

## Contribution of Satyabadi School to National Movement

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The impact of the national movement in Orissa was apparent. It fuelled, mobilised and directed almost all the spheres of human life. The growth of national consciousness stirred the minds of the people making comparative analysis of their Socio-Political and Cultural retrogradation. It was the time of transition from the age of darkness to that enlightenment. The impact of the national movement was perhaps the most imminent on the development of education in Orissa. The title class could easily grasp the importance of development of this field. Hence, the beginning of the twentieth century saw gradual attempt and demands for the development of education and amelioration of educational conditions.<sup>1</sup>

It is significant that in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when many organisations and a host of important individuals engaged themselves in the task of redressing the political and socio-economic ills of Orissa, a small open air minor school which later became a High School, and then converted to National School with the name of Satyabadi

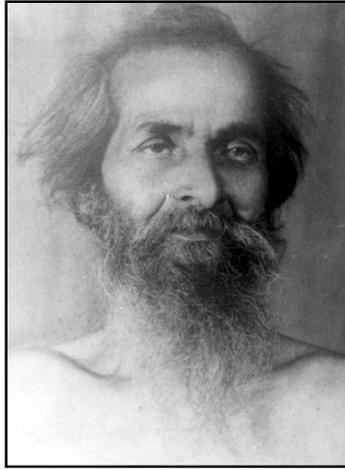
Vihar, was to play a vital role in shaping the history of the region. From 1866 onwards, the integration of all scattered territorial units of the Oriya-speaking people became the main favourite dream and the only wish of the people of Orissa and alongwith that the betterment of national life was desired. The nucleus of this mission was the poet, patriot and priest Gopabandhu Das.<sup>2</sup>



Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das

The Satyabadi School established on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1909<sup>3</sup> may be said to be the cradle of the National Movement in Puri District. It was at Sakhigopal or Satyabadi, 11 miles north of Puri and in the midst of mango and bakul groves.<sup>4</sup> There are various reasons in justification of this selection. The war against corruption, the reform movement and the educational policy which Gopabandhu intended carrying through his Satyabadi School reflected the above spirit. On the suggestion of Madhusudan Rao,<sup>5</sup> the place Satyabadi was chosen as the ideal place for the school. Its scenic beauty and the churiana trees imparting charm and fragrance must have been quite refreshing to the young boys who came to study there.<sup>6</sup> The school was

the product of lofty idealism of few young intellectuals who were convinced that much of the evil could be eradicated through proper development and training. Along with their studies, they taught the essence of life which would make them complete human being; courageous, confident and ready to work for the uplift and progress their brethren. These young intellectuals had before them the images of Eton, Harrow, Rugby and Furguson College of Pune. Gopabandhu Das was the brain behind the School.<sup>7</sup> A band of selfless youngmen namely Harihar Das, Nilakantha Das, Krupasindhu Mishra, Godavarish Mishra who distinguished themselves in later life as scholars and national leaders under the inspiring leadership of Pandit Gopabandhu Das popularly known as Utkalmani which means the Jewels of Orissa who managed this institution and carried on social service as well as nation building activities.<sup>8</sup> Pandit Gopabandhu converted it into an Ashram to carry on the social activities through it.<sup>9</sup>



Acharya Harihar

The British authorities hesitated to recognise the school in the first instance because of fabricated reports submitted by some local officers against the school. That the school was a revolutionary centre and the boys were being trained on that line was a notion which persisted in the minds of the authorities for some time. The school came into further prominence when Gopabandhu became a member of the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council in 1916. All of a sudden, it became a nationalist institution with the beginning of the Non-Co-operation Movement in Orissa and

