

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,  
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE CONCLUSION OF THE PLATINUM  
JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS OF UTKAL UNIVERSITY**

**Bhubaneswar, December 8, 2019**

1. The Land of Odisha is a marvel to behold. Not far from this place where we stand today exists a historic site that gave the eternal message of love and peace to the humankind after realising the futility of violence and hatred hundreds of years ago. This land is a seat of learning for entire humanity. Therefore, I feel honoured to be here among you all today. I am happy to participate in the concluding celebrations of the Platinum Jubilee of Utkal University. I congratulate all of you on this proud occasion.
2. Founded in 1943 by the architects of modern Odisha and great freedom fighters, this University embodies the educational aspirations of its people. I join you in paying a glowing tribute on this auspicious occasion to Barrister Madhusudan Das, Gopabandhu Das, Nilakantha Das, Godavarish Mishra and Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati, among others, who are remembered as the builders of new Odisha. I note with satisfaction that the foundation stone of the campus was laid by the first President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, in 1958. It was inaugurated by the second President of India, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, in 1963. After a gap of half a century, in 2013 Shri Pranab Mukherjee delivered the convocation address here at this University. Continuing the special bond, I am happy to be a part of the platinum jubilee celebrations of this University.
3. During the 75 years of its existence, the University has dedicated itself to the advancement of learning. It has emerged as the premier destination for thousands of students. Scholars from here have brought glory to their alma mater by distinguishing themselves in different walks of life in India and

abroad. Many of its past students have done the country proud, and I am happy to see some of them here today. The achievements of this University in the fields of teaching and research have brought it laurels and it was granted the coveted A+ by N.A.A.C. in 2016. The Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, identified it as a Category I University in 2018 and vested it with greater autonomy for its pursuit of academic excellence.

4. I learn that Utkal University has been recognized by the Government of India as a Regional Research Hub and entrusted with the important task of networking with the central research institutes in this part of the country. By joining hands and pooling their resources together, they will create a vibrant research ecosystem.
5. I am confident that the University is poised to scale even greater heights in future and contribute significantly to building a knowledge-driven society fully equipped to face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The upcoming Centres of Excellence for cutting-edge research in frontier areas, will help realize this lofty goal.
6. I am glad to learn that the University created a park in memory of Gandhiji, called Ahimsa Sthal, on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019, as part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations. That was a fitting tribute to the Father of the Nation on his 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary. In a time of violence, intolerance and strife, it is our duty to remind everyone, especially the young, of the core values that Gandhiji lived for and died for. This park has a special resonance as it lies not far from Dhauli, where Emperor Ashoka learnt invaluable lessons in peace and compassion after the bloodbath at the Battle of Kalinga in 261 B.C.E. The University has sought to translate another key idea of Mahatma Gandhi that India lives in its villages. The Government of Odisha allotted 67 acres of land at Chandikhole, and the University started its second campus there. I am sure it will benefit a large number of students in the area.

7. The other initiatives taken as part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations also give me much satisfaction as they strengthen the very foundations on which the University is built. I gather the stage was set for the celebrations with a literary festival, which was a confluence of many languages. The University has also launched a distinguished lecture series. It will provide a great opportunity to not only students, scholars and the faculty but also the wider community to hear acclaimed scholars. Such interactions and exchanges of ideas make a university a vibrant place of learning. The recent conclave titled *Antardhvani* provided a platform for young scholars to showcase the progress in their learning as well as the richness of their heritage. In the Platinum Jubilee Year, the University has taken the initiative to involve its alumni in the development of their alma mater. This worthy move will fetch dividends in future.
8. An occasion like this is a milestone. During a long journey, when we come across it, we pause; then we look back and gaze ahead. It is time to take stock of achievements as well as of areas where further improvements are possible. For the whole Utkal community, it is time to rededicate themselves to the vision of the founders. I am confident that the University will remain committed to playing a significant role in higher education and research, nationally and globally.

Ladies and gentlemen,

9. Education is the best tool of social empowerment. I am not only a passionate advocate of this belief, but stand before you as a proof of it too. Universities are great hubs of ideas, but they are not ivory towers. They are part of society and thus remain engaged with social change. The academic community should be engaged in research in areas that create not only a new knowledge base but also a knowledge base that sustains human society. Students and teachers should be sensitive towards the themes of empowerment of the marginalised. Environment, health and education should be taken up vigorously. Universities like Utkal that are endowed with multi-

disciplinary faculty are better equipped to undertake this task. Moreover, the world has started taking note of the richness of India's ancient knowledge systems. Our universities need to harness this and Utkal can take the lead in this regard. In the next 5 to 7 years I would like to see Utkal University emerge as an Institute of Eminence in our country. This status will carry with it not only recognition but also greater autonomy and higher funding. I am happy to note that the University has entered into MoUs with two reputed foreign universities. I am sure that Utkal University will emerge as an Institute of Eminence with a strong international outlook.

10. If I have to leave you with one advice, it will be one from Hitopadesha:

शास्त्राणि अधीत्य अपि भवन्ति मूर्खाः  
यस्तु क्रियावान् पुरुषः स विद्वान्।

11. It means: One can study a lot of scriptures and still remain fool. The real scholar is one who puts his or her learning into practice. So, in your quest for knowledge, never forget to put it into practice in the world around you, and improve it with your intellect.
12. I once again congratulate you on having reached this historic milestone in the long journey of your University. I express the sincere hope that its quest for excellence leads to glory.

Thank you

Jai Hind!