

Utkalmani Pandit Gopabandhu Das

The Jewel of Utkal, Utkalmani Pandit Gopabandhu Das, was in the true sense a jewel and friend of the poor. Born on 9th October 1877, in Suando Village near Sakshigopal of Puri District, he started his education career in Vernacular language initially at Rupadeipur minor school and then at Puri Zilla School. Gopabandhu had lost his mother Swarnamayee Devi after few months of his birth and also lost his father Daitari Dash while he was a student at Ravenshaw College. In spite of his great personal loss, he had written poems like "Abakasha Chinta", Go-mahatmay, Nachiketa upakhyana, Karakabita, Dharmapada and "Bandira Atmakatha" when he was continuing at Ravenshaw College. From his College career he had started a organization named "Kartabya bodhini Samiti" to help the poor students even during flood, he tried to help the affected people through the samiti. The personal life of Gopabandhu was really tragic. Not only parents, but he also lost his wife untimely. He established Satyabadi M.E. School which later on developed to a High School, in pattern of Santi Niketan which was popularly known as Satyabadi Bana Bidyalaya. As he was greatly influenced by Santi Niketan when he studied M.A. in Kolkata. The Political career of Gopabandhu began with Utakal Sammilani in the year of 1908. He was the disciple of Madhubabu and Madhubabu was the real guide of Gopabandhu. Starting his career as a teacher at Nilagiri he raised himself as member of Odisha-Bihar legislative council as well as President of Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee. In the year of 1917 he was nominated as member of Bihar-Odisha legislative Council and served there for the next four years for the flood affected poor people of Odisha by raising his voice before the council. He was also closely associated with Utakal Sammilani for 13 years and was elected as President of the Sammilani in 1919. Gopabandhu took this responsibility of Non-cooperation movement in Odisha after 1920 after becoming President of OPCC and dedicated himself completely to this movement. Several times he was arrested and imprisoned. He was indeed a friend in need. During the flood of 1925, Andrews Sakeb visited the flood areas on Gopabandhu's request and rendered help. Mahatma

Gandhi also deputed Sir Visweswaraya to do necessary engineering works to control the flood in Odisha and Gopabandhu was the key person to mobilize the activities.

Actively involved with the interests of Odisha from the period of early stage of amalgamation of Odia speaking tracts till Non-Cooperation movement and through pioneering work on education, Disaster management, Gopabandhu has left an indelible imprint in the mind of the people of Odisha.
