Breaks the Arrogance of the Market: A Conversation on Cooperation in Colonial Odia Public Sphere

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The history of Cuttack in the nineteenth-century is a history of the town's gradual integration into the imperial British world system. Integration acquired particular momentum with the advent of railways in the final decade of the century. The urban society of the town responded to this accelerated pace of integration in a variety of ways. One of them was to initiate a cooperation movement which aimed to protect the interest of urban consumers vis-à-vis the unbridled profit-making impulse of the market. Madhusudan Das, a wealthy lawyer and entrepreneur, was the prime mover behind the initiative. His principal interlocutor was Gourishankar Ray, the founder editor of the *Utkal Dipika*, the most prominent weekly in the town. This short paper offers an outline of the urban initiative for consumer cooperation and analyzes the conversations and discourses it generated in the local press. The fragment of the sentence included in the title of the essay, '…breaks the arrogance of the market', is drawn from a report that Gourishankar wrote. It summarized Madhusudan's opinion on the work of the cooperation principle[1] This urban initiative to translate the English discourse on cooperation into Odia has received inadequate attention from cultural historians. A study of it could contribute to a finer understanding of the formations of colonial modernity in the region.

Madhusudan - A Provincial Victorian

Madhusudan Das (1848-1934) is a widely studied figure in the history of colonial Odisha.

A pioneer of political nationalism, he worked for the unification of all Odia language speaking regions under a single unit of colonial administration. His political project included a strong emphasis on economic development. He argued for industrialization of the region, and himself founded small scale industries in the town, the Orissa Art Wares in 1897 and the Utkal Tannery in 1905.

Presently available scholarship interprets the value of Madhusudan's regionalism in the context of a larger narrative about the gradual formation of Indian nationalism. It rightly argues that regional consciousness was not in opposition to the formation of the national consciousness—these were mutually interdependent processes.[2] Political figures such as Madhusudan, the argument goes, raised regional concerns on national platforms on the one hand, and brought national issues to the notice of regional publics on the other hand. Their mediating role which sought to balance the claims of the region and the nation, served to make 'the process of nation making in India…relatively smooth, deep rooted and strong'.[3]

The history of Madhusudan's mediating role was complex. He did not subscribe to the political project of anti-colonial mass movement which began to garner wider support among the younger generation of Congress leaders in Odisha in the second decade of the twentieth-century. Rather, he advocated a model of *prajaniti* which combined a liberal commitment to community reformation with an agenda of communicating grievances of the subject population to the imperial administration.[4] His promotion of the cause of the regional and vernacular was not at first acceptable to the Congress. However, the imperial state brought in constitutional reforms towards the close of the second decade of the twentieth-century. It introduced responsible government formed via popular election, and thereby impressed on the Congress the necessity of educating the masses in the processes of electoral politics. Madhusudan argued that effective politicization of the masses could take place via the vernacular and pushed for the reorganization of

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provinces along linguistic lines. In due course, Congress saw the logic of the regional and vernacular cause and threw its weight behind it. Thus, the project of the national self-determination witnessed the formation of a 'regional citizen' who was marked by its vernacular identity.[5] Odia speaking tracts from Bengal, Madras and Central Provinces were brought together to form a separate province in 1936.

I intend to re-describe Madhusudan's overriding political and economic preoccupation with the region as a form of provincialism that was produced by the historical processes which increasingly integrated Odisha into the Victorian world system. A re-description of Madhusudan as a provincial Victorian affords an opportunity to disentangle his commitment to the region from the historiography of Indian nationalism for a short moment, and situate it in a narrative about integration. In this interpretive scheme, the value of Madhusudan's provinciality does not remain confined to considerations of what it could or could not contribute to the formation of a national consciousness. Rather, it is derived from his location as a node in a global network of ideas, practices and people which integration produced.[6] That is, we reconstruct Madhusudan as a citizen of the empire and offer a thick description of the global networks he inhabited as he worked for the development of the region. This helps us to better assess his economic thought. This analytic framework also enables us to revisit the period which is usually described as a phase of early nationalism. As a historical process, integration began with the advent of the colonial rule in the region, and remained the central narrative of the place through the nineteenth-century. That is, it antedated the arrival of nationalism. In available histories of the region, both cultural and social, language nationalism furnishes the dominant plot of the narrative. And, there are good reasons for it. Having said that, this paper is a short experiment in adopting integration as an alternative mode of emplotting the history of the region. This helps us to discuss those aspects of colonial rule—evolutions in urban imagination for instance—which remain largely unexplored.

