

## EDUCATIONAL THOUGHTS OF GOPABANDHU

**Dr. Sunil Behari Mohanty**  
**Head, Department of Education, Bhadrak College**

Utkal Mani Pandit Gopabandhu Das was an eminent educationist of this century. He is called Utkal Mani because of his contributions to the Utkala. Utkal is the old name of present Orissa State. Gopabandhu loved Orissa as his own mother. He worked for the welfare of the people of the State including education. Gopabandhu had taken birth at Suando village near Sakhigopal in Puri district. His father was a clerk to a pleader. He got his education in Orissa and Calcutta. His last formal degree was B. L from Calcutta University. Out of various educational efforts made by Gopabandhu, Satyavadi experiment is the most important one.

### **Satyavadi Experiment (1909-1926)**

Satyavadi is the other name of Sakhigopal. Gopabandhu had established an institution in Satyavadi. This institution was not an ordinary institution. It was a special institution. It was an ideal institution of that period. On the Kumar<sup>^</sup> Purnima day of the year 1909 (August 12) Satyavadi School was established. The Sakhigopal Temple trust had lent a room for the purpose. Gopabandhu selected Satyavadi because of its unique facilities. The place had a railway station. It was situated on the branch line joining Khurda Road and Puri. It was near to Puri town. It had a rural atmosphere. It had natural surrounding-Bakula and Chhuriana forest. Not only Gopabandhu liked the place but the School Inspector of that time, Bhakta Kavi Madhusudan Rao also preferred the place. The place also had additional facilities of furniture and other equipment of a proposed school. Gopabandhu could get the materials collected for the establishment of a Middle Vernacular School at nearby Sri Ramachandrapur village.

*The source of inspiration*—The source of inspiration for starting this school was the movement for national education. As a member of this movement Sri Aurobindo had left his job at Baroda and joined the National College, started at Calcutta. During Gopabandhu's study at Calcutta, he might have been motivated by the National School and College movements. The other source of inspiration may be Santiniketan, established by Rabindranath Tagore. Gopabandhu had thought of making Satyavadi grow up as Santiniketan. But public demand made him agree to develop Satyavadi as a Government recognised formal school. Gopabandhu was also motivated by the activities by the Decan Education Society of Poona, Maharashtra. This Society had members such as Gopal Krishna Gokhale and others. The society had established the famous Ferguson College of Poona. Gopabandhu had also been influenced by the activities of Gurukul Kangri, an institution based on ancient teachings. Thus, Satyavadi had various influences.

### **Principles followed in Satyavadi**

The principles followed in Satyavadi experiment were as follows:

*a) Patriotism*—The education given in formal schools of that period was controlled by the Government that consisted of Britishers. The education system wanted to make Indian children grow up a British in culture. It purposefully tried to develop in them hatred for their own culture. Satyavadi wanted to prepare students who would have faith in their own culture Satyavadi's education was aimed at creation of educational swaraj. Sri Aurobindo also had given a slogan for efforts for educational swaraj before attaining political swaraj. So many other personalities of that time also supported this idea. In fact, because of this principle, Satyavadi failed to get recognition in the first two years.

**b) Simple living and high thinking**—Satyavadi believed in simple living and high thinking. All teachers and students led an austere life. They did their daily cleaning of the rooms, safai etc. These activities made children grow up as humble citizens. They also read about high ideals. **PAGE 41** They did social service. They helped the suffering people at the time of flood, famine and epidemics of cholera and such other diseases.

**(c) Social service**—Social service makes man humble. Gopabandhu was the ideal of social service. This ideal was followed by other teachers and students. Satyavadi gave more importance to social service than to studies.

**(d) Social reform**—Satyavadi worked for social reform. At that time there was rigid feeling of casteism. Brahmins had certain code of conduct. A brahmin was not expected to grow moustache. Nilkantha Das, though a brahmin grew moustache so also his student. The students of different castes took meals together and lived in the same room. This was a social reform in action. Of course, this had created tension in the surrounding, which was a Brahmin dominated community. The angry and conservative Brahmins had once set fire to the school. But this did not deter the Satyavadi school from its social reform work.

