

Movement for A BHU-type Central University in Puri: Concept Note

The goal of this movement is to establish a BHU-type Central University in Puri.

By a BHU-type Central University we mean a Central University (fully funded by the Central government) that has wide ranging disciplines (as in BHU) and that is well recognized (like BHU) in the country and the world.

Why BHU type Central University: BHU with a student body of 20,000 has a wide array of disciplines such as various languages, social sciences, philosophy, mathematics, sciences, law, medicine, engineering (IT-BHU became an IIT), education, commerce, visual arts, performing arts, Sanskrit, agriculture and management. Such a university does not exist in Odisha.

Why in Puri:

- Puri, the abode of Lord Jagannath, is a special place in India and has a history of being a center of knowledge.
- Puri has fallen behind Varanasi (which has the central university BHU, an IIT and much more) and Tirupati (which has an IIT, an IISER and much more) as a center of knowledge and Puri is in no way inferior to them.
- No government can ignore a genuine demand by the people for a knowledge institution in Puri, the abode of Lord Jagannath.
- A BHU-type central university in Puri will complete the knowledge infrastructure of the greater capital area of Odisha, which has IIT, NISER, AIIMS, etc. with a Central University being the only missing piece.

But Odisha has been already given a central university in Koraput!: Since 2009, when CUO Koraput was established, Bihar has been given SIX centrally funded universities in Gaya, Motihari, Kishanganj (a center of Aligarh Muslim University), Nalanda, Pusa and Vikramshila. Surely, Odisha's desire for a BHU type central university in the abode of Lord Jagannath is reasonable and appropriate.

Some steps that have been taken:

- Web page: <http://www.cupuri.orissalinks.com/>
- Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/missioncentralunivpuri/>
- Letters to PM and CM: Various people and organizations such as, Mukti Mandap Pandit Sabha and Mumbai Odia Samaj have signed Letters to PM.
- Pledge: Text has been created. Online pledge at <http://pledge.orissalinks.com>
- Media Coverage and rallies: A few rallies and media coverage has happened.

What next? How do we go about establishing a BHU-type Central University in Puri:

- A broad based inclusive movement (supported by all political parties of Odisha) led by people of Puri and supported by rest of Odisha (and beyond) is in process.
- Letters needs to be sent to CM of Odisha and PM and HRD Minister of India.
- A pledge drive to collect pledges from people promising a contribution towards the establishment of this university. (This will be a modern version of Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya's effort to collect funds for BHU.)

Uniqueness of Puri in the Indian and World Context

* 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.