unification of Oriya speaking people*

The Oriyas were unfortunately placed under three separate Provincial Government. The main body of Orissa was administered by the Governor of Bengal where as the Ganjam Agency and the Sambalpur tracts were ruled by Madras and

Central Provinces respectively. The Oriyas formed a minority under each Government. Their powerful partners in the political union under each Government, for obvious reasons, developed into an intermediary ruling race. Attempts were made by Bengalees, Marathas and Telugus to replace the Oriya language by the language of the intermediary ruling race. The Bengalees made the attempts in the sixties on the 19<sup>th</sup> century but the efforts proved unsuccessful.

Orissa, then, did not possess the spirit of public agitation and the people did not learn the importance of the agitation. They had long neglected themselves and had, in consequence been neglected. The Oriyas had been treated as a class of people who possessed no individual distinction for consideration which was vouchsafed to others who were in better circumstances and had British Administration longer than that of Orissa. There was no rolling swells on the surface.

But there was a fresh popular movement in Sambalpur, in the last part of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The people protested against the authorities when the latter proposed the substitution of Hindi in place of Oriya. The Language Agitation of Sambalpur and its subsequent amalgamation with Orissa Division in 1905 may rightly be considered as positive steps towards the formation of the separate province of Orissa in 1936. The district of Sambalpur along with other Oriya

speaking tract of Patna, Kalahandi, Sonepur, Bamra and Rairakhol from Central Provinces was amalgamated with the Orissa Division on 16th October 1905.

The problem of the unification of the Oriya speaking people under the four provinces had been before the public for a long time. Ever since 1901, the difficulties arising out of dismembering of the tracts had been voiced through the conferences and the public gatherings. Deputations had been led, memorials were sent from time to time since the inception of the movement for amalgamating the Oriya speaking tracts. The Government all along promised for a sympathetic consideration of the question but had delayed its solution on the ground of administrative expediency. Two decades of petitioning and praying had been of no avail in dispelling the ignorance, real or assumed of a Government. The leaders of Sambalpur could realize that the realization of their object depended upon the intensity of their agitation.

The spirit for the amalgamation of Oriya speaking tracts gained a fresh momentum; all leading person of Sambalpur joined in a meeting held at the Fraser Club on 17<sup>th</sup> September 1924. Ramnarayan Mishra, Member of the Legislative Council was elected as the President. In the beginning Mahendranath Burma drew the attention of all to the 'Searchlight' where the

article concerning the amalgamation was published and reminded the people of their duties towards their fellow brothers. Chandra Sekhar Behera Former President of Utkal Union Conference, in order to encourage the fellow brothers of Ganjam, proposed to send a batch of volunteers from Sambalpur. The proposal was supported by Sripati Mishra, Former Editor Utkal Darpan and the Chief architect of Language Movement of Sambalpur.

Nrusingha Guru, the trusted lieutenant of Chandra Sekhar Behera, volunteered to be associated with the batch of volunteers from Sambalpur. He being very apprehensive of the 'Divide and Rule' policy of the Government laid much emphasis on self-sacrifice and agitation to achieve the end. In this case also as in the Non Co-operation Movement, Sambalpur was the pioneer in the movement for the Union of their separated brothers. The agitation was growing in intensity and volume.

A fresh impetus was gained at Phuljhar, Chandrapur, Padampur and the people of these regions were very active and made all efforts to be in Sambalpur. They protested against the census agent; advocated that the justice was ignored when the agents did not show them as Oriyas. They in language, manners, religion etc. had all affinity to the Oriya race.

In August 1926 as per the decision of the Committee for the Re-Union of Orissa, Sambalpur, a delegation of Sankar Prasad Padhi, Dr. Ramchandra Mishra and Gananath Panigrahi was sent to Phuljhar to know the wishes of the people. Nrusingha Guru, though Young, was not a passive on looker and decided to accompany the delegation. Chandra Sekhar Behera supported his move and he felt encouraged to fight for the fellow brothers. The delegates had contacted Baikuntha Badpanda and got a detailed account of the agitation there. They also proceeded to Tos Gaon and met Gauntia Bidyadhar, Dayanidhi Gauntia the father of the former and Baikuntha Badapanda who were the pioneer in the agitation of Phuljhar. They were given the charge of some thirty five villages. Consequently, Nrusingha Guru accompanying the delegates toured the places like Baroli, Khursipahar and met personages like Piarilal Tiwari, Madanmohan Babu and Pandit Banamali Mishra. They further met Purusottam Rath at Saldih. The people every where were eager to be with Oriya race.

It is to be noted here that the people of the affected areas were never happy with the separation. After having enjoyed the partnership of the people of Sambalpur, infact forming an indispensable part of the community of Sambalpur for centuries, the people of the surrendered areas cannot be expected to change their custom, habits, manners, language and institution so as to render it impossible to mix with the people of Sambalpur. The



policy of the Government is clear from the resolutions of the successive Viceroys during the early part of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Risley resolution in 1905 during Lord Curzon's time was definite pronouncement of the determination of the Government to unit the Oriya speaking population of India. The policy underlying the resolution was re-affirmed during the time of Lord Hardinge when the province of Bihar and Orissa was carved out of the province of Bengal in 1912. The main reason was that the Biharis and the Oriyas being backward races could not be yoked with Bengalees, one of the advanced races of India. If the main body of Oriya was considered incapable to compete with the Bengalees how could small community of Orissa living outside, in Madras, Bengal, Central Provinces and Bihar itself match with their partners, no less advanced than the Bengalees.

*The people continued to protest.*

The efforts of the people of Sambalpur for the amalgamation of the Oriya speaking people could be rejuvenated with the coming of Biswanath Kar, the editor of Utkala Sahitya to Sambalpur on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1931, Nrusingha Guru then the President of the "Committee for Re-Union of Orissa, Sambalpur took up the cause with all spirit and enthusiasm. A huge meeting was organized in the town hall where all classes of people attended. Biswanath Mishra and Nrusingha Guru criticized the attitude of the provincial Government and inspired the people to intensify the movement. Parsuram Mishra, the Municipality

Chairman and Chandra Sekhar Behera also delivered speeches supporting the cause. The people were further encouraged when Nilamani Senapati, the then Deputy Commissioner, supporting the cause, addressed the people.

In the year 1931 O'Denell Committee was appointed for demarcating the boundaryline of Orissa. Chandra Sekhar Behera along with Nrusingha Guru played the most active role in submitting a memorandum and in organizing the people to give statement before the committee. A committee at the initiation of Nrusingha Guru was formed with Bhagawan Mishra and Jayanarayan Panigrahi as the Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Sankar Prasad Padhi, Bijaya Kumar Padhi and Anantaram Guru were sent by cycle to Padampur. They encouraged the people for giving statement before the committee. Bhagirathi Gauntia of Dhulundi and Duryodhan Gaunti of Katapali were entrusted with the work and the delegates went to Raipur. After a brief discussion with Bankim Chandra Pattanaik, the prominent advocate of the area, the workers proceeded to Khariar. On their way they also covered Jaunk, Nuapara and inspired the people there.

Sankar Prasad Padhi, Nrusingha Guru and Bijaya Kumar Padhi were sent to Khariar for personally bringing Gokul Chandra Patnaik and Laxman Pattanaik with them. Their statement before the O'Denell committee was very appealing. A result of the incessant efforts of Nrusingha Guru and others a

number of Gauntias from Padampur, the Kulta Chiefs like Bidyadhar Gauntia, Sankirtan Gauntia and Lochan Singh from Phuljhar Zamindari and personages like Ramanarayan Mishra, Balamukunda Bohidar, Bodhram Dube and Mahammad Saliah from Sambalpur town gave their statements before the committee. Artatran Deo, the raja of Khariar, Bhawani Shankar Deo, the Zamindar of Padampur welcomed the move for amalgamating their feudatories with Orissa. Because of the unwillingness of the Phuljhar Zamindar, the cause of the Zamindari could not be taken.

There was an unprecedented scene of enthusiasm and excitement on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1931, when the committee reached Sambalpur. Nilamani Senapati, the Deputy Commissioner along with Chandra Sekhar Behera, Achyutananda Purohit, Balamukund Bohidar, Ramanarayan Mishra, Parasuram Mishra and Gokul Chandra Babu received the members of the committee. Nrusingha Guru organized the students of all local schools who were there with national flags in their hands. The "Youth Association" of Pattnaikpara had the procession with national song. They had the placards and banners bearing "we want to join with our brothers", "Padampur, Khariar and Shakti belong to us". Parasuram Sahani headed the procession and ultimately reached Fatak. The students of Zilla School also at the initiation of Nrusingha Guru joined the procession. The Secretary of the committee was received by Deputy

commissioner and then both of them went to the President who was in the last compartment. After a discussion for twenty minutes all of them went to the bungalow of the Deputy Commissioner. The O'Denell Committee, however failed to give any justice to the Oriya speaking tracts adjoining Sambalpur. The people of the district were very much disappointed by its report.

