

## Economic Development During Colonial Era : An Ingenious Idea of Madhusudan Das

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Madhusudan Das was a protagonist on development of Odishan economy, during the British Raj. The prime objective of this essay is to study his monetary or financial affluence<sup>1</sup> thoughts. It's dealing with the contemplation through the Madhubabu's way of belief on modernization and the advancement of scientific industrializations as well as the common mass involvement. He was not only the architect<sup>2</sup> of modern Odisha, but also acclaimed as Cato (Senator Cato of Italy fought for Justice and supported the poor, helpless and deprived sections of society) through the fiscal development of common mass and his progressive outlook, he supported the untouchables and appointed a large number of them in his industries.<sup>3</sup> His way of thinking on distillation of the values he nourished through his life, works and thought which have un-expressible utility for Odisha. The wholesome picture of his personality from economic point of view is presented in this paper and also the conditions which were presented before Richard Thomson as a form of memorandum such as the need of permanent settlement, land for the tillers, not for Zamindars, abolition of Zaminidari system, rapid industrialization of Odisha and criticism against monopoly of salt by the British Government.<sup>4</sup>

Madhusudan Das was one of the early pioneers who laid the foundation of planned economic growth. He clearly recognized the fact that unless the occupational structure of the people was changed and pressure on agricultural land relieved by absorption of a considerable segment of the working force in industries both large and small and the mode of agriculture improved by means of irrigation and scientific methods the poverty of the people would never be mitigated. He was of the view that 'Culture of the land is Agriculture and culture of the hand is Industry.'<sup>5</sup>

Madhusudan Das who was committed to the welfare of the people and development of the economy of Odisha had some ideas for economic change and developments which still have inestimable values for today's Odisha.

These include -

- Administrative autonomy of a spatial entity is fundamental to the economic development of a region.
- Micro planning and decentralization contribute to democracy meaningful and participative development at the grass root level.
- Proper use of natural endowment such as the mineral capital and forest wealth can raise the material wellbeing of the people.

- Mass based industrialization is necessary for economic prosperity.
- Promotion of handicrafts should be an important dimension of industrial development of Odisha.
- Odia entrepreneur should try to procure goods inside the region to export finished products rather than export raw materials.
- Quality consciousness should be the hallmark of responsible productive activity.
- No economy development is possible without human capital formation. Education can bring about change in society.<sup>6</sup>

Madhusudan Das was the first and foremost promoter of *Swadeshi*<sup>7</sup> in Odisha. Much before Gandhiji's thoughts on *Swadeshi*<sup>8</sup> he had started it in Odisha. He was keen in promoting commercial interest of his people through his own singular effort i.e., exhibiting art wares of Odisha in England, holding craft fairs within his residential campus. He was not only a visionary but also chartered these ideas into reality in many ways. So for the economic prosperity of Odisha he devoted his time and invested his money. He said that, "I have been an industrialist during the greater part of my life. I have spent my life's earnings in reviving and improving local industries."<sup>9</sup>

He sincerely believed that rapid industrialization of Odisha alone could promote its economy. He was convinced that his country could never progress unless her industries were improved. He was the first Odia nationalist whose thoughts and ideas were based on a scientific analysis of the economic maladies from which Odisha was suffering. Odisha was famous for its gold and silver works of exquisite delicacy. But because of deliberate and persistent economic policies of colonial power, these fine native artistic crafts faced a great crisis. To save these precious

crafts from ruin, he set up a large factory, Odisha Art Wares at Cuttack in 1897. But it could not survive for long as it incurred huge loss to a tune of one lakh rupees.<sup>10</sup> He was forced to close down his workshop. He encouraged the people to revive the old profession of cottage industry and small scale industry for earning a livelihood.

A strong advocate of rapid industrialization, he suggested the Government to explore the mineral resources of Odisha, impart industrial training to Odia students, provided them with scholarships for training abroad, so that the economic condition of Odisha could be substantially improved. It was only through his efforts that Sarangadhar Das,<sup>11</sup> Braja Mohana Senapati and Lakshmi Narayana Singh went outside Odisha and abroad for higher technical education. The Utkal Union Sammilani had a special committee to sponsor such projects. These organizations such as 'Utkal Sabha' (Odisha Association, 1882) and the 'Utkal Sammilani' (Utkal Union Conference, 1903) also took up the cause of economic development of Odisha under the dynamic leadership of Madhusudan Das. The issues before these association other than the unification of all Odia Speaking regions and material moral development of the people were encouragement of local crafts, revival of 'Salt Industry', proper exploitation of the natural resources, improving the productive capacity of the soil through irrigation and scientific manuring, renovation of the ports on the sea coast, revival of indigenous industries and use of indigenous articles etc. The 'Silponnati Sabha' of Cuttack was also affiliated to the Utkal Sammilani. A resolution was passed in the Utkal Union Conference vide Resolution-VII and a central committee was formed consisting some prominent members for the purpose of helping poor and deserving candidates. It was also published in Utkal Dipika<sup>12</sup> that to study in the newly

established Sabore Agricultural College at Bangla each student will be provided scholarship of Rs.20 per month.

