CHAPTER-6

ECONOMIC AND
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Madhusudan wanted to rebuild Orissa on the anvil of some economic and social ideas, which happened to be a nice blend of western ideas and Gandhian philosophy, and his own ideas born of experience and prevailing conditions and needs of the people. Economics deals with the principles and conditions that promote human well being. It is both a light-bearing and fruit-bearing science. All those who have enriched the discipline have not been economists by training and profession. The history and economic ideas is replete with many personalities who have contributed not from their research but from their practical experiences in personal and public life. In India, economic thinking is the output of such great personalities. Valuable economic insights useful in state making rather than economic theories accepted in the Anglo-American mainstream constitute the treasure-trove of the Indian economic thought built by such people. Madhusudan Das belongs to this category. Though he was not an economist, he had dynamic economic insights that fostered socio-economic change and development in Orissa. There is hardly any Oriya of his times who had attained his height in public life. He was a highly learned advocate, a selfless political activist, a dynamic entrepreneur, a committed social reformer and a very reputed minister of the Government of Bihar and Orissa. From such a commanding height he worked for the welfare of the common man of the land of Oriyas.

The objective of this paper is to analyze the economic ideas of Madhusuda Das, and distil the values he nourished through his life, works and thinking which have perennial utility for the state of Orissa. The materials for this paper have been collected from books and research studies made on his personality. The activities and ideas of the person have been dispassionately sifted, classified and serialized with reference to the objective. The method is historical and descriptive. The approach is not to become exhaustive, but to bring the symbolic thoughts and tendencies together through analytical
classifications so as to paint a wholesome picture of the personality from the point of view of economics.

The land of Oriyas was at the peak of the difficult times by the mid-nineteenth century. From the mid-fifteenth century the land was under constant aggression and exploitation by Afgans, Moghuls and Marathas. The nineteenth century witnessed the internal quarrels due to which Orissa lost its independent existence. The administration if the East India Company heightened the sufferings of the people, Orissa was divided into several parts which were kept under the administration of the Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Madras, for some time the Government of Bihar and Orissa ruled the land. Apart from territorial disintegration, the socio-economy of the land was awfully bad. For English education there were only a few schools in Orissa. Health care establishment almost did not exist. Mass poverty and backwardness symbolized the regional economy. The “Naanka Famine” of 1866 brought all difficulties to the fore.

Madhusudan Das was 18 years old by that time. He felt that due to the lack of education among Oriyas, administration in the Orissa division was dominated by Bengalis. There was also problem in the administration of law and justice. Not many people then pursued political of law and justice. Not many people then pursued political career. But the Oriyas took pride in their language and literature, which were getting disintegrated. Madhusudan Das tried to face challenges in all these fields with a view to unifying the land of Oriyas. His activism in Utkal Sammilani was a reflection of this commitment. During his lifetime, however, though everything was ready, he could not see the birth of Orissa as a separate province, because he died just two years before his dream came true on the 1st April 1936.

Madhusudan Das had a turbulent life. He was born in a middle class zamindari family. His mother influenced him very much. The act of Sati by his great grandmother made him commit to the sense of duty in his life. After childhood education, he continued his higher education in Calcutta against the will of his parents. They were opposed to his getting higher education because of financial difficulty. Though many of his contemporaries including
Gaurishankar Roy, the father of Oriya journalism and the editor of Utkal Dipika, and Radhanath Roy, the father of poetry, could not pursue higher studies in Calcutta, Madhusudan could have it because of his firm conviction. He also accepted Christianity against the wish of his father for which the family disowned him. In Calcutta he married a Bengali Christian woman, Saudamini Devi. He had a brief married life as his wife passed away quite young. He visited London twice and observed the process of industrialization there.

Yet another achievement of his Calcutta times relates to his efficient teaching. His impressive tuition could produce men of intellect like late Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, one of the topmost educationists of India. His impulse and inspiration enabled the illustrations Sir Ashutosh in later times to be a great jurist and educationist. Such was the charm of his personality and so genuine was the understanding between Madhusudan and Ashutosh that their sweet relationship stood well through the passage of years and change of environment. Ashutosh had life long great respect for his remarkable teacher Madhusudan, who had extraordinary intelligence and profound knowledge of English.

