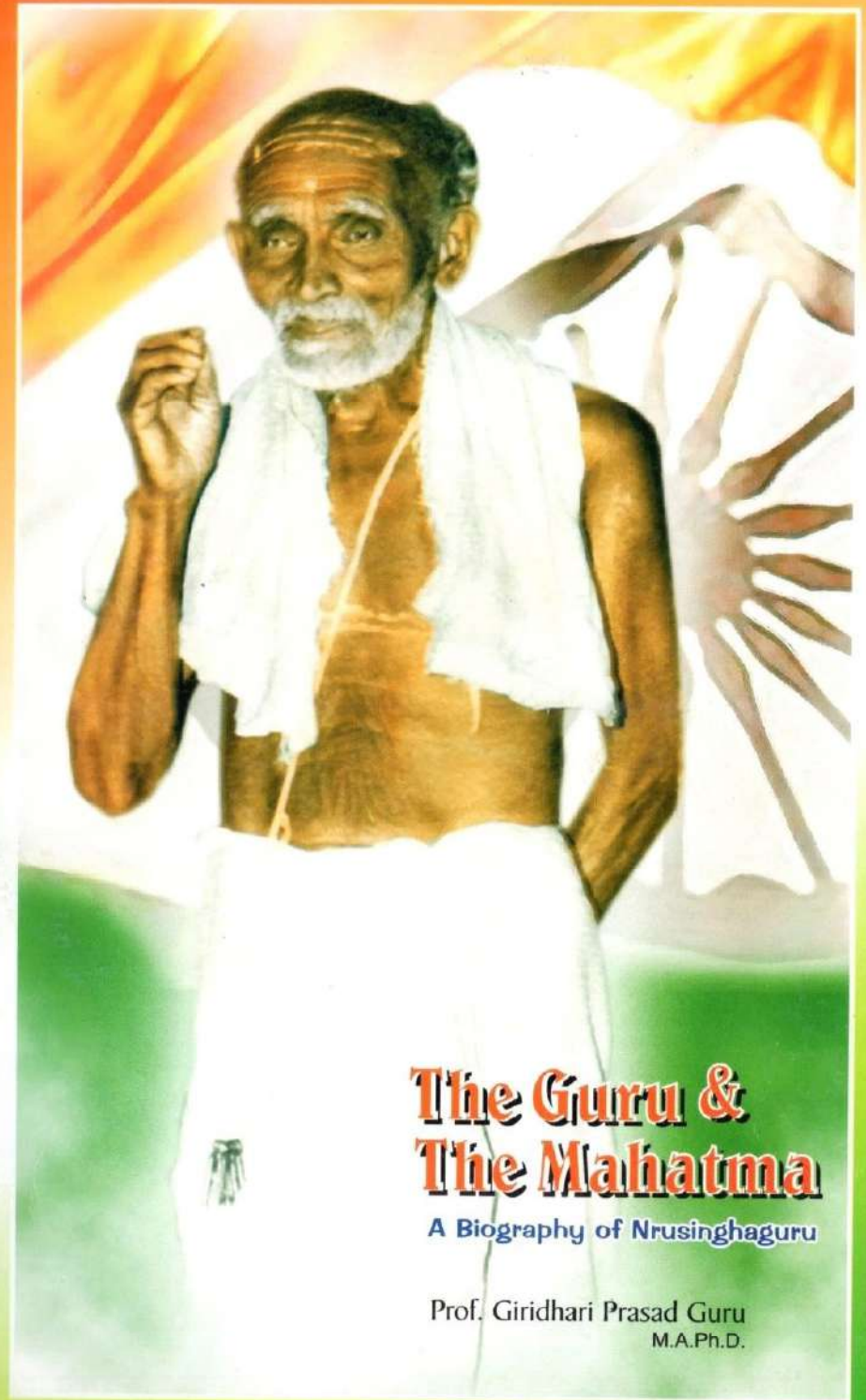




Prof. G.P.Guru, born on July 4, 1933 at Sarangah (Chhattisgarh), graduated with Honours and Distinction from Gangadhar Meher College, Sambalpur in 1953. After doing his M.A. in English from Ravenshaw College, Cuttack in 1955 and serving as a Lecturer in Bhadrak College, Bhadrak for some time he joined Orissa Education Service in 1957. He worked as Lecturer and Reader in English in Gangadhar Meher College, Sambalpur, Rajendra College, Bolangir and Maharaja Purna Chandra College, Baripada. He was assigned educational administration in 1971 and worked as Principal Anchal College, Padampur, Development Officer and Registrar, Sambalpur University and Principal Rajendra College, Bolangir. In 1982 he joined Gangadhar Meher College as Professor of English and became its Principal in 1983. In 1986 he was posted at Bhubaneswar where he worked as Chairman, Council of Higher Secondary Education, Orissa, Director, Orissa State Text Book Bureau and Director, English Language Teaching Institute before working and retiring as Director, Secondary Education, Orissa in July 1991.

Publications of Prof. Guru ;

Besides publishing a book of criticism on the novels of Thomas Hardy titled **Thomas Hardy: The Artist and The Thinker**, Prof. Guru has published his autobiography titled **The Tides of Time**. In addition, he has written short biographies of three eminent freedom fighters of Western Orissa namely Ghanshyam Panigrahi, Parbati Devi and Prachin Devi and of the eminent poet, critic and orator Dr. Gangadhar Guru. This short biography of Nrusingha Guru, another renowned freedom fighter of western Orissa, is the fifth in the series.



## The Guru & The Mahatma

A Biography of Nrusinghaguru

Prof. Giridhari Prasad Guru  
M.A.Ph.D.

**THE GURU AND THE MAHATMA :**

**A BIOGRAPHY OF NRUSINGHA GURU**

**Prof. Giridhari Prasad Guru** M. A. Ph. D.

**Nrusingha Guru Smruti Samiti  
Sambalpur**

**THE GURU & THE MAHATMA:  
A BIOGRAPHY OF NRUSINGHA GURU**

**Writer:-**

Prof. Giridhari Prasad Guru, M. A. Ph. D.

**Publisher:-**

**Hemanta Kumar Mohapatra, Secretary**  
Nrusingha Guru Smruti Samiti  
Modipara, Sambalpur

**Printed at:**

Impressions

**Cover Design:**

Gouranga Mitra, Galaxy Computer

**1st Edition:- January, 2008**

**Price:- Rs. 80/-**

*Few Words from the publisher*

Although the freedom fighters of western orissa had in various ways contributed to the freedom movement they have not been given proper place in the history . Nrusingha Guru a prominent freedom fighter of the region was also no exception so, Nrusingha Guru Smruti Samiti consisting of prominent public men of the state formed after his death decided to publish a book in English on the life of Shri Guru and requested Prof. G.P. Guru to write a book , Prof. Guru who knew Nrusingha Guru very well readily agreed and wrote this book . But due to various unforeseen reasons the book could not be published in time .However at last the Samiti succeeded in its effort to publish the book . The Samiti expresses its deepest gratitude to Prof. Guru for helping in writing a book at this age to perpetuate the memory of Shri Nrusingha Guru .The samiti also thanked those who helped in publishing this book.

Earliar four books on the life and contributions of Nrusingha Guru, have already been published. Hope the readers will like to read this Book

*Hemanta Kumar Mohapatara*

# INTERACTION

Dedicated to all those journalists of the world who, unmindful of either hazards or gains, by their reporting based on their firm adherence to truth and non-violence, enlighten their readers about the society and the world around them and thus help them create a world better than they presently live in.

**Prof. Giridhari Prasad Guru**

## INTRODUCTION

My career as a teacher of English and as an educational administrator came to an end in July 1991. Writing critical articles and literary essays was a part of my profession; they were written because of the need that my job entailed. I was a free man after July 1991, but I had a taste of freedom only when I began creative writing in March 1999. About seven years have passed since then and I have written my autobiography consisting of about five hundred pages and four short biographies – three of eminent freedom fighters of Western Orissa and one of a poet and a man of letters of the same region. The books have not yet drawn the attention of critics in a formal way, though my autobiography has been selected by the Department of Culture, Government of Orissa for distribution among the public libraries in Orissa under the Raja Ram Mohan Library Foundation, Kolkata. Of personal opinions from friends, students and other men of letters of Orissa I have had plenty and most of the readers have said that they have found all the five books interesting to read and that they were not bored while going through them. This is more than what I expected when I began writing my memoirs first.

A writer writes a book as much for the joy of his readers as his own, because creative work of any kind gives great joy to him or, for that matter, to any human being. Man has an inborn tendency to get joy out of any creative activity, God has created him thus and he should revel in this gift of God.

This inborn tendency, perhaps, prompted me to accept the request of Sri Hemanta Kumar Mahapatra, the grandson of Nrusingha Guru (his daughter Kumudini Mahapatra's son) and the Sambalpur representative of The New Indian Express. Sri Mahapatra, the Secretary and the other office bearers and members of the Nrusingha

Guru Smruti Samiti, Sambalpur have done a pretty lot to perpetuate the memory of Nrusingha Guru. With their sincere and sustained efforts four books – one each in Oriya, English, Sanskrit and Hindi – on the life and contributions of Nrusingha Guru have already been written and published. In addition to celebrating the birth centenary of Nrusingha Guru in every nook and cranny of Orissa, they have taken concrete steps to install a life-size bronze statue of the great freedom fighter at Mandalia Chowk near the Samaleshwari College, Durgapali at Sambalpur. No such effort on such a large scale has been made by any individual or a group to commemorate the memory of any other freedom fighter in Western Orissa. And despite all these why Shri Mahapatra came with this request to me is beyond my comprehension. But I accepted his request readily for, I knew, it would provide me another opportunity for having the joy of writing creatively on the life of a person whom I knew and whom I adore.

I have read the three books written on Nrusingha Guru by Dr. Jagyan Kumar Sahu in Oriya, Dr. Chittaranjan Mishra in English and by Dr. Balaram Dash in Hindi. While each of the three books has its own merits, I liked reading Dr. Sahu's book which deals with the role of Nrusingha Guru in the struggle for freedom in Sambalpur. The book is a fine combination of both history and biography. Without losing a historian's perspective, Dr. Sahu recreates the life of Nrusingha Guru as a human being. And despite the details of dates, years and places, the book gives an enlivening account of the innumerable incidents in Nrusingha Guru's life and, in the process, gives us a holistic picture of the man and his times. I am not a man of history. The fact is that during my school and college days I have read very little history. But any account of the life and personality of a freedom fighter has to be given against the backdrop of the freedom movement which is now history. My aim, therefore, in writing this biography of Nrusingha Guru, a renowned freedom fighter of Orissa, is first to portray the kind of human being that Nrusingha Guru was and then refer to the freedom movement and other important events during his life time as

and when necessary to bring out his distinctive qualities as a human being. The life of Nrusingha Guru is a burning example of how circumstances influence and change the course of a man's life and how they bring to the fore the latent exceptional qualities in him. I would be happy if I am able to convey to the readers, through this small book, a feel of the exceptional human being that Nrusingha Guru was.

Every one who writes has a keen desire that readers should read what he has written. And readers read those writings which they find interesting, entertaining or otherwise worth reading. May the Goddess of Learning guide my pen accordingly and may this booklet give the readers the desired joy of reading. If it does so, I shall feel amply rewarded. If it doesn't, I have nothing to lose, because this book will ever remain as an eloquent testimony of my tribute to the memory of one of the most selfless and sincere freedom fighters and social activists of a rare kind in Orissa.

Incidentally I may mention here in passing that, as in the case of Dr. Gangadhar Guru, Nrusingha Guru also belongs to a different Guru family than mine.

Giridhari Prasad Guru

*Bahuda Rath Yatra*

5 July, 2006

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

For the broad parameters of Nrusingha Guru's life during the freedom struggle I have depended on Dr. Jagyan Kumar Sahu's book in Oriya on the role of Nrusingha Guru in the freedom movement in Sambalpur and Dr. Chittaranjan Mishra's book in English titled *Nrusingha Guru The Freedom Fighter*. I have also relied upon other revealing details about Nrusingha Guru's life during and after the freedom struggle provided by the writers in their articles that have been included in the *Smaranika* published in 1995 by the Nrusingha Guru Smruti Samiti. I express my indebtedness to all the above writers.

Sri Hemanta Kumar Mahapatra gave me all the information regarding Nrusingha Guru's life I needed from time to time. He deserves my thanks for the same.

I owe my gratitude to the Nrusingha Guru Smruti Samiti, Sambalpur for having taken the responsibility of publishing this book.

I must thank Sri M. N. C. Pillai, former Steno to Principal, Gangadhar Meher College, Sambalpur for typing out the entire manuscript of the book correctly and with great care.

The proprietor of Impressions, Sri Bijay Kumar Kedia, deserves all our thanks for the neat printing and fine get-up of the book.

Giridhari Prasad Guru

Sambalpur

March 2007

## CONTENTS

Chapter-I - The Spirit of the Times	1
Chapter-II - The Family and the Boyhood Days	5
Chapter-III - Through Successive Phases of the Freedom Struggle	14
Chapter-IV - The Post-Independence Era – Journalistic Excellence	38
Chapter-V - The Mahatma and the Guru	53
Chapter-VI - A Rounding Off	65
Chapter-VII - A Few Words More	71

## I THE SPIRIT OF THE TIMES

The freedom movement in India, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, saw cataclysmic changes in the character, popularity and the strength of the movement. There was a massive natural upsurge among the Indian masses after Gandhiji became the driving force behind the movement. He had a thorough understanding of the culture and soul of India and, being a political strategist of the first order, he chose truth and non-violence as his weapons to fight against the might of the British Empire. He thus struck the right chord at the right moment. As a result, the whole country was awakened. All parts of India became united as never before. There was not a single family in the whole of urban as well as rural India which remained unaffected or untouched by the movement. The enthusiasm generated was so widespread and deep rooted that not even Indians serving as the servants of the British in India could keep themselves wholly aloof from it. Those who could not support the movement directly or openly resorted to subterfuge and helped the spread of the movement and the freedom fighters secretly. Both men and women, young and old, landlords and farmers, workers and industrialists, teachers and students and the uneducated and the educated came forward in massive numbers to participate in the struggle for freedom. The whole nation, irrespective of caste, sex and religion, stood as one man. And the foundations of the British Empire in India began shaking. The British had never dreamt that they will face such a situation in India. They felt that they, with all the might of their guns, tanks and battle order, were being disarmed by the poor looking khadi-clad, half-starved Indians who wielded the weapons of truth and non-violence. For the first time in the history of our planet



crude physical force found itself face to face with the forces of spirit, a situation yet unheard of in the annals of mankind. Gandhiji had experimented with the method of non-violence in a limited way and for a different purpose in South Africa and found that it worked. Encouraged thus he decided to apply it on a wider scale and for a more vital cause in India. Non-violence for Gandhiji meant not just abjuration or non-use of force on the part of those who were fighting against injustice or, for that matter, an adversary. It also meant that injustice has to be removed without causing any injury or pain to its perpetrator and the adversary is not to be defeated but persuaded to believe that his ways of thinking and action are wrong. And this has to be done by humility, renunciation of any kind of pride, by non-possession and non-attachment. A person practicing non-violence has to live a simple life. Such an individual has to work for eradication of causes that bring sufferings for his fellow men. Gandhiji believed that poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, alcoholic liquors, greed for other's wealth or excessive wealth, hatred for the underprivileged, discrimination based on caste, creed and sex among human beings and superstitions are the root causes of human suffering and they have to be removed through non-violent means. He therefore offered practical non-violent methods of removing all such causes of pain and unhappiness and enjoined upon the freedom fighters to adopt and follow all such methods.

Ideas such as these fired the imagination of all Indians because they were very much a part of the same social and cultural milieu. And people in lakhs and crores joined the freedom movement. The process began with the Non-Cooperation Movement launched by Gandhiji in 1921 and by the time of the Quit India Movement of 1942 the social and political fabric of India had undergone a sea change.

Through the process of evolution a revolution had taken place in India which was more revolutionary than the French Revolution in France or the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia or the Cultural Revolution in China. The Indian way of looking at things and acting underwent a metamorphosis for the first time in Indian history and the result was freedom from centuries of bondage.