### *III. The Quit India Movement :*

The Quit India Movement in Sambalpur was very intense and there was wide spread protest against the British Raj not only in big towns like Sambalpur, Bargarh and Jharsuguda but also in remote villages. Laxminarayan Mishra who had been to Bombay to attend the meeting of the All India Congress Committee was arrested on his way back to Sambalpur. Hartals were organized at Sambalpur and Jharsuguda in protest against the high handedness of the British Government. The students as usual took active part in the Movement and organized strikes and mass demonstrations. Taking part in the movement Nrusingha Guru was arrested by India Defence Act. While in prison, his six year old daughter Dineswari expired; Nrusingha Guru was brought on parole for the ritual and was taken back on parole. It is well said that adversity is the touch stone in which the character of a man is tested. No doubt, it evokes a sentiment of devotion. Besides, large number of Congress workers like Rama Rakshya Sukla, Durga Prasad Guru and Dayanand

Satpathy were also arrested. But the police could not establish the charges. Though they were released but were detained in Sambalpur. An attempt was made by the nationalists to burn the police station at Bijepur. Ramachandra Puri and his associates were arrested before they could set the station to fire. There was widespread unrest in Barpali, Remanda, Panimura, Bodasambar, Padampur and people in large number courted arrest. With all this engorged manifestation of nationalist temper, however the Quit India Movement in Sambalpur was only sporadic in its success. It could not be sustained due to the arrest of almost all the important leaders.

Gandhiji was released in early May 1944, it was hailed with enthusiasm by the congress workers as well as the public of the district. Accordingly the security prisoners of the Sambalpur district were released in phases from first half of July 1944. Nrusingha Guru and Druga Prasad Guru were released in the first phase. Durga Prasad Guru actively occupied himself in fighting the cause of the Orient Paper Mills at Brajaraj Nagar. At the time of his release a restriction was imposed on him not to enter Jharsuguda police Station. He moved the Government either to waive the restriction or to detain him again. He was arrested again for violating the condition. But because of serious illness he was released soon. He went to Calcutta for treatment and in spite of all efforts by Dr. B.C. Ray, the surgeon, he expired at Calcutta. Subsequently Laxminarayan Mishra, Ghanashyam Panigrahi, Bihariram Tanti, Bhagirathi Pattanaik were released.

## Chapter – IV

### ECONOMIC IDEAS

#### 1. *Charkha and Khadi*

Gandhiji was witness to the poverty, acute and tormenting that then existed in the country. It was to him "The tremendous tragedy". The chronic poverty rendered the people 'constantly idle'. "This idleness has persisted for so long that it has become a habit with them". This being the lot of thousands, measures to remedy it were bound to take time. And, there was no time to wait. The situation demanded an immediate remedy. This, Gandhiji found "in the spinning wheel", which is both traditional and cheap. For this, he wanted to make it the foundation "on which to build a sound village life". He called it "a useful and indispensable article for every home and the symbol of "the nation's prosperity and therefore freedom". He wished it to be the instrument to revive the cottage industry. It could be a supplementary work "to harness every single idle minute of our millions for common productive work". This he felt to be "the one and only work which can supply the needs of the million without disturbing them from their homes".

Connected with Charkha is Khadi, the hand woven and spun cloth. Common use of it connoted "the beginning of economic freedom and equality of all the country". Gandhiji

considered it to be the "most important corollary of the principle of Swadeshi. It symbolizes economic decentralization and the employment of masses. It was the symbol of "unity of Indian humanity. He wanted, the educated to spin and wear Khadi, not for more economic reasons but to "express their sympathy for the poor. Jawaharlal Nehuru described it "the livery of Indian freedom". Gandhiji made it the mission of his life to popularize the use of Khadi.

Nrusingha Guru, the true desciple of Gandhiji lived a life of intense activity. His activities were involved in practical politics. He evolved an approach to meet the immediate. Gandhiji's ideas of Khadi and Charkha immensely influenced him and as a man of conviction, idealism and practical approach he put all the efforts to support the Khadi and Charkha movement as an economic system that would redress the economic poverty of the people. He induced the Khadi and Charkha movement as one of the schedules in the activities of the National School of Sambalpur in launching the Non-Cooperation movement.

Nilakantha Das, Rajakrushan Bose and Gopabandhu Chaudhury the member of Utkal Provisional Congress Committee reached Sambalpur on 24 October 1922. They were received by Ambica Madha Prasad Patnaik. At 6 P.M. on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1922 a meeting under the presidentship of

Dharanidhar Mishra was convened at Gandhi Ghat. They preached there the creed of the congress and the responsibility the people owed to it. All of them after the meeting; assembled in the Fraser club and it was decided that the National School would be left in charge of the Congress. Further, at the initiation and suggestion of Nrusingha Guru a proposal for opening a Khadi Board was placed before the District Congress Committee. Accordingly, unanimously it was agreed upon to create a 'Khadi Board' for spreading the Khadi. The foundation of the Khadi and Charkha Movement, as it assumed the status, was laid down and Nrusingha Guru became the champion of the cause.

In 1922, Khadi and Charkha movements were organized, and literacy and prohibition drive were made in many parts of the district of Sambalpur. Centres of Khadi industries were opened. Laxminarayan Mishra, Bhagirathi Patnaik, Ghanasyam Panigrahi, Achyutananda Purohit, Chintamani Pujari and Nrusingha Guru made vigorous drive against the untouchability and spread of education among the Harijan people of the district. Meetings associating the untouchables were convened and pledges to give up liquor and spin Charkha were taken. Illiterate Harijans like Sukhram Tanti, Kastaram Tanti and Kanaram Tanti joined Indian National Congress and suffered imprisonment.

Sambalpur in 1922 with the efforts of Nrusingha Guru headed in Khadi and Charkha movement. The district is noted for its "tie and dye" weaving in cotton and tassar silk bringing out the most artistic design from the loom like magic. There were four types of weavers : Bhullia, Kosta, Harijan and Kuli. Nrusingha Guru along with Ganesh Prasad Padhi and Jangil Mistri took up the cause of the movement and with their initiation the Khadi and Charkha centre was opened in Fraser Club Sambalpur. Accordingly centers were opened in Bargarh, Remanda, Barpali, Jharsuguda, Talpatia and the people of the locality joined the movement with great enthusiasm. Mahavir Sing opened a Khadi centre in Jharsuguda for that he had to borrow some money from the provincial congress committee. Like wise Nrusingha Guru also opened a centre in Sanasingha of Sasan. Both of them used to supply Khadi to Khadi and Charkha center of Sambalpur. In the south also a centre was opened in Dulampur of Attabira. Brundaban Guru championed the movement in this locality. Further, Krutartha Acharya and Mahadev Sathua in Remanda took up the cause and centres were duly opened there. Niranjana Patnaik and Harihar Patnaik from Ganjam and Gopabandhu Chaudhury from Cuttack visited Sambalpur in connection with the Khadi movement. They were very much pleased and appreciated the spirit of Sambalpur. Shyam Sundar Chakravarti and Satis Chandra Dasgupta from West Bengal also visited Sambalpur in connection with Khadi organization.

The Khadi and Charkha Movement also attracted many members of the depressed classes into its fold. About six hundred 'Gandas' (Harijans) enrolled themselves as congress members. All of them were moved by the spirit the Khadi and joined the organization with great enthusiasm. A Ganda, named Kastaram Tanti took very active part in organizing Khadi and Charkha in rural areas. He came in contact with all leading workers of the Congress in the district. He moved in the rural villages of the district and propagated the message of the Congress and encouraged the people to take up the course of Khadi and Charkha. The Gandas (Harijans) who constituted the bulk of the depressed class in the district could find a respite of their self sufficiency through Charkha and Khadi. Kastaram Tanty, Sukhran Tanty and Kaidram Tanty enhanced and encouraged the Charkha and Khadi Movement, initiated by Nrusingha Guru and upheld the honour of the district.

In the beginning of the year 1928, the political atmosphere of India was charged with feelings of resentments against Government over the appointment of Simon Commission. The boycott of that Commission was pre-occupation of the country. On 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1928 the statutory Commission landed a Bombay. An all India Hartal was observed on the day of their arrival. In Madras, the attitude of the crowd was considered threatening at the High Court and in the end

the police opened firing injuring a number of people of whom one fell dead on the spot and two died later. In Calcutta also there was conflict between the students and police. In Delhi, the first place to be visited, the landing of the Commission was marked by hostile demonstration. The success of the boycott of the Simon commission induced the Government to try methods of coercion and terrorism. In Lahore a vast gathering of people headed by Lala Lajpat Rai was assaulted by policemen, Lucknow experienced several wanton and unprovoked police charges an unarmed and peaceful gathering on the occasion of the commission.

In Patna, a mammoth gathering of fifty thousand people gathered to make a hostile demonstration against the commission on the arrival to the city while there were but a few hundred people who waited to give a welcome.

Eleven delegates from Orissa had gone to Patna to meet the Commission. They were condemned everywhere in Orissa. On 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1928 a meeting was held at Sambalpur being presided by Laxminarayan Mishra. The public of Sambalpur were agitated against the measures taken by the Government in Lahore, Lucknow and passed resolutions condemning the attitude of the Government. Resolution was also passed condemning those who went to Patna to meet the Commission.

The major events of the year 1928 consist of marches of the Simon Commission, the sitting of all Parties Conference and the movement of Bardoli. In accordance with the resolution of the Congress and all India parties conference was convened at Delhi in February and March 1928 and it was agreed between the Congress and other organization present that the question of constitution would be discussed on the basis of full responsible Government. The second question was that of communal relation and proportion. Accordingly a committee with Motilal Nehru as President was appointed to draft a constitution before 1<sup>st</sup> July 1928. The No-tax campaign was organized at Bardoli for the purpose of obtaining redress of an agrarian grievance. Ballavbhai Patel took up the cause and organized the movement. Ultimately the government had to give way.