Self Help: Provincial Economic Imagination

In the last decade of the nineteenth-century, the Victorian ethic of self-help was treated with considerable respect in the Odia language press at Cuttack. As I have discussed elsewhere, a particular discourse on political economy began to evolve in the Odia public sphere in this period. It held the social-moral character of the people, more than the nature of colonial rule, responsible for the economic under development of the region. As a remedy, it imported the mid-Victorian Protestant discourse on self-help into the colony and sought to popularize industry as a moral virtue among the people. Discussions of Samuel Smiles and his work unfolded in the local press. Biographies of successful self-made European and American entrepreneurs garnered public approbation.[7]

Madhusudan's economic imagination was formed in this intellectual climate. There is room here to discuss some of the interrelated strands of this imagination. First, he espoused the ethic of self-help whole heartedly. He was particularly drawn to its collectivist manifestations—cooperative societies and joint stock companies. On his first visit to London in the summer of 1897, he had an opportunity to study the work of English cooperative stores and trade unions. On his return to Cuttack, he addressed public meetings and extolled the virtue of collective enterprise. A summary of one of his speeches appeared in *The Englishman*, a pro-establishment newspaper published from Calcutta. It said: 'A public meeting was held last evening in the hall of the Cuttack Printing Company to welcome the Hon. Mr. M. S. Das on his return from England. Mr. Das, in addressing the meeting, described his experiences in England, briefly noticing the Trade Unions, the Cooperative Stores… He advised his countrymen to work collectively like Englishmen'.[8] We will return to Madhusudan's involvement in cooperatives and joint stock enterprises.

Second, Madhusudan preferred industrialization to agriculture as a means of economic development of the country. In the essay 'Freedom from Industrial Captivity' he observed that the 'human energy employed in agriculture…is less valuable than that employed in the manufacture of goods…'.[9] 'When a country', he continued 'exports its food stuff and imports its raiment it is not using its energy to the best advantage of the nation. Its energy is used for the benefit of other countries for want of employment in more remunerative fields'.[10] In a lecture on 'Dignity of Labor', he defined industry as a 'branch of manual labor which affords facilities for a progressive culture of the hand securing higher wages at successive stages', and refused to include agriculture in this category as it afforded, according to him, 'no scope for attainment of a more remunerative skill.'[11] He described 'the relation between two countries one of which supplies raw materials out of which the other manufactures goods to supply the needs of daily life' as fundamentally unequal, and posed a rhetorical question that impressed upon his audience the value of self-reliance, 'Is it not in our power to burst the fetter of this slavery in the economic world?'[12]

Third, Madhusudan analyzed the underdevelopment of the region in the context of its integration into the imperial economy. In 'Utkal Jananinka Maguni,' a pamphlet written in 1918, he observed how both human labor and natural resources went out of Odisha to the

manufacturing industries of Bengal and consequently contributed to the comparative poverty of the region. The pamphlet constructs a figure of 'Mother Odisha'. She first draws attention to the exploitation of the large number of migrant Odia laborers: 'They leave for a foreign country for the sake of their bellies. But what do they get? Look at the profit others earn from the commodities they manufacture in those factories, and then look at the wages they receive in return. Profits are way higher compared to the wages…all the profit goes into the hands of others and what do my children receive for their hard labor?'[13] She then speaks about the appropriation of natural resources: "Moreover, a larger share of the natural resources used to manufacture the commodities in those factories come from me. I have stored those resources here and there for you. Others earn profit out of them. You stand dazzled. And, run to other people's places for earning a livelihood."[14] She concludes by suggesting a way to grow out of poverty. "If you keep the natural resources within the house and manufacture commodities here, then profit will begin to accrue here. There will be the wages as well. You have not been able to arrive at this insight till today."[15] We can set aside the emotional appeal of the rhetoric and appreciate the manner in which Madhusudan grasped the fact that the region had turned into a periphery of the Imperial world system. It had acquired the characteristics of a peripheral economy. In the circumstances, he invested his faith in collective effort to turn the region into a manufacturing space.