The Man and the event were both unusual. But more unusual was what the men, who were disciples of the Man, did in their individual lives. Each of the disciples i.e., the freedom fighters, while facing the same face of the British Empire everywhere in India with the same weapons of truth and non-violence, reacted in their distinctive ways while interacting with varied circumstances in their individual lives during the struggle as they came from different walks of life with varying backgrounds and upbringing. A man's spiritual abilities are limitless. With right thinking the given circumstances can bring out the best in him. The freedom fighters were all normal men and women before they joined the freedom movement. But each of them became an exceptional human being after being touched by the magic wand of the freedom struggle. That is what mesmerizes me when I go through the details of the lives of these individuals. A study of their lives reveals how each of them reacted to the various circumstances he faced in his individual life in his own peculiar or unusual way. That is the reason why every time I read the life history of a freedom fighter, be he a small or great one, I am fascinated by what he did or what he said at a particular point of time during the struggle. That is to say, each one, in the process of the struggle, performed heroic deeds in his own sphere of activities and thus became a great human being in his own distinctive way.

The atmosphere during those years was surcharged with the spirit of the struggle. Patriotic fervour, willingness to sacrifice all that one had at the altar of the motherland, desire to work for the uplift of the poor and the neglected in the society, eagerness to be self-dependent and self-sufficient and to make the motherland self-dependent and the tenacity to tolerate and suffer physical torture and cruelties perpetrated by the officers of the British administration in India were among the many sentiments that permeated the air during the freedom struggle. And moved by such sentiments many people left their homes, others gave up their jobs and students left schools and colleges. Agriculturists, industrialists, doctors, lawyers and teachers – all joined the fray. Every one tried to contribute his mite to the freedom movement in his or her own way. Never before were so many men and women from all walks of life and all sections of the society converted together and at the

same time, either in the history of India or of any other nation in the world, to one particular way of thinking or acting. That is why the Gandhian way of thought and action proved more successful and enduring in the long run than the ideals which inspired the French Revolution, the Bolshevik Revolution or the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Whereas the last three revolutions made demons of human beings by pampering their baser instincts, the Gandhian revolution made Gods of human beings by addressing their finer instincts and divine nature. Every one was taught not to tolerate the British rule and the injustices perpetrated by it but no one was taught to hate the British.

Two outstanding qualities – sincerity and complete self-abnegation – characterized the activities of all freedom fighters during the freedom struggle. Freedom of the motherland from British subjugation was their only aim. No selfish thought of any kind entered into their minds as long as the struggle was on. And, if required, every one was willing to go as far as was needed even if it cost one's life.

Every one who breathed in this kind of air could not remain unaffected by it and Nrusingha Guru, the freedom fighter, who breathed in this kind of atmosphere, was no exception.

## II

### THE FAMILY AND THE BOYHOOD DAYS

Legend has it that *Utkaliya* Brahmins of Western Orissa having the title of Guru, Raiguru or Rajguru came from Puri in eastern Orissa to the then Patna State (Bolangir-Patna) at the instance of the Chouhan kings of Patna State in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Originally these Brahmins had Mishra as their title. Later they acquired the title of Guru, Rajguru or Raiguru because they became the *diksha* Gurus of the Chouhan kings. They worked as Raj Purohits, *pujaks* or worshippers and teachers in the service of the kings.

Raja Balram Dev of the Chouhan dynasty established the kingdom of Sambalpur in the sixteenth century. It is possible that some of the Gurus of the Patna State might have come to Sambalpur with Raja Balram Dev. It is also possible that some more Brahmins came direct from Puri to Sambalpur after the separate kingdom of Sambalpur was established. These Brahmins also acquired the title of Guru after becoming the *diksha* Guru of the kings and they also worked as Raj Purohits, *pujaks* or worshippers and teachers in the service of the king.

All these Brahmins who worked for the kings both in Patna and Sambalpur States were given villages of which they became *mafidar gountias*. They were entitled to collect revenue from the farmers and, instead of giving it to the king as the *gountias* of other villages did; they enjoyed it and used it for their own purposes. This was a position of privilege they enjoyed and noticing the same, more Brahmins from Puri began migrating to Sambalpur hoping that some day, in future, they might as well get similar privileges.

During the reign of Raja Ajit Singh, the eighth Chouhan ruler of Sambalpur, a group of such Brahmins from Puri came to Sambalpur. Raja Ajit Singh decided to settle them in a *Sason*, a village, like the many established *Sasons* of Puri, about eleven kilometers north of Sambalpur towards Jharsuguda and he named it as Ajitpur Sason. This *Sason*, like other *Sasons* of Puri, has a wide road that runs east-west through the middle. This road is lined on both the sides by houses belonging to the Brahmins. At the western end is a temple dedicated to Lord Gopinath i.e., Lord Jagannath and at the eastern end there is another temple dedicated to Lord Nila Kantha or Loknath. The deities in both the temples are east facing. This village now known as Sason had Brahmins with Mishra and Hota titles as its residents. And Raja Ajit Singh requested one Hari Guru from Sambalpur to be the *gountia* of the Sason and to look after the management of both the temples of this Sason. In all probability this Hari Guru was one of the forefathers of Nrusingha Guru.

About a kilometer east of Sason there is a village called Sandasingha inhabited mostly by tribals. This village was at first given to the Dandasena or Dansana family of Sambalpur by Raja Chhatrasai Deo of Sambalpur to enable them to maintain a temple called Dalagudi temple near the Samaleshwari Temple at Sambalpur where the Dandasena family had installed an idol of Nag Devata and whom they worshipped. Subsequently there was some misunderstanding between the Dandasena family and the royal family. For this reason Raja Jayant Singh suspended the rights of the Dandasena family over village Sandasingha and gave the same to the Guru family of Sason. This Guru family thus enjoyed *mafi* rights over both the villages of Sason and Sandasingha for many years.

With the passage of time the Guru family of Sason began multiplying. Hence, towards the middle of the nineteenth century, Kashinath Guru, son of Nilakantha Guru and grand father of Nrusingha Guru, shifted from Sason to a place near the village Sandasingha which later came to be known as Gurupali. Kashinath Guru persuaded young Brahmins of nearby villages to settle in the open spaces available at Gurupali and thus the village Gurupali came into being. Kashinath Guru thus became the *gountia* of both Sandasingha and Gurupali.

Kashinath Guru established one *chatshali* or school for children at Gurupali and also worked as its teacher. His wife Radha Devi gave birth to his only son Ganesh Ram Guru who also worked as a teacher in the *chatshali* at Gurupali. Ganesh Ram married Laxmi Devi, daughter of Jagadish Hota of Saranda, a village near Atabira in the then Bargarh Sub-Division of the undivided Sambalpur district. Jagadish Hota's father belonged to Sambalpur and was persuaded to move to village Saranda by the Brahmin *gountia* of Saranda to work as a teacher in the *chatshali* at Saranda.

Ganesh Ram Guru and Laxmi Devi were childless for some years after their marriage. In 1901 Radha Devi visited the famous Nrusinghanath temple near Paikmal during the *Chaturdashi Mela* held in the bright half of the Hindu month of *Baisakh* along with her son and daughter-in-law and offered prayers to Lord Nrusinghanath to bless her son and daughter-in-law with a son. Lord Nrusinghanath appears to have heard her prayers and Ganesh Ram and Laxmi Devi were blessed with a son on 24 March 1902 corresponding to the full moon day or *puṇima* of the Hindu month of Falgun. The child was considered as a blessing of Lord Nrusinghanath and hence was named Nrusingha Guru. There was great joy in the family with the birth of the first son. Two or three years later, another son was born to Ganesh Ram Guru and Laxmi Devi and he was named Durga Prasad Guru.

The year 1902 was a crucial year in the history of Sambalpur. By 1781 the Marhattas had captured a large part of Western Orissa. After about thirty-five years of their rule, they were challenged by the British, who, finally, by 1849 captured the areas under the control of the Marhattas. Soon after the first battle of freedom in 1857, Veer Surendra Sai and others continued their battle against the British for about seven more years. The British, therefore, thought of a plan of merging Sambalpur with Madhya Pradesh so that they might not have to face the type of resistance that Veer Surendra Sai offered. Hence in 1862 Sambalpur became a part of Madhya Pradesh. The British were not satisfied with this. They went a step further and in 1895 declared that Hindi will replace Oriya as the language of the courts at

Sambalpur. This infuriated the people of Sambalpur and they tried all methods to reverse the order. This gave rise to the *Bhasa Andolan* at Sambalpur. Leaders like Chandra Shekhar Behera, Dharani Dhar Mishra, Madan Mohan Mishra, Sripati Mishra, Braj Mohan Patnaik, Balbhadra Suar (Supkar) and Mahant Behari Das took all the necessary steps to impress upon the authorities that majority of people in Sambalpur preferred Oriya to Hindi. The British Government, thus, was almost forced to reverse its order and on June 18, 1902 the official notification replacing Hindi by Oriya was issued. The notification, however, was implemented from January 1, 1903.

Nrusingha Guru, thus, was born at a time when crucial changes were taking place in the firmament of Sambalpur. Not very long after his birth Sambalpur was merged with the Bihar-Orissa Division of the province of Bengal in 1905.

Coming back to Nrusingha Guru's life, he began his studies at the age of seven in the village *chatshali* managed by his father. With the love and affection and able guidance of his father he soon learnt the alphabets and was able to read Oriya books like the *Bhagbat* and *Mathura Mangal*. Every evening there was a prayer session in his house where religious books like *Bhagbat* and the *Puranas* were read. Ganeshram Guru and his wife Laxmi Devi were simple and religious minded and this had an impact on the psyche of infant Nrusingha Guru.

Next his father admitted him into the Lower Primary School of Sason which is about two kilometers from Gurupali. Sagar Padhi, the Headmaster of the School, asked him some questions and as he answered them correctly, he gave two copper coins to Nrusingha Guru as a reward and as a source of encouragement. In those days sixty-four copper coins made a rupee and one copper coin of those days had more value than the modern day rupee.

All the care and the enthusiasm of the teachers of this Lower Primary School, however, could not inspire Nrusingha Guru to learn his lessons well. After school hours students had to attend gardening and drill classes. Thus often it became dark when Nrusingha Guru had to return to Gurupali. The young boy was frightened to take the journey

back home alone and in the dark and hence his enthusiasm for learning in the school flagged.

Ganesh Ram pondered over the matter for long and help came to him from his father-in-law who was the Headmaster of the Lower Primary School at Saranda. Jagadish Hota asked his son-in-law Ganesh Ram to send Nrusingha Guru to Saranda. Being the first grand son in the families of both his father and mother, Nrusingha Guru became the object of great affection and care of both the families. At Saranda he found an inspiring and lovable teacher in his maternal grand father and was inspired in such a manner that he could learn the lessons prescribed for classes I and II within a year and was, therefore, admitted in class III next year.

To take up the class IV scholarship examination he was brought to Bargarh where his maternal grand father, Jagadish Hota, introduced him to *Kavibhusan* Swapaneshwar Dash, the Headmaster of the Vernacular Middle School at Remenda, who had also come to Bargarh along with the students of his school due to take up the scholarship examination. Swapaneshwar Dash was a renowned teacher of those days and he taught Nrusingha Guru with great love and affection for a few days to prepare him for the scholarship examination. Nrusingha Guru was so much impressed by the personality of Swapaneshwar Dash that he always regarded him as his Guru.

Soon after the scholarship examination was over the *bratopanayan* ceremony of Nrusingha Guru was performed at Gurupali. He passed the scholarship examination with distinction and was awarded merit scholarship by the Government for prosecuting further studies. He then was admitted into Patnaikpada Middle English School at Sambalpur in January 1914. During those days the academic session in the educational institutions began from January and ended in December.

Nrusingha Guru was influenced tremendously by the ideal behaviour of the Headmaster of Patnaikpada Middle English School, Purna Chandra Dash, and another distinguished teacher of the school, Brundaban Dani.

While studying in the said school he stayed in a house near the Frazer Press in Patnaikpada under the guardianship of one Bimbadhar Mishra who was then the editor of *Utkal Sevak*, a newsletter that was printed at the Frazer Press. Nrusingha Guru was already familiar with the newspaper called *Sambalpur Hitaishini* of which his maternal grandfather, Jagadish Hota, was a regular contributor. This newspaper, published from Deogarh, was very popular in those days among people in Western Orissa. Initiated thus into the habit of reading newspapers from his early childhood, Nrusingha Guru became a regular reader not only of *Utkal Sevak* but of other papers as well that were available at the Frazer Press. His early tryst with newspapers had a great influence on his life as a freedom fighter during the freedom struggle and as a journalist in post-Independent India.

Nrusingha Guru, sometime later, became an inmate of the school Hostel. To encourage a meritorious and needy student, Purna Chandra Dash, the Headmaster of the school, exempted him from payment of both the mess charges and the tuition fees. He was thus able to prosecute his studies in the school without depending upon his father for any financial help because he was getting the scholarship amount of Rs.5/- p.m. from the Education Department.

He passed the Middle School Scholarship examination from the Patnaikpada Middle English School and was then admitted into class VIII of Zilla School, Sambalpur. While reading in Zilla School he stayed in the Hostel of the school and was exempted, as in the Middle School, from payment of tuition fees in the school as well as mess charges in the Hostel. Being a meritorious student he was thus helped to prosecute his studies in the High School as well.

Krushna Chandra Sen Gupta, the Hostel Superintendent, was an ideal teacher and a good man. He treated Nrusingha Guru as his own son. He took great care of his studies and encouraged him to take active part in debate and essay competitions in the school. Nrusingha Guru learnt a lot about life, spirituality and politics from his close association with him.

Those were the days of child marriage in India and, accordingly, Ganesh Ram Guru performed the marriage of Nrusingha Guru just

before the latter was admitted into class VIII. The bride, Priyabati Devi, was the daughter of Bala Ram Mishra of Sarangarh, then a native State in the Eastern Estates Agency and now a Sub-Divisional town in Chhattisgarh State.

The merger of Sambalpur with the Bihar-Orissa Division of the province of Bengal in 1905 coincided with a flurry of political activities in the region. Utkal Union Conference or Utkal Sammilani was founded in 1903 to accelerate the formation of a separate Orissa State. Leaders of the *Bhasa Andolan* at Sambalpur spearheaded the movement for a separate Orissa State in Sambalpur.

A session of the Utkal Sammilani was held at Sambalpur in 1915 when Nrusingha Guru was a student of the Middle English School at Patnaikpada. Swapaneswar Dash, the Headmaster of Remenda Vernacular Middle School, had joined Patnaikpada Middle English School in 1914. He asked Brundaban Dani, a teacher of Patnaikpada Middle English School, to lead a batch of students of the school to work as volunteers in the Utkal Sammilani session. Nrusingha Guru was inspired by the Headmaster and the teacher to join this group of volunteers known as *Sevadal*. During the conference he had the opportunity to see and meet great leaders of Orissa like Gopabandhu Das. He was very much moved by the speeches of the leaders of Orissa and Sambalpur in this session of Utkal Sammilani.

Dharani Dhar Mishra, one of the leaders of the *Bhasa Andolan* at Sambalpur, established Mishra Press at Sambalpur in 1916 to publish writings connected with the freedom movement which was already in progress. He wanted to groom his grandson, Jagannath Mishra, for the freedom movement. And this Jagannath Mishra was Nrusingha Guru's classmate in the high school classes. He had attended the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress in 1920 and the Chakradharpur session of Utkal Sammilani in the company of his grandfather. And he related all that he had seen at Nagpur and Chakradharpur to Nrusingha Guru and the latter's imagination was fired. It was, therefore, not a difficult decision for him, when time came in 1921, to leave school and to join Gandhiji's Non-Cooperation movement.

Kashinath Guru, his grandfather, and Ganesh Ram Guru, his father, were both teachers and at the same time deeply religious in nature. As a result an atmosphere of piety prevailed in the Guru family at Gurupali. The foundations of his emotions were thus laid in the pious household of his parents and grand parents. Nrusingha Guru thus, even as a child, learnt the lessons of love and of humanism from the examples set up by the elders in the family. Hard work, sincerity and respect for elders were some of the other virtues he learnt at home.