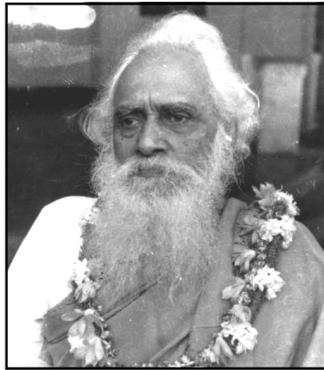
was known as Satyabadi Vihar. It finally collapsed in 1926. Though Satyabadi School existed for a brief period, yet it brought flicker and enlightened many a young mind in the province and helped to mould national consciousness to a great extent.<sup>10</sup>

Gopabandhu and his close associates wanted the school to remain free from Government Control. Hence, it never accepted any grant from authorities. The Satyabadi School drew attention from all quarters of life and its credibility as an educational institution soared up in public eyes with the growing reputation of Gopabandhu Das. People throughout Orissa admired this venture and many sent their sons to this school. Many boys from outlying Oriya tracts came to study here. His fame grew outside Orissa too.<sup>11</sup> Gopabandhu realised that unless a dedicated band of youngmen come forward to serve their

motherland, it would not be possible to raise the people from their age-long slumber. In order to remove lethargy, ignorance and poverty of the masses, Gopabandhu emphasised the need for proper education of youngmen in the province. At that time, there were a number of schools in Orissa, but those institutions were primarily designed to serve the needs of the Government. Therefore, Gopabandhu desired to establish an ideal school which would impart education to the pupils not only in traditional courses, but also infuse in their young minds the ideals of patriotism, social service, honesty and such other human virtues. It was a school with a different mission; the mission of making men who would serve their motherland.

Naturally it combined the two systems of education, the old Gurukul system and the system of English education prevalent in those days.<sup>12</sup> Besides education, the efforts were made to build the character of the students in the Satyabadi school. The students were imparted training in different fields like village industry, cottage industry, agriculture, carpentry etc. in order to be self-reliant in future. The courses were now being offered to the students of basic educational centres. The method of education was mainly based on the Indian Gurukul tradition. However, it was influenced by the modern ideas of western countries. The students were taught about the importance of discipline, moral character, the duty for the nation etc. Physical training was compulsory for all the students. To remind the students of the glorious cultural heritage of the country and to raise their national consciousness, students along with some teachers visited the historical places. Top priority was given to social service from the inception of the school. It was the intention of Gopabandhu to infuse the spirit of sacrifice and social service in the mind of the Pupils. The Satyabadi teachers and students challenged many social odds and evils. The students of different castes stayed and lived together.<sup>13</sup>

Satyabadi school was converted into a 'national school' by Gopabandhu after the call for non co-operation was railed, Pandit Krupasindhu Mishra was the then head of this national school.<sup>14</sup> Then its branches were established at many places to propagate the nationalistic ideas.<sup>15</sup> It was the impact of the national movement that turned the smooth, easy going tide of the Satyabadi School which



Pandit Nilakantha Das

merged into nationalistic activities with all its sincere efforts. The 'Pancha-Sakha' or five comrades contributed their best for the cause of national aspirations. They were equally dedicated to the blend of educational as well as political uplift of Orissa. Satyabadi became a national school with progressive and national ideals. It stood as a 'reaction' against the then leaders who nursed the cause of limited ideas.<sup>16</sup> Gopabandhu subsequently became the distinct leader of the new generation. His political loyalty towards Gandhiji was total. Acharya Harihar led the famous Inchudi salt Satyagraha in Orissa. This Satyagraha elevated Orissa's image in the eyes of the nation. The consequences of the political activities of these five comrades were rather harmful to the Satyabadi Movement. The school was virtually orphaned and could not function in the earlier manner. The students were inspired by Gopabandhu to plunge into national struggle. Gandhiji's visit to this place in 1921 gave further impetus to the spirit of the students at Satyabadi. They now grew up their studies and became active members of the Congress. Hence forth, Satyabadi became an active centre of non Co-operation movement rather than a model educational institution. The Satyabadi School was in the true spirit of a national school as its main objective was to become a honey-comb of India struggle of freedom. So far Orissa was concerned, it was able to carve out a place of uncommon significance in view of the fact that the pioneering freedom fighters of Orissa were assiduously associated with it. These leaders were self-less dedications and hard working who left no stone unturned for the achievement