**e) Moral and religious education**—As stated earlier, Gopabandhu had been influenced by the programmes of ancient educational institutions—*Tapovanas* and *Gurukulas*. He was a believer in Hindu religion- Therefore, reading of Hindu scriptures-Gita, Bhagabat, Mahabharata, Ramayana, etc. found a place in school programmes. There were discourses on religions.

**f) Informal relation between teacher and taught**—The Teacher and taught of Satyavadi were living in the same campus. There was informal relation between them love between the two did not exist in other schools. The teachers and students lived as a closely-knit family.

**(g) Teaching by ideal teachers**—Satyavadi had attracted many ideal teachers some of them were famous personalities. These teachers were ideal not only for the students but for the general public. Five teachers were named as Pancha sakha (Five friends). They were Gopabandhu, Nilakantha, Godavarish, Harihar and Kripasindhu, Nilkantha was a giant in literature. His writings include Konark, Pranayitri, etc. He was an M. A., Godavarish was famous as poet, short story writer, translator, and dramatist. Acharya Harihar Das was also doctor not only for the students and teachers of Satyavadi but also for the people of the surrounding area. Other teachers were Banchhanidhi of Patia, Pandit Ramachandra Rath, Sri Nilamani Das, Sri Basudev Mohapatra and others.

**h) Education in open air:** In the beginning, there was no room, afterwards, in spite of the availability of the room, teachers used Bakul and Chhuriana forest as classroom. The forest was cut. The thick jungle of trees and their parts served as walls. There was similarity between the open-air classrooms in Santiniketan of Tagore and Satyavadi of Gopabandhu.

**(i) Residential school**—Ancient Tapovanas and Gurukulas were mostly residential. This was the spirit behind Satyavadi. The students were encouraged to stay in the hostel along with their teachers. This helped in providing education not only during formal school hours but also before and after school hours, at the time of taking food, at the time of social work, etc.

**(j) Rural atmosphere**—Ancient Indian education was given in institutions, situated away from the settlement of the people. Gopabandhu loved nature. Nature was in its true form in rural atmosphere- Rural atmosphere touched the human emotions better. Rural atmosphere helped students lead simple life.

**k) Earning while learning**—Satyavadi had accepted the idea of earning while learning. The staff and students used to do manual work. But the experiment had shown that the students who did manual work

during the day and studied only in night could not compete with others in subjects of formal instruction. This experiment was to take care of the poor boys who could not pay hostel mess expenses. Leaving aside this experiment for poor boys, everybody worked.

(l) **Work Education**—Satyavadi gave importance of education of hand, feet, and other limbs for work. Different kinds of work programmes were—spinning, weaving, carpentry, agriculture, care work, rope work, etc. a time, the school had 25 acres of land, 16 looms and 100 *charakhas* donated by Jamunalal Bajaj.

(m) **Non-government and unrecognised independent institution**—In the beginning. Gopabandhu had a plan to develop Satyavadi school as an independent school. But as attempts were being made to start a Government recognised school at Sri Ramachandrapur and the resources collected for the purpose were to be used for Satyavadi, the Satyavadi school was also to be formal Government, recognised school. Gopabandhu got opportunity to declare the school as independent school only a few years before **PAGE 42** the decay of the school. In 1920, on return from Nagpur Congress session, Gopabandhu declared Satyavadi to be a national school and severed Its link with the Government, But this school could not last long as a free school.

(n) **Self-help**—The Satyavadi school had accepted the principle of self-help in the management of the hostel and school. The students and teachers used to share different responsibilities. The management was a democracy in action. The elections were not the college elections of today. The most competent students used to get elected for different work, in which they had certain amount of competency.

(o) **Training in Self-control**—The Satyavadi School gave training on self-control; the students were not afraid of teachers. The behaviour of the teachers was helpful in imparting self-control training to students.