During his school days he was fortunate enough to come into contact with teachers like Jagadish Hota, his maternal grandfather, *Kavibhusan* Swapaneshwar Das, Purna Chandra Dash, Brundaban Dani and Krushna Chandra Sen Gupta. They were not only ideal and affectionate teachers, but were enlightened and aware of what was happening in Orissa and India at that time. Loved and respected by their students, they, in their turn, showered love and affection on their students. What was singular about them was that they were all patriotic and nationalistic in their outlook and wanted their students to play a significant role in their future lives in the struggle for liberation of the motherland from the clutches of the British.

There was some thing in Nrusingha Guru's intellectual and emotional build up because of which he was naturally attracted, even during his school days, towards workers and leaders of the national movement which was then taking a different shape, in texture as well as in numbers, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

In 1920 Nrusingha Guru was promoted from class X to class XI in the Zilla School. At the beginning of 1921 he was to appear at the Matriculation examination and after passing it, he would have joined the select group of Matriculates of the Bihar-Orissa Division. Passing the Matriculation examination in those days was a rare and a great event in the life of an individual. There were plenty of jobs available for them. Once a student passed his Matriculation examination he would soon get a job. Nrusingha Guru's parents were anxiously waiting for him to pass the examination and to take up a job to secure his own future. Once he got a job, they thought, all their

monetary difficulties would disappear within no time. Nrusingha Guru, however, even while pursuing his studies studiously and preparing for his Matriculation examination, was, without his own knowledge, preparing himself for participating in the great and unique struggle for freedom which our country and the world at large was to witness in the next two decades.

### III

## THROUGH SUCCESSIVE PHASES OF THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE

Gandhiji had successfully employed the weapon of *Satyagrah* in his resistance to laws enacted by the British Government that discriminated against the people of Indian origin in South Africa in 1906. When he returned to India in 1915, the freedom movement had already begun under the leadership of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and others. Gokhale advised Gandhiji to associate himself with the movement. A situation like the one in South Africa was created in the Champaran district of Bihar where peasants growing indigo were forced to sell their product to the British traders at a price fixed by the British Government. Gandhiji worked systematically with the peasants to get acquainted with their problem. Rajendra Prasad, Mahadev Desai and J.B. Kripalani helped him in this work and they were impressed by Gandhiji's idealism as well as his dynamic, fearless, practical and down to earth approach in political action.

The Champaran Satyagrah of 1917 was the first experiment of Gandhiji with *Satyagraha*, *ahimsa* in action, in India.

*Satyagrah*, Gandhiji's philosophy of action, had two major elements: truth and non-violence. He defined it to be 'soul force' or 'love force', the force which is born of truth and non-violence. The *Satyagrahi* would refuse to submit to whatever he considered as wrong. He would remain peaceful under all provocations. He would

resist evil but would not hate the doer of the evil. He would vindicate truth not by inflicting suffering on his opponent but by undergoing suffering himself. The purpose of the *Satyagrahi* was to arouse the conscience of the wrong-doer. To be successful the *Satyagrahi* must give up fear, hatred and falsehood. Passive resistance, according to Gandhiji, was a weapon of the weak whereas *Satyagrah* was a weapon of the strong.

As a result of the *Satyagraha* launched by Gandhiji the Government passed the Champaran Agrarian Act of 1918 to do away with the economic injustice perpetrated on the peasants.

In Champaran *Satyagraha* Gandhiji had demonstrated his total identification with the rural peasants. In the Ahmedabad Mill Worker's strike of 1918 he showed how he could identify himself with the urban labourers. He applied the weapon of *Satyagraha* and the Mill owners of Ahmedabad were made to pay higher wages to the labourers which was their legitimate due.

Another opportunity for applying the weapon of *Satyagraha* offered itself to Gandhiji when there was a devastating crop failure in the Khaira district of Gujarat. The Government, in this case, was forced to suspend collection of land revenue from the farmers of Khaira.

These three initial experiments of Gandhiji with *Satyagrah* had brought him into close contact with the rural masses and the urban workers. This was one of the great contributions of Gandhiji to the national movement, which, till now, despite all the efforts of the leaders, had remained the concern of the urban middle class and the intelligentsia. With the coming of Gandhiji the masses became active participants in the movement.

During the Champaran *Satyagraha* Gandhiji came face to face with the stark poverty of the Indian peasants and this prompted him to discard the western style of dressing and from now onwards

he began dressing like a poor peasant with a *dhoti* covering up to his knees and a *chaddar* on his body.

Encouraged by his successes in the above three cases which were limited to single districts, Gandhiji was in search of an opportunity that would enable him to apply the method of *Satyagrah* on a country-wide scale. And the Government of India provided the occasion when, in March 1919, it enacted the repressive Rowlett Act which empowered the executive and the police to detain, try and punish any person found to be engaged in anti-Government activities. A call for a nation-wide peaceful *hartal* or strike was given in April and it was a tremendous success. There were country-wide protests when Gandhiji was arrested. And during the same month the police massacred hundreds of people in Jallianwalla Bag in Amritsar in the Punjab where such a protest meeting was being held. This incident stirred the soul of India and there was severe resentment through out the country. The leaders of the Indian National Congress now demanded complete freedom for India instead of the Home Rule for which they had been fighting so far.

The Congress leaders, in a special session of the Indian National Congress held in Kolkata (Calcutta) in 1920, decided to launch the Non-Cooperation Movement and this was approved by the Nagpur Congress of December 1920. By this time Gandhiji had come to be recognized as the undisputed leader of the Congress.

The Non-Cooperation Movement included a dynamic course of action which comprised boycott of British Courts by lawyers, of schools and colleges by students, of elections to Councils and Assemblies by political workers, setting up of national educational institutions like the Kashi Vidyapith and Gujarat Vidyapith and boycott of foreign goods and use of *khadi*.

With the launching of the Movement in 1921 a wave of unprecedented enthusiasm swept the entire country. Men and women from all walks of life joined it.

In Orissa the Utkal Union Conference or the Utkal Sammilani, which was formed to accelerate the formation of a separate Orissa State, in its Chakradharpur Session in 1920, decided to adopt the programmes and ideals of the Indian National Congress for the freedom of India. Thus Orissa also was drawn into the mainstream of the freedom struggle. Chandra Shekhar Behera, one of the leaders of the *Bhasha Andolan* at Sambalpur, played a key role in the 1920 session of Utkal Union Conference or Utkal Sammilani and on the basis of a resolution moved by him, the Utkal Union Conference decided to adopt the programmes and goals of the Indian National Congress in India's struggle against the British rule for complete freedom.

Thus, in 1921, like all other parts in India, Sambalpur also began to play an important role in the Non-Cooperation Movement.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> day of January 1921 the three leaders of Sambalpur- Dharani Dhar Mishra, Chandra Shekhar Behera and Dasarathi Mishra- returned to Sambalpur after attending the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress and Chakradharpur session of the Utkal Union Conference. Along with Dharani Dhar Mishra also returned his grandson, Jagannath Mishra, who had accompanied him to Nagpur as well as Chakradharpur. Next morning Nrusingha Guru and some of his classmates met their classmate Jagannath Mishra and heard from him the detailed accounts of what had transpired in the Nagpur session of the Congress and the Chakradharpur session of Utkal Union Conference. These students of class XI of Sambalpur Zilla School were so moved by what they heard from Jagannath Mishra that they immediately decided to have a meeting of the students of Zilla School. Accordingly they met at the foot of the Budharaja Hill in the evening of 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1921 which was a Sunday. Though it was a Sunday, the enthusiasm of this group of students was so great that they could easily collect about two hundred students. These students, in conformity with the programmes contained in the Non-Cooperation Movement, decided to boycott their classes in Zilla



School the next day i.e., the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 1921. And on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, when the school reopened after Christmas holidays, more than two hundred students of Zilla School under the leadership of Nrusingha Guru boycotted their classes. Towards evening they came in a procession to Balibandha near the Somnath Temple and held a meeting. This meeting of the students was addressed by leaders like Chandra Shekhar Behera, Dashrathi Mishra and Janardan Supkar. It was decided in this meeting that the students would not join Zilla School again as it was run by the British Government. In this same meeting it was also decided that a National School like Kashi Vidyapith or Bihar Vidyapith would also be set up at Sambalpur for these students.

While the students boycotted their school many lawyers of Sambalpur boycotted British Courts and some individuals who were serving in different Government offices also resigned their jobs.

This boycott of school by the students of Sambalpur Zilla School, the first of its kind in the country, caught the headlines of many national newspapers. Shyam Sundar Chakrabarty, the editor of the Servant from Kolkata (Calcutta) was full of praise for the students of the school. Gopabandhu Dash, who was then staying in the Satyabadi Mess at Cuttack, after coming to know what the students of Sambalpur Zilla School had done, told the inmates of the Mess that future generations will not forgive them if they did nothing and simply kept quiet.

On 4<sup>th</sup> January the students gave a call for a general strike at Sambalpur and they were very happy to observe that the strike was complete and peaceful.

This success of the movement at Sambalpur encouraged leaders of different parts of the district of Sambalpur and they tried to mobilize support for the Non-Cooperation Movement in their respective areas. Within a short time volunteers in large numbers began to implement different programmes contained in the charter of Non-Cooperation Movement.

An important part of the programme was to strengthen the Indian National Congress at the grass root level in the rural areas. A large number of men and women in the district became primary members of Congress by paying four annas each which went to the Tilak Swarajya Fund created by the Congress. It is said that more than one crore rupees was collected throughout India for this fund and that Sambalpur district contributed the largest amount compared to any district in the Orissa Division. And this was the result of the leading role played by the students of Sambalpur Zilla School like Nrusingha Guru and Jagannath Mishra.

In order that the students who had given up their studies in the Government school may continue their studies, a National School was established at the Frazer Club in Patnaikpada at Sambalpur with the help of its President Chandra Shekhar Behera in 1921. This was the first National School in eastern India. To begin with, Shankar Prasad Padhi, Sayed Abdulla and Baldeb Bohidar, all freedom fighters, were given the responsibility of carrying on the teaching and the training work in the School.

Before the school at Satyabadi established by Gopabandhu Das was converted into a National School, a National School had already been established at Sambalpur. And this school at Sambalpur had the good fortune of having Pandit Nilakantha Das as its Headmaster. It is said that while Pandit Das was working as a lecturer in Calcutta University, one student, Bhagirathi Mishra, from Sambalpur was staying with him. Pandit Das heard of the establishment of the National School at Sambalpur from Bhagirathi Mishra and conveyed his desire to work as the Headmaster of the school to Gopabandhu Das. Gopabandhu Das agreed and soon brought him along with Bhagirathi Mishra to Sambalpur to work as the Headmaster of the National School. Bhagirathi Mishra was to assist Pandit Nilakantha Das as Assistant Headmaster of the School. Lawyers like Mahendra Nath Burma and Achyuta Nanda Purohit worked as part-time teachers. The other teachers of the school were Ambika Prasad

Patnaik, Balmukunda Mishra, Anant Ram Behera, and Bishnu Prasad Singh. Pandit Shiva Kumar Shastri taught Sanskrit, Kamal Prasad taught Hindi and Parasuram Sahani looked after Physical Education. Persons like Ganesh Prasad Padhi and Chakradhar Panda left their studies in the Engineering School at Patna and joined the National School at Sambalpur as teachers.

Nrusingha Guru and a large number of his class mates in the Zilla School enrolled themselves in this National School and devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the different kinds of activities undertaken by this School.

Besides teaching in various subjects, craft training in spinning, weaving and carpentry was also imparted in the National School. Jangali Mistri and Gouranga Meher were appointed to make *charkha* and the loom. One Gajraj, a Harijan, taught pupils to prepare ropes for cots.

All these persons became teachers in the school out of their own sweet will and all of them were rendering voluntary service. Such was the nature of the enthusiasm to sacrifice and to serve that was generated among people of all walks of life by Gandhiji's call.

Examination for the final year in the school was conducted by the Utkal Swaraj Shiksha Parishad of which Gopabandhu Das was the Chairman and Nanda Kishore Dash, the Secretary. Gopabandhu Das visited this school on June 18, 1921 and was very happy at the way it was being run. In the first year three students – Nrusingha Guru, Damodar Padhi and Arun Kumar Dash – of the school successfully completed their studies.

During the course of the Non-Cooperation Movement Gopabandhu Choudhary, who was the Deputy Magistrate at Bargarh, resigned his job in order to join the movement. Purna Chandra Dash, the Head Master of Patnaikpada Middle English School, Pitambar Dey, an Assistant teacher of Zilla School, and Govinda Sachidananda Rao, a clerk in the office of the Political Agent at Sambalpur resigned

their jobs to actively participate in the Movement. Mahendra Nath Burma, an advocate, gave up his profession to join the Congress and work for the freedom struggle.

The teachers as well as the students of the National School, in their spare hours, worked for spreading the message of the Non-Cooperation Movement in the rural areas of Sambalpur and thus tried to mobilize active support of rural masses for implementing the programmes contained in the charter of the Movement. Within a short time, therefore, the movement spread to areas like Bargarh, Jharsuguda, Talpatia, Rampella and Padampur.

The message of the Non-Cooperation Movement spread so fast in the rural areas of Sambalpur district that this attracted the attention of many national leaders like Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das.

Nrusingha Guru and Ananta Ram Behera were kept in charge of Jharsuguda for enrolling members for the Congress and for collection of funds. Nrusingha Guru also toured places like Tukra, Nuapali, Govindpur, Bhatli, Ambabhona, Ruchida, Kanaktura etc. and by the first week of July 1921 he was able to enroll about six thousand people as Congress members and distribute about 7000 *charkhas* among people for popularizing *khadi*.

In all the villages he visited he organized meetings of people and told them of Gandhiji's programmes about spinning cotton, weaving and wearing of *khadi*, giving up the use of liquor and establishing Panchayats for settlement of disputes.

In March 1921 Gandhiji passed through Cuttack on his way to Vijaywada in Andhra Pradesh. This was his first visit to Orissa. Leaders from Sambalpur tried to bring him to Sambalpur but this was not possible due to paucity of time. Gandhiji addressed many meetings at Cuttack and Puri and requested people to intensify the Non-Cooperation Movement. The leaders from Sambalpur, after their

return from Cuttack and Puri, devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the spread of the Movement.

Gandhiji had resorted to *Satyagraha* on April 6, 1919 against the enactment of the Rowlett Act and the Jallianwala Bag massacre occurred on April 13 that year. In order to make people aware of such atrocities of the British Government, the Congress had decided to observe National Week from April 6 to April 13 every year.

During the observance of this National Week in 1921 a *hartal* was proposed to be organized. The Government took recourse to all repressive measures to stop people from organizing or taking part in this *hartal*. Nrusingha Guru, for the first time in his life, was arrested during this period but was released after a short period. Dharani Dhar Mishra published a nationalist poem composed by Nilakantha Das and was fined Rs. 25/- for publishing the same in his Mishra Press.

Many *gountias* and Zamindars of Sambalpur district opposed the programmes of the Congress. Amongst them was Madhukar Sai, the Chouhan Zamindar of Rajpur. When in June 1921 Nilakantha Das, Chandra Shekhar Behera, Nrusingha Guru, Mahabir Singh and Trilochan Sai Deo wanted to organize a meeting at Rajpur, they were hounded out of the village by goons employed by Madhukar Sai. The Congress workers, therefore, organized a meeting outside the village and hundreds of villagers joined the Congress and vowed to propagate the message of Gandhiji and the Congress.

In November 1919 the Utkal Congress Committee was reorganized. In order to contest the elections to the Committee, Nilakantha Das left Sambalpur and worked for a long time as a very active member of the provincial Congress Committee of which Gopabandhu Das now became the President.

During the visit of the Crown Prince of England to India in November 1921, a total *hartal* was observed at Sambalpur on 17<sup>th</sup>

November in response to such a call by the All India Congress Committee. On the previous day the students of the National School closed their school in the afternoon and marched in a procession through the town requesting people to observe *hartal* on the following day. Nrusingha Guru played an active role in all this and the *hartal* was a complete success at Sambalpur.