Fourth, Madhusudan's economic thought had a pronounced communitarian aspect. He argued that the landed elite, the intelligentsia and the artisans and peasants were equal stake holders in the industrial development of the region. Consequently, cultivation of sympathy and coordination between the diverse classes of a society was central to his project. Several of his essays and speeches reiterate this point. In an important letter to Jayamangal Rath, associate editor of the periodical *Samaj Mitra* in 1918, Madhusudan invited the landed elite to contribute capital, the educated middle class to provide managerial and technological knowledge, and the artisans to supply labor so that manufacturing units could be established. Such units would be guided by an Odia community consciousness. They would, he suggested, manufacture those commodities which would be of benefit to the largest number of people in the community. In order to protect the interest of the poorer classes, he suggested that the proposed manufacturing company should sell shares worth as low as one rupee. As share-holders, the artisans and the workers could also profit from the progress of the community.[16]

Lastly, Madhusudan's economic imagination was in dialogue with an imperial audience. On his visits to London, he is known to have delivered lectures, published pamphlets, and conducted press meets.[17] He had a presence in the metropolitan public sphere. This important part of his oeuvre is not yet collected. At this stage, I can offer but a short glimpse into his engagement with the imperial audience. On his second visit to London in the summer of 1907, Madhusudan touched upon a crucial issue of the wastage of human capital in his address to the East India Association in Caxton Hall, Westminster. As reported in the London newspaper *The Globe*, he set out to describe the 'effect produced by British influence upon the native arts and industries of India', and 'called attention particularly to the failure of the Government to encourage the artisan class to maintain those artistic traditions which had been handed down from generation to generation'.[18] In place of the traditional art and industry, he maintained, 'new and unsuitable industries conducted on English commercial lines were being introduced which did not adapt themselves to the conditions under which these arts had grown up through the lapse of centuries'.[19] 'Reasonably enough', the report concluded, 'he argued that the introduction of new industries which did not take into account the hereditary training of the Indian craftsman caused a serious waste of a great artistic asset, for it led to the abandonment of forms of achievement for which the fitness of the workers had been quite definitely demonstrated'.[20] In the debate which followed Madhusudan's address, eminent India hands Lepel Griffin and George Birdwood supported the thesis, and censured the colonial government. It is to address this issue of wastage that Madhusudan founded his company Orissa Art Wares in 1897. In its workshop, he sought to reinvent and industrialize the traditional local art of filigree work, and make it competitive in the in the global market.

Madhusudan's economic imagination can be described as that of a provincial Victorian. It was Victorian in the sense that it drew its primary inspiration from the Victorian ethic of self-help, and the collectivist projects the ethic gave rise to in England. These ideas saturated the Odia public sphere of the time, and Madhusudan was the principal channel through which they flowed from the metropolis to the colony. It was provincial in the sense that Madhusudan situated himself as a node in a larger network of communication involving ideas, practices and people that was spread across the British world system. He often saw the region of Odisha not only in relation to the nation of India but also in relation to the Victorian empire.

Several features of this economic imagination duly informed Madhusudan's efforts to start a cooperation

movement in the town of Cuttack at the turn of the twentieth century. After his return from London in 1897, he introduced G. J. Holyoake to Odia readers. Writing to the editor of the *Utkal Dipika*, the most popular weekly in the town, Madhusudan said, 'There is a very valuable book on the subject by Mr. Holyoake. It is entitled "The History of Cooperation". I should strongly recommend this book to such of your readers who wish to study the Essentials of the Cooperative system and the secrets of its success in England'.[21] Before we turn to the story of Cooperation at Cuttack, we need to familiarize ourselves with its history in England.

