



# INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE MEERUT DIVISION

(A.D. 1850-1947)

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## Aim of Study:

To Study the industrial development that took place in the area of the present-day Meerut division from the perspective of history. The Focus of the Study will be the present-day area of Meerut division and the time period of the study will be from 1850 to 1947.

## Abstract:

The present study is an attempt for evaluating the industrial development which took place, in the historical past between the time period ranging from 1850 to 1947, in the present-day Meerut division. Currently, the Meerut Division consists of six districts, which are, namely- Meerut, Ghaziabad, Hapur, Baghpat, Bulandshahr and Gautam Buddh Nagar. The industries which developed in this division cover a wide spectrum of industries like the Faience pottery of (Khurja) Bulandshahr; Sugar mill and other industries of Ghaziabad. Sugar mill, Leather goods, Embroidery work and Scissors industry of Meerut; Sugar mill, cloth weaving industry and pottery of Hapur and Blanket and cloth weaving industries of Baghpat. All these industries underwent considerable development over a period of time. All these industries have given immense contribution in giving Meerut division a unique identity and recognition.

**Keywords** Industry, Faience, Pottery, Leather goods, Scissors, Lantern, Embroidery, Sugar mill, Oil Mills, Vanaspati, factory, Soap works, textile, Blanket, Meerut, Daurala, Ghaziabad, Modinagar, Hapur, Simbhaoli, Bahadurgarh, Nirpura, Baghpat, Bulandshahr, Khurja

### **Introduction:**

Present day Meerut division consists of six districts namely Meerut, Ghaziabad, Hapur, Baghpat, Bulandshahr and Gautam Buddha Nagar. The Meerut division has witnessed considerable development of both traditional and modern industries during the course of time. Traditionally in the region, in and around Meerut, items like leather goods, cotton fabrics, blankets (at Nirpura of then Sardhana Tehsil), embroidered articles made of silk, faience pottery (at Bahadurgarh of then Hapur Tehsil of Meerut) etc were produced by the native population of the region. Talking about the pottery industry, Khurja (Bulandshahr) has been historically known for its ornamental ware pottery. As per the colonial documents, in late nineteenth century, Mr Growse, an Englishman, introduced glazing art in the region of Khurja (Bulandshahr). This pottery was also produced at Bahadurgarh (in the then Hapur Tehsil of Meerut) which was originally introduced there from Multan region. Glazed ornamental vases and flowerpots were produced at Khurja (Bulandshahr). Various modern industries sprung up around 1930s in the region of present-day Meerut division, such as those established at Modinagar (Ghaziabad) of the Modi Industries Limited like the Modi Sugar Mill (established in 1932), Modi Vanaspati Mfg. Co. (established in 1939), Modi Soap Works (established in 1940), Modi oil Mills (established in 1944) etc. Some of the other such modern industries in Meerut division are Simbhaoli Sugar Mill at Simbhaoli (in present day Hapur district) established in 1933 and Modern Industries, Ghaziabad established in 1941 etc.

### **Methodology:**

The present article follows the descriptive and analytical method from a historical perspective. A critical use of the sources both primary and secondary has been employed in this article to provide a larger perspective of the historical background of the industrial development which took place in the present-day Meerut division between the period ranging from A.D. 1850 to 1947.

### **Discussion:**

A detailed discussion on various industries which developed in different parts of the Meerut division is as follows: -

#### ***Meerut***

**Scissors industry** of Meerut enjoys worldwide reputation. As per the artisans this industry is believed to have existed for more than 360 years. The scissors were made by hand by the craftsmen. First metal was melted after which during its molten state it was poured into the mould of pre-determined shapes. In this manner two

blades of the scissors were crafted by the craftsmen. The handles for the scissors were made of brass which was obtained from old brass utensils and objects. Later on, the two crafted blades were joined together by a nut and bolt mechanism. This craftsmanship skill was passed on to the next generation mostly within the family or to the students of renowned craftsmen.