Madhusudan’s association with Gaurishankar, European education, and the live experience in an industrialized economy helped him bring the wave of modernization to Orissa. He carried his dynamic ideas forward through his profession as a very powerful advocate, a spirited entrepreneur and a visionary politician. His contact with Mahatma Gandhi has been recorded as highly beneficial. The influence of Gandhiji sowed in Madhusudan the seeds of social justice and sympathy for the weaker sections of the society in Orissa.

6.1 Concern for Development of Orissa

For many angles Madhusudan Das is called the founder of modern Orissa. He worked for the prosperity of Oriyas for such a long period that he was called the Kulabradha, the ‘grand old man’ of Orissan society. He not only had visions for a bright future of Orissa, he also set good examples for the people to follow. Therefore, for the purpose of analysis and inference, his economic ideas need narration under three sections such as his vision for the region, his contributions to the shaping of socio economic policy and his
activities as the vanguard of a backward stagnant economy.

6.2 Mission to integrate Orissa with the mainstream economy of India

He firmly believed that Orissa was to be integrated with the mainstream of the economic development of the country. He always compared the state of Orissa's economy and people's awareness with that of the other regions of the country, particularly West Bengal, and felt that the Oriyas needed mass motivation for moral and material development. He knew that the economic potential of Orissa lies in her forest wealth, mineral resources and the human capital. He envisioned that only mass-based industrialization could help the state realize its full potential. At the same time he knew that manifestation of the best Oriya talent occurs in the handicrafts. He therefore laid emphasis on the small and cottage industries, which were in tune with the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi.

6.3 Mission to abolish zamindari

The message of Swadeshi was also ringing through his ears. He realized that land reforms alone could bring about agrarian change in Orissa. He supported the peasant movement and the abolition of zamindari; Madhusudan was ahead of his time in stressing the nationalization of Railways in the better interest of the nation. Establishment and renovation of ports caught his attention for expanding trade and commerce of Orissa. This reflects his vision for regional development through international trade. Micro planning and decentralization, the buzzwords of modern democratic economic development, were very dear to his heart. In this spirit, he desired that the work sphere of the district boards and municipalities should expand.

Behind all his thinking, the fundamental element of his vision was that Orissa should be an independent regional administrative and economic entity as early as possible. Therefore even when it was within the province of Bihar and Orissa, he tried his best to draw exclusive attention to the problem of Orissa part of the combined federal unit.

6.4 Shaping of Socio-Economic Polity

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Madhusudan Das occupied several positions in public life, which enabled him to give a new shape to the socio-economic policy relating to Orissa. First, he was an outstanding advocate, the first Oriya at the Cuttack bar in 1881. This profession helped him find out the loopholes in the statutes and legislations. Through his arguments in different cases he provided the true spirit and fair interpretation of legal provisions. Secondly, in 1896 he became the first member of the Legislative Council of Bihar and Orissa. From that position he had the privilege to become the member of the Imperial Council or Bihar-Orissa Legislative Council from 1913 to 1916. He also became the minister of the Government of Bihar and Orissa for local self-government. The third aspect of his public life relates to his active role in the All India Nikhila Jatiya Congress and Utkal Sammilani.

The important policies and perspectives he provided and nurtured through his public positions noted above include the following:

- He struggled hard to improve the welfare of the peasants as a lawyer and as a politician. He opposed the provisions of the Orissa Tenancy Act, which were against the tenants. In course of time his opposition was sustained which protected the interest of the tenants.

- Another major reform process relates to his idea that women should not lag behind in the social, political and economic life. He not only tried to promote women's education but also laboured to secure the right to vote for women. Because of his effort the Legal Practitioner’s Act was changed in 1879. Later, this helped his foster daughter Sudhansubala to become the first woman barrister of India.

- He believed that austerity should be the hallmark of a political career. He strongly argued that ministership should be honorary. As a minister, he did not receive any remuneration from the Government, but he failed to introduce a bill on this to be applied to all ministers. In 1923, after a local self-government bill failed to be approved in the Legislative Council, he was suggested to resign by the opposition. But he did not resign, as he was not convinced that he had lost the confidence of people. Later, however, on the issue of salary to the
ministers, when his views were not honoured he felt a prudent to resign from the ministry. In order to bring about mutual co-operation among the public and cater to their day-to-day requirements. Madhusudan established a Co-operative Store at Cuttack, This kind of an institution was a dream in those days, particularly in this part of the country, and such activities of social welfare were highly appreciated by all.