Languages of Cooperation in Victorian England

Historians have studied the tangled languages of cooperation in Britain in the second half of the century.[22] On the one hand, it contained a liberal middleclass reformist element that saw co-partnership and cooperation as a solution to the widening class divide in an industrial society. This model wanted to share profit among all shareholders so as to wean the workers away from the trade unions.[23] It sought to distinguish itself from the socialists, endorsed a form of free trade, and was not in favor of state intervention.[24] It had a pronounced moral aspect—it sought to inculcate virtues of thrift, temperance, and self-reliance etc. among the working classes.[25] It positioned the establishment of the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers in 1844 as the foundational moment, and thereby sought to push cooperation's origins in Owentie socialism and radical politics to the margins.[26] The society, the argument went, provided a share of the profit or dividend to the consumers, and thereby transformed earlier Owenite forms of cooperation from a community based model to a consumer based model. It kept the interest and needs of the consumer in the foreground as opposed to that of the worker as producer, and thereby differed from socialist principles.[27]

On the other hand, the language of cooperation also contained a more radical working class element that saw cooperation as a form of socialism that eschewed state intervention.[28] It retained the emphasis on community, and spoke about the coming of the 'Cooperative Commonwealth'.[29] It contested the incorporation of the working classes into the capitalist system, and remained committed to programs and visions of wholesale social transformation.[30] It sought to retain its independence from middleclass leadership or authority. Both these forms of languages were tangled together. Madhusudan was introduced to these discourses on cooperation during his visit to Britain. He brought some elements of it home to the colony with him.

Cooperation and Odia Public Sphere

Cooperation at Cuttack was a civic and urban project. On his return from England, Madhusudan held public meetings and led an initiative to establish a cooperative store in the town. In this venture Gourishankar was his partner in arms. Gourishankar brought out elaborate reports on these meetings in his weekly, the *Utkal Dipika*. He also published letters and notices from Madhusudan. Between the two of them emerged an urban effort to translate the English discourse on cooperation into Odia.

As it took root and evolved in the colonial Odia public sphere, the language of cooperation formulated a central question: who should the project benefit? Should cooperation aim to benefit any specific embodied class or should it aim to benefit the general consumer at large? This question emerged from the process of translation that Madhusudan undertook. The metropolitan discourse on cooperation evolved in response to an industrialized society. Here, the worker could at once be the producer as well as the consumer, and both the liberal as well as the socialist languages could position the embodied worker, whether as a producer or as a consumer, as the beneficiary of the project of cooperation. The Odia entrepreneur sought to translate the discourse for a peripheral colonial town that was urban but not industrialized. Here, the figure of the industrial worker was by and large absent. Consequently, the question as to who should cooperation benefit, a particular embodied figure or a general impersonal consumer, remained an open ended one at Cuttack.

It should be noted that Madhusudan did not aim to start an agricultural cooperative society. The choice is not without an element of surprise. Available histories of cooperation in colonial India suggest that such projects primarily concentrated on rural agricultural communities. Beginning at the end of the nineteenth-century, the colonial state took the initiative to establish rural credit societies in Western India as well as Punjab so as to protect small farmers from unscrupulous moneylenders.[31] This policy proceeded from the state's desire to slow down and better manage the pace of social change in rural India. Village communities needed to be carefully managed vis-à-vis the new forces of change—colonial laws about private property and taxation as well as demands of colonial commerce. The official mind felt that unless it was managed properly, rural India would pose a violent threat to the continuity of the colonial order itself. In this context, the colonial state chose to use cooperatives to 'reconstruct' rural societies. The Indian Co-operative Societies Act was passed in 1904. Cooperative movement became a part of the colonial state's strategy of indirect rule. It became a 'political technology' which was

'designed to rule—that is, to dominate, to govern from a hierarchical position above'.[32]

Given this rural and statist history of cooperation in colonial India, Madhusudan's civic and urban initiative presents a novel aspect. As delineated in the essay 'Dignity of Labor', his economic vision deemed it desirable that the 'line of economic gravitation' in India be redirected from land to industrial manufacture. The colonial administration concentrated on land and derived revenue from it. Native private investors in general also did not see beyond land. Such a line of 'economic gravitation', Madhusudan felt, was 'not conducive to the growth or prosperity. The inevitable consequence of this is permanent poverty of the nation'.[33] This emphasis explains the absence of the agricultural worker or rural cooperatives in his scheme of action.