**Leather Goods industry** thrived in the region of Meerut during the pre- independence period. Tanning of hides was undertaken in Meerut during nineteenth and early twentieth century. Basically, in this industry hides from cattle, majorly buffalo, was obtained from the dead animals. These hides were sold as raw materials for the manufacture of several products such as shoes, horse saddles and bags etc. The shoes were made of various shapes and sizes. Shoes and other products were then sold in the markets.

**Daurala Sugar Mill** is situated in the then Daurala village of Meerut. This sugar mill was established in the year 1932 by its founder Lala Shri Ram. This sugar mill provided the opportunity to the sugarcane farmers of the nearby region to supply their produce of sugarcane as raw material for the sugar mill. The sugarcane after crushing, processing and refining led to the production of sugar. Initially the sugar mill functioned at a small scale. Also, during the initial stage the amount of mechanization was limited. The production of the sugar mill was supplied in the nearby markets of the region.

**Embroidery work** was carried out on fine fabric like silk in various households of Meerut. Apart from fabric, embroidery work was also done on silk and velvet caps. Embroidery work was mostly done by the women artisans. Mostly this was a very intricate form of craftsmanship which required great amount of time and expertise.

This craftsmanship presented several challenges as well. The challenges included the learning of embroidery work by the artisans, as it was an intricate artwork so it required long hours of work and perfection on the part of the artisan. Also, the artisans faced other challenges such as weak eyesight due to the intricate and tiring nature of this work. Since, the embroidery work was carried out by hands, as a result of this, the finished goods were very expensive and only the elite and privileged classes of the society were able to afford it.

### ***Ghaziabad***

**Modi Sugar Mill (Modinagar)** was established in the year 1932 by the founder Gujarmal Modi. Initially, this sugar mill was established at a small village called Begumabad. The sugar mill and other factories setup in the area gave Begumabad prominence and recognition which later came to be known as Modinagar, a new industrial township. Initially, sugar was produced from desi khaand and gur. Later, this sugar mill was supplied with sugarcane from the nearby areas by the farmers. The sugarcane was then crushed, processed and refined to produce sugar from it. The produce was supplied in the local as well as in the other markets of the region. A number of other industries were also setup in Modinagar during the pre-independence period. Gujarmal Modi

had also setup institutions such as schools, temples and charitable hospitals for the workers and their families in this industrial township.

In the year 1939, Gujarmal Modi had setup a vanaspati factory known as **Modi Vanaspati Manufacturing Company** at Modinagar. This factory produced vanaspati to provide a cheaper alternative of ghee to the masses. The Vanaspati product, produced in this factory was sold by the name of 'Kotogem' in the market.

In the year 1940, **Modi Soap Works** was setup by Gujarmal Modi at Modinagar. This factory produced washing clothes soap. This soap was produced by oil sludge, which was one of the waste products obtained from the Modi Vanaspati Manufacturing Company. The soap produced by Modi Soap Works was sold in the market by the name of 'Modi No. 1'.

In the year 1941, Gujarmal Modi had established an oil mill to provide supplies for the manufacture soap in the Modi Soap Works. In the year 1944, **Modi Oil Mills** was setup to produce peanut oil and mustard oil which were then used in the Modi Vanaspati Manufacturing Company for the manufacture of Vanaspati.

'**Modern Industries**' in Ghaziabad was founded in the year 1941. It was one of the earliest modern factories that was setup in the Ghaziabad city. It was founded with humble beginnings which initiated with simple lantern factory. The manufacturing capacity was very limited in the initial stages. In the course of time, it expanded into diverse industrial sectors.

**Amrit Vanaspati Co. Ltd.** was a factory which was setup in Ghaziabad in the pre independence era. This factory used to manufacture Vanaspati ghee. The factory was one of the first industry which was setup in Ghaziabad city. It was founded in the year 1940. Vanaspati is a kind of synthetic fat which is a cheaper substitute of Ghee. In this factory, Vanaspati was manufactured using edible vegetable oils. These edible vegetable oils were refined and hydrogenated to produce Vanaspati. The produce thus obtained was then sold in the local markets as well as supplied in the markets of the nearby region.