With these developments in 1928, the Charkha and Khadi movement, started so vigorously in 1922, could come to a stand-still and the people lacked initiative in it. But Sambalpur still continued the spirit and the Khadi movement gained a firm ground. In 1928, the "Agharias" championed the cause of spinning the Charkha and the Khadi centers like Bargarh, Remanda, Barpali, Jharsuguda and Talpatia still attracted the leaders from outside. Acharya Prafulla Chandra Sen, the noted scientist from Bengal visited Sambalpur on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1928.

He though a Scientist, could visualize the improvement of the country through Khadi and Charkha. He visited the Khadi centers of Sambalpur and encouraged the people in the move. He was immensely pleased and satisfied to see the progress of the Khadi in Sambalpur in a time where most of the people of other places lost interest in it.

Shyam Sundar Chakravarti, the noted editor of the *Servant of Bengal* visited Sambalpur on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1928 in connection with the spread of Khadi. A meeting under the presidentship of Chandra Sekhar Behera was held in the evening. Shyam Sundar Chakravarti while addressing the people, emphasized on wearing the Khaddar and to boycott the foreign goods. He further advised to put on Khaddar, to spin Charkha and to attain Swaraj through intense and selfless efforts.

Mahatma Gandhi visited Sambalpur on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1928. He was accompanied by Kasturba Gandhi and Devdas Gandhi. Gandhiji being the enthusiastic about Khadi and Charkha visited Swadeshi Bastralaya of Dayasagar Bohidar at Mohantypara. He was quite impressed with the activities of the Swadeshi Bastralaya and encouraged the people for more efforts in the field of Khadi and Charkha. Gandhiji explained the people in a mass meeting organized in his honour about the utility of Khadi. Charkha alone would help the people in

eradicating the poverty. He requested to open more and more Khadi centers and to support the cause with all spirit. The people in a short time, donated a sum of Rs.1750/- for the cause of Khadi and Charkha. Nityananda Behera son of Chandra Sekhar Behera donating his gold ring. It was very much appreciated by Gandhiji.

Gandhiji also addressed women folk in a separate meeting and reminded them of responsibility they owed to spinning the Charkha. The women folk were very much encouraged and promised to spin everyday. They also donated for the Khadi movement. The two daughters of Chandra Sekhar Behera initiated and donated their goldrings. Gandhiji appreciated the spirit very much.

The Khadi and Charkha movement in Sambalpur region came to stand-still after 1930. Nrusingha Guru because of his preoccupation for the cause of Anti-untouchability movement, could not devote much time for the purpose. Possibly it could not suit to his suitability. Though the leaders like Laxminarayan Mishra, Dayananda Satpathy and Chamure Behera of Panimura had their efforts for augmenting the cause of Charkha and Khadi movements they were sporadic in nature. Further the British Government put a number of restrictions and created problem to suppress the handloom activities in India.

There intention was to market mill made cloths manufactured in their country in India. At this time when the Charkha and Khadi movement was on the verge of suffering a set back Late Padmasree Krutartha Acharya came to rescue of the poor weavers of Sambalpur region and in order to protect their skill and interest and to preserve, improve and propagate the traditional Tie and Dye handloom fabrics, he started a private entrepreneurship of his own in 1930 in the name of Sambalpuri Bastralaya. Later, in order to improve the socio-economic condition of the weavers of this area he formed a co-operative society in the name and style of "Sambalpuri Bastralaya handloom Co-operative society Ltd.". After the Sambalpuri Bastralaya came to existence steps were taken for opening production centres in the weaving populated area and bringing them into co-operative fold. Needless to say, the Sambalpuri Bastralaya could create new markets not only in India but also in foreign countries. Non can deny this contribution of late Krutartha Acharya to this industry particularly in Western Orissa.

### ii. *The Swadeshi*

"Swadsehi" means "once own country". The spirit of Swadeshi, restricts us to the service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote. It is a goal to be realized steadily. Nrusingha Guru took it as a religious discipline to be accepted in disregard to the physical discomfort. This he considered essential for the home industry. But he was

not a narrow minded Swadeshi. Any article is Swadeshi if it sub serves the interest of the million, even though the capital and talent are foreign but undet effective Indian control.

### iii. *Social reconstruction*

Nrusingha Guru attributed the decline of Indian society to the failure of its social institution. Their disorganization caused the social disruption. The existing social order, he took to be unsurvivable. Its worse aspect, according to Nrusingha Guru is its dedpendence on the Government. In the reconstructed society he wished not the state but the society to be centre of power. To make this possible, he wished every individual to be strong in his own place. He always had the efforts to teach the down trodden and wanted the despised "to be strong and to protect themselves". He used to suggest the workers to take charge of some village and to organize it. Being a farmer he wished the farmer to be strong.

Nrusingha Guru's social reconstruction programme included the destruction of social barriers. Along with it should be undertaken the construction work in the midst of masses. According to him, society must have spiritual ideal to follow for the "true happiness" of all. The social system, according to him depended upon mutual obligation upon ethical ideals accepted by all people. He wanted to revitalize the society and



restore physical and intellectual opportunities to those who have been deprived of it.

In this context his response to learning was remarkable. Having realised the glory of "Vidya" he wished to make it available for all. Women, he felt, must be given education. He used to deplore the criminal indifference of parents who keep their daughters utterly ignorant and illiterate "Education of Character", he opined, "is essential for the elimination of dowry". His contribution to the cause of women education is manifested by his efforts towards the establishment of 'Sambalpur Women's College.' "Women must be complement of men" - he viewed.

## Chapter – V

### ANTI-UNTOUCHABILITY MOVEMENT

Observances of untouchability and adherence to it, pained Gandhiji most. It was to him the "miserable, enslaving sprit". A "sin against God and man and is, therefore, like a poison, slowly eating into the very vitals of Hinduism. The Shastras do not sanction it. It has come to the society, when it must have been at the lowest ebb. It has since arrested the growth of the bulk of community. He was convinced that once untouchability is driven out of Hindu heart, Hinduism can well deliver its definite message for the world. With this intention he launched the untouchability campaign. The untouchable's he felt, were friendless, helpless and needing God's protection. Since God is described by all religions as the "Friend of friendless, Help of the helpless, and Protector of the weak" they are in true sense the "Harijans", the men of God.

All round improvement of Harijans is essential. Gandhiji wanted temples to be thrown open to them. They should be accepted as self respecting citizens. They must be given Sajuare deal as human beings. Gandhiji was confident that untouchability shall have to go. He wanted its removal in every sense, before the time, spirit compelled to do things against our will". It will be no credit to the caste Hindus, if the untouchability is removed when "Harijans come into their own".

Gandhiji through the National Congress, expressed desire for a social order based upon equality of man and man, and of man and woman. Man and woman except as had been made by nature and can be seen with human eye', are co-equal. He felt convinced that depending on the sacrifice and enlightenment of the women the society would be ethical, nationalist, and self-reliant. It would be, with the removal of untouchability, free from communal bitterness, religious recrimination and absurdities that the formal religions often impose on the innocent and the ignorant. It visualizes the full growth of individual; without one losing sense of contentment, and the capacity of growth.

Nrusingha Guru one of the leading light in the annals of freedom fighters of Sambalpur worked for the down-trodden people of Sambalpur district. In order to put more life in the National Movement to he put relentless efforts through his Anti-Untouchability Movement to carry the Gandhian creed of social order to the interior of the district. Nrusingha Guru was noted for his fearlessness, self-sacrifices and self-respect. His stature in the freedom movement of Sambalpur remains intact. His contribution to the National Movement was multi-dimensional. Being a true Gandhian, he was confident that untouchability shall have to go. He desired its removal in every sense.

It was through the efforts of Chandra Sekhar Behera and Nrusingha Guru that a committee for the removal of untouchability was established at Sambalpur in the early part of 1929. Chandra Sekhar Behera was the pioneer in this issue. Long before the Non Co-operation Movement he had given all facilities to the Harijans for using the water from his well. He further made efforts to induce the Brahmins to go to the fields for plaguing it personally. On 7<sup>th</sup> February 1929, Nrusingha Guru organized a public meeting in the town hall and the Congress Creed was unanimously accepted. He at the invitation of Gopabandhu Chaudhury, attended the provincial conference at Cuttack and accepted the responsibility to organize it at the district level. In course of time, it become known as "Harijan Sevaka Sangha" and so began the movement for removing untouchability. Sundhansu Sekhar Gupta, Benimandhav Supkar, Prahallad Rai Lath, Bodhram Dube were active leaders to champion ? the movement in Sambalpur.

Nrusingha Guru showed a new spirit in attracting many members of the depressed class into the fold of Khadi and Charkha movement then organized throughout the country. He opened a centre in Sandasingha of Sason. About Six hundred "Gandas" (Harijans) enrolled themselves as congress members and joined the organization with great enthusiasm. A 'Ganda' named Kastaram Tanti took very active part in organizing Khadi

and Charkha in the rural area. He through Nrusingha Guru came in contact with all leading workers of the Congress in the district. He moved in the rural villages of the district and propagated the message of the Congress among the Gandas (Harijans) who constituted the bulk of depressed class in the district.