This *hartal* was a great challenge to British administration. Hence it enforced restrictions on the movement of persons like Dharani Dhar Mishra, Ganesh Prasad Padhi, Bhagirathi Mishra, Laxmi Narayan Mishra, Mahabir Singh and Nrusingha Guru under the appropriate sections of the Indian Penal Code. When Mahabir Singh was arrested in December 1921, Nrusingha Guru organized a protest meeting near the Narmadeshwar temple where the repressive actions of the British Government were condemned.

In the last week of December 1921, a large delegation of about sixteen persons under the leadership of Braj Mohan Panda attended the Ahmedabad annual session of the Indian National Congress. Nrusingha Guru attended this Congress session along with others like Laxmi Narayan Mishra, Shankar Prasad Padhi and Mahabir Singh.

This was the second occasion where Nrusingha Guru saw Gandhiji and had the opportunity to study him closely. The more he knew about Gandhiji, the more he was impressed by the different facets of the personality of this great man. And inwardly Nrusingha Guru decided to follow Gandhiji's teachings in every aspect of his life and practice non-violence and truth in word, thought and deed.

During this session of the Congress some leaders of Sambalpur met Gandhiji and requested him to come to Sambalpur. Gandhiji told them that when he found time he would love to visit Sambalpur.

The District Congress Committee of Sambalpur, to intensify further the Non-Cooperation Movement, decided in 1922 to hold three open sessions of the Congress on February 21, 22 and 23 in Jharsuguda, Sambalpur and Bargarh. The district administration was bent upon frustrating the plans of the Congress and, therefore, it declared that no meeting could be held within a radius of five miles of each of the three towns on the respective days. Gopabandhu Das had agreed to address all the three meetings. But when he arrived at Jharsuguda on February 20 to attend the next day's meeting, Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code was imposed on him. He therefore proceeded to Panchpada. In his discussion with Congress workers he was full of praise for the organizational work done by Chintamani Pujari and Nrusingha Guru. All the three meetings were held on the appointed days in places beyond five miles of the three towns and in all the three meetings the printed speeches of Gopabandhu Das were read by Nrusingha Guru and others. Despite the opposition of the district administration these meetings were considered a great success.

Meanwhile Nrusingha Guru worked hard for propagation of *khadi* and removal of untouchability. He visited Harijan *bustees* at Sambalpur and other places and joined with them in *Bhagwat Melas*. He met groups of Harijans and motivated them not to touch liquor and not to eat beef. He talked to them about the desirability of cleanliness and gave them lessons on how to keep their premises clean.

On April 8, 1922 a special campaign was launched for removal of untouchability. Gandhiji firmly believed that if a section of the community remained illiterate and ignorant, the community as a whole could never prosper. The untouchables, whom Gandhiji named as Harijans – the people dearest to the Lord – had to be amalgamated with the main stream of the Hindu society if the society as a whole was to progress and to become enlightened. In pursuance of this programme a special meeting of the Harijans was organised by

Nrusingha Guru at Sambalpur on April 10, where the Congress workers persuaded them to take an oath to give up drinking wine and eating beef. Similar meetings were also organized in different parts of Sambalpur district. Ghanashyam Panigrahi, a senior freedom fighter of Manpur, organized such meetings on the other side of the Mahanadi and exhorted them to give up many evil and superstitious practices of which they had become victims.

When the Non-Cooperation Movement had gained momentum in all parts of India and when it was at its peak, a violent incident took place at Chouri Choura village in Gorakhpur district in Uttar Pradesh on February 5, 1922. In this incident several policemen were burnt alive by an infuriated mob. This incident took the whole nation by surprise. Gandhiji was shocked by this incident. He felt that if things were allowed to happen this way, the very purpose of the Non-Cooperation Movement would be in jeopardy and he, therefore, immediately decided to withdraw the Movement though many Congress leaders were opposed to such a move by Gandhiji.

After calling off the Non-Cooperation Movement, Gandhiji asked all the Congressmen to devote themselves to the constructive programme finalized by the Congress. Gandhiji felt that Indians had become slaves not only politically but, because of the exploitative economic policy of the British Government, they had also become superstitious and slaves of many bad habits. To build a free and prosperous India, he felt, along with the removal of political slavery, the people in India had to be freed from the many social evils to which they had fallen prey. The eighteen-point constructive and creative programme of Gandhiji, included, among other things, eradication of illiteracy and untouchability, spinning of cotton thread with the help of *charkha* and use of *khadi*, giving up drinking wine, introduction of basic education and cottage industry, boycott of foreign made cloth, cleanliness, Hindu-Muslim unity and equality of sexes.

During the celebration of the National Week in April (6 to 13), 1922 the Congress leaders of Sambalpur began implementing the eighteen-point programme of Gandhiji. Every day they organized processions and meetings in different places and by their speeches tried to spread the message of the Congress among the masses. All Congress workers had *charkhas* in their houses from which they spun thread and used *khadi* cloth. They mixed with the Harijans, organized meetings in their *bustees* and persuaded them to keep their premises clean and give up drinking wine.

Leaders like Nrusingha Guru, Laxmi Narayan Mishra, Chintamani Pujari, Mahabir Singh and Ghanashyam Panigrahi took a leading role in the implementation of the eighteen-point constructive programme in Sambalpur district. With their efforts *khadi* centres were established at places like Barpali, Bargarh, Manpur, Remenda, Panchapada, Bhalupada, Sandasingha, Jharsuguda and Bargaon. Nrusingha Guru was in charge of the centre at Sandasingha, Chintamani Pujari at Panchapada, Mahabir Singh at Jharsuguda and Ghanashyam Panigrahi was in charge of the centre at Manpur. Ghanashyam Panigrahi boycotted foreign cloth by burning all the foreign made cloth belonging to him and his newly wed wife at Manpur along with others. During this period Nrusingha Guru also decided to boycott foreign cloth and to use *khadi dhoti* up to his knees and a *chaddar* over his body. This remained his normal dress for the rest of his life.

During this period many Harijans also joined the Congress and became its active members. Among them were Kasta Ram Tanti and Kaida Ram Tanti of Talpatia, Sukharam Tanti of Panchapada and Bihari Ram Tanti of Mungapada.

In 1922 Bhagirathi Patnaik of Barpali came to Sambalpur and became an active member of the Congress. In course of time he became a close associate of Chintamani Pujari, Nrusingha Guru and Laxmi Narayan Mishra. In 1924 they formed a parallel District Congress Committee with Chintamani Pujari as President, Bhagirathi

Patnaik as Secretary and Nrusingha Guru and Laxmi Naryan Mishra as members.

In 1925 the All India Congress Committee formed an All India Weavers' Association, a branch of which was established at Sambalpur the same year. Nrusingha Guru, Mahabir Singh, Durga Guru and Krutartha Acharya were kept in charge of managing the branch and they were assisted by Chintamani Pujari, Bhagirathi Patnaik and Laxmi Narayan Mishra.

Gandhiji had a standing invitation to come to Sambalpur since 1921 but his visit to Sambalpur was postponed on many occasions due to various reasons. Finally in December 1928, on his way to attend the Kolkata (Calcutta) session of the Indian National Congress, he was able to pay a visit to Sambalpur on December 13. During this visit he stayed in the house of Chandra Shekhar Behera. He addressed a meeting organized on the bed of the Mahanadi river in the morning and in the afternoon Gandhiji and Kasturba Gandhi were both welcomed by the Women Congress workers of Sambalpur. Nrusingha Guru was in charge of looking after the personal comforts of Gandhiji, Kasturba Gandhi and their son Debdas Gandhi.

Though Nrusingha Guru had observed Gandhiji from close quarters earlier, this was the first occasion when he came into personal contact with him and his family. This had a tremendous impact on him. Inwardly he underwent a kind of transformation. Gandhiji's words, his manner of reacting to people and situations around him mesmerized him. Inwardly he decided to transform himself accordingly. To remain quiet, poised and undisturbed under all circumstances, to face all situations fearlessly and to stick to truth despite all temptations were some of the virtues of Gandhiji's character which he, from then onwards, decided to cultivate in his own life.

After the Kolkata (Calcutta) session of the Congress the Provincial Congress Committee reorganized Sambalpur District Congress Committee and now Chintamani Pujari became its President,

Bhagirathi Patnaik its Secretary and Nrusingha Guru and Laxmi Narayan Mishra became its organizing Secretaries.

A section of the Hindu society consisting of *Gandas*, *Painkas*, *Ghasias* and Adibasis in general were regarded as untouchables by the upper caste Hindus. An upper caste Hindu did not touch any member of the above sections of the society. If any one touched them he had to bathe and thus purify himself. The members of these communities were not allowed to enter and worship in Hindu temples. They were not allowed to use water from the well or the pond which the upper caste Hindus used. Even their habitats in the villages were away from those of the upper caste Hindus.

Gandhiji believed that such divide among the Hindu community was a slur on any civilized society. He therefore included removal of untouchability in his eighteen-point constructive programme and thus it was made imperative for any Congress member not to practice untouchability in his personal life and to persuade others not to practice and perpetuate this evil.

In pursuance of this programme Chandra Shekhar Behera, Nrusingha Guru and Laxmi Narayan Mishra formed, in 1929, a District Committee for Eradication of Untouchability of which Ghanashyam Panigrahi of Manpur was the President for some time. All these freedom fighters visited the habitats of the Harijans, sat with them, ate with them and persuaded them to keep their houses and themselves clean. They also asked them not to touch wine or the meat of dead animals. Sometimes *Bhagwat Melas* were held in Harijan habitats and these workers of the Congress belonging to conservative Brahmin families ate *prasad* on such occasions with the Harijans.

Dayananda Satpathy, who worked as a teacher in Bamanda State, was forced to leave Deogarh, the headquarters of Bamanda State on charges of treason. He came to Sambalpur in 1929 and first stayed with Nrusingha Guru. A close family relationship developed between the two. Dayananda Satpathy used to address Nrusingha

Guru as *dada* or elder brother. In course of time he joined the band of freedom fighters consisting of Chintamani Pujari, Bhagirathi Patnaik, Nrusingha Guru and Laxmi Narayan Mishra. These five persons, sometimes referred to as the *Pancha Sakha* of Sambalpur, worked in close cooperation during the freedom struggle and in their efforts to eradicate untouchability. Dayananda Satpathy was so much moved by the teachings of Gandhiji that, in his efforts to eradicate untouchability, he threw away the sacred thread that a Brahmin puts on and regularly dined with the Harijans.

These efforts of Nrusingha Guru and his associates had a tremendous impact on the Harijans and soon they began implementing Gandhiji's prescriptions in their lives and thus were able to reform themselves.

Drinking wine was a great weakness of the Harijans as well as other poorer sections of the Hindu society. It devitalized them and made them poppers. The Congress leaders of Sambalpur like Chandra Shekhar Behera, Bhagirathi Patnaik, Nrusingha Guru and Laxmi Narayan Mishra went from village to village and by their powerful speeches tried to persuade thousands of Harijans and Adibasis to take an oath of not touching wine in their lives again. The impact of the efforts of these people was so great that people stopped going to wine shops. As a result many license holders for selling wine surrendered their licenses to the Government. The revenue that accrued to the Government on this account dwindled. The Deputy Magistrate in charge of excise at Sambalpur was placed under suspension for his inability to counter this move of the freedom fighters. Chintamani Pujari, the President of the Sambalpur District Congress Committee, gave this information to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who became full of praise for the Congress workers of Sambalpur.

The 1929 session of the Indian National Congress held at Lahore was an important milestone in the Indian liberation struggle. The Congress so long was fighting for Dominion Status for India within

the British Commonwealth. But the conduct of the British Government in India during the past few years dismayed the Congress leaders. It was therefore decided in the Lahore session of the Congress that the Congress would now fight for full independence of India.

To press the demand for complete independence the Congress also decided to launch a Civil Disobedience Movement and it was left to Gandhiji to decide the time and the manner of the Movement.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1929, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, at the stroke of the midnight hour, in the presence of thousands of Congress workers, unfurled the tri-colour national flag on the banks of the river Ravi, where he declared that it was "a crime against man and God to submit any longer" to British rule.

In this Congress session it was also decided to observe 26th January every year as the Independence Day where people would take a pledge to fight for full independence.

On 26 January, 1930 Independence Day was celebrated with great enthusiasm at Sambalpur. Laxmi Narayan Mishra was arrested a few days earlier and put behind bars. Dayananda Satpathy ran through the streets of Sambalpur with the tri-colour in his hand and exhorted people to join a meeting to be held on that day. Bhagirathi Patnaik went round the city with a drum and announced the date and time of the meeting with drumbeat. And despite the pressure of the military, the police and the Deputy Magistrate late Bharat Chandra Nayak, a large number of men, women, students and children joined the first Independence Day celebration near Balibandha. Nrusingha Guru blew the conch shell and Bhagirathi Patnaik administered the oath, the pledge of independence, to the people.

In March 1930, Gandhiji decided to begin the Civil Disobedience Movement by offering *Satyagraha* against the Salt-law which prohibited common people from making salt from sea water and which imposed salt duty on the locally produced salt. His famous

Dandi March which began from Sabarmati Ashram on 12 March, 1930 electrified the national consciousness. Thousands of men and women joined him during his twenty-four day *padayatra* over a distance of about two hundred miles to Dandi, a sea-cost town in Gujarat. On 6 April all the assembled men and women including Gandhiji at Dandi broke the Salt Law and this non-violent act of truth sent shivers through the spines of British administration.

At Sambalpur on 12 March, the day when Gandhiji began his Dandi March, the students of Zilla School hoisted the national flag on the school building and observed a strike by boycotting classes. The Congress workers held meetings in different places at Sambalpur to mobilize support for the *Satyagrah*. Laxmi Narayan Mishra was arrested as he gave a call for general strike in a public meeting. Other leaders like Bhagirathi Patnaik, Nrusingha Guru, Dayanand Satpathy, Chintamani Pujari and Durga Prasad Guru were booked under different sections of the Indian Penal Code and were produced in different courts.

Despite all these repressive measures of the administration, a meeting of the Congress workers was held at Sambalpur to chalk out a plan for mobilizing support for the *Satyagraha*. Ghanashyam Panigrahi of Manpur presided over this meeting. In this meeting a *Satyagrah* Committee was formed under the Chairmanship of Ghanashyam Panigrahi. Freedom fighters like Chintamani Pujari, Behari Ram, Nrusingha Guru, Laxmi Narayan Mishra and Durga Prasad Guru were given the responsibility of mobilizing volunteers for the *Satyagrah* in the areas in the north of Mahanadi and Ghanashyam Panigrahi, Bhagirathi Patnaik and Dayananda Satpathy were to mobilize volunteers from the areas in the south of Mahanadi. The latter were to be assisted by Fakir Behera, Laxmi Narayan Agrawal, Chaturbhuj Sharma and Kunja Behari Dash. These freedom fighters organized *satyagrahis* for several batches of volunteers to go to Inchudi, a village on the sea-shore of Balasore

district, to prepare salt and to offer *Satyagraha*. These volunteers were lathi charged by the Police and prevented from making salt at Inchudi.

The Salt *Satyagraha* was withdrawn by Gandhiji on 5 March, 1931 after the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed by the Congress leaders and the representatives of the British Government. A meeting of the Congress workers was thereafter called at Bargarh where leaders like Ghanashyam Panigrahi, Laxmi Narayan Mishra and Nrusingha Guru explained to the workers how the Salt *Satyagraha* had succeeded, because, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact allowed common people to prepare salt for home consumption and Congress workers were allowed to picket wine-shops and shops where foreign cloth was sold.

Gandhiji had hoped to get more concessions from the British Government in the Round Table Conference held in London in the last months of 1931. But the Conference was a failure. Gandhiji, therefore, gave a call for the second Civil Disobedience Movement in 1932. Large numbers of Congress leaders and workers were arrested by the British to suppress this movement.

During this Movement at Sambalpur Nrusingha Guru and Brundaban Guru of Dulampur near Attabia were arrested by the police for distributing anti-Government pamphlets at Sambalpur.

After being released from jail, Gandhiji gave a call for Individual *Satyagraha* or Individual Civil Disobedience Movement from August 1933. Only those who had no family burden or on whom no one depended were to court arrest during this *Satyagraha*. Nrusingha Guru, Brundaban Guru, Mahabir Singh, Bhagirathi Patnaik, Jambobati Patnaik and Prafulla Patnaik offered individual *Satyagraha* and were arrested at Sambalpur. Jambobati Patnaik was sent to Bhagalpur Central Jail and the rest were sent to Patna Camp Jail. They were released from jail after the terrible earthquake in Bihar in 1934.