of freedom as well as for the amalgamation of Oriya-speaking tracts. The big five comrades of Satyabadi school were leaders of their own distinction. It is true to say that these five leaders symbolised the history and culture of Orissa as well as India. They had struggled hard without most dedication in order to bring Orissa into the national mainstream. Their earnest desire was to alleviate Orissa from misery and sufferings. Orissa had bitter experience of being subjugated by external powers or different times. The Pancha Sakha not only fought for unification of Oriya-speaking tracts but also for the Indian struggle for emancipation which was the crying need of the hour. They wanted to bring Orissa into the mainstream of national life so that Orissa would see her brighter days. These leaders were not guided by narrow consideration in establishing Satyabadi School which became the seat and centre of freedom movement in Orissa.

The history of freedom movement would not be complete without reference to these five comrades. Freedom movement in Orissa is a regional manifestation of the All India Congress Movement of Indian National Congress. The National Movement was concerned not only with independence but also with social and economic reforms. Such reform movements existed in Orissa much before the Congress came to the scene.<sup>17</sup>

The National Movement in India did not allow Orissa to remain aloof and Orissa caught the spirit of nationalism. Gopabandhu saw the glorious future of Orissa in the national movement and plunged into it.<sup>18</sup> the Montford scheme was not approved by the Indian

National Congress. Besides, the public were very much excited due to the ill-famed Rowlatt Act<sup>19</sup> and the massacre of Jallianwalabag in Punjab. Gandhiji founded a new weapon of peace namely the 'Satyagraha' to fight against the British rulers, with the philosophy of Satyagrah a new struggle was started with the non-violent, non co-operation movement to which Gopabandhu alongwith his followers joined.<sup>20</sup> The chief contribution of Gopabandhu Das to the freedom movement were the creation



Pandit Godabarish Mishra

of national leaders with political training in his Satyabadi School, propagation of the message and programme of the non co-operation through the newspapers 'Asha' and 'Samaj' among the people and organisation of the Congress movement in making it a political force.

The Satyabadi leaders were pioneers in the field of freedom movement in India. The Indian National Movement was concerned not only with Independence but also with social and economic reforms. The centres of such movement was none other than the Satyabadi School. The Satyabadi leaders also attended some sessions of the Indian National Congress until they brought Congress to Orissa. From 1920, the Congress organisation was led by the Satyabadi group. The non-cooperation movement spread like wild fire due to the efforts of Gopabandhu and his associates. The students and teachers took active part in the non-cooperation movement in spreading the Congress message in different parts of Orissa. Even after the death of Gopabandhu his associates entered into the whirlpool of hectic politics.<sup>21</sup> The tremendous influence of this institution had weilded was too deep to be



Pandit Krupasindhu Mishra

blotted out of memory. In its own unique way Satyabadi has contributed a great deal to the cause of nationalism and education. Conjectures like what would have happened if it had not become a national school and so on would hardly serve any purpose. Though Satyabadi was an educational institution, it was also the thought and idea of Gopabandhu metamorphosed into an institution. It was therefore, only to be expected that when Gopabandhu after much thought decided to invite the wave of nationalism to Orissa, his institution would jump into it. It was only sad that others could not come to the rescue of the school and therefore its distinctive mark got obliterated.<sup>22</sup> The Satyabadi leaders also took part in the Civil Disobedience Movement.

The Satyabadi school had an indigenous character while striving for the fusion of the old with the new. It strove to restore the old Ashram school without emphasis on a sound mind in a sound body and plain living and high thinking. It was a factory to build up the personality of man. The most outstanding contribution of the Satyabadi school was the sense of nationalism and patriotism that it infused in the youth preparing them for the freedom struggle. The chief contribution of Pandit Gopabandhu Das was to raise political consciousness to amalgamate Oriya speaking tracts, and to achieve national independence.<sup>23</sup>

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