The Anti-Untouchability Movement, under the leadership of Nrusingha Guru assumed a new dimension towards the end of 1932. A "district Anti-Untouchability Committee" was formed in a public meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1932 at Fraser Club, Sambalpur. The District Committee consisted of twenty one members. A Sadar Committee of the organization was also formed with fifteen members as its members. Anti-Untouchability meeting was held at Balibandha of the town on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1932 being presided over by Chandra Sekhar Behera. A working Committee of the organization consists of six members was formed in the said meeting. In a meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1932 at Sambalpur a resolution requesting Mahant of Gurubayur Temple of Madras Presidency to open the doors of the temple to the depressed classes was passed. A similar resolution was passed to admit the untouchables into the temples of Sambalpur district.

Laxminarayan Sahu of Cuttack a member of the "Servants of the India Society", toured round the district of

Sambalpur during the 1<sup>st</sup> Week of April, 1933. He intended to hold Anti-Untouchability meeting in the educational institution and sought the permission of the authorities for the same. Permission was refused to him by the authorities for holding Anti-Untouchability meeting in school as they suspected that he might deal with the Congress propoganda by restoring to such means. Ultimately, the meeting was held at the Fraser Club where the members took vow to campaign for the removal of untouchability.

The Anti-Untouchability Movement in the district was viewed by the Government authorities with suspicion and disfavour as they thought that it was a kindred organization of the Congress and that the Congress workers employed it as a suitable medium through which the activities could be pushed. In spite of the adverse attitude of the authorities towards the movements, the workers continued the campaign of Anti-Untouchability with zeal and earnestness. Meetings were organized throughout the district and vigorous propagandas were made for the removal of untouchability. The Hindus were requested to discard untouchability and the Harijans called upon to give up drinking and to wear Khaddar.

During his stay at Sambalpur in April, 1933, Laxminarayan Sahu took very active part in the reformatory

programme of the movement in the district. The movement received the wide support of the mass in general excepting a few conservatives who were under the impression that Anti-Untouchability would result in corruption and degradation of Hindu society. But the local authorities looked down upon the movement with a hostile attitude as they thought it to be detrimental to the Government interest. This is evident from a letter written by the Deputy Commissioner, Orissa Divn. On 28<sup>th</sup> April, 1933, dwelling on the activities of Laxminarayan Sahu and their policy with regard to the movement.

However, the Anti-Untouchability Movement gained a wider field. On 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1933 the Harijan Day was observed. The following programme was chalked out by the workers of the Anti-Untouchability committee for the celebration of the day in the district. :

- I. Collection of funds for the Harijan Welfare
- II. Cleaning the Harijan Quarters
- III. Bathing the children of the Harijans and giving them gifts.
- IV. Mixed procession of kirtans
- V. Holding public meetings
- VI. Opening either a well or a temple on that day.

Further, a number of meetings were held in the town during the period in connection with the Harijan activities. The champions of the cause were Nrusingha Guru, Ghanayan Panigrahi, Sudhansu Sekhar Gupta, Artatrana Pujhari, and Jagannath Mishra. They through different meetings called upon the people to discard untouchability. Leaflets were distributed among the public preaching in favour of Anti-Untouchability. Kirtan parties were taken out in the mornings and afternoons in which the Harijans participated in large numbers. A night school was opened in the village Phatapali to give elementary education to the Harijans. Similar schools were established in other parts of the district for education and enlightenment of the untouchables. Educated men were invited to impart teaching and instructions to Harijan boys and adults. Wells under the District Council were allowed to be used by such untouchables. Amritlal V. Thakkar visited Sambalpur during the period. He went round the Harijan Bustees and was satisfied with the activities there.

The attitude of the Government, however, remained hostile to such activities. The authorities took all possible measures to discourage and hamper the cause of the Anti-Untouchability in the district. They warned the workers to refrain from such activities and kept a strict watch on the growth and spread of the organization. They also encouraged the

Gountias of the village to excommunicate the Hindus who would show sympathy for or participate in the movement of Anti-Untouchability. But inspite of the antagonism of the authorities, the movement gained strength and was widely supported by the people, in general.

The Anti-Untouchability Movement spearheaded by Nrusingha Guru could pave the ground for individual – Satyagraha in Sambalpur from 1<sup>st</sup> August 1933. The individual ‘Satyagraha Movement’ in its new spirit was started with all earnestness by the Congress in Sambalpur. Bhagirathi Patanaik, the prominent congressman from Barpali, who was released from Patna camp jail on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1933 took active part in such activities and the movement gained a new strength being supported and enhanced by Nrusingha Guru. On 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 1933 Bhagirathi Pattanaik along with his son Prafulla Pattanaik and wife Jambubati Devi picketed the foreign cloth store and excise shop of the Marwaripara of Bargarh. The husband, wife and son were arrested and were sentenced.

In accordance with the decision to devote himself to the Harijans cause, Gandhiji commenced a Harijan tour in the country in November 1933. He covered in about ten months, every province of India and each day of those months was a day of intensive study of the problem of untouchability and the best method of solving it.

The people of Sambalpur expected Gandhiji during the 1<sup>st</sup> half of 1934. On 21<sup>st</sup> February, 1934 a meeting was held under the chairmanship of Chandra Sekhar Behera where a Reception Committee was formed in view of the forthcoming visit of Gandhiji. All classes of people joined hands and worked together to accord a great ovation to the father of the Indian Nation. They appealed to the people to enlist themselves as the member of the Reception Committee and to contribute subscription. People in general were enthusiastic over the prospect visit of Gandhiji.

Gandhiji along with Laxminarayan Sahu and Raj Krushna Bose reached Jharsuguda at 5 A.M. on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1934. He was received by the people with cheers. Tulsi, the Harijan lady (mother of Bihari Ram, the Harijan worker) garlanded him. Gandhiji being overwhelmed addressed her “O, Harijan Mata. It was a touching sight. A meeting was held at Jharsuguda where Gandhiji addressed the people and emphasized the need to remove untouchability from the society. An amount of Rs. 405/- was collected for the welfare of the Harijans. Gandhiji reached Sambalpur at 9 A.M. and stayed with Dr. Ramachandra Mishra. He was given a warm reception by the people. Sudhansu Sekhar Gupta with his wife garlanded him. Immediately, he expressed his wish to visit the Harijans Bustee. He along with Benimadab Supkar, Nrusingha Guru and Amritlal V. Thakkar

visited the Harijan Bustee at Thelkopara. He was pleased at the neatness of Bustee and encouraged the Harijans for further improvements. He was given a present of Rs. 60/- by the Harijans. On his way back he visited the leper colony and wrote in his inspection role.

“I am glad to be able to visit this deserving institute”

In the noon, a few conservatives like Ragnath Mishra, Godadhar Mishra and Krushna Guru argued with Gandhiji against Anti-Untouchability movement. Ultimately they were convinced about the merits of the movement and returned. At 5 P.M. a mammoth meeting was held in the Mahanadi bed near Balunkeswar Ghat. Gandhiji was presented with a citation written by Bhagirathi Mishra, the president of the meeting. Gandhiji then delivered his speech and explained to the people in clear terms that the welfare of the state lies in the welfare of the Harijans. At the end of the meeting an amount of Rs. 535/- was collected and donated to the Harijan welfare fund. Then Gandhiji proceeded towards Bamur on his way to Angul with Girija Busan Datt who came all the way to take Gandhiji with him.

Janardan Supakar donated his house for the Harijans in honour of the visit of Gandhiji and that was after a little

remodeling converted into a Harijan Hostel with three Harijan boarders in the beginning. Nrusingha Guru was the care taker until his arrest in 1942. Amritlal V. Thakkar, President of All India Harijans Sevaka Sangha, N.R. Mallani, the Secretary and Babajiram Das from Gorakhpur were in constant touch with the hostel. Besides Acharya Harihara Das, president of provincial Harijan Sangha, Nandakishore Das and Pandit Lingaraj Mishra used to visit occasionally and stayed in the hostel. Sukanta Rao, the Headmaster of Zilla School donated Rs. 5/- for encouraging the boarders, R.S. Bale, the Deputy Commissioner also visited the hostel and later on sent Rs. 10/- for the welfare of the boarders. Shyam Chandra Tripathy, the then Director, Public Instruction, granted a sum of Rs. 300/- annually and thus the hostel became an embodiment of Anti-untouchability Movement. Soon the number of the boarders increased to fifteen.

The Anti-Untouchability Movement aimed at cleaning the Harijan Bustee, recruiting Harijans boys for the school, digging wells, establishing schools and providing Harijans with various amenities. The All India Harijans Day was observed in Sambalpur on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1934. The following resolutions were passed in the meeting that held on the day to celebrate 'All India Harijans Day'.

- i. The meeting recorded a vote of thanks to Gandhiji for dedicating his life for the upliftment of the Harijans.
- ii. The meeting resolved that no body should be regarded as contemptible by reason of birth and that all untouchables should have equal rights and privileges in public schools and that such schools should have legal sanction sooner or later.
- iii. It was agreed that every leader of Hindu Community should strive by every possible legitimate and peaceful means for removing the social disabilities imposed on the Harijans.