6.5 Agent of Socio-Economic Change

Madhusudan 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. With a view to studying the methods and technical know-how, he visited large industrial towns during his stay in England. Returning from England, he started "The Orissa Art Wares" for the manufacture of silver and gold filigree works at Cuttack. With his effort the small concern soon became a big center of production and export. For this, he earned appreciation from England and other parts of the world. To train the Oriya workmen and to make them more efficient in this art, he employed workmen from different parts of the country.

In addition to the Orissa Art Wares, he also opened a variety of handicraft industries such as horn and ivory works, cabinet making and other kinds of wood works, and brass, gold, silver and aluminium works. He tried to design new and beautiful products of all these trades. In course of time, he became the master artisan himself and taught his workmen. He never bothered about the cost of production.

6.6 Harbinger of industrial development

As a harbinger of industrial development, Madhusudan Das also emphasized cotton production. For this he cultivated cotton plants 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 had woven garments were manufactured in his factory as early as 1902.He appreciated Swadeshi and was well motivated to pursue it with high priority. Like Gandhiji,
Madhusuda had also full knowledge and understanding of the vital role the Charakha can play in the national movement and for bringing economic self-sufficiency to the people.

His Utkal Tannery at Cuttack was a standing monument of his remarkable zeal and persistence. It was the byword for excellence. He founded this industry in order to stop the drain of resources such as raw hides and skins from Orissa. He succeeded in utilizing local materials from Europe and other parts of India. The provision of training of the workers in tannery helped his unit earn reputation\textsuperscript{18}. The manufactured products, especially the well known ‘Lizard skin’ that originated there were quite popular among foreign merchants. In tanning, boot and shoe making, and the manufacturer of such leather goods as bags, suitcases, saddlers etc. on a regular scale by employing modern western methods and machinery, the Utkal Tannery was the first in the entire eastern India. It was a pioneering effort in modern tanning and leather goods manufacturing.

6.7 Emphasis on quality product

Madhusudan was very keen on quality control. He saw to it that the name of his factory, the Utkal Tannery was known far and wide for qualitative production of leather goods. He was so much dedicated to quality that at times he had to burn heaps of finished shoes, which were considered substandard by him. He was of the view that the products of Orissa should not be looked down upon in the international market. However, the Utkal Tannery cost him his fortune. It spelled his financial ruin and bankruptcy\textsuperscript{19}. Its fame had reached England, other parts of Europe and Japan but unfortunately, the fame alone was not enough for the survival of an economic enterprise. Rather he placed too much stress on the quality and popularity of the products, and not enough on profit. He had also deep interest in the welfare of the workmen. The profit was basically utilized for the betterment of the workmen and for the innovation of better techniques of production employed by the workmen\textsuperscript{20}.

Apart from his entrepreneurship, Madhusudan also showed interest in several other spheres of economic development of Orissa. His marriage outside
the Hindu community, his higher education at Calcutta, the import of the spirit behind European prosperity and the effort for women’s education made him a unique socio-economic change agent²¹.

**His efforts for the industrial development of Orissa**

While Madhusudan was in England, he visited the large industrial towns, to study methods of manufacture. He was convinced that his country never progress unless its industries were developed and he never spared himself any expense from his hard-earned money for the industrial development of Orissa.

### 6.8 Establishment of filigree industry in Cuttack

After his return from England he started a workshop on a small scale for the better manufacture of silver and gold filigree work for which Cuttack is famous throughout the world. Nowhere in the world silver and goldsmiths make such fine filigree work but as an industry it was in moribund condition. In order to revive the old art he spent considerable sums money for teaching the Cuttack artisans to improve their craft. The filigree work, upon which the name and fame of Cuttack greatly depended in the past, was reorganized by the efforts of Madhusudan and brought to such excellence that it earned many appreciations from England and elsewhere in addition to admiration and praise at home. The small concern soon became a big center of production where 150 worked daily in a special workshop erected within the compound of his house at Cuttack. He brought workmen from all over India to teach the Oriya workmen such arts in which they were found deficient. His factory was called the “Orissa Art Wares” . Here in his workshop he started many other kinds of industries such as sola work, horn, and ivory work, cabinet-making and other kinds of wood work, brass, gold silver and aluminum work, and turned out beautiful products.

