

Central University of Odisha aims at boosting Odia literature

The Central University of Odisha, under the leadership of the Vice-Chancellor, Prof I. Ramabrahmam has been taking initiatives to work towards strengthening the cultural heritage and literature of Odisha, situated in Koraput, the Wonderland. From Lord Jagannath to fighter planes to Asia's mineral treasury, it is complete & the people are content. Content because the tribal and their Lord live here. It is the Sabar Shrikshetra (the mystic land of the Lord). This is the land where divinity and materialism co-exist in a unique balance.

In continuation with the regular Talk series, the Dept. of Odia, Central University of Odisha, with the guidance of Dr. Alok Baral, organised a unique discussion on **Odia Literature & You** where Sri Devdas Chhotray, eminent author, administrator and illustrious Odia culture change-maker was in conversation with Sri Charudutta Panigrahi, author & futurist. The Vice-Chancellor in his opening remarks said the University exist in and for the Society and we must have a special responsibility for the society.

Prof. Krushna Chandra Pradhan, an eminent critic of Odia literature graced the session.

The Odia diaspora from over 5 countries, 3 continents and across age groups participated in the session whose objective was to provide a platform and continuously work in raising the profile of Odia literature which to a large extent preserves Odisha's rich cultural heritage.

If Odisha were to promote its rich cultural heritage, then the most logical thing to do is to preserve both the tangible and intangible cultural heritage in writing, consequently literature. Literature survives the test of time and is always apprehended. The main stakeholder in the preservation of culture is the community. Sri Chhotray, a prolific, distinguished, and versatile writer opined that Odia literature and culture are inseparable. He said, "it is our responsibility to keep Odia literature as dynamic as ever and as contemporary as ever. The challenge for any literature is to be the centre and the mirror at the same time, every time."

It was commonly felt by all who attended the online discussion including students, senior bureaucrats, faculty, thinkers from many countries, Odia diaspora and others, that Odia literature needs to evolve constantly and organically and all of us should be responsible for preserving the high quality of Odia literature as a part of a Literature cohort, fostered at the Central University of Odisha.

Sri Charudutta Panigrahi emphasised on the efforts to keep literature in vogue for the new generations. The tangible cultural heritage includes places and monuments, while intangible cultural heritage comprises of our history, rituals, songs, language, poetry, craftsmanship, and other social ceremonies and both can be served thought literature, he said. He asked, who is going to narrate to the coming generations the beauty of our culture? It is our responsibility.

The participants had an interesting Question & answer session with Sri Chhotray and others, and it was decided that Sri Panigrahi would lead a literature cohort, which needs to be consistently developed with more and more inclusion of younger litterateurs and culture enthusiasts.

Everyone thanked this unique initiative of the Central University of Odisha and urged the University to continue its work in preserving Odia art, literature and culture. Dr. Rudrani Mohanty extended the vote of thanks.

Dr. Phagunath Bhoi, Public Relation Officer