A pioneer of industrialization in modern Odisha, he founded the 'Utkal Tannery' in 1905 and formed one 'Cooperative Weaver's Society' to improve the living conditions of a large number of poor but talented beneficiaries. He was the founder of the "Utkal Shilponnati Sabha"<sup>13</sup> to accelerate the growth of industries in Odisha. His services in the field of indigenous industrialization were really appreciated abroad as well as in the colonial India.

According to his view, economic emancipation was the prerequisite for political independence of the country. He nourished the view that the development of indigenous industries was the key to economic regeneration and self-rule. He observed: "We have expressed our desire for Home Rule, but we do not realize to what extent we depend on our nations. It should be understood that a country which supplies raw materials to other countries for production of industrial goods is industrially very backward".<sup>14</sup> Madhubabu firmly believed that unless an economy is industrially developed, it is not possible to achieve general prosperity and maintain the lead of one's region. Odisha was famous for its traditional filigree work which was a requisite art. But because of the defective economic policies of the government, the cottage industries and handicrafts of Odisha were in a dying condition. Being determined to revive the glory of Odisha's arts, Madhusudan set up a large factory in 1897 known as "Odisha Art Ware."

Although he did well in the legal profession his interest was mainly in industry, as he felt that the rejuvenation of Odisha was only possible through it. He gave great impetus to the silver filigree work, the horn work and the tanning

industry by establishing institutes and factories which gave great scope for the training and the employment of the Odia people. The 'Odisha Art Ware'<sup>15</sup> was set up inside the campus of his house for production of indigenous art wares and their sale was arranged in a large building adjacent to his house. A separate school of Art Ware was attached to the factory with hundred trainees who produced beautiful articles. He also provided training to 150 weavers from his factory for production of handloom fabrics. He devoted much of his time to improve the artistic skills keeping in mind the choice of foreign market. He introduced different types of hand operating machines for production of wares of different shapes and size.<sup>16</sup> In order to popularize the Odishan artistic skills he presented filigree articles to many British Officers. He went abroad twice and presented his craft products to the notable dignitaries of Great Britain and Europeans in order to popularize the Odishan art. When the Lt. Governor of Bengal, Sir John Woodburn visited the Odisha Art Wares, he was presented an address in Odia written on a palm leaf, artistically ornamented and enclosed in a silver casket bearing the miniature of Bhubaneswar temple. Woodburn was highly pleased to see the craftsmanship of the artisans and Madhu Babu discussed with him the problems of the artisan class of Odisha.

In the *Orissa Art Wares* factory along with filigree work, horn ivory, wood carving, brass, aluminium and many other beautiful handicrafts products were manufactured. He introduced new methods of work structure and taught the workers to produce articles matching the modern taste of the people. Horn articles were exported to Calcutta, Bombay and too many other places and were highly appreciated. The *Statesman* and the *Friend of India*, a newspaper of Calcutta wrote on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1901 that "the specimens of Odisha Art that were shown to us

in silver and gold, ivory and horn are in every way excellent, graceful and of original design.”<sup>17</sup>

He propounded the cotton production basically spread of *Khadi*<sup>18</sup> and *Charakha*.<sup>19</sup> He introduced the *Charakha*—the spinning wheel and encouraged cotton cultivation for production of *Swadeshi* cloth. For this reason, he cultivated cotton plant in his garden, made yarn and woven cloth in his factory. Various types of handloom were purchased from different parts of India, as well as from Japan and were manufactured in his factory as early as 1902. He had full knowledge and understanding of the vital role of *Charakha* for bringing economic self-sufficiency to the people. He addressed *Swadeshi* meeting held at Cuttack on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1905 under the chairmanship of Janakinath Bose. While asking the people to use *Swadeshi* goods he cited two examples, one of the general Togo of Japan who used shoes made only in Japan and the other was of an Englishman buying English shoes at a higher cost instead of buying German shoes. Mahatma Gandhi was always a great admirer of Madhusudan Das as a lover of handicrafts. Gandhiji in his *journal Young India* often quoted Madhusudan’s views on cottage industries. In his letter on August 12, 1925, Gandhiji from Calcutta wrote to him that “You will of course teach me how to spread the message of the spinning wheel in Utkal.” Madhusudan always attended the *sammilani* sessions in Indian dresses which were hand spun, hand woven and handmade, long before Gandhiji’s *Khaddar* became the political watchword of India.