### 6.9 An exemplary ideal for others

Any good thing that he saw anywhere, he tried to manufacture in his workshop and the result was a band of highly trained workmen, who could stand comparison with their concerns in the same branch anywhere else. The cost of production was immaterial to him. He became the master artisan himself
and taught his workmen. To produce cotton cloth the cultivated the cotton plant in his garden. The cotton from these plants was made into yarn and woven into cloth in his factory. Various kinds of handlooms were brought from various places in India, and even from Japan and hand woven cloth was manufactured in his factory as early as 1902. He always valued Swadeshi things and encouraged them, but his country had not then been ready to understand his ideals and co-operate with him. He had to fight the great battle of competing with cheap machine made goods of the West all alone and single-handed, at great financial loss to himself. Sometimes he used to be adversely criticized, but he was not a man to yield to irresponsible criticism.

6.10 Spreading the Orissan glory in Art to the outside world

He designed most exquisite things in gold, silver and aluminium and sent them to Calcutta and other countries for sale. They fetched good prices, but the profits went to into his own pocket but into the middleman’s. His object was not any gain for himself but the improvement of the technique of the workmen so that the art might be revived and the artisans be able to better their position. In a short time Madhusudan created a name in the world of art, and his silver wares were highly admired in many European countries. The fame of the ‘Orissa Art Wares’ spread far and wide. Madhusudan presented many British officers in India with the beautiful products of his art works just to bring the artistry of Orissa to the notice of their country. He spent a lot of money for this purpose. Sir William Wedderburn M.P., Sir George Soicer, James Burdilion, Sir Charles Elliot, Sir Henry Cotton and many other British officials and Indians spoke very highly of Madhusudan’s Art Wares. Those who received the presents from him always valued them more as mementoes than as gifts and wrote to him in words of high appreciation of the glory of Orissan Art.

Madhusudan had never been into an art school, yet his success in this direction was marvelous, At first he engaged a few men, watched how they worked and when he had learnt their methods, he set himself to introduce improvements to cheapen labour, secure better finish and new processed of manufacture and adapt the products of modern requirements.
6.11 Sir John Woodburn’s visit to Orissa Art Wares

Madhusudan had a long discussion with Sir John Woodburn, regarding the recognition of the artisan class, by conferring some sort to honour or title on them. He added that the artisan class had never got an opportunity of coming before their Lieutenant Governor, though the fruit of their labour was always being presented to his honour by other classes of people. Madhusudan invited His Honour to pay a visit to his workshop. His Honour mentioned in his speech that he came to Orissa to visit two things, namely old art- the temple of Bhubaneswar and the new art- Mr Das’s Industry. It was on the 20th of August, 1902 that His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir John Woodburn, visited the Orissa Art Wares. The workmen presented an address in Oriya, written up on palm leaf artistically, ornamented and enclosed in a silver casket of excellent make, bearing the figure in miniature of the Bhubaneswar Temple. They expressed their sincere gratitude to Sir John Woodburn for his great kindness in receiving their address, and expressed their hope for help and encouragement at the hands of the Government, His Honour made a kind and sympathetic reply which he asked Madhusudan to interpret in Oriya. Sir John said that of all the gifts he had ever received, he considered the one offered by these humble workmen the most precious. As he was going to hold his office only for a few months longer, he was not in a position to do anything that would elevate them to wealth and eminence but he would certainly not forget to recommend their case to his successor. He would talk to the Viceroy about the matter and hoped that after him other people in authority might visit the institution and show their sympathy. His Honour then went round and inspected the articles manufactured by the workmen, and observed with great care and interest their process of working, the ingenious method of drawing out very fine wire, the flawless stone-setting and other works of skill and art. He handles their simple tools and implements to their great delight and shook hands with each of them with a smile on his face.