At a later stage, Madhusudan did turn his attention to agriculture. In an essay he wrote in the periodical the *Utkal Sahitya* in 1908, he proposed that the Utkal Union Conference should open rural credit societies or *paraspara sahajyakari runa bhandara* in the villages. He also proposed formation of collective rural granaries which would make grains available on small interests in ordinary times, and would provide charitable succor during times of famine.[34] Along with his collaborators, Madhusudan had established the Utkal Union Conference in 1903. It was the most prominent public platform in Odisha in the period, and worked for the unification of Odia speaking regions. Improvement of agriculture was one of the subjects that was often discussed in its annual sessions. It is also quite likely that Madhusudan was aware of the initiatives the colonial state undertook to open rural cooperatives in other parts of India. However, he himself did not undertake any rural cooperative project. It is also not known if his proposals found much support among the public or received favorable attention from the local colonial administration. At least it needs further research to examine whether they ever moved beyond the stage of preliminary proposals. In this paper we will confine our analysis to the urban civic project he led in the town of Cuttack.

The Poorly Paid *Amlah*

This question as to who should the project of cooperation benefit led to a brief public debate between Madhusudan and Gourishankar which would be of interest to our conversation. Madhusudan first proposed to start a cooperative store at Cuttack to ameliorate the condition of the *amlah* or the poorly paid urban clerk who worked in the lower echelons of local British administration. In a sense, he sought to translate the metropolitan figure of the industrial worker into that of the colonial clerk. He reproduced the metropolitan liberal-reformist language vis-à-vis the Odia *amlah*. In a public meeting of the clerks held in March 1898, he said, 'Effective ways of making money can be arrived at if people came together and tried. In England, many people of the same class [*samashreni ra anekloka*] come together and mitigate their wants by way of doing a business. Thereby, they also earn the respect and affection of the higher classes [*uccha shrenira lokankara adara ebam shradhha ra patra heuacchanti*]'.[35] As we discussed earlier, Madhusudan's economic imagination placed emphasis on sympathy and cooperation between the upper and lower classes of the society. This language of social sympathy is at work in his speech to the clerks. The urban poor in England subscribed to the ethic of self-help and endeavored collectively to improve their situation through commercial enterprise. It earned them the respect and affection of the rich. In other words, a form of social cohesion was forged, in Madhusudan's understanding, in the space of self-help. This metropolitan model, he beseeched his audience, needed to be transplanted in the colony. He encouraged the clerks to open a joint savings account in the local post office and individually deposit a small amount every month from their salaries. He also promised to pay a little interest, from his own pockets, on the deposits of those clerks who received particularly low wages. In this manner, he hoped, a starting capital could be raised in about a year. The plan was to initiate a business in rice, paddy and other agricultural goods. The clerks assembled at the meeting received the proposal with warm enthusiasm and committed to raise a fund.

As he reported the public meeting and the proposal in his weekly, Gourishankar also adopted a moral tone which resembled that of the middle-class metropolitan cooperator. It sought to inculcate the ethic of personal thrift among the lower-class clerks. 'It would not be a small profit', Gourishankar wrote, 'if by this venture the clerks acquire the habit of depositing small amounts in the savings bank'. He continued, 'once this habit is acquired, they will be enthused to make regular monthly deposits and see their savings grow, and will move away from the temptation of unnecessary expenditure'.[36]

