Muljibhai Prabhudas Madhvani, MBE
(18th May 1894 – 11th July 1958)
A tribute to celebrate the life and achievements of
the Founder of the Madhvani Group
Five decades after his death, his legacy and philanthropy in Uganda still live on.

“Your True Wealth is Actually Your People.”

Muljibhai P Madhvani was born on 18th May 1894 in Aunsiapat, Saurashtra, India. He died on 11th July 1958 in Kakira, Uganda – the place that he loved so much and where he had spent most of his life. Muljibhai’s mother died when he was young and one can only imagine how this must have affected him. He was to overcome his sadness and concentrate on his education. A bright student, he completed his primary school up to Standard VII by the early age of 12 years. He was then keen to learn English so he obtained admission to the Lohana Boarding House in Porbander, Gujarat. He began to study in English, passing Class 1 in the first rank. His ability to speak, read and write in English fluently was to be one of his greatest assets later in life. Then, as was the common practice in those early days, he abandoned further study for the world of commerce.
In 1908, two years after his brother Nanjibhai had travelled to Africa, Muljibhai came to Uganda. He was 14 years old - full of courage and determination. He joined his uncle, Vithaldas and Kalidas Haridas in their shop in Iganga, which was near Ibanda. He had to travel by bicycle, and later by motor-cycle, on very difficult roads often passing through densely thick jungle areas. This must have been hazardous and it would have taken courage to do this on his own at such a young tender age. His determination impressed his elders - because by 1914 he was asked to open and manage a shop in Jinja. An entrepreneur was thus born, whose story will be an inspiring milestone for the young generations for years to come. While still an employee of Vithaldas Haridas, Muljibhai started to build up Vithaldas Haridas & Company, where later he became the Managing Director. In 1918, the company bought around 800 acres of land in Kakira. This was the start of the Kakira sugar complex, which eventually became his flag-ship creation. It would be another nine years before the sugar factory started operating at Kakira in 1929. The opening ceremony for that mill was conducted by the then Governor, who mentioned in his speech that he was "dissatisfied" of Kalidas Haridas could sell sugar in Uganda! The sugar works started with a cane crushing capacity of 150 tons per day. The Colonial government availed only 6,000 acres, and most of the land for the expansion of Kakira was procured by the company from European and Asian farmers and exchanged with some of the land in Busoga. The original sugar mill of 1930 is preserved to this day within the factory compound at Kakira. Even at this early stage of his career, Muljibhai’s vision was that of continuing growth with wider horizons. In 1928, Vithaldas Haridas & Company entered the cotton ginning industry. This was only the first of many diversifications.

Muljibhai Prabhudas Madhvani: A Tribute

"Man must always have complete faith in religion and his community." Muljibhai made good use of the wealth he earned by his entrepreneurship and strenuous work through many donations for the welfare of the country, community and society at large. He was always anxious to see the community in which he lived progress in education and he always gave encouragement to efforts to direct that aim. Not a single body or any individual who had approached him for monetary assistance for a public cause was disappointed in his mission. He had a heart of gold, and lived for and cared for others from all walks of life, especially for his employees. He firmly believed in the importance of education and culture. Towards that end he created an Education Trust under the auspices of the first British East Africa Lohana Conference which was held in Mombasa, Kenya, under his Presidency in 1947. A number of deserving students received scholarships and in scholarships from income derived from the Trust Fund. Many professionals such as doctors, lawyers, chartered accountants and engineers were educated in this way.

Muljibhai’s hopes for Uganda’s future are best seen in the energy and money he devoted to the education and welfare of his employees and their families. It was his fundamental belief that education is at the root of personal fulfillment and national development. His personal conviction was that agriculture and commerce are the backbone of society. He also strongly believed in a largely agricultural economy in which, after secondary education, young people should be trained in agriculture and be convinced to go back home with the idea of leading a self-sufficient life. To implement this vision, he established an agricultural school at Wairaka near the Kakira complex. Many of the institutions that he established were then entrusted to the government by the Madhvani Foundation. Educational institutions such as primary, secondary and nursery schools, medical wards, boarding houses, clubs and library rooms were established and expanded with his donations. Some of these in Uganda included:

- The Muljibhai Madhvani Town Hall and Pavilion Hall, Hindu Cemetery (which is now called Kamwokya).
- The Vithaldas Haridas Hostel for Students.
- The Muljibhai Madhvani Commercial College (which was the first commercial college in Uganda, and was eventually shifted to Kyambogo).
- The Muljibhai Madhvani Cricket Stadium.
- The Gangabulsi Muljibhai Madhvani Pavilion Hall, Hindu Cemetery.
- The Gangabulsi Muljibhai Madhvani Memorial Hall, Nsambya Hospital.
- The Vithaldas Haridas Pavilion.
- The Vithaldas Haridas Convention Park.
- The Muljibhai Madhvani Town Hall and Clock Tower (which is still used as Jinja town hall).
- The Wairaka Agricultural College both of which were built by Muljibhai and then handed over to the Government to run.
- The Muljibhai Madhvani Farm School.
- The Parvathiben Muljibhai Madhvani Girls School (popularly known as "PMM Girls School").
- The Muljibhai Madhvani & Co Ltd Trust for the Hindu Temple in Jinja.

He established many educational institutions throughout Uganda’s towns and villages in a view to sharing his good fortune with the country that had been so kind to him. His workers and their dependants have long enjoyed free education, housing and healthcare many decades before the term “corporate social responsibility” was even devised. Today his everlasting memory is appreciated by the many disadvantaged Ugandan students who are beneficiaries of scholarships each year to study at universities with funding from the Muljibhai Madhvani Foundation.

On a sunny day in Kakira in the 1940s, on a hill overlooking the shores of Lake Victoria, Muljibhai Prabhudas Madhvani and his sons were having a heated argument. The senior Madhvani loved trees, and although many had already been planted on his sprawling estate, he wanted to plant many more. Thus the marshes, to justify this grandiose project. In 1908, two years after his brother Nanjibhai had travelled to Africa, Muljibhai came to Uganda. He was 14 years old - full of courage and determination. He joined his uncle, Vithaldas and Kalidas Haridas in their shop in Iganga, which was near Ibanda. He had to travel by bicycle, and later by motor-cycle, on very difficult roads often passing through densely thick jungle areas. This must have been hazardous and it would have taken courage to do this on his own at such a young tender age. His determination impressed his elders - because by 1914 he was asked to open and manage a shop in Jinja. An entrepreneur was thus born, whose story will be an inspiring milestone for the young generations for years to come. While still an employee of Vithaldas Haridas, Muljibhai started to build up Vithaldas Haridas & Company, where later he became the Managing Director. In 1918, the company bought around 800 acres of land in Kakira. This was the start of the Kakira sugar complex, which eventually became his flag-ship creation. It would be another nine years before the sugar factory started operating at Kakira in 1929. The opening ceremony for that mill was conducted by the then Governor, who mentioned in his speech that he was “dissatisfied” of Kalidas Haridas could sell sugar in Uganda! The sugar works started with a cane crushing capacity of 150 tons per day. The Colonial government availed only 6,000 acres, and most of the land for the expansion of Kakira was procured by the company from European and Asian farmers and exchanged with some of the land in Busoga. The original sugar mill of 1930 is preserved to this day within the factory compound at Kakira. Even at this early stage of his career, Muljibhai’s vision was that of continuing growth with wider horizons. In 1928, Vithaldas Haridas & Company entered the cotton ginning industry. This was only the first of many diversifications.
The Madhvani Group has now grown to become one of the largest diversified private-sector groups in East Africa, employing over 10,000 people. The Group’s current turnover in Uganda exceeds USD 100 million. The Group’s assets in Uganda are valued in excess of USD 200 million, with several units undergoing major expansion. That this success continues today has only been possible because of Muljibhai Madhvani’s unerring devotion to duty and by his unique vision and imagination all through his life.