6.12 Press Appreciation
The “Amrita Bazar Patrika” of Calcutta wrote on March 19, 1901, “We know the Hon’ble Mr M.S. Das as a member of the Bengal known that he is a man of the highest genius. During his travels in Europe he was very forcibly impressed with the idea that India could be raised by industry alone. It also occurred to him that unless educated men stepped forward and took an active interest the profitable industries of this country for which India was once famous would die out or pass into the hands of the people of the West. We have always held that if we have the will, we can work out our salvation to a large extent by our own exertion. Mr. Das had found out another cause which has killed the native Indian industries, and it was that preference was frequently found to be given to Europe made articles over Indian products made by Indians themselves and the reason was not far to seek. While in other countries the services of the best intellects are obtainable in the Industrial pursuits, in India it is only the men belonging to the professional castes, who are generally illiterate, that follow them. Consequently the things turned out by Indian workmen have in many cases no fine finish and are wanting in variety of design. These drawbacks, however, Mr Das has sought to remove in the case of various fancy wares of gold and Silver. Mr Das is determined to do something to improve the local industries of Orissa. We may, however, en passant say that Mr. Das has set a very noble example by opening out to the gaze of our educated countrymen new fields of enterprise which have hitherto been uncared for, and showing one of the best and perhaps the only possible method of improving the natural resources of India.”

The “Bengali” of Calcutta wrote: “The example of our Hon’ble friend Mr. Das of Cuttack ought to be followed everywhere for the revival and development of Industries. He is now engaged in this work, winning golden opinion for himself and nobly helping forward the development of Industries in this province.”

6.13 No bounds to his service to the poor

Such were the “golden opinions” of the public, officials as well as non-officials had great appreciation for his work, but all the good opinion of the
public and the appreciation of officials could not help the Orissa Art Wares to survive. After the loss of about a lakh or rupees, Madhusudan was obliged to close his workshop. The artisans of Cuttack, who were taught in his workshop, carried on the trade, and people outside Orissa are reaping the benefit of his great experiment and enterprise. There had sprung up half a dozen silver and gold smith's workshops at Cuttack, which were owned by Sindhis and Marwaris who had engaged Madhusudan's workmen, and his original and exquisite designs were still in great demand. Indian society ladies patronized fine silver filigree wares and jewellery which were sent out from Orissa all over India. In other countries of the world also the pioneer has had to suffer for his work while others profit by his costly experiences. The spheres of Madhusudan's service to the motherland knew no bounds; Not satisfied with what he performed himself, he used to help and support other workers in the public cause, financially and otherwise, whenever occasion arose, in his own characteristic quiet manner, unknown to others and a little later forgotten even by himself. It is impossible to give a faithful account of this type of work performed during his lifetime. Had not his tenacious secrecy precluded all chances of access to information in this regard, the occasion themselves would be too numerous to mention.

6.14 Beacon of modern Orissa

Madhusudan Das was the beacon of 'Modern Orissa'. In his personal life, he was a man of contradictions. He lived for 86 meaningful years. He was quite active for a very long period. He was highly dedicated to the welfare of people and development of the economy of Orissa. He was popularly called the Kulabrudha of Orissa. But when he died, he was a pauper. As an entrepreneur he saw as much success as failure. In his political career he climbed the height to become a minister from which post he resigned. If one analyses his so-called failures carefully, one would agree that therein lay his success. His bankruptcy as an entrepreneur was due to his high sense of quality consciousness and self-dignity as an Oriya. The resignation from the post of minister was more due to humanity and austerity than for any kind of ill act or failure. It is important to
conclude this essay by pinpointing his main economic ideas having perennial values. Many of his useful insights are as much valid today as they were when he propounded them. Barrister Madhusudan Das will be ever remembered in Orissa for his ideas and contributions. Some of his important propositions, which Orissa should pursue even now, for socio-economic change and development, include the following:

* Administrative autonomy of a spatial entity is fundamental to the economic development of a region.
* Micro planning and decentralization contribute to democratic, meaningful and participative development at the grassroots level.
* Proper use of the natural endowment such as the mineral capital and forest wealth can raise the material well being of the people or Orissa.
* Mass-based industrialization is necessary for economic prosperity.
* Promotion of handicrafts should be an important dimension of industrial development of Orissa.
* Oriya entrepreneurs should try to produce 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 can develop without human capital formation. Spread of education alone can bring about change in society.
* Women’s education and welfare are fundamental to the socio economic change in Orissa.
* Given mass poverty and backwardness of Orissa, social welfare should be an important dimension of Orissa’s governance.