Gandhiji intensified his programme for eradication of untouchability after the British Government announced the Communal Award in 1932. To fight against the British policy of communal divide he began the publication of a periodical named Harijan in 1933 and soon after formed the All India Harijan Sevak Sangha. A district committee of Harijan Sevak Sangha was formed at Sambalpur with Chandra Shekhar Behera as president and Nrusingha Guru as Secretary. Nrusingha Guru and the members of the committee spread themselves among different villages. Harijans in every village were allowed to use ponds and wells and temples were opened for their entry and worship. A Harijan Primary School was established at a village named Fatapali. The president of All India Harijan Sevak Sangha, Amrit Lal Thakkar, popularly known as Thakkar Bappa, visited Sambalpur in 1933 and expressed his satisfaction over the work being done by the Sambalpur Committee.

To intensify the Harijan movement Gandhiji began a tour of different parts of India. In 1934 he came to Sambalpur again. He addressed public meetings at Jharsuguda and Sambalpur and went to the Harijan bustee at Thekopa and was full of praise for the work done by Nrusingha Guru. He also spent some time with leprosy patients in the nearby leprosy colony.

Janardan Supkar had donated a house near Fatak in Sambalpur for being used as a Hostel for Harijan students. Gandhiji inaugurated this Hostel during his present visit. Nrusingha Guru was asked to work as the Superintendent of the Hostel.

Nrusingha Guru, Mahabir Singh, Nagarmal Kedia and Kasta Ram Tanti attended the 1934 session of the Indian National Congress at Mumbai (Bombay) as representatives of the District Harijan Sevak Sangha.

Nrusingha Guru worked as the Superintendent of this Harijan Hostel as long as it functioned. He visited the hostel every day and took great care of the boarders. He had no hesitation of any kind in



personally going round and collecting rice and other things from willing people in and around Sambalpur and making the same available to the boarders. He often talked to the boarders about the freedom movement and about Gandhiji and his ideals and thus inspired them to be good individuals. There were about twenty boarders in this hostel. It was so well managed that many Congress leaders of Orissa came and stayed there during their visit to Sambalpur. Among those who stayed there were leaders like Thakkar Bappa, Acharya Harihar, Nanda Kishore Dash and Pandit Lingaraj Mishra. Many of the boarders later occupied important positions in their lives. One of them became a Cabinet Minister and others became Deputy Magistrates. They were all influenced by the sincerity, simplicity and tremendous love and affection of Nrusingha Guru. They have sung their praises of the great love and concern that he displayed towards them in their articles published in a Souvenir in 1995.

His concern for the wellbeing of the Harijans was deep-rooted and hence he worked as the Secretary of the Harijan Sevak Sangha, Sambalpur Branch with great dedication and commitment.

In the Second Individual Satyagraha that Gandhiji launched in 1940 many freedom fighters from Sambalpur were arrested. This Satyagraha was withdrawn when Japan, during the Second World War, attacked Pearl Harbour an important America naval base..

The Indian National Congress was unhappy with the dillydallying response of the British Government to its demand for full independence for India. Hence, as a final stroke, in its Mumbai (Bombay) session in 1942, it decided to launch The Quit India Movement. The British Government, as usual, started its repressive measures. All the national leaders were arrested. At Sambalpur many leaders like Bodhram Dubey and Prahallad Rai Lalth were arrested from their residences. Nrusingha Guru, who had not taken part in Individual Satyagraha of 1940 as he was in charge of the Harijan Hostel, was arrested from the Hostel premises by the Deputy

Commissioner of Sambalpur under the National Defense Act and was taken to Sambalpur jail.

Late Jogendra Mahanand, an inmate of the Hostel, in his article published in the earlier mentioned Souvenir, feelingly and with great pride describes the scene of arrest. Acharya Harihar Dash, Dayananda Satpathy and Nrusingha Guru were closeted in the latter's room in the Hostel for a discussion of plans relating to the Quit India Movement. About ten minutes after the first two individuals had left, Nrusingha Guru had his breakfast and was spinning on the *charkha* when a brand new car entered the Hostel from the front gate. Lord Archibald, the then Deputy Commissioner of Sambalpur, alighted from the car, greeted him with folded hands and with a smile enquired if he was doing well. Nrusingha Guru, with a smile on his face, replied that as long as the British remained in India no Indian could be well. The next moment the Deputy Commissioner told him that he had come to arrest him. Nrusingha Guru immediately went into his room and taking some clothes with him got into the car. Before leaving he told the boarders of the Hostel that he was now a prisoner of the Raj and that during his absence they should mind their studies most.

False charges were thereafter levelled against Nrusingha Guru and though no charges were proved against him, he was detained in jail for more than two years under the provisions of the said National Defence Act.

When he was arrested his six year old daughter, Dineshwari, was having high fever. People advised him to apply to the authorities to give him a week's time so that he could give proper treatment to his daughter. But Nrusingha Guru could not think of demeaning himself before the British Government by doing so. Hence, leaving everything to God, he continued to remain in the jail. His younger brother, Durga Prasad Guru, was arrested immediately thereafter and the girl died after three days due to lack of proper treatment.

In July 1944 Nrusingha Guru was released from jail but by that time his daughter Dineswari was no more.

The Quit India Movement of 1942 had a tremendous and deep impact on the freedom movement throughout Sambalpur district. Thousands of people from the towns and villages courted arrest. A large number of freedom fighters from villages like Remenda in Bargarh Sub-Division and Panimora near Sohela courted arrest during the Movement. All these freedom fighters sacrificed everything to help the country to be free. But there is no record of the sacrifices or the exceptional deeds of most of these soldiers of the freedom struggle in the undivided district of Sambalpur.

The Quit India Movement of 1942, in a sense, was the culmination of the Indian struggle for independence. The Government succeeded in putting it down soon by adopting repressive measures in which more than a thousand people were killed. The Movement, though short-lived, was intense and at the end of it there was no doubt in the minds of Indians that grant of freedom to India by the British was just a matter of time. There were many parleys and much bargaining between 1942 and 1947 when on August 15, 1947 India became an independent country.

Since the day Nrusingha Guru left the school at the age of nineteen, while he was a student of class eleven, to participate in the freedom struggle, he never looked back till India became independent. Banishing all thoughts of his career and the welfare of the family, with single-minded devotion he devoted all his energy for the furtherance of the freedom struggle. His second marriage i.e. *bandapana* was held in 1922 when Gandhiji had withdrawn the Non-Cooperation Movement. If he then so liked, he would have lived the life of a householder. But he decided to do otherwise. Achieving freedom for the motherland was his uppermost consideration and he decided to give all that he could to the freedom struggle. He became a disciple of Gandhiji in body, mind and spirit. Though he had a family consisting

of his wife and children, he did not hesitate to resign his job in the Sambalpur Municipality to participate in the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930. He was, in fact, a very simple, soft-spoken person with no ambition of any kind except working hard and with utmost sincerity for the implementation of all those constructive programmes which Gandhiji had proclaimed for his people. Because he was simple, sincere and good as a worker, his colleagues in the Congress party both loved and respected him. They were confident that Nrusingha Guru would shoulder gladly any responsibility given to him and Nrusingha Guru did, in his turn, carry out all his responsibilities with utmost devotion. In the Congress circles he was considered a dependable co-worker and among his colleagues he was the most trusted friend.

#### IV

### POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA – JOURNALISTIC EXCELLENCE

Nrusingha Guru left school while he was a student of class XI to participate in the Non-Cooperation Movement when he was just nineteen years old. Had he not left school then and passed his Matriculation examination the same year, he would have joined the select company of a few Matriculates and would have been assured, like all Matriculates in those days, of a good job. He did not come from an opulent family and was badly in need of a regular source of income. His *bandapana*, the bridal ceremony, was performed in 1922 after the Non-Cooperation Movement was suspended by Gandhiji. He thus had the additional burden of his own family. Fortunately for him, he got a job in the Sambalpur Municipality of which Chandra Shekhar Behera was then the Chairman. Nrusingha Guru was a very close associate of Chandra Shekhar Behera in the freedom struggle and this must have facilitated his getting a job in the Municipality. But when the Civil Disobedience Movement was launched in 1930, responding to Gandhiji's call for resigning Government jobs, Nrusingha Guru resigned his job in the Sambalpur Municipality and joined the Civil Disobedience Movement. These two landmark incidents in Nrusingha Guru's life speak volumes about his deep love for the motherland and his total commitment to the freedom of the country. These incidents also show how he was prepared to offer any sacrifice if only his motherland could be freed from the fetters of the British rule. In everything that he did during the freedom movement he always

put the country before self. The annals of the Indian freedom movement abound in instances of unprecedented sacrifices on the part of each of the freedom fighters. But Nrusingha Guru's sacrifices of his own future and the future welfare of his family stand apart and deserve our admiration. Filled with the spirit of Gandhiji, throughout his life, he always rose to the occasion.

But as time passed he had to think of a source of earning his livelihood. He could not simply wish away his family responsibility for there was none other in the family to shoulder it. His parents had become old and his younger brother Durga Prasad Guru had died an early death. And the job of a journalist came handy to him. Gopabandhu Das, the undisputed leader of the freedom struggle in Orissa, was the brain behind the publication of "The Samaj" (Oriya Daily), the first Oriya newspaper from Cuttack in 1919, for spreading the message of the Indian National Congress among the masses. It was published first on *Bijay Dasami* day as a weekly with Gopabandhu Das as its editor. And it became a daily since April 1930. In 1932 Nrusingha Guru was designated as the first regular representative of "The Samaj" for the whole of Western Orissa.

This appointment as the staff reporter of "The Samaj" at Sambalpur did not come to Nrusingha Guru suddenly. It was the culmination of a process that had begun during Gandhiji's first visit to Sambalpur in 1928. He had sent a report regarding this visit to "The Samaj". A resident of Sambalpur had seen this report printed in "The Samaj" of those days at an exhibition at Bhubaneswar. During the *Salt Satyagraha* in 1929 he began sending more frequent news and reports regarding the *Satyagraha* so that people of other parts of Orissa could know what was happening at Sambalpur. This interest in collecting news and writing reports was the consequence of his avid interest in newspapers and periodicals which he displayed during his early school days.

In the house of his maternal grandfather, Jagadish Hota, at Saranda, where he went to complete his primary education, he used

to leaf through copies of Sambalpur Hitaishini, a periodical published from Deogarh of which his grandfather was a regular contributor. Purna Chandra Dash, the Headmaster of the Patnaikpada Middle English School, edited a weekly called Shakti and Nrusingha Guru, while a student of the said school, became interested in that periodical and read it avidly. Purna Chandra Dash was a nationalist and his views published in Shakti inspired Nrusingha Guru to be a nationalist and also a journalist. Bimbadhar Mishra, his guardian at Sambalpur during his studies in the Middle School, edited a paper called Utkal Sevak published from Frazer Press, Sambalpur and Nrusingha Guru read this paper regularly along with other newspapers that came to the Press of Bimbadhar Mishra. Krushna Chandra Sen Gupta, the Superintendent of the Zilla School Hostel, was a regular subscriber of Udbodhan, a periodical published by the Ram Krishna Mission in Kolkata (Calcutta). Nrusingha Guru was a favourite hostel inmate and student of Krushna Chandra Sen Gupta and thus he was allowed to read copies of Udbodhan. This periodical had a great impact on his mind during his formative years in the high school. He learnt moral and spiritual lessons from this periodical which stood him in good stead in later years and which helped him to become an honest, good and sincere person in his later life. The periodical Young India published by Gandhiji became a great favourite with him after he joined the Non-Cooperation Movement. Pandit Nilakantha Das, the Headmaster of the National School at Sambalpur, edited a weekly titled Seva which was published from the Mishra Press at Sambalpur in 1921. Nrusingha Guru was associated with the publication of this magazine and for some time he also worked as its editor.

It would thus appear that without his being aware of it, Nrusingha Guru was preparing for a career as a journalist even while he was deeply involved in the freedom struggle.

Before becoming an accredited reporter of "The Samaj" in 1932, Nrusingha Guru worked as a hawker and carried in his bicycle

copies of "The Samaj" to the individuals at their door-steps. He did this more to spread the message of Indian National Congress through "The Samaj" than to earn money. Because of his sincere efforts the circulation of "The Samaj" increased manifold in Sambalpur district and then he engaged other hawkers to distribute the paper. In course of time he was appointed as the Agent of "The Samaj" for the whole of Western Orissa and he began sending copies of "The Samaj" from Sambalpur to places like Bargarh, Bolangir, Deogarh, Sundargarh etc. Whenever a hawker absented himself from duty Nrusingha Guru did his work of distributing the paper. He continued this practice of carrying the news paper to the houses of individuals even in his old age.

In 1937 Nrusingha Guru, for a brief period, edited the weekly Jagaran published from Sambalpur by the young Congress workers of Sambalpur including Laxmi Narayan Mishra and Nityananda Bohidar. From 1937 he also worked as the correspondent of Associated Press of India at Sambalpur for some years. Bodhram Dubey of Nandapada, Sambalpur, then a Minister in the Orissa Cabinet, had recommended his case to N.R. Swamy, the Manager of the Associated Press of India. In 1947 The Associated Press of India became the Press Trust of India and Nrusingha Guru continued to work as its correspondent at Sambalpur.

He had learnt to apply the two principles of truth and non-violence in the struggle for independence. And he applied the same two principles in his work as a journalist. That was the reason why the then prestigious and only Oriya daily, "The Samaj", trusted him and chose him not only as its correspondent but also as its Agent at Sambalpur. For the same reason national press organizations like the Associated Press of India or the Press Trust of India held him in high esteem and placed the onerous responsibility of a correspondent on his shoulders.

Nrusingha Guru, as a press reporter, was unique. No one who had seen him ever since – a short-statured man in his *khadi* loin cloth around his waist, a *khadi chaddar* on his body and a *khadi* bag hanging from his left shoulder, with white *tilak* sandalwood paste linings across his forehead, the knotted tuft of hair at the back of his head, sometimes moving on an old bicycle, but most often walking bare-foot to collect news – could ever forget the sight and the man. His figure thus was a contrast to the other common figures of suit-clad or fashionably dressed journalists of even those days.

The uniqueness of Nrusingha Guru did not end with his appearance only. It extended to his way of looking at events and mode of writing about them. A true disciple of Gandhiji he adhered to truth in so far as the subject matter of the news item was concerned. He never wrote about any incident without himself personally verifying its veracity. For this reason whenever necessary he visited the nook and corners of Sambalpur district. For the same reason he did not mind commuting thirty kilometers every day from Gurupali to Sambalpur and back till he was provided a house at Sambalpur. Rains, cold winds and the scorching sun could not deter him from visiting a place for collecting truthful news. An expert in Oriya language, he would lay bare the facts of an event or a happening and send a finished thing to the head office at Cuttack. Uday Nath Sadangi, former news editor of “The Samaj”, has said that no editing of any kind was needed of the news reports sent by him. His handwriting was so good and his language so perfect that his reports were sent as such to the compositor. While writing news, his paramount consideration was truth. And he did not bother how the news affected the parties concerned. Neither did he want to please or flatter any one nor was he interested in deliberately harming any one. Truth always breeds fearlessness and Nrusingha Guru was totally fearless as a journalist and as an individual. Even in those days there were journalists at Sambalpur who collected money from people by blackmailing them or for praising them in public. Such things were far from Nrusingha Guru’s thinking; he could not

even dream of such things, of drooping so low in his profession. Uday Nath Sadangi has further asserted that at no time did they receive any refutation or any objection or any contradiction of any news items sent by him. And this was so because all that he wrote was based on facts and had maximum objectivity. His reports regarding proceedings of a meeting or a conference were very balanced. While writing his reports he did equal justice to all political parties, all organizations and all individuals. Consequently, though he was in the profession for almost half a century, he created no antagonism or enmity of any kind. Hence he was an *ajatshatru*, a person who had no enemies in this world.