The Group is the largest private-sector investor in industry in Uganda. The flagship of the Group is Kakira Sugar Works, which currently operates at a crushing capacity of over 5,000 tons cane per day (TCD) during a 10.5 month crushing season. Sugarcane is cultivated on the company’s own estate of over 9,700 ha supplemented by cane from over 5,000 outgrowers farmers grown on 17,000 ha. A confectionery factory produces a variety of sweets, lollipops, etc. In the 2007-8 season, Kakira has crushed 1.12 million tons of cane to produce over 100,000 tons of sugar, maintaining its position of Uganda’s largest sugar producer. This Company alone employs over 7,500 people and has been instrumental for the socio-economic development of the rural area surrounding Kakira providing the means of livelihood to over 75,000 people in the South Busoga region.

The Group is now completing an extensive phased expansion to enhance Kakira’s crushing capacity to over 6,000 TCD and to produce more than 150,000 tons of sugar each year. The project included expanding the co-generation plant to produce a total of 22 MW of electric power of which 12 MW is for sale to the national grid.

The Group owns and operates the only sugar complex in Rwanda – Kabuye Sugar Works. In Uganda, the Group owns two tea estates (over 500 ha) with a tea factory, etc. The Group ventured into floriculture with Kajjansi Roses – which has 9 ha under steel greenhouses, exporting over 19 million rose stems per year. This unit has now established a joint-venture with Flower Direct of the Netherlands – Chrysanthemums Uganda – which will grow 12 million stems for export to Europe.

In the packaging sector, the Group has joint ventures in Uganda to produce crown-corks (Coleus Crowns) and cardboard cartons (East African Packaging Solutions). Coleus Packaging Pty. is a subsidiary of South African Breweries and the largest crown producer in South Africa.

The Madhvani Group also produces various consumer products – including confectioneries, soap and matches. Makepasi Match in Jinja is the largest producer of wax-safety matches in East Africa. Another focus area for the Group is tourism with activities centered in the main National Parks of Uganda. The Madhvani Group operates the two leading safari lodges in the country - Mweya Safari Lodge in Queen Elizabeth National Park and Paraa Safari Lodge in Murchison Falls National Park. The Group is now rehabilitating a third lodge, Chobe Safari Lodge, also in Murchison Falls Park, to create another stunning destination on the Nile River for tourists to visit. The Group is planning a beach resort in Zanzibar and is looking for opportunities for tourism in Southern Sudan.

In the services sector, the Group has interests in:

- **Insurance** - through East African Underwriters, which covers all commercial risks and medical needs, as well as Liberty Life Assurance Uganda, which is a joint-venture with Liberty Life of South Africa (which is owned by the Standard Bank Group).
- **Software** - Software Applications Uganda is the channel partner for System Union, Sun Systems and Inspiro Software Applications.
- **Construction** - Excel Construction undertakes all types of commercial and industrial building projects as well as roads in Uganda and is now establishing activities in Southern Sudan.
- **People and provides business solutions for accounting, payroll, human resources, etc.**

In keeping with Muljibhai Prabhudas Madhvani’s foresight the Foundation supports graduates with vision; individuals who are able to perceive the path to Uganda’s future and who not only want to travel the road but also actively participate in its development.

The Mukesh Madhvani Children’s Hospital (popularly known by its location as Nalufenya) was originally constructed in 1970 by the Group. Whilst it continues to be run by the Jinja District Administration since 1972, it was completely renovated by the Group in 2004 to provide much needed paediatric facilities in Jinja for the Busoga region.

One of the Foundation’s primary objectives is to maintain and promote scientific and technical education among the people of Uganda. The scholarship programme is aimed at benefitting Ugandans pursuing either undergraduate or graduate studies at University level in Uganda and has been in operation since the 2003/04 academic year (after the repossession of the assets by the Foundation), awarding over Uganda Shillings 450 million to a selected batch of graduates for each year until graduation.

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Muljibhai Prabhudas Madhvani’s fundamental principle of a socially-responsible business enterprise that benefits all stakeholders and his core values of integrity and long-term commitment are ingrained in every aspect of the Madhvani Group’s activities. Half a century after his death, his vision and humanity still continue to have a positive effect in Uganda to this very day.