(p) **Morning afternoon school timing**—The school timings were for a few hours in the morning and evening. According to Gopabandhu, this timing was more suitable for Indian situation than one continuous period of instruction from 10.30 A. M. to 4 P.M. Gopabandhu said that the climate and food habits of the people demand that schools be made to work in two sessions-morning and afternoon. In the morning, the mind is ready for work. After lunch, the body needs rest. After rest, it becomes ready for work. Gopabandhu had quoted statement, Anibesant at Madras endorsing morning, and afternoon school timings. Gopabandhu said that the timing followed in other schools and colleges (10-30—4) was source of stomach diseases such as indigestion, collic, etc.

(q) **Physical education**—Satyavadi experiment gave stress on physical education. Gopabandhu had criticised the educational institutions of that time for not giving importance on physical education. He said that it was a matter of great regret that the society did not give importance to physical education. Unless adequate provision for physical education was done, the society would collapse. Because of this reason, Satyavadi had been famous for physical exercise. The school had a famous physical education teacher in Shri Basudev Mohapatra. Two students of Shri Mohapatra were very famous. They were *Utkal Bhima* Padma Charan Ray and *Kalinga Bhima* Radhashyam Das. Shri Mohapatra was the disciple of the wrestler Shri Lokanath Mohapatra. There was also provision for scouting. Satyavadi school had got first position in all Orissa Scout Conference. Shri Nilamani Das was the teacher in charge of Scouting.

(r) **Education through mother tongue**— Gopabandhu was a lover of mother tongue. During his time medium of instruction at school, college level was English. He was against it. He said that by not studying through mother tongue not only we are wasting our intellect but also, we are wasting physical strength, health\* and time.

(s) **Indian education**—Gopabandhu argued for a system of education suitable to Indian needs. He had praised the proposal given by Shri John Woodruff to Calcutta University Commission to reorient education according to Indian thinking. Satyavadi tried to imbibe Indian spirit to the possible extent.

t) **Certificate less education**—Gopabandhu was in favour of education not oriented to any particular examination. He said that Indian education was different from the education of others. In ancient times, the students were attending institutions only for learning. They were not selling education received through much labour. Gopabandhu wanted that to be the ideal of Satyavadi. This was also the ideal at Santiniketan of Tagore of that period. This is also the ideal practised at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education at Pondicherry. In the beginning, Satyavadi did not have this ideal. Towards end, the Satyavadi got this ideal. But it could not last long enough. The National Policy on Education 1986 aims at creating an educational system that does not give certificates, degrees and diplomas that could be utilised for getting jobs. The policy aims at delinking of degrees from jobs. This shows that Gopabandhu's ideal is even relevant today.

(u) **Indigenous education**—Satyavadi believed in indigenous education given in ancient India. It tried to provide Ashram life.

(v) **Teacher-prepared curriculum**—Satyavadi teachers used to develop that own curriculum. Some of them prepared textbooks which were used by others.

w) **Fusion of modern with ancient**—Satyavadi had teachers, who had received modern education. They had also faith on ancient Indian education. The teachers tried to have best of both the systems. There were efforts to supplement the ancient scholastic discipline of Brahmacharya with the active and many-sided habits of modern life".

x) **Teaching at low cost**—Satyavadi was a bold experiment of teaching at low cost.

(y) **Curriculum**—(Methods and techniques) The Satyavadi School gave stress on co-curricular activities. Every Saturday a meeting was held. It was called *Sanivar Sabha* (Saturday meeting). In order to increase the motivation of students, an entry fee of one rupee was collected. The student joining the meeting was paying one paise as subscription. Essay reading, lecture etc., were organised in these meetings. This was also called as Lalegro Club. Attendance in this meeting was not compulsory.

On Sunday mornings, History meeting was taking place. There were various committees-entertainment committee, literature society, Kula Samilani, etc.