Nanda Kishore Das of Balasore, Secretary of Provincial Harijan Sangha visited Sambalpur on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1934. A Harijan meeting was held on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1934 at the house of Chandra Sekhar Behera. A working committee consisting of seven member was formed in the meeting. The following people were elected as members of Provincial Congress Committee in the said meeting.

1. Chandra Sekhar Behera
2. Nrusingha Guru
3. Ambika Madhav Patnaik
4. Raghabji Josi

5. Nagarmal Kedia
6. Mahabir Sing
7. Devi Hazarbhai Patel

Nanda Kishore Das, Secretary, Provincial Harijan Sangha being convinced by the argument and the work of Nrusingha Guru for the Movement sanctioned a sum Rs.728/- for the upliftment of the Harijans in Sambalpur district. The fund was utilized for the improvement of the Harijans in the social and educational sphere. It was with the force of Nrusingha Guru that Kastaram Ganda, the Harijan Congressite accompanied him to attend the Congress at Bombay on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1934.

The work for the welfares and upliftment of the Harijans taken up Nrusingha Guru gained momentum. The Anti-Untouchability Movement was now carried on by the Congress workers along with other Congress activities. Laxminarayan Mishra reached Sambalpur on 13<sup>th</sup> December 1934 after being released from Hazaribag jail where he had undergone two years of imprisonment. The activities of Nrusingha Guru through the Anti-Untouchability Movement moved him. He along with the Congress activities took up the cause and served the Harijans to the best of his abilities. He laid the foundation stone of a Harijan Home at the village

Panchpara under Jharsuguda police station. The work for the welfare and upliftment of the Harijans was carried on by the Congress workers along with their other Congress activities. It was with the earnest efforts of Nrusingha Guru a night school for the Harijans was started at Sambalpur. Wells were excavated for the use of Harijans in the village of Panchapara. The conservative Hindus, being convinced by Nrusingha Guru's arguments also allowed the Harijans to use the water of their well. Chandra Sekhar Behera, the pioneer in this regard, acclaimed the efforts of Nrusingha Guru who with all justified reasons can be reckoned as the replica of Gandhiji. Chandra Sekhar Behera, the prominent Congress leader and the staunch supporter of Anti-Untouchability Movement passed away on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1936. A condolence meeting was held at Balibandha on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1936 to mourn the death of Chandra Sekhar Behera and the people were advised to follow his example by abstaining from drink and doing welfare work for the Harijans.

Laxminarayan Mishra's Youth Conference aiming to lay the grievances of the district before the Government assumed a new vigour when it, at the efforts of Nrusingha Guru took up the activities of Anti-Untouchability Movement. It became known as "Yuvak Sammilani from 17<sup>th</sup> April 1936 and Nrusingha Guru, the Secretary of Harijan Sangha, Sambalpur

passed the following resolutions :-

- i. Formation of youth conference for raising the status of the district.
- ii. Starting an Oriyas newspaper.
- iii. Moving the Government to make Sambalpur the capital of the new Orissa Province.
- iv. Improving the conditions of the depressed classes of Sambalpur.
- v. To move to Government to establish a college at Sambalpur.

During the third week of June, 1936 a weekly newspaper entitled 'Jagarana' was started in Sambalpur as an out come of the movement of 'Yuvaka Sammilani'. The paper was intended to be an outlet for the grievances of the people of the district against the administration of the Government Nityananda Bohidar was its declared editor and publisher.

Nrusingha Guru, now a member of the 'Yuvaka Sammilani' and the Secretary of the Harijan Sangha of the district used to stir the minds of the people in favour of Anti-Untouchability Movement through his forceful writing in Jagarana. He through his writings, could convince the people about the sufferings of the Harijan. The disadvantages suffered



by them was well advocated. Meetings were organized and the cause of the Anti-untouchability Movement was given due weightage. In the meeting held in the third week of June 1936 Nrusingha Guru reported the progress of the Harijan Movement in the district. The resolutions passed in the meeting were as follows :-

- i. The removal of untouchability amongst the people.
- ii. Harijans should be allowed to enter the temple.
- iii. Harijans should not indulge in drinking, beef-eating and gambling.
- iv. The District Council of Sambalpur be asked to excavate wells for Harijans.
- v. The Government be moved to encourage the education of the Harijans.
- vi. Government be asked to remove out the liquor system.

Laxmi Narayan Mishra and Bodhram Dubey of Sambalpur attended the opening ceremony of a Harijan temple at the village of Pandripathor on Jharsuguda police station. The national flags were hoisted with national song. Dubey addressed the people and exhorted them to take to spinning with right earnest. Nrusingha Guru drew the attention of local people to labour in spinning and boycott foreign goods. He

also advocated for the abolition of 'Bethi', 'Bhagari', and 'Rasad' and emphasized on the use of Khaddar and the removal of inter-untouchability between classes of Harijans.

The Harijans through Anti-Untouchability Movement initiated by Nrusingha Guru made vigorous efforts to refrain themselves from taking liquor and beef. They used to have 'Bhagavat' recitation. They accepted the Congress Creed and to spin in Charkha. They also took oath to give up liquor and beef.

The Harijans workers of the district under the leadership of Nrusingha Guru made vigorous efforts for the successful observance of the Harijan Nabah in the district. On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1936 a procession marched through the streets of the town and a meeting was held at Balibandha in celebration of 'Harijan Nabha'. Congress men addressed the gathering after the prayer and selected readings from Bhagbat Gita, Nrusingha Guru traced the history of the Harijans Movement in his speech and narrated the aims and activities of this movement in the district. Other speakers appealed to the public for support of the Harijan Movement.

Amritlal V. Thakkar, Acharya Harihar Das and Laxmi Narayan Sahu arrived at Sambalpur on 8<sup>th</sup> October, 1936 and

visited the Harijans localities of Sambalpur and Jharsuguda. On 9<sup>th</sup> October, 1936 a public meeting was held at Balibandha and it was addressed by the leaders and the social workers. In their speeches they stressed the importance of the upliftment of the Harijans. The speakers appealed to the audience to remove untouchability from Sambalpur district and to co-operate with the Harijan Movement. It was proposed in the meeting to move the district council and the Municipal Committee to admit Harijan pupils into their schools. Members of Marwari and Gujrati communities promised to contribute subscriptions for digging a well for the Harijans. The Gujratis were encouraged to accept the creed of the Congress and join the organization in large number.

Nrusingha Guru, a true disciple of Gandhiji was himself firmly against untouchability and spear-headed the Anti-untouchability Movement. He did not attack the Varna system and in this context he tried to draw a parallel between caste-structure and the leaves of a tree; pointing out that leaves of a tree were not of the same shape and structure. He like Gandhiji had vociferously spoken against a separate electorate.

“Those who speak of political rights of untouchable do not know India and do not know how Indian society is today constructed..... If I was the only person to resist this thing, I

will resist with my life” – this statement of Gandhiji was duly reflected in the activities of Nrusingha Guru. He never aimed at antagonizing the different sections and his approach was too cautious. He put into national consciousness a collective sense of reform and this is why he wanted a change in the hearts of the caste-Hindus. Nrusingha Guru never tired to divert attention from freedom struggle by raising the issue of untouchability; he felt that such a major social reform could not wait and went ahead of it. For him the fight against untouchability was the mission of life. No body in Sambalpur did more to remove untouchability than Nrusingha Guru.

## Chapter – VI

### JOURNALISM

Nrusingha Guru did not believe in mere political 'freedom'. The shackles of slavery with which the country had been laid low had been sacked off but he wanted the larger freedom; the freedom of soul. He wanted men to imbibe the spirit of independence. He was largely influenced by the ancient Indian political thought. This made him, the great exponent of individual freedom. The ancients had given greater importance to society than to the state; to the individuals than to the society. They were totally resentful of a system that could be the cause of injustice and of social suppression of individuals. He wanted men to be free from fear and bondage. He wished men to be free to shape their destiny. Hence he emphasized on national heritage, scientific outlook, social service and the nation building activities. This is possible according to Nrusingha Guru through Journalism.

Nrusingha Guru kept himself away from political activities and accepted Journalism as a means for augmenting the Democracy. Everybody should be under service to the community. "No one can" he emphasized "take away the blessed task of service to community - it is God given". It is all to our shame if we lose the natural right of service and throw blame on others for the discharge of our duties. Once that is realized

than the objectives of Democracy is fulfilled. Nrusingha Guru felt that it was time to renew the life" of the people, and they "learn to look after their own affairs". True freedom is possible if there exists "a perfect harmony of relationship". The habit of being self-centred need be given up. The mere satisfaction of having political rights and the manifest exercise of the same at the election is not enough and serve the real purpose. Democracy to be real, has to be relieved of the politics without ethics, government from the grip of the few and leadership from the clutches of self-indulgence. Nrusingha Guru in order to achieve this goal accepted Journalism as his profession and weapon in post independent India. His sincerity and deep insight into the society, Government project him as a front line Journalist. To him Journalism was an example of sacrifice, courage and wise judgement.

#### *A. Fundamental assumption of Journalism*

Nrusingha Guru was a man of faith. He accepted certain assumptions as fundamental to his belief and action. He drew upon these for support, sustenance and inspiration. Within his accepted frame he developed and expressed his idea, analyzed them and followed the conclusion arrived at, some ideas of these assumptions is obviously primary to the proper understanding of his thought.