The establishment of *Utkal Tannery*<sup>20</sup> (Odisha Shoe making Industry) located at Chauliaganj and Nua Bazar area of Cuttack was a standing monument of his remarkable zeal and persistence. He founded this industry in order to stop the drain of resources such as raw hides and skins from Odisha. While he had been to England

he tried to acquaint with the working skill of many shoe making factories of England. The shoes prepared out of lizard skin had demand in European countries for which Madhu Babu started collecting lizard skin from different parts of Odisha.<sup>21</sup> While setting up such industries, he appealed to the people to make and use of home made goods and articles. Leather industry of Odisha acclaimed highest estimation in Japan, France and in other places. As people from all strata, i.e. poor, rich, lower caste a feeling equality and unity was developed were engaged. His utkal tannery was a great revolutionary social organization where, in the leather industry the superior castes Brahmins, Karanas and the untouchable cobblers had opportunity to interact and work together (about half century back when the shade of a man of the so called untouchable castes was considered as impure and sinful).<sup>22</sup>

In the realization that material prosperity could come only from industry and practical effort and was not matter of political catchwords he was far in advance of his people and his age. His courage in undertaking industrial enterprise for the common good, ill equipped as he was with technical knowledge and disinterested assistance, was very wonderful. His very failures should be a source of inspiration for the future.

Mr. Das, a pioneer among Odias in many fields, highlighted various socio-economic issues of Odisha through his Odisha Association; he drew the attention of the Government on the agrarian problems in Odisha.<sup>23</sup> He met high officials in England and apprised them of Odisha’s problems including need of the Permanent Settlement. He pleaded that tenants, not *Zamindar*’s, should be declared as the real owners of the land. As a legislator, he fought for the abolition of the *Zamindari* system and the system of absentee landlordism.

In a session held at Cuttack in 1918, Madhusudan in his address stressed the all round development of the farmers of Utkal. He felt that though there was a large number of a farmer in Odisha in the sphere of business and industry, hence Odisha could be rich only by the development of agriculture. He said "In Odisha farmers are more in number, if their conditions are not improved, how can Odisha improve? They cultivate our lands and feed us their products. They are doing the real service to the nation. They are fed by mother Utkal and also they feed Utkal. The kings and *zamindars* (landlords) are like the heart of Utkal. As blood is circulated to the heart and being purified again supplied to the different parts of the body, the products of the farmers, which go to the godowns of the landlords should be distributed among the farmers for their betterment. If products of the farmers are spent this way, the body of the society will remain hale and hearty." He personally met the farmers and made them understand the modern method of agriculture and using of improved fertilizer in their land for the improvement of the production capacity of the soil.

He was a strong advocate for the production of salt.<sup>24</sup> Salt Industry was the backbone of coastal belt of Odisha which sustained thousand of families. The British economic policy had destroyed the source of income for the Odias among whom the spirit of entrepreneurship gradually died out. With the enhancement of the Salt Tax by the Britishers there decreased the demand and value of the handmade salt. People who depended on this occupation became wageless and found no ways for their sustenance. Madhu Babu deeply reacted and raised this issue on 'Bengal Presidency Association' and demanded the restoration of Odisha Salt department to the administrative control of the Government of Bengal from Madras

Government. As a consequence of the popular movement in 1896, the salt department was transferred from Madras to Bengal. Before Gandhiji's Salt Satyagraha in 1903, Madhu Babu had started this in Odisha. This clarifies his deep insight on economic development and his farsightedness for the better economic growth of Odisha.

He emphasized usefulness of the cottage industries, the formation of the Joint Stock Companies and Co-Operative Industries as early as 1903. Before the commencement of Cooperative Law in 1904, Madhu Babu had started the Cuttack Co-operative Society in Odisha which was his another brainchild. He was greatly inspired by the London Co-operative Society in 1897 during his visit. In pursuance to make a Co-operative Society, he invited some personalities to his resident in 1898 and discussed the Co-operative movement of Europe and England. The very purpose of such type of gathering was to increase brotherhood and to discuss each and every aspects of the then society. It was then decided to make a National Bank and to collect funds from the all classes of people. With which some valuable agricultural products will be cultivated and scarce industrial equipments will be lent for commercial purpose. Customer Co-operative Store was established at Cuttack which was attended by lawyers, government servants, clerks, and the lower class people. Madhubabu personally met every person while collecting the fund. He successfully motivated the people to save something from their monthly expenditure for that Co-operative Society with some good interest. By doing this he laid the foundation of modern day banking system. It was decided in a meeting held in 1898 at the resident of Madhubabu to establish a Joint Stock Company to save both the consumers and the manufacturers from the clutches of the middlemen.