When the school was declared as a national school, separate syllabus was framed. Primary education covered children of 6 to 9 years of age. The child of 6 years of age was not to learn writing. He or she was to listen to stories from *Puranas* and History. Besides, he or she was to learn counting addition and subtraction up to 100. In the beginning of age 7, learning of writing of alphabets were to start.

The college course was of three years duration. The compulsory subjects were Hindustani, Spinning, History of Indian Culture and Thought, Public Administration, Contemporary Politics, Elementary Economics, Physical education, and Religious education. The optional subjects were History and Sociology, Oriya literature and History, English literature, Philosophy and Logic, Political Science, Sanskrit and Archaeology (specialty of Orissa).

#### **THE HISTORY OF SATYAVADI EXPERIMENT :**

The Satyavadi school had been started in 1909. At that time, the school examination was being conducted by the Universities. The schools of Orissa followed the syllabus prescribed by the Calcutta

University. In the year 1914, the Calcutta University gave recognition to this school. In 1918, the school got recognition of Patna University. On the 21st of January 1921, executive committee of the school declared it to be a national school. The parents took away their students. The teachers left the school for participation in freedom movement. Towards end of 1920, Pandit Nilkantha Das left Satyavadi to join Calcutta University as a lecturer. Before that, in 1919 Godavarish had left Satyavadi for Singhbhum (now in Bihar State). Gopabandhu remained absent due to his political work. During Gopabandhu's absence some persons wanted to re-establish Satyavadi as a Government recognised school, but Gopabandhu did not agree. On the 5th of September 1925, he stated in Samaj that he felt that the work of Satyavadi had been finished. The school was closed in 1926.

### **Reasons for Closure of the experiment:**

There are various reasons for closure of the experiment.

- (i) Gopabandhu had to remain absent from Satyavadi due to his election to Bihar Orissa Legislative Assembly, later his imprisonment for participation in freedom movement and absence due to engagement in social service work.
- ii) Relinquishment of job by teachers such as Nilakantha, Godavarish.
- iii) Difference of opinion among teachers— Nilakantha and Godavarish by the University/Government.
- iv) Disaffiliation of the School/and corresponding withdrawal of the students from the national institution.
- (v) More importance given to freedom movement than to the Satyavadi.
- (vi) Apathy of the Government as well as conservative Brahmins of the area.

### **Effects of Satyavadi experiment of others**

Following effects of Satyavadi experiment were observed.

- i) Establishment of open-air schools by the Government, which in course of time were converted to formal schools.
- ii) Use of textbooks prepared by teachers of Satyavadi in other schools—A Handbook of Model Drawing by Nilakantha Das, etc.
- iii) Branches of Satyavadi School at Singhbhum and at Bahadagoda (Dhalbhumi).
- iv) Teaching of Satyavadi School Teachers in other Schools—Geography teaching by Venugopal Achary as model teaching for others *es* suggested by the Inspector of Schools.

### **A Few Remarks**

Many educationists have praised Satyavadi experiment. Some of these are given below—

*Mahatma Gandhi*— Pandit Gopabandhu has an open-air School at Sakhigopal, twelve miles this side of Puri. It is a groove school. It is worthy of visit. I passed a most delightful day in the midst of the boys and their teachers. It is a serious experiment in open air teaching. Some of the boys are powerful athletes. (Young India—13-4-1921).

*Shri Ashutosh Mukherjee of Bengal*—Their ideals are high; they understand the value of discipline and culture-mental moral and physical x x x One cannot but wish that every village in Bengal should possess a genuine piece of instruction like the Satyavadi School.

*Shri K. G. Gupta, Commissioner*—The School is a happy combination of old and new methods. But its success is mainly due to the spirit of self-sacrifice which actuates those who compose its staff.