News papers are often called the first rough critic, stimulator of debate on public issues and a medium of feedback. It undoubtedly plays a vital role in creating, shaping and reflecting public opinion. It is the custodian of public interest as it is the watch dog of government actions and inactions. Thus newspaper in the democratic backdrop of nation is termed as the Fourth Estate and the most powerful of all estates. In this context Journalists are looked upon in awe and admiration as the champion of the down trodden. Nrusingha Guru admits Lokamanya Tilak when he vocalized the duty of journalist in these words. "We consider it our duty to work for awakening the people and to teach them sincerity and sense of duty. We wrote not for rulers; but in order that the readers might insight own spirit and understand our own thoughts and our agonies." A Journalist according to Guru can be a social reformer, creator and a visionary but never a power hankering person. The Journalist who is able, judicious and got a deep insight into the social and political fabric can produce news in an effective manner.

A Journalist according to Nrusingha Guru could bring the actions and reactions of the Government to the society, the policy and the objectives to the public, it was considered as his reward. The people on the other hand also felt obliged as their sorrow, misery, tribulations were duly

highlighted. The reciprocation between the Journalist and the public was indispensable. As such Journalism was an example of devotion, dedication, courage and wise judgement. Needless to say, it has all along remained as the basic medium of communication, education and scholarship. In spite of all the modern amenities like telephones, radio, television and latest the computers the journalism as Nrusingha Guru thought, continues to be best bet for assimilation of knowledge. The growth and evolution of journalism, in a sense, is an outcome of man's constant endeavour to record knowledge for the posterity.

Nrusingha Guru accepted Journalism as a manifestation of man's insatiable lust to grasp more information to know the who, why, what, when and where of events happening around him. That art of disseminating information or news to the public is called journalism in present parlance, it is being practiced from time immemorial.

Journalism as accepted and adopted by Nrusingha Guru is humanity's long struggle to communicate freely with each other to dig out and interpret news and to offer intelligent opinion in the market place of ideas. It has the continuing efforts by men and woman to breakdown barriers that have been erected to prevent the flow of information and ideas upon

which public opinion is so largely dependable. Nrusingha Guru felt journalism as an art. He wanted to look upon Journalism as an art and not as an industry. Journalist are like painters and poets rather than factory workers. They really create art. Whenever a journalist writes an item of news or an article he creates a work of art. What ever may be his difficulties, what ever may be internal pains and travails he must look upon what he has produced as productive, creative art. Journalism is the result of man's century long striving and experimentation of events and objects, concerning information and knowledge.

Journalism, as felt by Guru, should be a dynamic force to mould public opinion and the attitudes of the society. Fundamentally, Journalism implies honesty, cleanness, courage, fairness and a sense of duty to the reader and community. Its first duty is to shun the temptation of a monopoly. Its primary office is the gathering news. At the peril of its soul it must see that the supply is not tainted. In no case the truth should suffer wrong. In this context a newspaper should seek what is original, distinctive, unique curious, quaint apt to be talked about without shocking good taste or lowering the general good tone and above all without impairing the confidence of the people in the truth of the story or the character of the paper for reliability and scrupulous cleanness.

A novelist or play write express their thoughts and ideas through their novels or plays. Similarly a painter gives a concrete picture of a person or a social issue through his brush and colour. But a Journalist takes the advantage of all of the above to express himself. He combines them wisely to draw the attention of readers towards him. Truly, journalism is a different kind of literature and mass media. Newspaper caters to the need of all types of people irrespective of their profession and attitude, it acts like an intoxicant making them laugh, dance and play. The people in the suburbs consider the printed words in a newspaper as law. At times a particular news acts like a life-saver. Journalism should be looked fair, unbiased and factual carrying correct information without comments or opinion. It is to dispel ignorance and to promote knowledge. If a journalist does not work as people's representative analyze with sympathy, the society and government incur an ir-repairable loss. Love for people, sincerity to his duty and inclination to truth are the essential requirements for a journalist. The language and the way of expression must have a touch of truth. If a journalist cannot properly evaluate the history of journalism, progress of civilization, the need of time, ideas of the country, dignity of the nation demands of the situation, he cannot produce news impartially. Patience, courage, sharp minded and sympathetic heart are the characteristics of the journalism : it gives the supreme importance to individuals. Hence whether an

individuals is good or bad is not merely his own concern, but really the concern of the whole community, nay of the whole world.

### *Initiation :*

Sambalpur Hitaisini, published from Deogarh (then Bamanda) from 30<sup>th</sup> May 1889 under the auspices of Nilamani Vidyaratna marked the initiation of Journalism in Western Orissa. As there was no local news paper at Sambalpur during the period, the Sambalpur Hitaisini, through their editorial column took up the cause of the Language Agitation of Sambalpur from 1895 and started commenting upon the British attitude. The editor-defined the government and supported the people. It used to make appeal to the people to come forward to take up the cause with courage and preservance. Gangadhar Meher, through his poems published in Sambalpur Hitaisini championed the cause and imbibed nationalism into the minds of the young people. As a result of the efforts of Sambalpur Hitaisini a group of young people like Dharanidhar Mishra, Balabhadra Supkar, Brajamohan Patnaik, Janardan Panda came to the forefront and were determined to fight out the case. Besides, the chiefs of Bamanda, Sonapur and Padampur took a lot of interest in the move and had the full support for the issue. Along with Sambalpur Hitaisini the language agitation of Sambalpur was also taken up by the leading newspaper of Cuttack and Balasore, for example, "Utkal Dipika" and "Sambada Valika".

Nrusingha Guru while a student of upper primary school, Saranda was acquainted with Sambalpur Hitaisini in the house of Jagadish Hota, his maternal grandfather. He though very young to go through the news, was quite impressed with news paper and was fascinated towards journalism. He could, at the initiation and suggestion of Jagadish Hota, think of coming to the people's level to serve them; to redress their grievances and to be one with them. He earned a primary knowledge about the news paper and journalism and was inclined to take up journalism as the means for augmenting the cause of the people at large. A sense of truthfulness was developed in him; he was deeply influenced by the news that were reflected in Sambalpur Hitaisini and being explained to him by his maternal grandfather with all earnestness. His interest towards the newspaper at the initial stage; the ideas and ideals of Jagadish Hota the maternal grandfather could prepare the ground for taking up journalism at the later stage, he was true to his concepts and could establish himself as a front line journalist of Sambalpur in post Independent India.

During the studentship at Patnaikpara Middle English School, Nrusingha Guru was fortunate enough to come in contact with the teachers like Purna Chandra Das, the Headmaster and Brundaban Dani, the Head Pandit of the school. Both of them, being nationalists left a deep impact with

Nrusingha Guru which moulded and regulated his life. Purna Chandra Das was the editor of the weekly 'Shakti'; he used to make powerful blasts of diatribes through brilliant language. Each issue of the weekly, contained articles on political, commercial and social matters. In doing so the editor not only established what journalism at this stage most needed, a tradition of responsible popular reporting but also provided a pervasive antidote. The weekly 'Shakti' created a sense of contemplation in the comparatively young mind of Nrusingha Guru; he could gain confidence to make enough reflection for himself. Needless to mention Purna Chandra Das held almost undisputed dominance in the world of the then journalism.

Bimbadhar Mishra was the editor of the 'Utkala Sevaka' published from the Fraser press, Sambalpur. Nrusingha Guru had the privilege to have the guardianship of Bimbadhar Mishra for sometimes. 'Utkal Sevaka' used to highlight the need for a free press. Bimbadhar Mishra could advocate for a honest journalism with sacred facts. Later on, it played a significant role in infusing a sense of nationalism in the hearts of the people during the Non Co-operation movement in Sambalpur. Nrusingha Guru now a keen observer could be moved with the personality of Bimbadhar Mishra and was encouraged morally. He felt that the press and Journalism can act as the most powerful weapons of the freedom movement

and as such utilized the same in the second phase of India's struggle for freedom. Further he realized the journalism would win freedom because it had the support of the public. He could visualize a free press related to the National movement but not yet matured enough to participate there in, but confident enough to be fit, willing and able to take over in due course. He carried the strong feeling that the newspaper is historian, reporter, analyst, communicator, salesman and advocate.

Krushna Chandra Sengupta, the superintendent of the hostel where Nrusingha Guru was a boarder was a convinced socialist. Being the disciple of Ramkrushna Paramahansa, he was the embodiment of independence. He did not believe in formal religion; secularism was a way of life to him. He stood for a progressive society, a society based on national culture, applied idealism, scientific spirit and rationalism. All these traits were well reflected in 'Udbodhana' a periodical published by Ramakrushna Mission. Krushna Chandra Sengupta used to circulate the periodical among the hosteliars who were deeply moved by the creed carried by Ramakrushna mission. Nrusingha Guru accepted the periodical as a friend to guide him for defining the right to exist, and voice the opinion of the Indian people. Swaraj the mouth piece of Bal Gangadhar Tilak could express interestingly the strength, conflicts of the Indian journalism during the period and the Indian press as a whole

was groping towards an understanding of the new role in Independent India. Besides, The young India, by Gandhiji was a pathfinder for Nrusingha\*Guru during the Non Co-operation Movement. Along with these Anand Bazar Patrika, Basumati and Hindusthan Standard from Calcutta, Search Light from Patna could provide him enough scope and opportunity to get himself established as an journalist.