### ***Hapur***

**Simbhaoli Sugar Mill** was setup at Simbhaoli in 1933 by the efforts of its founder Sh. Sardar Raghbir Singh Sandhawalia. This sugar mill provided an opportunity to the sugarcane farmers of the nearby villages to provide sugarcane as raw material for this industry. The farmers through bullock carts carried their produce and deposited them at the collection centre, from where by means of railways the sugarcane was brought in the mill for the production of sugar. This raw material was then processed and refined to produce Sugar. The sugar was then supplied in the markets.

**Pottery at Bahadurgarh** was produced in the pre- independence era. It dates back to the eighteenth century and appears to have been introduced from Multan region of pre- independence India. Here, various households of the village produced red earthenware pottery covered with opaque white enamel and chiefly painted in dark blue, turquoise and sometimes in yellow or red colours. These included products such as Diya, Matka, Surahi,

Handi etc. These were made from the clay obtained from the nearby areas of the village. The clay was first smoothed and mixed. After this the potter's wheel was used to mould the clay by hand and water was also used to provide the desired shape to the product. After this the product was baked in the kiln. The finished products were sold in the local markets. Also, some products were glazed to provide them a better finish, which were also sold in the markets.

**Weaving of cotton cloth at Pilkhuwa** was undertaken in the rural households. The traditional use of charkha and later handlooms were used for the weaving of clothes. This kind of work was done by the weavers in the region. The weavers wove khadi cloth and this cloth was used for the manufacture of several products like quilt covers, dhoti, kurta etc. The cloth was made in such a manner that it was of a decently good quality and was produced at a price which could be afforded by the masses. The products thus made were sold in the local markets of the region.

### ***Baghpat***

**Weaving of cotton cloth at Khekra** (Baghpat) was undertaken during the pre-independence period. Here people in the area used traditional charkha and later handlooms to weave the cotton cloth. The cotton cloth was of coarse quality. The woven cloth was called as khadi. It provided livelihood to most people in the region. The cloth thus produced was used to make products such as Dhoti, Kurta, Pyjama, quilt cover etc for the consumers.

**Blanket weaving at Nirpura** was undertaken during the colonial period. Earlier, Nirpura was a part of Sardhana tehsil of Meerut but in the present-day it is a part of Baghpat district. The blankets in Nirpura were made traditionally using charkha and later with handlooms. The blankets thus produced were well of coarse quality and were well renowned in the region for their warmth. These blankets were sold in the local and nearby markets.

### ***Bulandshahr***

**Faience Pottery (Khurja)** has given a distinct recognition to Khurja (Bulandshahr). This Khurja pottery is believed to be more than 600 years old. A marvelous pottery has been produced in Khurja by the artisans. The unique skill was transferred from one generation to another mostly within the family of the pottery artisans. This pottery has been entirely hand made as well as painted by hand by the artisans. The clay was dug up from the nearby areas and was then shaped by hands on the potter's wheel using water. After this the pottery was dried and fired in the kiln. The earthenware was then glazed and painted in different colors to provide a magnificent look to the finished product. The products which were produced here included ornamental vases and flowerpots etc. The finished products were sold in the regional and other markets.

**Conclusion:**

In the historical past, Different regions of the Meerut division have witnessed a considerable development in various kinds of industries. All these developments have played an indispensable role in providing a distinct identity to the place where these industries have been setup.

Initially, majority of the products were manufactured at the household level mostly by hands by the craftsmen and the artisans. As a norm, one generation passed the particular skill and tradition to another, mostly within the family. The developments which took place in various fields encompass industries such as the Pottery, Leather goods, Scissors, Lantern, Embroidery work, Sugar mill, Vanaspati Industry, textile, Blanket, textiles industry etc. All these industries present a vivid picture of the magnificent diversification which has taken place in the process of their development in the historical past during the time period of this study.

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