



English

## Orissa - a paradox

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### Orissa - a paradox

Orissa has vast resources. Yet Orissa is a backward state, the land of poverty and pestilence. Here is a paradox for all to wonder. Few have set themselves to analyze or solve the riddle. What could be the possible factors that bring about this state of affairs? Why do the people of the state fail to utilize the resources available at the doorstep? What frustrates them in their endeavor to build a better economy? A correct analysis and practical view of the factors that retard her progress and an honest effort to remove them would bring about the conditions for better production and prosperity. All plans are bound to hinder if they do not take into consideration the different elements and do not strive to create conditions conducive to production.

### Historical Background

Under British rule, Orissa remained a colony of the Bengali collaborators for more than a century when all avenues of employment were systematically closed to Oriyas. They were turned to beasts of burden - to be recruited as cheap labor in jute mills of Bengal, for tea garden in Assam, or for the kerosene mines in Burma. All head offices were located in Bengal and all educational institutions were seated in Calcutta and her neighbourhood. Orissa was manned by Bengali officers and Bengali clerks. Bengali landlords reduced the farmers to penury. Thereafter, Orissa tagged as a trailer to Bihar for a quarter of a century. Development was far cry when relief measures to flood affected areas were meager.

When, at last, the truncated province of Orissa came into existence, her main architect, Madhusudan Das, was no more and Utkal Sammelan was in a

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moribund state. There were a few amongst her leaders who were imbibed with the patriotic urge of love of the land and her people. Career-crazy politicians were callous to the crying needs of the province. Public spirit actuated few. The desire to secure positions in the administration led to formation of parties, groups and cliques. Ministers found it more convenient to man the administration with non-Oriya personnel, as they were found to be more docile and unconcerned with the dubious methods adopted to build fortune at the cost of the people. To silence the demands for manning institutions in Orissa with Oriyas, slogans to think on an all India basis was raised by these cunning leaders.

Orissa has not yet had a mouthpiece that can voice her demands on an all India basis. She has not even a publishing concern or even a second grade journal which commands interstate circulation. She has few technological institutions. Her educational institutions are few, far between and very poorly manned and equipped. Her intellectual talents are starved for lack of opportunity. In agriculture and industry, the conditions of production remain as hostile as ever. Public administration, instead of removing the impediments, creates further obstacles that would sap all enthusiasm and initiatives.

### Bureaucracy

None of the political parties have any program of mass movement to revolutionize agriculture or industry in Orissa. Planning and execution there have been left to officials and their staff. However their jobs are not to gear up production but to maintain files and papers. Enough money is spent from the state's revenue for propaganda to popularize plans and projects and for maintenance of staff to implement them but no responsibility is attached to the ultimate result it achieves. Placed in such an environment and irresponsible position, the officials and their clerks find some pretext to delay matters and to adopt obstructive tactics towards the farmers or the industrial entrepreneur

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unless their palms are sufficiently greased. The enthusiasm of the adventurer soon dries up at various delay, harassment, red tapism and avaricious demands at each step. Several entrepreneurs are known to have abandoned their projects in Orissa as the revenue authorities delayed for years allotting a few acres of barren lands needed for their projects. Bulldozers or tractors are not available to interested parties. Seeds are offered to the farmers when the season is over. Fertilizer is more readily available to the distiller of illicit liquor than to the farmer. In the field of industry, loans are advanced to persons who mean fraud on the revenue rather than to the honest demands, as the former can spare more for the sanctioning authorities. Unless the jobs of these officials and their staff are tacked to the measure of success in the matter of production entrusted to them and their pay and promotion is dependant on production basis, the malady cannot be remedied. Bureaucratic machinery is not the proper vehicle to deliver goods in matters of national development. Political parties and social organizations should undertake development work of the country's economy as a patriotic measure.

### Taxations

The Oriya entrepreneur is fresh in the field - lacking both in funds and in experience needed for the purpose. Most of the banks in Orissa have their head offices outside the state and the Orissa branches are manned by non-Oriyas. Naturally, they exhibit little interest in the development of Orissa. The tax officers stationed in Orissa bleed the young industries white to justify their jobs in this region of low income and scarce industrial activities. The young entrepreneur with his limited resources is unable to mention the standard of no-erroneous accounts demand and, as such, becomes an easy prey to tax hawks. Entrepreneurs having sufficient source and better experience find it more convenient to open their head office in Calcutta or Bombay to escape arbitrarily and unreasonably heavy taxation. The small entrepreneur has neither the means nor the know-how of manipulation to grease the palm of the tax officers. Ultimately he finds himself unable to bear the tax burden and has to close down



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his enterprise. Would it not be just and conducive for the production of young entrepreneur in Orissa if he is protected from tax levy for the first five years of his business? Otherwise, it is hard for him to compete with the more established and rival entrepreneurs in other states.

### Labor

Although Orissa has been the mine of cheap labor, which attracts young pioneers to set up industries in Orissa, it has been the sad experience of all entrepreneurs that, as soon as an industry is set up, labor agitation starts making the industry a losing concern in no time. Such agitations are usually sponsored by political parties which have their head offices in bigger industrial centers like Calcutta or Bombay. Rival entrepreneurs of more advanced state find it profitable to inspire this agitation with the support of the top leaders of the party. Orissa's enterprise is closing down; the workers go as unemployed as before and the rival entrepreneur in the more advanced state reaps the benefits. The labor in Orissa is not enlightened enough to see through the game. They should spit in the faces of these labor leaders who tempt them and resort to such methods that ultimately spell disaster for them. Bureaucracy or ordinary labor tribunals cannot tackle such political maneuvers. Patriotic organizations can alone successfully undo the mischief.

The champions against exploitation swear by scientific socialism, though they have assimilated dialectics little beyond the word. They have yet to understand that, like all other social systems, the human race going through capitalism has a historical growth; it comes into existence because of social necessity, it develops and then comes its decadence. It brings progress in its advent but, later on, fetters society in its forward march. The exploitation which has helped production turns odious and hinders further progress. To raise the cry of exploitation on the first step of capitalism is to nip the bud and prevent it to blossom. Rank reaction masquerades under progressive slogans. It crushes the sprouts, it seeks to strangle the baby and it prevents production and prosperity. These butchers dunning as politicians and labor leaders are to be

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dealt with politically. Would it not be in the interest of the society and the people and even of labor itself to protect infant industries in an industrially backward region like Orissa for the first five or ten years from this undesirable element?

We had enough of crocodile tears from leaders at Orissa's poverty. It is idle to think that others would solve Orissa's problems. People of Orissa with genuine patriotic urge can alone take the initiative in building up a mass upsurge for revolutionizing agriculture and industry in Orissa. There is hardly any organization to give leadership to the people in this matter though it has been the crying need since the formation of a separate province. Orissa needs massive efforts to cure her of her age-old malady and to bring her to health and happiness.

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(Published around 1980)