

EDITORIAL

Utkal Divas 2025: Celebrating Odisha's Legacy and the First-Ever Odia Paksha

By **Brajabandhu Mahanta** • April 1, 2025 • 3 min read

Odisha is celebrating **Utkal Divas** with immense pride and enthusiasm, marking the day the state achieved its long-awaited recognition as a separate province on **April 1, 1936**. The occasion is being commemorated with grand celebrations across the state, including a **state-level event at Satyabhamapur in Cuttack's Salipur**, where the rich history and contributions of Odisha's founding leaders are being honored.

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The Historic Struggle for Odisha's Statehood

The formation of Odisha as a separate province was the result of relentless efforts by great leaders and reformers. During the **19th century**, Odisha's language and culture faced significant challenges due to the **expansion of Western education and the influence of neighboring regions**. At one point, there were even attempts to merge Odisha with Bengal, and Telugu-speaking rulers sought to dominate southern Odisha.

The movement to protect Odisha's linguistic and cultural identity gained momentum with the formation of the **Utkal Sammilani in 1903**, led by **Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das**. Other key figures in this struggle included:

- **Fakir Mohan Senapati** – the father of modern Odia literature.
- **Maharaja Sri Ramchandra Bhanjdeo** – a strong advocate for Odisha's separate identity.
- **Pandit Nilakantha Das** and **Radha Nath Ray** – who played pivotal roles in the socio-political movement.
- **Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati** – who worked tirelessly to achieve Odisha's statehood.

Their persistent efforts led to the **formation of Odisha on April 1, 1936**, finally reuniting Odia-speaking regions under one administration after nearly **five centuries of political fragmentation**.

First-Ever “Odia Paksha” to Celebrate Linguistic and Cultural Pride

This year, for the **first time**, the Odisha government has introduced a **two-week-long celebration called “Odia Paksha” from April 1 to April 14**. Announced under the leadership of **Chief Minister Mohan Majhi**, this initiative aims to **revive, preserve, and promote Odia language, literature, and culture**. The **Department of Odia**

Language, Literature, and Culture is organizing various activities that emphasize Odisha's heritage and traditions.

Schedule of Odia Paksha Events

- 📅 **April 2** – *Khadi Chhuaan Ceremony*: Traditional ritual symbolizing Odisha's identity.
- 📅 **April 3** – *Ama Poshak Ama Parichaya*: Promotion of traditional Odia attire.
- 📅 **April 4** – *Odia Signboard Campaign*: Encouraging businesses and government offices to display Odia signboards.
- 📅 **April 5** – *Heritage Marathon*: Organized by the **Department of Sports and Youth Services** to promote historical awareness.
- 📅 **April 6** – *Cleanliness Drive*: Preserving the sanctity of Odisha's historic sites.
- 📅 **April 7** – *Distribution of Odia Language Learning Materials* in schools and colleges.
- 📅 **April 8** – *Blood Donation Camp* to promote social responsibility.
- 📅 **April 9** – *Buy an Odia Book Campaign*: Encouraging people to read Odia literature.
- 📅 **April 10** – *Celebration of Folk Art* and Odisha's rich artistic traditions.
- 📅 **April 11** – *Young Writers' Day* to inspire new literary voices in Odia.
- 📅 **April 12** – *Discussion on Odisha's Great Leaders*, organized by Odisha Sahitya Akademi.
- 📅 **April 13** – *Promotion of Traditional Odia Cuisine*.
- 📅 **April 14** – *Celebration of Odia New Year (Maha Bishuba Sankranti)*.

This structured celebration is expected to instill **a renewed sense of pride in Odisha's language, traditions, and heritage**, ensuring they are cherished by future generations.

Looking Ahead: Odisha's Centennial in 2036

As Odisha moves closer to its **100th anniversary in 2036**, the state government is focusing on **strengthening its cultural and linguistic identity**. Culture Minister **Suryabanshi Suraj** has emphasized that *Odia Paksha* will serve as a **symbol of Odia**

pride, encouraging people to actively engage in preserving their rich history and traditions.

Utkal Divas not only commemorates the past struggles of our leaders but also reminds us of our responsibility to **carry forward Odisha's legacy**. The introduction of **Odia Paksha** is a step towards **ensuring that the state's unique heritage thrives in the modern era**, fostering **unity, identity, and cultural revival**.

(By Brajabandhu Mahanta)

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