However, as the project evolved, Madhusudan chose to de-link cooperation from the interest or necessity of a particular class. He opened it to the participation of the general public as shareholders. In other words, he interrupted the discursive process which sought to translate the metropolitan worker into the colonial clerk. He brought out an advertisement in English in June 1898. It informed that 'a public meeting' involving 'a large number of pleaders, Mooktars, and amlahs' was held 'at the residence of M. S. Das' and that it was decided 'to start a Cooperative Store for the supply of articles of necessary consumption such as rice, dal, ghee, oil, cloth, firewood,

& c. to the shareholders and to the general public'.[37] It was resolved that the 'business is to be commenced with capital of Rs. 10,000 which is to be divided into 2000 shares of Rs. 5 each.'[38] Members of the general public were invited to write to Madhusudan, the honorary secretary, with applications to hold shares in the cooperative store. A board of Directors was also appointed—all of its eight members belonged to the middle and upper middle classes of the Cuttack town.

A Critique and a Closure

As the project moved its emphasis from the specific community of the poorly paid clerks to the general consumers at large, Gourishankar wrote a critique. It offered a nuanced reflection on the nature of free trade and the necessity for protection from the harsh market forces for people of specific classes and communities. He wrote:

> When we first reported about the proposal, we thought that the cooperative store was modelled after similar ventures found in Britain… We thought, given the high prices of necessary consumables of everyday life as well as continuous rise in their prices, the proposed store aimed to bring relief to the poorly paid clerks who are in the service of the government. However, it seems from the advertisement that the store will not be thus formed. Instead, it will be formed like any other ordinary company or joint business venture. This is because participation in the venture and the scope of its transactions are not confined to a particular community [*kounasi bisesa sampradaya madhyare abaddha nahin*].[39]

Gourishankar wondered to what extent this proposal for 'free trade' (*abarita byabasaya*) tallied with the idea of a 'co-operative store' (*joutha bhandara*). He wrote,

> If we go according to the proposal, we would need to sell consumables according to the market price. So, if we buy according to the fluctuating prices of the market, then, there will be no difference between buying from the cooperative store or from the market. Shareholders will have no benefit except for receiving a profit according to the value of their shares, and given the value of the starting capital, there is hope only for a small profit.[40]

Why did then Madhusudan shift his attention away from the interest of a specific community which needed protection from the harsh forces of the market? It is quite possible that there were real issues of control and authority. A segment of clerks developed cold feet. We have access to a notice that Madhusudan brought out in June 1898.[41] It informed the public that Madhusudan had received a signed letter from some clerks of the office of the Collector and the Civil Court. The letter conveyed that the clerks had certain complaints about the cooperative project, and requested a meeting, only of clerks, to discuss them and find a resolution. The demand to have an exclusive meeting suggests that the clerks were anxious about issues of control and authority over the project. Madhusudan did convene a meeting. But most likely, the meeting could not improve matters much. The response from the clerks remained lukewarm.

The move away from a specific class that needed protection from the market did not pose an ethical problem for Madhusudan. Unlike the metropolitan worker, the colonial clerk could not occupy both the positions of the producer and consumer. He was only a consumer. That is why perhaps, his poverty could not present itself as a problem of social injustice or of ethics. In other words, the question as to who should cooperation benefit did not find a resolution in the discursive figure of the poorly paid *amlah*. It remained an open-ended question in the Odia public sphere. In his response to Gourishankar, Madhusudan reiterated his commitment to the principle of competition and his plan to undersell the retailers. However, he declined to tie the project to the interest of a specific class or community.[42] In a letter to Gourishankar's weekly, originally in English, he wrote:

> Allow me to point out that the restriction of sales to men, who have invested money in the business is none of the cardinal principles on which the Cooperative Institutions of England or of Europe are conducted. Compare the Rochdale with the London stores.[43] Every dealer at the former is a share holder. There are many members of the London Stores who have no vested interest in the concern whatever...At present I should content myself with the remark that direct dealing between the consumer and the producer or wholesale trader, and the introduction of a new element of competition which in England have compelled tradesmen largely to reduce their prices for ready money customers have made the cooperative principle so popular in England. You say that it is intended to sell the goods of the 'Cooperative Stores' at the current market prices. You are misinformed on the subject. The object is to under-sell the ordinary individual trader and this can be secured by direct dealings with the producer and other means…[44]