### **OTHER EFFORTS OF GOPABANDHU FOR IMPROVING EDUCATION—**

Besides Satyavadi experiment, Gopabandhu had made different efforts, some of which are given below:—

- i) *Nilagiri experiment*—Immediately after passing law from Calcutta University, Gopabandhu took up teaching work at Nilagiri. He was helped by Harihar Das and others. Gopabandhu's activity was regarded

as patriotic activity. The Nilagiri was a State under British rulers. There was a representative of the British Government called Political agent. He did not like the activities of Gopabandhu and others. The school was closed within a year. This was the experiment before Satyavadi experiment.

ii) *Universal Education League*—Gopabandhu had established Universal Education League. This was an organisation meant for establishing colleges. These proposed colleges were to prepare teachers for schools like Satyavadi. There were two types of members. One type of members was to give financial help and work in the management of the institutions, teaching in schools / colleges at least for 2 years.

iii) *Puri District Education Conference*—Gopabandhu was born and brought up in Pm district. He had special obligation for the district. He set up Puri district Education conference to promote education. This conference gave incentives that resulted in opening of Paban Vidyalaya at Delang, a girl's school near Shri Ramachandrapur, an Upper primary school at Routrapur near Puri, a middle school at Bhubaneswar, a middle school at Vingarpur etc. The persons associated with Gopabandhu in this effort were Pandit Nilakantha Das, Jagabandhu Singh, Sudarsan Nanda, Chowdhury Dinakrishna Das and Chowdhury Narahari Das of Vingaarpur Zamindar family, etc.

(iv) *National School/College Movement*—In the year 1920, after returning from the meeting of the Congress part/ held at Nagpur, Gopabandhu stated his efforts to establish national institutions in Orissa. An organisation named as Utkal Swarajya Shiksha Parishad—was created for the purpose. Schools were established at different places—Swarajya Ashram, Cuttack, Sorao, etc. In 1921, college degree examination was conducted. Shri Narayan Mishra, lecturer of Ravenshaw College was the question setter as well as examiner. Shri Jadumani Mangaraj passed the examination. Various students of Cuttack school were Shri Ramakrishna Nanda, Shri Nilamani Pradhan, Shri Chintamani Mishra, Shri Raj Kishore Das, etc. Various persons collaborated with Gopabandhu in starting national schools. Some of his collaborators were Dr. Harekrushna Mahatab, Dr. Ekram Rasul, Shri Bhagirathi Mohapatra, Shri Brajabandhu Das, Pleader Shri Jagabandhu Singh, Shri Niranjan Patnaik, Shri Rajkrishna Bose, Shri Narayan Birabar Samant, Dr. Atal Bihari Acharya, Shri Jadumani Mangaraj. Shri Nanda Kishore Das, Shri Achyutananda Purohit, Shri Chandra Sekhar Behera, Shri Damodar Mohanty, Shri Gopabandhu Chowdhury and Shri Madhusudan Biswal, etc.

(v) *Orissa Education Fund*—Gopabandhu had created an organisation called Orissa Education Fund. It was also known as one paise fund. Shri Lambart, the then principal of Ravenshaw College was its patron.

(vi) *Satyavadi Vihar*—In 1925, an effort was made to start a University of national education. An appeal was issued. The father of Subash Chandra Bose was the president of the committee that issued the appeal. Shri Jagabandhu Singh was its secretary. The appeal said that

“The Satyavadi Vihar is not an institution complete in itself. As contemplated even from its inception, is to be in future a National University of a comprehensive character having several other institutions-in different part of the province under its control and guidance”.

(vii) *Efforts at Legislative Assembly*—Gopabandhu worked for restoration of weightage to teaching of Sanskrit for training schoolteachers, when weightage from Sanskrit got reduced to accommodate Urdu. He had made efforts for opening of M.A. in English subject and Law in Ravenshaw College, Cuttack. Cuttack Engineering School and Puri Sanskrit College were results of his efforts. He had argued for creation of a separate University for Orissa. At that time, there was no University in Orissa. His efforts resulted in exemption of tuition fees to 10 per cent of the students. He had argued for hostel facilities for the Oriya and Bihari students of Calcutta Medical College. He had also argued for provision of Ayurvedic education in Orissa.

Gopabandhu did not live long. In a span of 51 years, he has done much for his mother land.