

## **Nand Kishore Patnaik (AITUC), Puri, Cuttack, Orissa**

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>Name</b>              | <b>Nand Kishore Patnaik (AITUC), Puri</b>  |
| <b>Date of Interview</b> | January 23 to 25, 2003   |
| <b>Place</b>             | at Cuttack, Orissa   |
| <b>Context</b>           | Nandkishore Patnaik is now leading a retired life with his wife and a physically handicapped daughter under extreme economic constraints, but his exuberance and revolutionary fervour remains unaffected. |
| <b>Interviewers</b>      | Krishna Jha  |

### **Biographical Sketches**

I was born on September 16, 1923. My father was a visionary and knew many trades beginning from handling of various types of arms to medicine and had operated upon several patients successfully. He had toured all over the country at least four times. He was working in a princely state called Adgad under the then king Radhanath Dev Verma Patnaik. My father was liberal and believed in personal freedom and opposed Begari system (unpaid labour).

I was also greatly influenced by my elder brother Brajkishore Patnaik who was a communist. Later he studied in Ravenshaw college. He started working in Praja Mandal at Khanduni a place near Cuttack under the leadership of Radhanath Rath. I joined the student front and decided to boycott classes. It was my first political step of protest.

At the time of second world war, when Japanese forces were entering the country, I was given the charge of security arrangements. Later I was arrested on August 30, 1942.

It was also a time when communists were fighting in princely states and liberating them. One among them was a subdivision in Dhenkanal called Murhee, now renamed Kamakhyanagar. Murhee was declared free republic.

Soon the atrocities on the rebels were unleashed. I was sent with five others to Dhenkanal famous for the brutality of its king Shankar Pratap. We were made to starve with an allowance of three annas a day to meet all our expenses and soon launched hunger strike. Later the authorities conceded and the prisoners were given B grade with facilities.

Later after release, I came to Cuttack, but when wanted to join Ravenshaw college, the college authorities refused to take me back because of my rebellious past. I joined Christ college. By then famine and draught had taken its toll. In Orissa alone, 35000 starved to death. Food Movement was launched by communists.

I was active in student movement in 1944 and attended study circles to study about wage, labour and capital. It was the end of second world war and Communists launched postal, railways, press workers' and service sector workers' strike. It was a time when Cuttack was volatile. Labour

leaders like Radhakant Rath, Ramapati and Vaidya Nath Ratha were active and even contested from labour constituency. Radhakanth Rath became first labour member of Parliament.

It was at this time when Sree Durga Glass workers organised their strike and involved the entire workers community under the leadership of communists like Ramapati and others who themselves survived on a cup of tea or a lump of sugar a day.

All these movements added to the gamour and attaction towards the Communist Party and its trade union. I was active in the post independence period in the peace movement and was one of its national office bearer.

## Transcript Summary

Nandkishore Patnaik was born on September 16, 1923. His father was working in a princely state called Adgad under the then king Radhanath Dev Verma Patnaik. His father was liberal and believed in personal freedom and opposed Begari system (unpaid labour).

Nandkishore Patnaik was greatly influenced by his elder brother Brajkishore Patnaik who was a communist. Later he studied in Ravenshaw college. He started working in Praja Mandal at Khanduni a place near Cuttack under the leadership of Radhanath Rath. Nandkishore was active then on the student front and decided to boycott classes. It was his first political step of protest.

It was also a time when Japanese forces were entering the country and Nandkishore was among them who organised the security. Japanese had by then bombed Paradeep. It was a time when 1942 movement was also in the agenda. On August 30, 1942, Nandkishore was arrested. The political agent Griffin gave them a hearing when they went to him with their complaints. Later, Griffin was killed.

A subdivision in Dhenkanal called Murhee, now renamed Kamakhyanager was captured by the communist rebels led by Vaishnav Patnaik and all the police stations in the subdivision were burnt down. Murhee was declared free republic.

Soon the atrocities on the rebels were unleashed as Nandkishore among others was sent to Dhenkanal famous for the brutality of its king Shankar Pratap. These prisoners were made to starve as they were given an allowance of three annas a day to meet all their expenses. They soon launched hunger strike. As the authorities with the state prime minister came to negotiate, the prisoners attacked them with the only weapon available to them, their mats. They conceded and the prisoners were given B grade with facilities.

Later after release, when Nandkishore came to Cuttack, he met Bhagwaticharan Panigrahi, one of the founding members of the communist party in Orissa. When Nandkishore wanted to join Ravenshaw college, the college authorities refused to admit him because of his rebellious past. He joined Christ college. By then famine and draught had taken its toll. In Orissa alone, 35000 starved to death. Food Movement was launched by communists.

Nandkishore joined student movement in 1944. Alongwith others, he studied about wage, labour and capital. It was the end of second world war and Communists launched postal, railways, press workers' and service sector workers' strike. It was a time when Cuttack was volatile. Labour leaders like Radhakant Rath, Ramapati and Vaidya Nath Ratha were active and even contested from labour constituency. Radhanath Rath became first labour member of Parliament.

It was at this time when Sree Durga Glass workers organised their strike and involved the entire workers community under the leadership of communists like Ramapati and others who themselves survived on a of tea or a lump of sugar a day.

All these movements added to the gamour and attaction towards the Communist Party and its trade union. Nandkishore was also active in liberation movement of the princely states in collaboration with the Praja Mandals.