Unlike many journalists of today he never accepted any news item written by others. Nor did he ever, like many journalists of even important news papers, prepare any news item based simply on an invitation card or on the tour programme of an important personality. He had very good personal relationship with the journalists of all news papers and paid great respect to each of them. Because of his humble manners and amiable nature he became very intimate with journalists like Shashi Bhusan Rath, editor of daily Asha published from Berhampur, Pandit Nilakantha Das, who edited ‘Seva’ for some years, Radhanath Rath, the editor of “The Samaj” and other journalists like Satyabadi Tripathy, N.R. Swamy and Pandit Lingaraj Mishra.

Nrusingha Guru was instrumental in making “The Samaj” a newspaper of the masses in Western Orissa. The sincerity and personal care with which the distribution of the paper was done by him and the hawkers employed by him made the paper the most popular among the newspapers and its circulation increased by leaps and bounds in a short time. He and his sons were so intimately associated with “The Samaj” that, in course of years, Nrusingha Guru’s name became synonymous with “The Samaj” in this part of Orissa.

He was so particular about collecting money from the paper subscribers and readers and sending the same to the head office at

Cuttack that Sri Uday Nath Sadangi, in his recollections of Nrusingha Guru published in the Souvenir of 1995, speaks in superlative terms about the honesty with which he maintained the accounts and the regularity with which he sent the money to "The Samaj" office between the seventh and tenth of every month. Sri Sadangi, in this context, also recalls how the agents of "The Samaj" in other districts were regular defaulters and the newspaper had to initiate court proceedings against them to realize the dues. This habit of Nrusingha Guru demonstrates the nobility and the purity of his personal character.

Nrusingha Guru was an expert in what is called investigative journalism. He was an expert agriculturist himself and in order to give news regarding agriculture he visited the villages, saw the condition of the crop himself, talked to the villagers and then wrote a report. Similarly while writing news about epidemics he made an on-the-spot study of the affected people.

An accident occurred at the dam site at Burla when Hirakud Dam was being built. Ten people died and about more than a hundred labourers were injured. As soon as Nrusingha Guru came to know of this accident, he went to the site of the accident on his old bicycle after covering a distance of about twenty kilometers as no other means of conveyance was available to him then. After visiting the sight of the accident he came back to the Hospital at Sambalpur and collected information from the injured persons who were admitted in the hospital. And he prepared a detailed report and sent it to N.R. Swamy, the Manager of Press Trust of India, Cuttack and the news was relayed the same evening by All India Radio, Cuttack.

On another occasion Surya Kumar Pujari, the then Land Acquisition Officer, Hirakud Dam Project and Shyam Sundar Padhi, the then Deputy Superintendent of Police, Sambalpur were stranded on a rock in the bed of the river Ib on account of a small accident which occurred when they were crossing the river on a motor boat. They had to spend the night on the rock and were rescued in the

morning. Nrusingha Guru immediately rushed to the spot and collected all the detailed information and sent it to Cuttack the same day. This piece of news was highly acclaimed by all concerned and the Press Trust of India gave him an award for his excellent work later.

Nrusingha Guru undertook an extensive tour of the drought affected areas of Nuapada and Paikmal in 1965-66 and sent detailed reports about the plight of the people in the affected areas, about starvation deaths, about the inadequacy of Government measures to alleviate people's sufferings and all these reports were published in the columns of "The Samaj". These reports created a great uproar in the Orissa Assembly then. The Government was put to severe criticism and it was, thus, forced to take up corrective measures that eventually proved to be of great help to the people of the draught-hit areas.

Nrusingha Guru, thus, utilized his profession as a journalist for serving the cause of the people and not for self-aggrandizement.

I have been a regular reader of "The Samaj" since my college days and I remember how the long and detailed reports about events and happenings prepared by Nrusingha Guru were published in the pages of that newspaper every day. They were very much unlike the cut and dried news items published in the pages of many newspapers those days. These days I find in many cases the reporters collect news of crimes, thefts and rape from their respective police stations. In many cases they collect news over phone and without verifying the authenticity of the item, send it for publication in their newspapers. Newspaper reporting, in many cases, has been turned into a white-collar job, where the reporters, without even moving out of their office rooms, collect news and some times calculate statistics for publication in their newspapers. In this respect Nrusingha Guru was an exception and belonged to a category of reporters which is slowly vanishing.

In so far as the choice of items for news reporting is concerned, Nrusingha Guru was also an exception. He avoided news relating to rape or cheating thinking that publication of such news

would corrupt the taste of the common man in our society. He did not touch any item for reporting if he thought that it would have an adverse effect on the moral life of the society. He was himself a person with a very refined taste and wanted not to infect the taste of the society by highlighting incidents of moral decrepitude. In this sense Nrusingha Guru, while performing the job of a reporter, acted as a social reformer. People with such high ideals of journalism are becoming rare and rarer these days and consequently the morals of the society are going down and down. Had Nrusingha Guru lived these days, he would have been filled with disgust by looking at the pages of many newspapers which carry nothing beyond stories of rape, theft, murder, deception, corruption and scams. He would have been dismayed to see that "The Samaj", which he had nurtured with such care and devotion, was no longer the same newspaper and though it has considerably improved in size and get-up, it does not carry within its pages the kind of news which it carried during his days.

Nrusingha Guru chose the profession of a journalist not for making money but for serving the people and reforming the society. For a long time he worked as an honorary press reporter. Subsequently he was given a monthly salary of Rs. 5/- which, in course of years, was increased to Rs. 250/-. This was the amount he was getting till about five years before his death.

Men in high offices sometimes arrange either a grand tea-party or a dinner for the journalists before addressing a Press Conference. And journalists throughout the world join these parties or dinners with great joy. Nrusingha Guru too, during his career as a journalist, was invited to such tea-parties or dinners. And he joined such occasions more for the sake of formality than for the joy it brought him. He did not attend any dinner or tea party if there were no press briefings. He was a pure vegetarian; he did not touch any drink either cold or hot and he did not have the habit of either chewing pan or smoking cigarettes. He was as simple and pure in his eating habits as

in his manner of dressing and thinking. With such exceptional attributes of his character, conduct and thinking, it was very natural that, as time passed, he came to be regarded with great respect by the community of newspaper reporters. Hence he was elected to work as the President of Sambalpur District Journalists' Association. He also became a respectable member of the Utkal Journalists' Association and represented Orissa in the Indian Federation of Working Journalists. And though he occupied such important positions in the fraternity of press reporters or press representatives, he was not touched by the sin of pride. And the great thing about him was that he never even dreamt of misusing his position for his personal benefit as many persons in similar positions are tempted to do today.

The values of life that inspired and motivated the Indians during the struggle for independence continued to do so for about two decades after it. Majority of people were illiterate and poor before independence, but, in those days, they looked towards and were guided by the people who were educated and who cherished high ideals of life. Introduction of the democratic form of Government and the spread of democratic values of equality, liberty and fraternity, spread of education among the common people and introduction of various developmental schemes began showing their impact on the post-Independence Indian society. Consequently the nature of the Indian society, the character of people that constituted it and the values of life which determined their conduct in society began to change with the passage of time. Change is the inevitable law of life; changes will take place despite our wishes to the contrary. People who resist changes, therefore, are most likely to suffer.

The people in charge of publication of "The Samaj" changed. Its outlook towards the people and their problems and the Government and its policies changed. But Nrusingha Guru, its correspondent and agent at Sambalpur, would not and could not change. Somebody has

to suffer when there is a conflict of interests. And in this case it could be none other than Nrusingha Guru.

Though Nrusingha Guru continued to work as the Sambalpur representative of "The Samaj", the management of the newspaper, for reasons best known to them, appointed another reporter at Sambalpur in 1978 without taking Nrusingha Guru into confidence. They were sure that Nrusingha Guru, whose every single act in life was determined by the Gandhian principles of truth and non-violence, would accept their decision without any opposition or resentment. Overlooking his contributions towards the wider circulation of the paper in the early years of its publication, they showed no reluctance of any kind in taking advantage his simplicity and humility. They now had more money and more power and in their scheme of things the half-clad little old man was no bigger or stronger than a peck. His son, Tarakanta Guru, who had been helping him as a press reporter in his advancing years and who was paid Rs. 250/- per month, was also asked to quit after the appointment of the new reporter. These acts of the management must have pained him immensely but not only did he tolerate the insult and the injury quietly but, surprisingly for all, he never expressed any resentment either against the management of "The Samaj" or against the newly appointed reporter. And, like a true Gandhian, he continued to work as sincerely and enthusiastically as he could for the newspaper.

But the last straw on his back was an incident that occurred in 1983. Laxmi Narayan Agrawal, a local contractor and a businessman of Padampur, suffered a massive heart attack when sleuths from the Income Tax Department raided his residence and business concerns at Padampur. I knew Laxmi Narayan Agrawal as he was a member of the Governing Body of Anchal College, Padampur during my tenure as its principal. He had built a block consisting of some rooms in which two science departments of the college were functioning. He had also built a *dharamshala* or a rest-shed for

patients who came for treatment to the Mission Hospital at Diptipur about fifteen kilometers from Padampur on the road to Sohela. Besides, he is also said to have constructed a *dharamshala* or rest-shed at Padampur. He was, thus, of a philanthropic bent of mind and was soft spoken, good natured and generous. The men of the Income Tax Department are reported to have not treated him properly. He was confined to one room during the period of the raid and was not allowed to leave it even to attend to the calls of nature. This is reported to have led to a sudden cardiac arrest on account of which he died. The people of Padampur were enraged and they protested against this action of the Income Tax Department. Nrusingha Guru, then past eighty, decided to visit Padampur with some of his trusted associates to make an on the spot study of the situation for preparing a report. They visited Padampur, interviewed many persons and collected detailed information on the basis of which a report was prepared by him and sent to Cuttack for publication in "The Samaj". A day after the report was published in "The Samaj", the then editor of "The Samaj" Dr. Radhanath Rath, being misled by some persons, published an apology for publishing the said news report which apparently went against the Income Tax Department. The same report was published in other newspapers as well, but they did not offer any apology for the same. Nrusingha Guru was shocked as this was the first and also the last report from him that was ever contradicted in the columns of the said newspaper.

Nrusingha Guru was a very very humble and reticent person. No one had seen him losing his temper on any occasion for any reason. On this occasion also, as usual, he suffered inwardly and quietly. The world, therefore, had no means to gauge the depth of his sufferings. It is a thing which he has left to others to imagine or surmise.

He continued to collect news and write reports for "The Samaj" even after 1978, i.e. after the appointment of a second reporter. But then he must have been dismayed to see the relatively greater



prominence accorded to the news items sent by the other reporter in comparison to the news reports sent by him in the columns of "The Samaj". But, like a true Stoic, he maintained, throughout the rest of his life, a studied indifference, never, however, neglecting his own duty. He was courteous towards his other colleague of "The Samaj" and never showed any resentment at what they did or at the things that were happening after he became a co-reporter.

Meanwhile Orissa Sanskrutik Samaj, a socio-cultural organization at Sambalpur, the Sambalpur University and many other organizations took note of the great service rendered by him to the society through his journalistic achievements and felicitated him on different occasions as a mark of their respect and recognition of his services.

In 1982 the Sambalpur District Journalists' Association decided to honour him for his outstanding contribution to journalism. In a function held at Nari Seva Sadan Shri Janaki Ballabh Patnaik, the then Chief Minister of Orissa, felicitated him by presenting him a plaque and an *angabashtra*.

By 1983 he had completed fifty years as an accredited journalist and that was a long long time of service in any profession. The type of service he had rendered during this period was also of a rare type. Nrusingha Guru had adhered to his principles and had served the society and "The Samaj" while serving the cause of truth unsullied by any selfish motive for enhancing his position or status in the society. The Sambalpur District Journalists' Association, therefore, decided to honour him as a token of its recognition of the services rendered by Nrusingha Guru to his profession and to the society at large. Nrusingha Guru at first showed his reluctance to attend the function which the Association was going to organize or to accept any honour that would be given to him, for, he believed that he had, in his profession as a journalist, done nothing except performing his legitimate duties to deserve any kind of reward or honour. But he

could not resist the persuasion of his colleagues and finally agreed to attend the function.

On the New Year's Day of 1984 a meeting was organized in the Koshala Bhawan at Sambalpur to felicitate Nrusingha Guru. In the presence of several reputed journalists, high-ranking officials, social workers, public representatives and a huge number of common people Nrusingha Guru was felicitated and honoured for the exceptional services rendered by him to the society and for his singular contributions to the field of journalism. Whoever spoke in this gathering, spoke highly of his achievements during his life.

Many people who were present at this meeting say that there was no sign of any elation on Nrusingha Guru's face on that occasion, though he listened to the praises showered on him. Though he did not contradict them and accepted with humility the commendations and the good words of the speakers, Nrusingha Guru perhaps felt that they were all bidding him farewell not only as a journalist but also as a human being living on this planet.

The next day i.e., on 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 1984, Nrusingha Guru decided to go to Sarangarh, then in Madhya Pradesh and now in Chhattisgarh, to attend the *dwadashah shraddha* ceremony of the wife of Sri Chittaranjan Mishra, the eldest son of his brother-in-law, late Dayaram Mishra. He was now eighty-two years old and despite his wife's objections he decided to join the function connected with the obsequies of the daughter-in-law of his brother-in-law who was already dead. Any other person in his place would have decided not to go to a distant place, but Nrusingha Guru gave utmost importance to social relations and that prompted him to decide in favour of going to Sarangarh. He hired a car and took his eldest daughter Kumudini Devi and son-in-law Yudhisthir Mahapatra with him as his wife was not in a position to undertake the journey.

That night, after he reached Sarangarh, he had a heart attack. Knowing that his end was approaching nearer he beacons his

daughter Kumudini Devi to the room meant for worship of the Goddess and lay his head on her lap and breathed his last with his eyes turned towards the idol of Goddess Durga, the *Ist-Devi* of the Mishra family, kept in the room.

Thus the life of this little great man of Orissa came to a sudden end. His was a long, long journey from a non-descript village to the battle-fields of the freedom movement, from an unknown lad to a renowned freedom fighter and a reputed journalist. It was an eventful and very fruitful journey during which our country became independent and the foundations of our democracy were laid. Cataclysmic changes had occurred around him during the journey, but he remained the same simple, unassuming individual that he was in his boyhood days.

A massive change, however, had occurred in the way the people now regarded him, of which he was, perhaps, unaware during his life-time. When his dead body was brought from Sarangarh in the same car the next morning, thousands of people turned up at his residence at Sambalpur to have the last *darshan* of this great freedom fighter, a reputed journalist and a real social reformer. An equally large number of people were present at Rajghat, on the banks of the Mahanadi at Sambalpur, where his dead body was cremated, to pay their homage to a human being whom they both loved and admired.

## V

### THE MAHATMA AND THE GURU

In the Indian cultural tradition a Mahatma and a Guru are both highly revered persons. They are revered because they are considered to be embodiments of traditional *gyan* or knowledge, virtues and wisdom. Self-imposed asceticism or *tapas*, celibacy or *brahmacharya*, non-attachment or *sanyas* and detachment or *bairagya* are the qualities that characterize their conduct in life and realization of the *Brahman* or the Ultimate Reality is the goal of their lives. While the Mahatma is stately stationed in the splendour of his attainments spreading light for any one who chooses to find it, the Guru assumes the role of a path-indicator for those who come to him. Basically they play an identical role in the society, the Guru being more pro-active than the Mahatma.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, through his prolonged efforts and in-depth experiments, came to acquire the characteristic qualities of both a Mahatma and a Guru. But never for a moment did he, like the traditional Mahatma or the Guru, think it necessary or right to forsake the world. His was the more difficult job because he wanted to acquire the attributes of a Mahatma or a Guru while still living a normal life. *Tapas* or ascetic practices he performed, non-attachment or *sanyas* he practiced and detachment or *bairagya* he gained while living through the flux of life. Hence he was an exceptional Mahatma. And, unlike many others, he did not want to become a Guru in the traditional sense of the term. He was and remained very much a man of the world and wanted it to change in order that it became a better

and happier world for men to live in. This was the reason why thousands of people were attracted towards him as towards a magnet and though the idea of playing the role of a traditional Guru never crossed his mind, thousands of individuals, in fact, treated him as their Guru and wanted to project themselves as his disciples.