Nrusingha Guru along with other students used to accompany Nilakantha Das, the Headmaster of the National School, Sambalpur in his tours to neighbouring villages for social services like helping the destitute, nursing the people suffering from cholera. The students had keen interest for such social services in the vicinity of Sambalpur. For augmenting the Congress creed the necessity of a paper of its own was very much felt by the National school. Besides the two regular weekly Utkala Sevaka and Sadhana another weekly, "Seva" was published from the Mishra Press of Sambalpur from 18<sup>th</sup> May, 1921. Nilakantha Das was the editor. Nrusingha Guru being associated with the press, could contact with remote place through this paper. This was the humble beginning of the life as a journalist. Though he was young but was driven by unflagging zeal inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. He had to go a long way before he could be accepted and taken as a journalist of the area. He used to volunteer himself occasionally in providing the day to day

developments of the Non Co-operation Movement, the activities of the Congress in Sambalpur to 'Samaja' the only established newspaper during the period, but started providing regularly during the period of Salt Satyagraha. The long cherished desire was accomplished in 1932 when he was given recognition formally as the representative of the Samaja in Sambalpur. The labour and sincerity were duly rewarded and Lingaraj Mishra and Radhanath Rath, the editor of the Samaj and the manager of Satyabadi Press respectively were hailed for the decision.

In July 1937 Bodhram Dubey, the elected Congress candidate of Sambalpur was taken in as a member of the cabinet of Orissa Government which was widely acclaimed with cheers by people of the district. He was quite impressed with the cheers by people of the district. He was quite impressed with the maturing assertive tendency and significant professional developments such as news services, the pooling of arrangement and the expanded coverage of the news by Nrusingha Guru and it was at his recommendation Nrusingha Guru was appointed as the news reporter of the Associated Press of India. N.R. Swamy, the manager, Associated Press of India Cuttack did a commendable job by appointing him while journalism was at its infancy. Nrusingha Guru also was the editor of the weekly 'Jagarana' published from Sambalpur at the initiation of



Laxminarayan Mishra. Associated press of India was known as Press Trust of India in post independent India. Nrusingha was associated with the firm for about two decades and the journalism during the period catered the need of the people of the region. He was a friend of the Indian press and defended its right to exist and voice the opinion of the people.

### *C. As Journalist.*

The name of Nrusingha Guru is remembered not only as a social reformer, saint and a gentle guide to the down trodden but also as a resurgent journalist. The frail yet firm Nrusingha Guru spearheaded journalism displaying his rare capacity to reflect his lofty ideals in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds. With courage in his convictions he spoke his mind freely and frankly on subjects ranging from spirituality to freedom movement from unfiltered democratic norms to social reformers from the pleasure of farming to the principle of underlaying a simple Spartan diet. Journalism was the best weapon – he gave due prominence to India's cultural heritage. His well meaning rebukes were taken in good spirit and he gave it all in full measures making no distinction between the people on the top or at the bottom. Behind a frail exterior and extremely soft heart, Nrusingha Guru had a will power as strong as steel. After the dawn of independence no lust of power could attract him throughout his life. He kept himself engaged in the field

of journalism there by giving supreme importance to individualism.

Nrusingha Guru initiated his career as journalist since 1932, when he assumed the charge as the district representative of the daily Samaja, the leading newspaper of the state. The story of journalism hence forth became a saga of adventure, patriotism, sacrifice and dedication to noble profession. It was an exciting tale of the pen fighting along with the sword of Ahimsa and non-violence shoulder to shoulder of young and old journalist. It was the golden period for him when he was hard pressed to make both ends meet but was driven by undoubted energy and inspired by Mahatma to heroic deeds and sacrifice heedless of pain and suffering they brought out. He was associated with the Samaja even in the post independent India till he breathed his last. He made the newspaper the mirror of the people. He manifested at its keenest and most persistent, the sprit of enquiry and criticism. And he imparted to the journalism the quality of leadership. The bureaucracy wanted by deporting him, to make him a warning to others but it could not port out the spark he had kindled. Nrusingha Guru was on those journalist who was born rather than made.

Nrusingha Guru's sincerity and deep insight into the society projected him as a frontline journalist. His collection

and selection of news was outstanding. The news were credible fair and accurate and unbiased. He as a news reporter could produce news in a pleasant way. He could criticize in a wonderful and razor sharp language with a detail account of his experience. He was never a power-hankering person. Nrusingha Guru used to communicate effectively with the readers. He used to collect a detailed knowledge about the history of the topic before it was finally sent to the newspaper. Besides, a command of the vocabulary and the right expression were basic ground of the topic he used to despatch. It is for this reason he maintained the necessary literature, particularly the information on the different subjects before he could write on his own. He had not only on his finger tip all the facts and figures but also a complete analysis of such data. He was able to focus the human value of new event concerning the subject.

As a news reporter, simplicity was preferred by Nrusingha Guru. The news as he reported, were simple, direct and incisive. The emphasis was on clarity rather than circumlocution. In all news, he made sure that the meaning of everything was crystal clear without any ambiguity. Absolute clarity was the essential. The news, according to him, must be understandable and forceful. He said "imitation is of no real value in journalism; every journalist has to develop his individually".

Nrusingha Guru, as a successful journalist had a sound foundation of general knowledge and commonsense. He carried on his mind or on him the necessary reference material to check up facts and figures as he came across them before giving his reports. His intention was always to safeguard the reputation of the 'Samaja' and avoid irresponsibility of error. He had the capacity to correct mistakes in matters of facts and the accidental slips in matters of taste and property of public men. The news he reported carried the test of his good sense – the certainty of accuracy. He was cautious that public men and women from whom he used to collect information are liable to error. He developed an observant eye and a questioning mind – the two assets important to a journalist.

The main characteristic of Nrusingha Guru as a journalist was that he was in close contact with the society. The inspiration he derived from his social contacts, the fire he got from his sense of social being and his ambition to be an active participant in social life – all these put life to his journalism. It is a fact that a successful journalist has not only to be one who has the basic talent but also the desire and the chance to make the best of it. As such, Nrusingha Guru had a consistent and persistent endeavour to acquire professional efficiency. He was never in favour of a conversational approach because he knew that material which is written for the eye is altogether wrong for the ear.

Nrusingha Guru played a key role in making the Samaj widespread in Western Orissa. Needless to say the paper was the mouthpiece of Congress Movement of Orissa. Initially, he used to volunteer himself occasionally in providing the day today development of the Non Co-operation movement, the activities of the Congress in Sambalpur to 'The Samaj' the only established newspaper during the period. In 1932 he became the district representative. He put on the efforts for the wide circulation of the paper. He, himself used to go to every door for its distribution. His involvement and sense of duty could attract the people to the fold of his journalism and he became synonymous with The Samaja. Besides, the collection and selection of the news, printings, objectives and editing became outstanding ; the subscribers were increased in a very short period. The Samaja could stand out as a competent daily for its leading role in the National Movement. Journalism with Nrusingha Guru as the representative of the Samaja ushered into a new phase in the Western Orissa.

As it has been mentioned, Nrusingha Guru developed an observant eye and a questioning mind. He as far as possible, used to visit the place and with personal vision and experience prepared the authentic news-report. The best example of personal observation and supervision can be cited here. During the construction period of the Hirakud Dam there

occurred an accident causing 10 persons dead and hundred and three labourers injured. On the information, Nrusingha Guru rushed to the spot by his cycle as there was no means during the period available to him. He could go for a spot verification. Subsequently he went to the hospital and a detail first hand report about the occurrence was despatched to Mr. N.R. Swamy, Manager, Associated Press of India, Cuttack. In the same night it was relayed from Akasvani, Delhi.

On another occasion, Surya Kumari Pujari, Land Acquisition Officer, Hirakud, Shyam Sunder Padhi, the then Deputy Superintendent of Police, because of a small accident while crossing the river Ib by a launch had to spend the night on a rock-bed of the river and were rescued in the morning. Immediately after a spot enquiry, Nrusingha Guru was able to transmit the news report for which he was profusely acclaimed and was rewarded by PTI later on. Subsequently on some occasion, the tone and temper of the news published could not please the authorities and because of the conspicuous silence of Nrusingha Guru, he was asked to tender his resignation.

Nrusingha Guru was a picture of courtsey, love, truth and affection. He believed in good conduct and not in sophisticated living. He during his lifetime looked upon himself as the humblest man. His outstanding success and popularity

are attributed to his immaculate simplicity and sincerity. His simplicity was inherent and sincerity innate. He did not have to strive to be simple. He put on a white "dhoti" made of hand spun yarn. A small 'chaddar' on the body and a 'Khadi bag' on the shoulder were his adoration; never used shoe or chappal nor he was acquainted with any head dress or umbrella. He never touched sugar in his lifetime. Being a farmer beaten rice and molasses, fresh and direct from the field were his true companion during the journey. He never attended any party or dinner. He was perfect vegetarian and teetotaler, he was an unsurpassable embodiment of simple living and high thinking - a true Gandhian in spirit and action. His personality and the principle does not only attract us but also bind us and evoke a sentiment of devotion.

Adversity is the touchstone in which the character of a man is tested. Such a situation as experienced and faced by Nrusingha Guru is quoted here.