This discussion about the nature and purpose of cooperation—who should it aim to benefit—came to a quick closure in the colonial Odia public sphere. It found a closure not because the question lost its steam or grew irrelevant. Rather, the discussion found a closure because of the shared regionalism of the debaters. Both Madhusudan and Gourishankar belonged to a small community of public intellectuals at Cuttack who were united in their support for the formation of a regional identity based on Odia language. This shared ideological campaign was at the back of the entrepreneurial efforts of both the men. Quite possibly, this element prevented the debate about cooperation from flowering further.

Gourishankar ceded the ground. In a response, he wrote, 'We have nothing to add to what Madhu babu has decided upon after personally making proper enquiries in Britain. Our sincere prayers are that he may succeed in this venture which he has initiated according to his wide-ranging experience'.[45]

The Cuttack Cooperative Store

The Cuttack Cooperative Store had a short-lived career. This was primarily because the urban middle-class stake holders in the project could not evolve a consensus about its leadership structure. In his report on a meeting of the cooperative held in July 1898, Gourishankar observed with regret that of the eight persons chosen as members of the Board of Directors only two were present. He also reported that of the total two hundred and sixty applicants for shares in the cooperative, a majority of hundred and sixty were from the town of Cuttack itself. Of these urban shareholders, only fifty were present in the meeting. Given this lukewarm response, a new set of Directors had to be chosen. The lions' share of the burden of running the cooperative fell on the shoulders of the proposer, Madhusudan.[46]

In February 1900, Madhusudan brought out a notice, originally in English, for a meeting of the directors of the cooperative store.[47] In an autobiographical vein, he wrote, 'My object in starting this store was to convince the people that business can be carried on this joint stock principle and I am glad I shall be able to show there has been profit…'[48] He conveyed his regrets, 'I am sorry I cannot undertake to do the whole thing as I have done hitherto but I am willing to give any help to the extent my time permits'.[49] Madhusudan requested that someone else from among the shareholders and directors would come forward to take up the responsibilities of the secretary and treasurer. 'I hope some good soul will come forward as it will be a matter of great regret if the thing is allowed to drop'.[50] At this stage of research, we do not know about the subsequent history of the cooperative store at Cuttack.

In a year of its business in agricultural produce such as paddy, blackgram, and horsegram, it returned a profit of twenty-five per cent.[51] It also inspired at least one more middle-class business project that aimed to create a just market for the consumer.[52] Madhusudan's experiment sought to translate the metropolitan-industrial discourse on cooperation to an urban but not industrial society in the colony. Such translations were a part of the provincial way of life at Cuttack at the turn of the twentieth-century.

Conclusion

To translate the English discourse on cooperation into Odia, Madhusudan first proposed to start a cooperative store at Cuttack to ameliorate the condition of the *amlah* or the poorly paid urban clerk who worked in the lower echelons of the British administration. In a sense, he sought to translate the metropolitan figure of the industrial worker into that of the colonial clerk. However, as the project evolved, he delinked it from the interest of a specific class and opened it to the general consumer. The question as to who should cooperation benefit did not find a resolution in the discursive figure of the poorly paid *amlah*. It remained an open-ended question in the urban Odia public sphere.

Historians of cooperation in colonial India have paid due attention to the state's efforts to establish rural credit societies in Punjab and Western India. Unlike these statist projects which concentrated on agricultural communities, the short-lived movement at Cuttack emerged from native middle-class entrepreneurship and confined its attention to urban consumers. The native middle class drew inspiration from the Victorian ethic of self-help. It analyzed the underdevelopment of the region in the context of its integration into the imperial economy which produced differentiations and disparities. It did not have much confidence in agriculture. It invested its faith in communitarian manufacturing projects to address the peripheralization of the regional economy, and placed emphasis on the cultivation of sympathy between the various classes of the local society.