This was the secret of his exceptional success in public life; this was the magic of his personality which transformed a whole nation of thirty-two million people and helped them achieve political independence for their country through peaceful and non-violent means.

Amongst thousands of freedom fighters who adopted the Gandhian way of life in the undivided Sambalpur district, two persons stand apart for their total commitment to Gandhian principles and the Gandhian way of thinking and living. And they are Pandit Ghanashyam Panigrahi of Manpur in Bheden police station and Nrusingha Guru of Gurupali in Sason police station. The former belonged to the senior generation of freedom fighters of Sambalpur which included Bhagirathi Patnaik, Jambobati Patnaik, Chintamani Pujari, Chandra Shekhar Behera and some others and the latter belonged to the younger generation of freedom fighters which included Laxmi Narayan Mishra, Pravabati Devi, Parbati Giri, Dayananda Satpathy and many others. Despite the difference in their age, they developed a very close relationship between one another because they both adopted the Gandhian way of thought and action in their public as well as private lives. This sameness of thought and spirit brought even their families together and each helped the other in whatever way was possible in times of each other's distress or need.

Though there was considerable difference in the circumstances of their birth and upbringing, they had a lot of temperamental similarity. Both became votaries of truth and non-violence in word, thought and deed. Simplicity, integrity, humility, truthfulness, fearlessness, social service, patriotism, Harijan seva, universal love and freedom from

vices like anger, envy, hatred, jealousy, deception and selfishness were the hallmarks of their character. Having acquired and cultivated these traits in their characters during the freedom struggle, they continued to practice them in their long lives after independence.

As has been stated earlier Nrusingha Guru wore only *khadi dhoti* and *chaddar* from the moment he decided to be a disciple of the Mahatma. Besides the *dhoti* that covered up to his knees and the *chaddar* that covered the upper part of his body, he also hung a *khadi* bag on his left shoulder. He adopted Gandhiji's *swadeshi* principle in a wider sense and instead of the imported sugar he used the indigenous *gur* prepared from sugarcane juice; instead of machine made umbrellas, he used *chhata* made of *tal* leaves or bamboo and he never used shoes of any kind and walked barefoot everywhere in all seasons – the rainy, the winter and the summer. He always carried a *takali* or a spindle and spun thread whenever he found time. At home he sat at the *charkha* every day for some time and spun thread from cotton.

He was a pure vegetarian and never touched fish, meat or eggs. Once during an election campaign in 1936 without his knowledge he ate meat. He was mortified when he learnt that he had eaten meat. Returning home the next day, he fasted for a full twenty-four hours to clean his body and mind. On a similar occasion in 1982 on their way back to Sambalpur from the flood affected areas of Boudh he ordered food for his associates at a wayside hotel. While his associates were to be served meat, he was to have a vegetarian meal. The hotelier, however, served him meat by mistake and he too tasted it thinking it to be mushroom curry. Returning home, he immediately bathed, changed his sacred thread and fasted for twenty-four hours without taking even a drop of water.

Born in a conservative Brahmin family, he was himself very conservative in his personal habits. Like a typical Brahmin he wore a tuft of hair tied into a knot at the back of his head. Getting up at four

o'clock in the morning he would offer his morning ablutions, put a broad-band of sandalwood paste on his forehead, worship the Gods, read one chapter of *The Geeta*, sing *bhajans* from Gangadhar Meher and Upendra Bhanja and then come out for his day's work which would continue, even in his old age, till midnight. Meher's *Mangale Aila Usha* was his great favourite. In the Hindu month of *Aswin* he worshipped Goddess Durga and read *Durga Saptasati* during the *Triratriya Puja* celebrations.

But he did not suffer from the narrow pride of conservative Brahmins. He did not look down on any person belonging either to his own caste or any other caste. In fact, being inspired by Gandhian ideals, he loved the Harijans as his own. Besides visiting the Harijan *bustees* for cleaning them, he goaded the Harijans to give up eating cow-meat and drinking wine, and he sat with them to partake of the *prasad* that was served after a session of *Bhagbat* reading. In fact, during the period he was the Superintendent of the Harijan *Chhatrabas*, he closed the *Chhatrabas* mess and invited the inmates to his house to eat during the *shraddha* ceremony of his parents. He cared the least when he was excommunicated and declared outcaste by conservative Brahmins. The care and affection with which he looked after the inmates of the Harijan Hostel or *Chatrabas* while working as its Superintendent has been recalled with great nostalgia by its former inmates. In the articles written by Sri Mohan Nag, a former Minister of the Fisheries and Veterinary Department of the Government of Orissa, late Purandhar Sasani, Sri Ghanashyam Besan and late Jogendra Mahanand - all published in the *Smaranika* or Souvenir on the occasion of the eleventh death anniversary of Nrusingha Guru in 1995 - one can get a very vivid picture of the impact Nrusingha Guru had on the impressionable minds of the Harijan students during their formative years. They all speak of the deep affection he had for them. He had such great concern for their welfare that he did not hesitate to beg rice, vegetables etc. for the inmates of the hostel from the generous persons of the town. He visited the Hostel every day and did his best

to sort out the problems faced by the boarders. Many of the boarders were so inspired and influenced by the conduct of Nrusingha Guru, that they were able to establish themselves in good positions later in their lives.

In order that the future generations of the Harijans may prosper, he encouraged them to join schools and also helped establishing Harijan Schools near Harijan settlements. He always fought for the rights of the Harijans. And his overall contribution to the upliftment of the Harijans was so much that according to late Jogendra Mahanand Nrusingha Guru will be remembered by Harijans as a person whose name should be uttered with great reverence every morning.

His sympathies and concerns were not limited to one section of the society. He was involuntarily lured towards all distressed human beings. In 1922 cholera epidemic broke out in village Manpur. Nrusingha Guru, with other volunteers, went to the village with medicines. They took steps to keep the village clean and to disinfect the village pond from which people used water for drinking. They visited every house where people were affected and gave them homoeopathic medicines. As a result of their efforts death of many people was averted and the spread of the epidemic checked.

In 1943 Nrusingha Guru was again found actively working in another cholera afflicted village near Jharsuguda. Most of the people had deserted the village in panic leaving their own relatives to the mercy of God. Nrusingha Guru helped the medical team in the village and nursed the deserted patients with great care and patience. Any one who saw him working there became full of admiration for him.

Nrusingha Guru could be seen moving here and there in the flood affected areas of Sambalpur, of Boudh Sub-division of the undivided Kandhamal district and Sonapur Sub-division of the undivided district of Bolangir during the 1980 floods assisting and directing the relief teams. He went to places like Bausuni of Boudh

Sub-division, the worst affected area, where the flood affected people were temporarily sheltered in schools or relief camps and supervised cooking and distribution of food among them. He was nearing eighty years of age but his commitment to help the people in distress was so deep and sincere that age could not prevent him from doing what he instinctively desired to do.

In the 1982 floods at Sambalpur he, at the age of eighty years, was equally active and helped the flood affected people of the low lying areas of Sambalpur in whatever way he could.

Not many freedom fighters of Sambalpur and other places had this kind of commitment to social service and in this respect, too, like Gandhiji, he stands apart among the freedom fighters.

Dismayed by the turn of events that were taking place in the political, economic and social life of India after independence, some freedom fighters of Sambalpur like Nrusingha Guru, Dayananda Satpathy and Manglu Pradhan decided to contest the 1957 elections to the Orissa State Assembly. While the Communist Party of India nominated Dayananda Satpathy, the Indian National Congress, of which the other two were members, decided in its wisdom not to nominate them as the party's candidates in the election. Eager as they were to change the trend of events in the political and social arena of the time, they filed their nominations as independent candidates. A Gandhi-ite through and through, Nrusingha Guru wanted Gandhiji's *Ram Rajya* to dawn upon the soil of India and, he believed, entering the State Assembly could be one of the ways of realizing Gandhiji's dreams of *Ram Rajya*.

He deposited Rs. 500/- as the security money needed to fight elections and that was the entire amount he spent in the elections. He visited most of the villages in Katarbaga constituency, from which he was contesting the election, using the bicycle that was his friend from his childhood days. He organized no meetings, printed no pamphlets, engaged no volunteers and did not use any other vehicle

or even microphones. He personally met as many people as he could and explained to them why he was contesting this election.

The electorate in India had already been taught by politicians whom to vote for and how to vote. Naturally, therefore, persons like Nrusingha Guru could not win in such elections. Nrusingha Guru not only lost the election but he had to forfeit the security money deposited by him as he could get only 1450 votes. Dayananda Satpathy, another freedom fighter of Sambalpur, who contested the election as a Communist Party of India candidate from Deogarh assembly constituency, also was defeated in the said election as he secured only 1881 votes. Manglu Pradhan, the third freedom fighter of Sambalpur and an Adibasi belonging to Remenda, lost the election as an independent candidate from Sambalpur Assembly constituency as well in this election.

That the three freedom fighters of Sambalpur could not win in the 1957 general elections was a clear indication of the fact that significant changes had taken place in the Indian polity within ten years of independence. Gandhiji's principles of non-violence and truth had lost the sway they had in the pre-Independence days.

Nrusingha Guru realized during this election that elections in India could not be won with the promises that abstract ideals gave for the future. Hard money power, crocodile tears for the supposed plight of the people and false promises for the future were needed to win elections. He further realized that his experiment with Gandhian principles vis-à-vis public life in India had failed. He, therefore, decided to carry on his personal life on Gandhian lines with double vigour in the remaining years of his life.

That he practiced the Gandhian principles of truth and non-violence in his everyday life with greater vigour is proved by an account of two incidents given by Sri Uday Nath Sadangi, a former News Editor of *The Samaj*, in his article published in the *Smaranika* or Souvenir of 1995.

Late Dr. Radhanath Rath, the then Editor of The Samaj, once became a Cabinet Minister of the Government of Orissa. Nrusingha Guru went to Cuttack to meet him. But as Dr. Rath was then staying in Bhubaneswar, he had to go with Sri Uday Nath Sadangi to Bhubaneswar to meet him. After reaching the Minister's residence he sent his identity card to Dr. Rath through a peon. After being summoned by the Minister, Nrusingha Guru and Sri Uday Nath Sadangi both entered his office chamber. When Dr. Rath saw this half-clad journalist and the Sambalpur representative of his prestigious daily, he could not control his anger and told him that The Samaj may not like to keep a shabbily dressed man as its representative at Sambalpur because the representative is often required to meet dignitaries and high ranking officials. The office chamber of the Minister was filled with officials, clerks and other visitors. Hearing such angry words from the Minister, awe stricken, they turned their anxious eyes towards the little man dressed in *khadi* up to his knees and a *khadi chaddar* on his body. And they were all stunned to hear Nrusingha Guru's answer. Unperturbed and maintaining the usual quiet tenor of his voice, Nrusingha Guru told the Minister that if his dress does not suit the representative of The Samaj he would rather prefer to cease to be its representative than quit the manner of his dressing. The Minister, not expecting such a reply, asked Nrusingha Guru to go inside the residence where they could later talk business matters.

Another incident mentioned by Sri Sadangi is more interesting and more revealing of the Gandhian spirit that informed Nrusingha Guru's mind and conduct.

Whenever he went to The Samaj Office at Cuttack he carried a small bed-spread and a pillow and always slept on the floor of a room wishing not to be dependent on any one. On evening, after finishing his work in The Samaj Office, he informed the Manager that he was going out and might be late in coming back. Hence he requested the Manager to inform the night guard accordingly so that

when he came to the office, he would allow him to get in. It was about 11 o' clock when he returned to Gopabandhu Bhawan where The Samaj office was located. The guard on duty at the gate did not allow him to get in as he did not know him and the Manager had not told him anything about any visitor coming to the office at night. Nrusingha Guru could have asked the guard to inform the Manager about him, but instead of doing so, he quietly left the place and went to the nearby Gopabandhu Bag or Park where he covered himself with his *chaddar* and lay down to sleep on the platform below the statue of Gopabandhu Das. Bad luck followed him there too. The keeper of the Bag thought him to be an unwanted person and informed the Policeman on patrolling duty, who took Nrusingha Guru to Lalbag Police Station and locked him in the Hazat. Nrusingha Guru did not tell anything to the Inspector-in-charge of the Police Station and spent the night comfortably inside the warm Hazat. In the morning enquiries revealed his identity and Sri Uday Nath Sadangi was asked to bring him to The Samaj office from the Police Station. On his way back to The Samaj office, quietly and with a smile on his face, he informed Sri Sadangi that it was more pleasant for him to spend the wintry night inside the Hazat than in the open in Gopabandhu Bag. So unassuming, so self-effacing was his nature that he made other people realize their mistakes in such a quiet but effective way that they would never dare repeat their acts of carelessness in future. All persons in The Samaj office, including the Manager, were thus taught a lesson which they might not ever forget in their lives, though Nrusingha Guru had no such intention in doing what he did that night. All that he wanted was a good night's sleep and nothing more.

Nrusingha Guru, the freedom fighter, who later worked as a Press Reporter or journalist did not do so for earning money. He did the job to help the people in society, to make them aware of the evils of superstitious beliefs and to highlight the problems of the deprived sections of the community. His ultimate objective was to make the nation a better place to live in. In this sphere of social life he was

inspired by Gandhiji's spirit of selfless service to the society and he was prepared to face all kinds of adverse circumstances while collecting news and sending them to the head office at Cuttack for immediate publication. Nrusingha Guru had not constructed any house at Sambalpur and, till he was provided with one by the Government, he did not mind covering daily a distance of thirty kilometers from Gurupali to Sambalpur and back.

Newspapers came into being out of the needs of the society and they subsist on the wherewithal provided by the society. Consequently they have a great responsibility towards the society. In a democracy they function as the fourth pillar and provide sustenance to it. In the post-independence era they did serve as the fourth pillar of the nascent democracy in India and helped to strengthen its roots. This was one of the main reasons why democracy survived in India while it failed in many neighbouring countries which gained independence along with India. We have travelled a long way on the path of economic development but the number of hungry and illiterate persons still runs into several millions. A time has, therefore, come when newspapers, besides functioning as the fourth pillar supporting democracy, should take upon themselves the role of the fifth pillar of democracy supporting economic development on which depends the healthy growth of the human material in a democracy. Instead of simply highlighting social and economic offences and evils newspaper reporters should aim at, as Nrusingha Guru did, creating public opinion, through the columns of their newspapers, in favour of economic, mental and moral development of each individual in the society.

Nrusingha Guru, in addition to being an enlightened journalist, was an enlightened and ideal agriculturist. He introduced new methods of agriculture to cultivate his own land and thus set an example which inspired other farmers to increase the yield per acre from their fields. He considered that increasing agricultural yield was as much helpful

for the farmers as it was a necessity to make India self-sufficient in food.

Immediately after the completion of Hirakud Dam project agriculturists in some areas of Sambalpur were reluctant to use water from the irrigation canals for irrigating their lands because they were led to a superstitious belief that the water lost some of its vital elements after it went through the turbines for production of electricity. The whole affair dismayed Nrusingha Guru and he decided to demonstrate that the people were wrong. He used water from the irrigation canals for cultivating his own fields at Gurupali and got very good yield. He thus practically demonstrated that water from the Hirakud Dam was as useful for cultivation as any other water. For enlightening the farmers thus and thus ensuring proper and the desired use of this project funded by the Government for the welfare of the farmers of this region, he was given an award by the authorities of the Integrated Agricultural Development Project of the State Government at Sambalpur.

He had learnt from Gandhiji that work was worship. Whatever job he undertook to do at any stage in his life, he did it perfectly. Sri Sarat Narayan Behera, a fellow journalist and a former Assistant Station Director of Akashvani (All India Radio), Sambalpur, in his article published in the Souvenir mentioned earlier, recalls how, in the summer months of May-June, one day, at about 1.30 p.m., Nrusingha Guru, several years older than Sri Behera, came to his residence with a request to provide him with a copy of the recorded speech of Dr. Radha Nath Rath, because the recording of the said speech arranged by The Samaj office had misfired. Nrusingha Guru had no hesitation in making such a request because he wanted to save the recorder of The Samaj office from any discomfiture and because he wanted that the contents of the said speech must be sent to Cuttack for publication in the Samaj the next morning.