6.15 Insolvency: A Testimony to Madhusudan Das’s Dedication to Industrialization

No more cruel fate could have befallen Madhusudan on his return to Cuttack after resigning from the ministry in Patna than to find his Utkal Tannery, the unique industrial undertaking which he had built by investing his life’s earnings, on the verge of ruins. What with his lack of
personal attention and inefficient, sloppy management, this industrial establishment which Madhusudan started in 1905 was about to be liquidated. Nothing distressed him more than to find his life's work thus disintegrating and peeling off bit by bit before his very eyes. Madhusudan set himself with frenzied vigour to resuscitate the tannery from its ruin not withstanding his advanced age of seventy five and depleted resources.

Madhusudan was one of the early pioneers of industrial revolution in India. Even long before the idea of swadeshi was born, he had resuscitated the languishing cottage industries of Orissa by spending quite a fortune out of his own personal earnings. The Orissa Art Wares, established in the nineties of the last century, was a tribute to his far-sighted and patriotic entrepreneurship. The Orissa Art Wares workshop was located within the spacious campus of his personal residence, where nearly one hundred men were engaged in the craft, specially in the delicate gold and filigree works for which Cuttack was famous at one time, but which was languishing now for want of adequate public support. In course of time, the delicate filigree works of the Orissa Art Wares became internationally famous and came to be marketed to the fashion capitals of Europe. Showers of encomium, beginning from Viceroy's and Lieutenant-Governors to high officials and an admiring public all over India and Europe were lavished on the Orissa Art Wares for its artistic products. Through the Orissa Art Wares Madhusudan not only saved the industry from extinction but also orchestrated it to the Orissan renaissance.

Madhusudan was one of the earliest economic planners to maintain that unless the occupational structure of the people was changed, by which a portion of the population living on agriculture could be rehabilitated in industries, big and small, it was not possible to eliminate the scourge of poverty, of which Orissa was a perennial victim. With this end in view he revived spinning and handloom-weaving as a cottage industry long before the Congress accepted it as one of the items of its constructive programme. Mahatma Gandhi did not lose sight of this fact, when he wrote to Madhusudan in a letter dated August 12, 1925: " ...... And you will, of course, teach me how to spread the message of
the spinning wheel in Utkal. Though the Congress has spent money like water there, it has made very little headway in Utkal, I have not, however, despaired.28

In 1905, Madhusudan established the Utkal Tannery on modern lines on about 40 acres of land in the suburbs of Cuttack, in which he not only invested a very considerable sum of money out of his own income but also incurred large debts to finance its operations. The following extracts from the reports of B.M. Das, the industrial expert of the government of Bihar and Orissa on the Utkal Tannery, in December 1921, may be read with interest.

Mr M.S.Das.of Cuttack, now Hon’ble Mr M.S Das C.I.E, minister of local self- government, Bihar and Orissa was the first man in the then combined province of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to conceive the idea of exploiting the rich resources of hide, skins and tan stuff of the country, by starting leather manufacture on modern lines .It is remarkable that long before the wave of swadeshi industrialism and even before the swadeshi movement of Bengal in 1905,this idea of pioneering a new industry was considered to be the one most backward of the three sister provinces .All the more wonder is that Mr Das,a highly educated man a busy lawyer and the head of the Bar, should have been attracted to this stinking trade which from time immemorial belonged to the depressed classes (the chamars )in India .

By 1906 and 1907 the tannery must have made appreciable progress as it sent its manufactured articles, leather boots, shoes and leather goods to the Calcutta Exhibition in 1907 and won a gold medal for the exhibits. In 1908 Mr J.G. Cumming ( I.C.S.) later a member of he executive Council of the government of Bengal has reviewed the industrial position of Bengal in the Calcutta Gazette. This review had noticed only three factories in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa which employed fifty workers or more. The Utkal Tannery was the only tannery which came up to the standard and was mentioned in Mr Cumming’s review.

