

Gurucharan Patnaik (AITUC) Cuttack, Orissa

Name	Gurucharan Patnaik (AITUC) Cuttack, Orissa
Date of Interview	January 27, 2003
Place	at Cuttack, Orissa
Context	Famous trade union leader in Orissa Gurucharan Patnaik leads a retired life in Cuttack alongwith his son and other family members. He has recently received Sahitya Academy award for his book on philosophical interpretation of the fables connected with Lord Jagannath.
Interviewers	Krishna Jha

Biographical Sketches

My date of birth is October 31, 1917. My father died when I was only five-month-old. My mother could not live without father and the same day she committed suicide leaving my four-year-old elder brother Anant Patnaik and me in the care of grandma.

I joined the Congress in 1930 and became part of the Vanar Sena. When caught by police, we were caned severely. My grandma sent me to Puri to live my maternal uncle. Congress Ashram was taken over by the police at Puri and was burnt down. I stayed inside the Jagannath temple with priests who were very affectionate to me.

I came to Delhi to attend the Congress session in 1932 and was arrested and kept in the historic jail near Khuni Darwaja. After coming back to Cuttack, again I was arrested and was sent to Patna where at least three to four thousand prisoners were kept in hutments made of tin roof and walls in the boiling heat. Many prisoners from Orissa perished in these extreme conditions. I also had small pox.

After I came out of the prison, grandma sent me to Kashi Vidyapeeth. Acharya Narendra Dev was my teacher who first taught me about socialism. Alongwith Prannath Patnaik, Nabakrishna Roychoudhary, Bhagwati Panigrahi and several others, we formed the Communist Party in Orissa.

In 1938, All India Communist Party Secretary PC Joshi came to Orissa and met the activists from Kissan, trade union, Princely state fronts and student fronts and others.

We knew that without organising the working class, we could not move towards socialism. Therefore, press workers union was founded in Cuttack. It was the first ever registered trade union of press workers in the country. But soon, in 1939 I was arrested in “Communist Conspiracy Case” and was in jail till 1942.

After my release, I returned to Cuttack and started organising Durga Glass workers. I was also taking part in the liberation struggle of the princely states alongwith Praja Mandal workers.

By the end of 1947-48, we were heading towards a massive joint movement of the workers from press, post and telegraph, railways and brought them into struggle.

In the post independence period, I was busy in organising workers in various trade unions though I never contested any elections.

Transcript Summary

Context: Famous trade union leader in Orissa Gurucharan Patnaik leads a retired life in Cuttack alongwith his son and other family members. He has recently received Sahitya Academy award for his book on philosophical interpretation of the fables connected with Lord Jagannath.

Gurucharan Patnaik was born on October 31, 1917. His father died when he was five - month old. The same day his mother committed suicide leaving her two sons in the care of her mother-in-law.

Gurucharan joined the Congress in 1930 and became part of the Vanar Sena. When caught in the rebellious activities like burning of foreign clothes, these kids were not arrested but only caned severely. Later he was sent to Puri to live his maternal uncle. Congress Ashram was taken over by the police at Puri and was burnt down. Gurucharan stayed with priests who were very affectionate to him.

In 1932, he went to Delhi to attend the Congress session but was arrested and kept in the historic jail near Khuni Darwaja. After coming back to Cuttack, again he was arrested and was sent to Patna where alongwith others he had to live in hutments made of tin roof and walls. Many prisoners from Orissa died because of heat. Gurucharan also had small pox.

Later after release he was sent to Kashi Vidyapeeth to continue his studies. It was under the influence of Acharya Narendra Dev, that Gurucharan was drawn towards socialism. Alongwith Prannath Patnaik, Nabakrishna Roychoudhary, Bhagwati Panigrahi and several others, he founded the Communist Party in Orissa.

In 1938, All India Communist Party Secretary PC Joshi came to Orissa and met the activists from Kissan, trade union, Princely state fronts and student fronts and others.

By this time press workers union was founded in Cuttack. It was the first ever registered trade union of press workers in the country. But soon, in 1939 he was taken prisoner in “Communist Conspiracy Case” and was released only in 1942.

After coming back to Cuttack, he organised Durga Glass workers. He was active in the liberation struggle of various princely states. By the end of 1947-48, he organised the workers from press, post and telegraph, railways and brought them into struggle.

Gurucharan Patnaik has been one of the tallest leaders of Orissa freedom struggle as well trade union movement. However he never contested any elections.