Sri Behera also records another incident which reveals how humble, generous and good-natured Nrusingha Guru's temperament

was. Once Nrusingha Guru presided over a meeting held to condole the death of one Narayan Panda. In the regional news bulletin of All India Radio it was reported that a meeting was held at Sambalpur to condole the death of Nrusingha Guru. As soon as this news was broadcast, Sri Behera was asked by the Station Director to meet Nrusingha Guru and offer their unconditional apology for a grave mistake committed by All India Radio. Nrusingha Guru met Sri Behera with his usual smiling face and humourously told him how throughout the day he had been re-assuring people that he was still alive. And then he told him how important the job of a journalist was and how one simple mistake could create great havoc.

Nrusingha Guru, like a Mahatma, was fully stationed in himself and no storm or disturbance of any kind could dislodge him from the axis of his inner repose.

## VI A ROUNDING OFF

During my childhood days at Sarangarh I had seen Nrusingha Guru when he visited his in-laws' house. His elder brother-in-law Dayaram Mishra was our Science teacher in the High School and his house was in the same locality as ours. The sight of a *khadi*-clad freedom fighter was a rare sight for us because at Sarangarh, then one of the princely states in the Eastern States Agency, there was no freedom movement of any kind. Freedom fighters like Nrusingha Guru visited Sarangarh because they had their relatives there. Others like Sarangadhar Dash came to Sarangarh because they had a safe heaven in the houses of Oriya families with whom they were acquainted. Whoever saw Nrusingha Guru for the first time was immediately reminded of Mahatma Gandhi, because there was a striking similarity in their appearances and I too was impressed in a similar manner.

As Nrusingha Guru was about thirty years senior to me in age, there was absolutely no chance of my having any personal contact with him at Sarangarh. But later when I served as a teacher in Gangadhar Meher College, Sambalpur, I did come into personal contact with him. He came to all the functions held in the college for collecting news and whenever we met, I would wish him, pay my respects to him as a son-in-law of my place and he would enquire about Sarangarh from me. He was so sincere about his duties as a news reporter that he never missed any function held in the college or at Sambalpur.



The first impression I had about Nrusingha Guru at Sarangarh became stronger and stronger as I came to know more and more about him at Sambalpur.

The Indian freedom struggle affected the whole of Indian nation in some way or the other, but it changed the course of lives of thousands of individuals bringing into the open, in its wake, the latent traits of their personality. In a majority of cases, the trial by fire turned them into the purest of gold. The harder the trial, the purer they became.

Nrusingha Guru's life is a unique example of this transformation process. Beginning his life as a normal child, he began his career in the school. Just a few months before completing his school studies, he came across a wave of freedom struggle on his way and moved by patriotic fervour and forgetting his own future and that of his family, he leapt into the advancing wave and went on braving the waves till the shore was reached. Gandhiji's ideals of a simple life, of self-sacrifice and service to the nation and to the deprived sections of our society through non-violent and truthful means fired the young man's imagination and he became an altogether different person during the course of a few years. In all spheres of his life, in his interaction with men and women in society, in dealing with the problems of life and different situations in life, in his dress, in his looks, in his eating habits, and in the very manner of his thinking he became like Mahatma Gandhi whose disciple he had chosen to be. Once he became a follower of Mahatma Gandhi, he did what the Mahatma wanted all his countrymen to do and in doing so he did not bother about his personal sufferings or the sufferings of the members of his family. He went to jail several times, served the Harijans, served other people in distress, and helped people in famine or disease stricken areas. All the time freedom of his county and liberation of his people from superstitions, poverty and ignorance were uppermost in his mind.

He worked like a fighter and a soldier during the freedom struggle. Though he did not play the role of a leader among the freedom

fighters, he was a good friend of all the freedom fighters of Sambalpur and Orissa. He addressed Ghanashyam Panigrahi as his elder brother and Dayanand Satpathy addressed him as elder brother. He could not give fiery speeches like Laxmi Narayan Mishra, but he was a silent and very sincere worker and was loved and respected by all. He had no ambition of becoming a front-rank leader, did not want to attract people's attention towards himself and was happy to work in his own simple and silent manner among freedom fighters of all ranks. Hence Chamru Parida, a freedom fighter of Panimora near Sohela, in his article published in the *Smaranika* of 1995, compares him to sage Basistha, the Guru of Raghuvansa, the dynasty of Lord Ram. No important decision during the different stages of the freedom struggle at Sambalpur was ever taken without consulting him. Young and innocent freedom fighters coming from the villages could easily become intimate with him and he was in a position to inspire them by his intimate sympathy, conduct and suggestions.

Chamru Parida has further stated that Laxmi Narayan Mishra, Nrusingha Guru and Dayananda Satpathy were like banyan trees for the freedom fighters to which they turned for shade and rest and which helped them find their way when they could not decide their courses of action.

Two incidents in the life of Nrusingha Guru indicate how freedom fighters and leaders at the national level knew him and had tremendous regard for him.

The first incident occurred during an election campaign when Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, came to Western Orissa. She was to alight at the aerodrome near Jharsuguda. All the journalists from Sambalpur and the neighbouring areas including Congress leaders were waiting for her plane to alight. The gathering at the airport being very large, Nrusingha Guru stood at a convenient place from where he could easily see what was happening and from where he could be easily spotted. After alighting from the plane when

Indira Gandhi began walking towards those who had assembled there to welcome her, her eyes suddenly fell on the figure of Nrusingha Guru. People assembled there saw her moving towards the place where Nrusingha Guru stood and every one present there was surprised to see her bending herself and touching his feet. Nrusingha Guru blessed her and she resumed her walk towards the assembly of people.

People who were present there could know that in the figure of Nrusingha Guru she saw Bapu and hence she paid her respects to him. Because of his total commitment to Gandhiji's way of thinking and doing, he often impressed others as another Bapu and this must have prompted Indira Gandhi to pay her obeisance to him.

In another incident which is said to have occurred on December 16, 1983, Biswambhar Nath Pandey, the then Governor of Orissa and a known freedom fighter of Uttar Pradesh in his youth, was to hold a press conference at Ashok Nivas at Burla that day. As one of the seniormost journalists of Sambalpur Nrusingha Guru occupied a front seat. All the while he was sitting there and waiting for the arrival of the Governor, he was wondering whether the Governor would recognize him. And he was very happily surprised when the Governor, noticing him in the front row and hearing from him words like 'Benares' and '1942', advanced towards him, breaking the rules of protocol, and hugged him with great pleasure. Obviously the Governor could recall his meeting Nrusingha Guru at Benares in 1942.

In the saga of Nrusingha Guru's public and private life sacrifice and service played a key role. They determined all his thinking and action. And our sages say that sacrifice i.e., abnegating the self and service i.e., giving away made one's mind and heart pure. This purity inside him kept him contented and was a perennial source of joy for him. Because of this sense of inward joy, a smile always flickered on his lips and lit his face. Like the Northern Star he was steady and

unmoved and even in the midst of adversity he continued to glow. Having burnt himself in the fire of sacrifice he irradiated a glow, a calm and a steadiness which the vices of the world would not dare deflect.

In the true tradition of the teachings of Lord Krishna, Nrusingha Guru performed his duties in the world consciously embracing simplicity and poverty and renouncing all worldly comforts. Ambition, a common vice of the modern world, had not touched him. Otherwise, with his extraordinary perseverance, dedication and devotion to the work at hand, he could have become a very powerful and influential person. But as he believed in only giving and not taking, his worldly possession remained what they were when he began his adult life. This might have been a cause of dissatisfaction among his children, but he never bothered about it. After independence when other freedom fighters contended and intrigued for their share of the cake, he quietly and diligently followed the profession of his choice, which, too, he accepted as a way of rendering service to the society.

He had no wealth and he did not mind; he had no power in the worldly sense and he did not hanker after it; recognition he did not care for; neglect he bore with stoic patience and resignation and revenge he could not dream of. And in the midst of all ups and downs, all ebb and flow of the tide in the flux of life, he, like a rock, stuck to his principles.

But if he was rock-like in the face of adversities, he was simultaneously and perennially humble, loving and kind as a human being. The smile on his face gave one the impression of a person who had been battered by life but who had braved it with real pleasure and glee and if you looked at him you would have the feeling that he was a soul which had surrendered and merged itself with the universe around him to be recognized only by the constant flicker of that smile. That smile as if told you that he was perfectly at ease with himself and the world around him.

That ease, that simplicity and that smile also reminded you of the Father of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi. Simplicity is a sure sign of greatness. All our saints had that simplicity. And Nrusingha Guru, who chose Mahatma Gandhi as his Guru, by following in the footsteps of the Mahatma, could finally change himself into a Mahatma.

Though Nrusingha Guru is no more with us, the ideals for which he lived and worked are still with us and these ideals have thus made him immortal.

## VII A FEW WORDS MORE

The freedom fighters of Sambalpur and for that matter those freedom fighters of Sonepur, Sundargarh, Bolangir, Deogarh and Kalahandi who suffered severely in the hands of the rulers of the former princely states of Western Orissa for their participation in the freedom struggle, had also, in various ways, contributed to the formation of a separate State of Orissa. But in the books of history of Orissa written after independence one finds only scant or no mention of these freedom fighters and their contribution towards the freedom of our motherland and formation of a separate State of Orissa. In addition, the State Government does not organize any programme on either the birth or death anniversary of these heroes of the freedom struggle in Orissa.

It appears to me that the freedom fighters of Western Orissa and of Sambalpur in particular, in the early days of the freedom struggle, had a direct connection with leaders of the freedom struggle at the national level and that their opinions counted in the formulation of policies to be adopted by the Indian National Congress in the subsequent stages of the struggle. They could convey their grievances, if any, directly to the national leaders and this gave a better direction to the freedom struggle at Sambalpur and the adjoining areas.

But in course of time as the Pradesh Congress Committee took the leadership, the voice of the local leaders began to be heard less and less. And after Independence the leadership is

now mostly controlled by the leaders of the coastal region and the local leaders of Western Orissa have been relegated to back-seats.

The disrespect with which organizations controlled by the Government of Orissa treat the freedom fighters of Orissa can be seen by a book-let titled *Gandhibadi Nrusingha Guru* published by the State Jana Shiksha Sadhan Kendra, Orissa, Bhubaneswar. The book-let, besides carrying a photograph on the front cover page of some one other than Nrusingha Guru, has a number of factual mistakes with regard to the life of Nrusingha Guru. On account of strong objections raised by the Nrusingha Guru Smruti Samiti the earlier photograph on the front cover page of the book-let has been replaced by that of Nrusingha Guru in the subsequent edition of the book but the factual mistakes of the earlier edition have not been corrected.

To ward off against such pitfalls, to perpetuate the memories of the freedom fighters for the benefit of the younger generation and to pay their respects to them, local people or the relatives of the freedom fighters have, in the case of some of the freedom fighters of Western Orissa, formed Smruti Samitis or Memorial Committees. These Smruti Samitis organize different functions and sometimes bring out Souvenirs on the occasion of the birth or death anniversary of these patriots and heroes.

One such Smruti Samiti or Memorial Committee was formed in 1984 immediately after the demise of Nrusingha Guru in January that year with late Prof. Prafulla Kumar Pati, a former Professor of English and Vice-Chancellor of Sambalpur University, as its President. Sri Digambar Pati, Chief Managing Director of the weekly Sambalshree was the Secretary of this Samiti for a long time. Sri Hemanta Kumar Mohapatra, Nrusingha Guru's grandson (son of his eldest daughter Kumudini Devi) is now working as the Secretary of the Samiti for the past some years and after the demise of Prof. P.K. Pati in January 2006, Prof. Aditya Prasad Padhi, former Professor

of Political Science, Sambalpur University and former Vice-Chancellor, Berhampur University has been working as its President.

This Smruti Samiti has done quite a lot of work to commemorate the memory of Nrusingha Guru ever since it was constituted. Besides organizing lectures and meetings on the birth and death anniversary of Nrusingha Guru every year, it published a Souvenir in 1995. As a result of the efforts of Nrusingha Guru Smruti Samiti, the road from Mudipara crossing to Khetrajpur Railway Station of Sambalpur was named as Nrusingha Guru Marg. And during the birth centenary year i.e, 2002-2003, the Smruti Samiti organized meetings and lectures throughout Orissa. The inaugural function was held at Sambalpur and the then Speaker of the Orissa Legislative Assembly, Sri Sarat Kumar Kar, gave the inaugural lecture. Among functions organized at Bhubaneswar, Berhampur, Bonai, Bargarh, Bolangir, Barpali, Bhawanipatna, Cuttack, Puri and Rourkela the then Governor of Orissa Shri M.M. Rajendran was the Chief Guest at the Deogarh function. The concluding function was held at Sambalpur with the present Chief Minister Sri Naveen Patnaik as the Chief Guest.

During the year a book titled *Nrusingha Guru The Freedom Fighter* and written by a former Professor of History of Sambalpur University, Prof. Chittaranjan Mishra, was published by Sambalpur University. *Nrusingha Satakam*, consisting of one hundred *slokas* in Sanskrit, written by Dr. Niranjana Pati of the P.G. Department of Sanskrit, Gangadhar Meher College, Sambalpur was also published in August 2003. A national Seminar and a regional Seminar on the life and achievements of Nrusingha Guru were also organized by the Sambalpur University during the centenary year.

Not satisfied with what it did during the year, the Smruti Samiti published a book in Oriya written by Prof. Jagyan Kumar Sahu titled *Sambalpurare Swadhinata Sangram O Nrusingha Gurunka Bhumika* in November 2003 and a book in Hindi written by Dr.

Balaram Dash titled *Paschim Odissa Ke Mahatma Gandhi: Nrusingha Guru* in 2005.

With its persistent efforts it was able to persuade the Government of Orissa in the Education Department to agree to its proposal of renaming Town High School, Sambalpur as Nrusingha Guru Town High School as Nrusingha Guru was a student of Patnaikpada Middle English School which was subsequently upgraded and named as Town High School. The school was formally renamed as Nrusingha Guru Town High School in a function held on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2005.

To cap all their efforts towards perpetuation of his memory a life-size bronze statue of Nrusingha Guru installed inside Nrusingha Guru Park at Mandalia crossing in the outskirts of Sambalpur near Durgapali was unveiled and the Nrusingha Guru Park inaugurated by Sri Rameshwar Thakur, the present Hon'ble Governor of Orissa on 28 October 2006. The Park has been built by Sambalpur Municipality and Mahanadi Coalfields Limited, Sambalpur have contributed the entire amount of fund needed for the preparation of the statue.

The Management of The Samaj at Cuttack, in the early days of its publication, was immensely benefited by the extraordinary sincerity of Nrusingha Guru as a result of which the newspaper became very popular in Western Orissa and its circulation increased manifold. There was a time when Nrusingha Guru was considered synonymous with The Samaj. Subsequently, however, events took a different turn and for no apparent reason The Samaj began distancing itself from Nrusingha Guru. And, wonder of all wonders, the Management of The Samaj did very little to honour the memory of one of its greatest benefactors and well-wishers during his centenary celebration. Several requests were made by late Prof. Prafulla Kumar Pati, the then President of Nrusingha Guru Smruti Samiti, to the functionaries of The Servants of the People Society, (Lok Sevak Mandal) New Delhi, which controls the management of The Samaj,

including its Board of Management at Cuttack and the Editor and General Manager of The Samaj, but they did nothing except holding a meeting in their office at Sambalpur during the centenary year. Even the promise of installing oil painted photographs of Nrusingha Guru made by the Editor and the Manager in the said meeting in Gopabandhu Bhawan at both Cuttack and Sambalpur remains to be fulfilled even to this day.

The Smruti Samiti, in addition, is organizing every year essay and debate competitions among school and college students at Sambalpur on topics related to Nrusingha Guru's life. This will certainly help creating awareness among these students of Nrusingha Guru's achievements as a freedom fighter, a social reformer and a journalist. But something else needs to be done in this direction. And that is, inclusion of information regarding Nrusingha Guru in the school textbooks. And I am told that the Smruti Samiti has already initiated action in this direction.

We, of the present generation, have to remember our saints and great men of the past generations and only by doing so can we facilitate the birth of saints and good men

---