The administration report of the province of Bihar and Orissa for the year 1917-1918 made a reference to the activities of the Utkal Tannery and mentioned. “All the reports prove that Utkal Tannery made steady progress
since its inception and its manufacture attained an excellence which was recognized at all hands and which the tannery carefully maintained. Particularly the lizard skin of the Utkal Tannery was in great demand in England and America.” Notwithstanding the commercial success of the Utkal Tannery it was on the verge of closure due to mismanagement and financial difficulties. After resignation from the ministry. Madhusudam put in Herculean efforts to put the affairs of the tannery on an even keel. But he could not stem the ebbing tide of progressive deterioration that had set in its affairs. Mahatma Gandhi advised him to do what was necessary for his tannery in the following letter:

“I have your prompt reply to my wire. I have been constantly thinking of you but till I was in Jamshedpur I could not make up my mind to pay a special visit to Cuttack merely to see your undertaking. Having, however, gone to Jamshedpur my conscience pricked me and told me that I must likewise go to Cuttack and see your tannery. I leave on Thursday, by the Puri Express - is it not? It reaches Cuttack, I understand, 4 o’clock in the morning. I shall stay two days. I know you cannot keep my visit secret, but I do not want a burdensome programme. I want thoroughly to study the tannery and your requirements, and discover whether I can give you any help. I would love to put up with you, but I am bringing Rangalal and Satish Chandra Das Gupta with me. The first friend is a Marwari gentleman, whom I and tying to interest in tanneries as an item in cow-protection. The Second you know, and there will be a third with me. probably Mahadeb Desai, whom you also know, Now, you may put me up wherever you like, I must collect from the Bengali friends there for the Deshbandhu Memorial, and you will, of course teach me how to spread the message of the spinning wheel in Utkal. Though the Congress has spent money like water there, it has made very little headway in Utkal. I have not, however, despaired.”

Gandhiji advised Madhusudan to sell his tannery to Rangalal, the Marwari gentleman who had accompanies him, so that he could keep it running, dovetailed into the cow protection programme. But Madhusudan would have
none of it. He wanted the people of Orissa to take upon themselves the burden and responsibility of running the tannery. With that end in view, he converted the tannery into a limited company with the object "to convert the oldest pioneer factory in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa into a limited company and work it on a more extensive scale to meet the demands for its leather in India and in Europe and America.

Though many public-spirited persons of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa bought shares of this company. Madhusudan could not keep himself and the tannery above waters. An English company in Calcutta offered to buy the goodwill of the Utkal Tannery for a consideration which also did not find favour with Madhusudan. In the meantime one of his influential creditors, who in the past had advanced him large loans, with the end in view of capturing the tannery, filed a suit in the law court for recovery of his loans. Other creditors followed suit.

Though Madhusudan lived a frugal and austere life, he spent lavishly in entertaining persons belonging to all walks of life, beginning from Lieutenant-Governors to students and the political elites. Never did a distinguished visitor from outside Orissa leave Cuttack without being properly hosted by Madhusudan. The activities of the Utkal Sammilani, the Prajapratinidhi Sabha and other such organizations, which Madhusudan had sponsored, could only be sustained through his unstinted financial support. On top of all these, he suffered heavy loss and incurred liabilities on account of the Utkal Tannery. His fabulous practice in the law courts suffered seriously in the meantime, on account of his political and official preoccupations in Patna as a minister. Had he continued as a minister, drawing a salary of five thousand rupees per month, he could not only have improved his financial status, but also averted the crisis. But he had resigned from the ministry on the issue of the honorary. Local Self Government minister. 30

As the creditors mounted their claims for recovery of loans, Madhusudan had no other alternative, but to apply for being “adjudged on insolvent” In his insolvency petition Madhusudan stated: “Your petitioner has
suffered loss and incurred liabilities to the extent of Rs 1,80,000 approximately, which he was unable to pay". In due course, Madhusudan was adjudged insolvent, and his Utkal Tannery, residential house, a well equipped library and other personal properties went under the auctioneer’s hammer.

Acharya P.C. Ray, paying glowing tributes to Madhusudan’s martyrdom to the cause of industry, wrote Mr Das had realized at a time when our countrymen have no such awakening that unless we could revive and create new industries, there will be no economic salvation for our people who are solely dependent on uncertain agricultural pursuits.... Mr Das died a martyr to the cause of industry and to the upliftment of his countrymen.

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