The benefits of this society were to give all facilities, co-operation and benefit to the lower class. And the very aim was to bring about a more equitable distribution of wealth and at the same time increase the total wealth.

“He emphasized the utility of cottage industry, the formation of joint stock companies and co-operative industries as early as 1903... He was 50 years ahead of his countrymen in Odisha, but people did not take up the spirit of industrial life and did not like to develop the particular national genius of their, but tried to seek jobs for asking both ends meet. Even, so early in 1903 he introduced *Charakha* (spinning wheel) which was piled formerly in every household in Odisha. He helped and encouraged cotton cultivation to save the people from hard competition with west and to save the struggling weavers and cultivators in their hard competition with Manchester goods.”<sup>25</sup>

The fiscal discourse not only developed the industrial legacy in Odisha, but also a new ideas for the Odia nationalism through the education. The spread of education in the primary level in Odia medium rather than other language, brought economic development as well as the development of condition of an individual, organizational, and Government post holders. These were the noble ideas of Odia intellectuals. But one arguing fact has been appeared in the work of J.P. Das who remarks<sup>26</sup> “The publication of Odia medium or ‘Utkal Bhasha’<sup>27</sup> school book not a big importance for Odia nationalism but also the rise of financial help hand to some ‘Odia school book author’s’ gaining profit,<sup>28</sup> who were associated with the Odia movement in Colonial epoch known as Odia intellectuals (Gourishanakar Ray, Radhanatah Ray<sup>29</sup>, Madhusudan Rao, Jaganatah Rao,<sup>30</sup> Fakir Mohan Senapati and Payrimohan Acharya<sup>31</sup> and so on?).” The very

impact of such type of ideas had not only brought economic prosperity but also it laid the foundation of socially, politically, educationally prosperous Odisha and gave birth to Odia nationalism. The Printing Press was established, thousand of books were published. Now, the people felt the necessity of Odia books and felt that there was no need for any Bengali syllabus or books. There was no scarcity of Odia books and their price made the pupils capable of reading in their own language. Several of books on subjects like Algebra, history, geography were prepared by the Odia intelligentsia. Publications of thousand of books also brought economic prosperity by selling those in large numbers. By reading in Odia they came to know about Odisha’s past, present and importance of Odia language as not only a mere dialect of Bengali but an independent one having its own identity. The ideas of growth of economy of individual as well as an organization has been borrowed from Madhusuda Das, which was enforced in the later stage as a strategy of empowerment of financial stipulation of colonial Odisha.

Madhusudan Das economic analysis was not only innovative but also useful for the then and modern Odisha. He was the pride and glory of Odisha who tried his utmost to bring Odisha a concrete shape and to revive its glory and economic prosperity. Once commenting on the concept of ‘*Swaraj*’ he said that it meant an improved economic condition, when a person can live more comfortably and earn higher wages<sup>32</sup>. He held that unless due importance was given to manual labour and proper condition was established between work and manual work, the wealth of the nation could not be augmented. His intention behind the formation of indigenous industries such as Utkal Tannery, and ‘Odisha Art Ware,’ formation of Joint Stock Company and Co-operative Society was for the economic upliftment of Odisha.

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5. *Ibid.*,p.250
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## Chilika

*Abhishek Tripathy*

To caress the waves,  
the silk waters, and the luscious swell.  
The sun has just bade farewell,  
and retired, tired, into the deep depths.

The night-bird sings to the impending night,  
and the moon arrives clothed in its majestic shine.  
The boats and the dhows,  
return from the day's grind,  
To retire, atop the deep depths for the night.

The boatman beams with pride,  
with the prized catch from the deeps.  
As the day ends, for yet another to begin,  
Chilika looks on with peace.

A proud mother, a generous giver,  
a devout wife, and a faithful companion.  
For years and years,  
It has stood still, yet flowing.

She is a goddess,  
and a treasure of wealth untold.  
the deep fathoms hold,  
priceless secrets and many  
a tale of adventure and joy.

Nature's loved daughter,  
She looks forlorn, though.  
For somewhere the darkness looms heavy,  
pollution and exploitation, *gheris* and what-not!

She seems distraught,  
at the onset of man's avarice.  
For one child may not,  
alone benefit the most.

She wonders, if she was indeed a mother,  
to the many who lived on her, by her side;  
If she was also the feared goddess,  
that people extolled.

Why, then, her children forget  
to respect the body of hers?  
She wonders as she flows,  
Stands still with time, yet flows.

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