

To

The Hon'ble Prime Minister of India
Government of India, New Delhi-110011

Sub: To set up a Central University in Puri Dham on the line of BHU

Dear Esteemed Prime Minister:

We would like to humbly request that the Government of India establish a central university in Puri (Odisha) on the line of BHU (Banaras Hindu University) with all the modern disciplines as well as cross-cutting disciplines that interface with traditional Indian knowledge, arts, culture and heritage.

Sir, Puri, the abode of Lord Jagannath, is also one of the four dhams (four pilgrimage centers) institutionalized by Adi Shankara and is revered by Hindus (and Indians in general), and considered the meeting ground of all branches of Indian philosophy and all kinds of sects and religions from time immemorial. Famous sages visited (and some stayed over) Puri and left their imprint on Puri. This includes, Adi Shankara, Narahari Tirtha, Nimbarka Acharya, Jayadeva, Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Vishnuswami, and Madhvacharya.

Puri was known as Purusottam Kshetra and its greatness is covered in various Sanskrit works such as Skanda Purana, Padma Purana, Narada Purana, Niladrimahodaya, Matsya Purana, Brahma Purana, Kapila Samhita, Niladri Mahadaya and Bamadeva Samhita.

The Archaeological excavation at Manikapatna (in Puri district) provides a running chronology of historical habitation as a port or trade center from 1st to 18th century A.D.

Several copper plate inscriptions have established the idea of Lord Jagannath as a paramount deity of the entire country. He is the Kalpa Bruksha (boon giving tree), Yogamurti of the Siddhas, Bishnu for the Vaishnavites, Shiva for the Shaivites, Mahabhairab for the Tantrics, Buddha and Anupurusha (void) for Boudhas and Ganesh for the Ganapatya. The Chariot Festival (Ratha Yatra) of Lord Jagannath at Puri has smaller versions in all parts of the world. The Puri Ratha Yatra gave the word "Juggernaut" to the English language.

Puri has been a center of knowledge formation, agglomeration and dissemination. Among the 40.8 lakh ancient Indian manuscripts that have been documented, the second largest are in Odia (after Sanskrit), and a significant portion of both originated in Puri. There are records of 752 mathas (monasteries), and many Kotas, Jagas, Akhadas and ashrams (hermitages) in Puri. Various priests, preachers, tourists, poets, saints, seers, teachers, devotees and thinkers of the world visited Puri and many established their knowledge centers at Puri. It was universally believed that the Jagannath cult is the confluence of all religious faiths. The precepts of different sects paid visit to the holy land of Puri and disseminated their philosophical doctrines. They preached their philosophy, got themselves involved in the ritual services of Jagannath temple and established their monasteries (mathas). One of the main purposes of the Mathas was to impart education to disciples.

Puri continues to make major contributions in the field of art (dance, music, painting, sculpture making etc.), architecture, literature, science (especially, astronomy), religion and

tradition. Gitagovinda by Sri Jayadev was composed in Puri. The classical dance form of Odissi as well as the classical music form (also called) Odissi was nourished in Puri. The patta painting form evolved, nourished and flourished under the cult of Lord Jagannath. The Kalinga style of architecture has its origin in Puri. Noted astronomer Pathani Samanta, was from Khandpada, in the greater Puri district (now in Nayagarh district). Konark, also in Puri district, is an UNESCO world heritage site and is known for its art and architecture.

An unique experiment in education was made at Satyabadi, Puri with the establishment of Satyabadi bana vidyalaya (1909) in the midst of mango and bakul groves by the great freedom fighter, social worker and poet Pt. Gopabandhu Das and his followers Pt. Nilakantha Das, Pt. Krupasindhu Mishra, Pt. Godabarish Mishra and Pt. Acharya Harihara Dash; together called "Pancha sakha". Later it became an active center of the non Co-operation movement.

In conclusion, Puri has been and is a special and revered place in India with global recognition. It continues to be a knowledge center of classical art, culture, language (Sanskrit) and Vedic knowledge. Considering the importance of cross-pollination of these Indian knowledge forms with modern knowledge and its impact on "Brand India" and "Make in India", it is imperative that *a Central University along the lines of BHU be urgently established in Puri. It is our humble prayer to the honorable Prime Minister that he establishes such a Central University in Puri.*

Sincerely,

Various Signatories.

(See attached list of Names, Signatures and Pledges towards a corpus fund for this university, to be paid, after the university is established by the Central government.)