Notes

1. News report, *Utkal Dipika*, 2 July 1898, p. 218. The original in Odia is '*bajara ra anta bhangi die*'. My translation.
2. Acharya, *National Movement*, 26, 30.
3. Acharya, *Selected Writings of Madhusudan Das*, viii. Also see, Mishra, *Language and the Making of Modern India*, p.127.
4. Mishra, *Language and the Making of Modern India*, p. 127-128.
5. Ibid., pp. 133-136.
6. For this understanding of the category provincial, see, McDonagh, "Rethinking Provincialism," p. 399-424.
7. Satpathy, 'Provincial Victorians'. Also see, Satpathy, 'A Market Society in Formation'.
8. 'Local Intelligence', *The Englishman*, 9 December 1897, p. 15.
9. Acharya, *Selected Writings of Madhusudan Das*, p. 23.
10. *Ibid*., p. 24.
11. *Ibid*., p. 206.
12. *Ibid*., p. 216.
13. Dash and Das, *Utkal Gouraba Madhusudannka Odia Rachanabali*, p. 140. My translation.
14. *Ibid*. My translation.
15. *Ibid*. My translation.
16. *Ibid*., pp. 141-143.
17. Mohanty, *Madhusudan Das*.
18. *The Globe*, 14 August 1907.
19. *Ibid*.
20. *Ibid*.

21. 'To the Editor of the Utkal Dipika', *Utkal Dipika*, 2 July 1898, p. 222. The letter was originally in English.
22. Gurney, 'The Middle-Class Embrace' p. 255.
23. *Ibid*., pp. 257-258. Also, Gurney, 'Introduction: Socialism and cooperation in Britain', p. 2.
24. Gurney, 'The Middle-Class Embrace', p. 264. Also, Gurney, 'Introduction: Socialism and cooperation in Britain', p. 9.
25. Gurney, 'The Middle-Class Embrace', pp. 273-274.
26. *Ibid*., p. 265.
27. Gurney, 'Introduction: Socialism and cooperation in Britain', pp. 6-7.
28. Gurney, 'The Middle-Class Embrace', p. 268.
29. Gurney, 'The Middle-Class Embrace', p. 271. Also, Gurney, 'Introduction: Socialism and cooperation in Britain', p. 2
30. Gurney, 'Introduction: Socialism and cooperation in Britain', p. 2
31. Windel, *Cooperative Rule*, p. 8.
32. *Ibid*., pp. 2, 7-8.
33. Acharya, *Selected Writings of Madhusudan Das*, p. 219.
34. Madhusudan Das, 'Utkal Sammilani', *Utkal Sahitya* vol. 11, no.3, 1908, p. 67.
35. 'Joutha Bhandara', *Utkal Dipika*, 12 March, 1898, p. 88. My translation.
36. *Ibid*., My translation.
37. 'Bigyanpana: Cuttack Cooperative Store', *Utkal Dipika*, 18 June 1898, p.206.
38. *Ibid.*
39. 'Kataka Joutha Bhandar', *Utkal Dipika*, 25 June 1898, pp. 211-212. My translation.
40. *Ibid*. My translation.
41. 'Kataka Joutha Bhandara', *Utkal Dipika*, 25 June 1898, p.215.
42. 'To the Editor of the Utkal Dipika', 2 July 1898, p.222.
43. Madhusudan refers to 'the store run by the Civil Service Supply Association—a middle-class body that purported to be a co-op organized for and by govt employees and clerks'. I owe this information to Peter Gurney.
44. 'To the Editor of the Utkal Dipika', 2 July 1898, p.222.
45. News report, *Utkal Dipika*, 2 July 1898, p.218.
46. See, 'Katak Joutha Bhandara', *Utkal Dipika,* 6 August 1898, pp. 259-260.
47. 'Notice', *Utkal Dipika*, 3 February 1900, p. 38.
48. *Ibid*.
49. *Ibid*.
50. *Ibid*.
51. News report, *Utkal Dipika*, 10 February 1900, p. 41.
52. 'Bigyanpana', *Utkal Dipika*, 9 December 1899, p.398.

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