Radhanath Rath, the care-taker of the Samaja was a Minister then in the Government of Orissa. In an occasion, Nrusingha Guru wanted to meet Radhanath Rath in his office at Bhubaneswar. Nrusingha Guru with all his simplicity entered the office after due permission. Radhanath Rath was stunned at the attire of a man who was then the district representative of

the Samaja. He was terribly annoyed taking the reputation and prestige of the firm into consideration. But Nrusingha Guru remained firm and was prepared to tender resignation. Ultimately Radhanath Rath had to submit and yielded to the determination of Nrusingha Guru who believed that work was the only element. Similarly on another occasion Nrusingha Guru, while at Cuttack returned late to the Samaja office where he used to stay. The office was closed and there was no information with the watchman who was completely ignorant of Nrusingha Guru. As a result, he with all serenity decided to spend the whole night on the bench in a park, but never liked to disturb any body there in the office. But the suffering came to a climax when the police on the night patrolling put him in the lock-up suspecting him as a stray person. It was in the morning only with ring from him to Samaja office, he was rescued. The Samaja office became apologetic and everything was amicable.

#### *Another Situation*

It was the last part of 1983. Sri B. N. Pandey, then Governor of Orissa had an occasion to address the press conference at Asoka Nivas, Burla. Nrusingha Guru the resurgent journalist and the freedom fighter was also present on the occasion. Because of a serious and painful ailment in the finger he was shirking the forefront. Nothing, except a mutual affinity as the freedom fighters, was common between the two. A

whispering voice "New Delhi" and '1942' from some where raised the eye brows of the persons present there. Nursingha Guru couldnot escape the notice of Sri B. N. Pandey. He, ignoring the protocol, rushed to him and paid his tributes by hugging him. Nrusingha Guru, the picture of courtesy, love, truth and as a freedom fighter makes a fine picture of his own nobility.

Nrusingha Guru was also the agent for the Samaja. He used to make intensive tour in his bicycle to the nooks and corner of the district. He sent the packets through the sub-agents to interiors of the district. He also appointed "Hawker" and in case of anybody's absence, personally distributed to the subscribers. Needless to say, Samaja was wide spread, people were involved and Samaja and Nrusingha Guru become synonymous with each other. A new phase in Journalism was ushered. Nrusingha Guru had the credit to become the pioneer in journalism. He never stipped to yellow journalism and black mailing. His reporting was always based on short, sharp and to the point and often his objectivity touched the fringes of bitter criticism. In his journalistic writing he always endeavoured to get to the heart the matter and thoroughly understood it before reporting on it. Fearlessness was his quality and for that reason people had to submit before him.

In the absence of a house at Sambalpur, Nrusingha Guru had to cover a distance of thirty kilometers daily by his

bicycle from Gurupali to Sambalpur and back. He was paid Rs. 5/- per month and subsequently in course of time it reached to the stage of Rs. 250/-. He did not take the task of journalism as his profession; rather it was a means to bring awareness among the people. In the long run his son, grandson were put in the field of Journalism and they sustained it. Gradually Tarakanta Guru the son of Nrusingha Guru was appointed as the News Reporter and with all sincerity he performed his duty for long ten years. Then for the reason unknown to him he was replaced by some body else - a set back for the first time in the life of Nrusingha Guru as a journalist. Gradually, because of illness, Nrusingha Guru was loosing his credibility, he was not able to with stand the physical hazards any more and succumbed to the change of political scenario of Orissa. But it is a fact that the Samaja with Nrusingha Guru as the Journalist, advanced through ups and down, disaster and distress also with delight and glee. Nrusingha Guru's nationalistic feelings, sharpness of language, delightful way of expression, pure and sincere attitude made the people spell bound. People analyzed, observed, followed and acclaimed Nrusingha Guru till his last day. No body in Sambalpur in the field of Journalism did more than Nrusingha Guru.

Towards the last part of his life, Nrusingha Guru was very critical of the political set-up of Orissa. He repeatedly regretted about the prevailing situation where journalism is

undermined. The dedication self-less journalism keeping oneself above narrow mindedness and following a polished behaviour and human pity is no more seen. Nationalistic values, dedicated ideology is decaying day by day. The distinction between life and livelihood has vanished and have fallen into one stream. As a result the journalist has become self-centred and has been involved in modern politics and new economic system. The securities, calmness, judgment and frankness in expression are almost on the verge of extinction, distorted and dirty. He is not able to write and produce news in its real form because of the infiltration of western culture on the cultural set-up of the country. He is ever changing in all respect. He has become a slave to materialistic pursuit and is engaged in momentary gain, accumulation of wealth and luxury. As a result, he is not able to fend for himself. The power-hankering leaders in this democracy oriented society, are trying to purchase the honesty and loyalty of the journalists and project themselves as social reformers and dedicated workers. They intend to advertise their names through the newspaper. They try to bring a few leading papers to their support to clean cheat the public and capture power. Therefore they offer handsome money and comforts to the reporters. As a result journalism has become an opportunity for accumulating wealth and an opportunity to be fool the public.

Nrusingha Guru, though served the Samaja till his last day, could not adjust the present trend and slowly went into oblivion. Nrusingha Guru could get a bolt from the blue when his integrity as a journalist was challenged by the authorities in connection with a businessman of Padampur who had been labelled charges for evading income tax. He was defied and the truth suffered from wrong. Being shocked, he slowly went into oblivion. Probably he couldnot be relieved from the shock. He used to say, "If the journalist can't properly evaluate the history of journalism, progress of the civilization, the need of the time ideals of the country, dignity of the nation, demands of the situation, we can't produce news impartially. Patience, courage, sharp mind and sympathetic heart can sometimes infuse life in a dead body. Mahatma Gandhi and Gopabandhu have established themselves in the society only by virtue of their sincerity and love for truth".

Nrusingha Guru could not cope with the storm and stress of the situation and slowly went into oblivion.

Being a silent worker, Nrusingha Guru shunned publicity. He with much reluctance attended the New Year Day celebration on 1.1.1984 organized by Journalist Association of Sambalpur at Kosala Bhawan. It was a coincidence that Nrusingha Guru could complete his 50<sup>th</sup> year in the field of Journalism and a grand ovation was accorded to him by lighting fifty candles in his honour. Nrusingha Guru, being aggrieved,

expressed the desire to die rather than to experience the degeneration of journalism. No body in the function even conceive that the assemblage would be the last for the stalwart to be with them. It seemed that his quest was for reducing himself to 'Zero' mingling his identify with the infinite.

Because of some ritual at Sarangagarh, his Father in Law house, Nrusingha Guru left Sambalpur in the early morning 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 1984. It was providential, on the same day this illustrious son of Sambalpur passed away due to a sudden heart attack. He had the eternal sleep in the lap of his daughter Kumudini Mahapatra - so providential it was possibly, to Nrusingha Guru, his mother was manifested in the person of his beloved daughter and he started the last journey for the eternal abode from her lap. The fabulous bird phoenix burns itself, it is said and believed, on a funeral pyre and rises again from its own ashes with renewed youth and beauty. Nrusingha Guru surpassed the phoenix. He had begun the renovated life in the hearts of people of Sambalpur even before he was placed on funeral pyre. Rarely has the sprit of dedication and selflessness been so enshrined within the person of a single individual. He gave a spiritual dimensions to the process of social change.

## Chapter – VII

### EPILOGUE

Nrusingha Guru was born on the cross-roads of our history. He made his mark as social worker, reformer, thinker and as the freedom fighter. The political guise in which he appeared before the people he did not own. He was religious, humanist and the practical idealist. He accepted life in all its comprehensiveness. A keen individual of human affairs as he was, he expressed himself on problems that he and contemporary society confronted the most. His 'thought' is therefore, not academically cut and set. In his postulations he has drawn the ancient heritage and philosophy. It has to him, as to many others, the fountain freshness and the ever bubbling source of ideas. To most of us, for our ignorance of our heritage, and for being conditioned by the western thought and culture, his ideas cause puzzlement. The effect, however, wears away as deep in our mind, there is the ancient impact and our silent response to it. Our ancestor did not live only to die or to be born again and again as the populist belief goes. They had developed the ideas suitable to their conditions. The westernism that has come between our heritage and our selves make often difficult for us to make a rational and positive study of these ideas. Nrusingha Guru believed that some of the ancient ideas can still be helpful in resolving some of our problems. He had a mannerism of his own and his ideas and work has a distinct

dimension. He claimed for himself the humblest position; and yet exercised immense influence. For all that he represented, he appears to have come from among the stock of ancient mythological personnel to awaken the soul. He was a 'rishi' in thought, word and deed.

Nrusingha Guru was a patriot. For this, early in his youth, he got attracted to the national activity that was creeping over the nation and to the leadership of Mahatma Gandhiji. His cultivated discipline, dedication and devotion to the task in hand made him follow his leader with faith and conviction, even when he had reservations and difficulties of his own. His personal integrity, the spirit of service and sacrifice with which he served the people over decades invested him with unique moral stature and strength. He rose to be a commanding personality. He was class by himself. For the suitable and many-sided contributions he made during the pre and post independent period, he will be remembered for generations to come. His impact on his contemporaries was second only to Gandhiji. He made incessant efforts for the economic uplift of the people, initiated literacy and educational drive for the down-trodden to provide the basis for change and removal the traditional caste based limitations in the interest of social expansion. Nrusingha Guru stood for a progressive and rational social order. He was the most complete human being. He was a high souled man - the Gandhi of Sambalpur.

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