

History:



Until 1936, when Odisha was made into a separate province, all its colleges were under the jurisdiction of either Patna University or Andhra University. Subsequently, the government of Odisha, headed by Shri Biswanath Dash, the then Prime Minister; appointed a committee on 2nd March 1938 with Pandit Nilakantha Das as its Chairman to examine the possibility of establishing a separate university in Odisha. Then, during the premiership of Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati, who played a pioneering role in the establishment of the University, the recommendations of this committee were made available. Pandit Godavarish Mishra, the then Minister of Education, introduced the Utkal University Bill, which was passed by the Odisha Legislative Assembly on 30th June 1943. On receiving the Governor's assent on 2nd August 1943, the Utkal University Act, 1943 came into force, clearing the way for the foundation of Utkal University on 27th November 1943. The University started functioning from this date in room no. 15 of Ravenshaw College, Cuttack. The Utkal University Act, 1943 did not specify clearly the territorial jurisdiction of the University. However, its jurisdiction was extended to include the princely states of Odisha by an agreement between the rulers of these princely states and the Government of Odisha. According to the agreement, adequate representation of the princely states in the administrative and academic bodies of the University was ensured. The Utkal University Act, 1943 was amended in 1947 defining the territorial jurisdiction of the University, which was subsequently extended to the whole state of Odisha in 1950. Dr. Pranakrushna Parija, the then Principal of Ravenshaw College, Cuttack was the first Vice-Chancellor of the University, and Mr. V. V. John, the then Assistant Professor of English, Ravenshaw College was its first Registrar.

The University, to start with, functioned mainly as an affiliating body. But soon afterwards, in 1949, it took over the management of the under-graduate Department of Law from Ravenshaw College, Cuttack and established its first constituent college now known as Madhusudan Law College, Cuttack. In 1956, the second phase of its expansion began with the opening of the Post-Graduate Department of Geology in Ravenshaw College Campus and an Engineering College at Burla, Sambalpur. The Department of Rural Economics and Sociology was also started in the same year with a generous grant from the Ford Foundation. In 1957, Post-Graduate Departments of Philosophy and Sanskrit were established in the premises of the Burdwan House in Cuttack. The

same year, the University office was shifted to the Circuit House in Cuttack. The University in the initial phases provided new facilities for post-graduate studies only in those subjects which were not taught at Ravenshaw College at that time. In 1958, the Post- Graduate Departments of Psychology, Statistics, Political Science and Anthropology were set up. While the first three Departments were housed in the premises of Ravenshaw College, the Department of Anthropology was accommodated in a rented house in Bhubaneswar. The University took over the Post-Graduate Department of History from Ravenshaw College in 1959. Post-Graduate studies in Zoology and Commerce were introduced in 1960 and 1962 respectively. The Research Department of rural Economics and Sociology was established in 1956 and introduced Post-Graduate courses in Applied Economics in the year 1963. It was subsequently renamed the Department of Analytical and Applied Economics.

Around this time, a movement for the creation of regional universities started in different parts of Orissa. In response to this, the government of Odisha appointed the State University Committee in 1962 with Dr. P. Parija, the then Vice-Chancellor of Utkal University, as the Chairman. On the recommendation of the Committee, two more universities were created, one at Sambalpur and another at Berhampur. The Utkal University Act, 1943 was suitably amended in response to the new situation. The two new Universities at Sambalpur and Berhampur came into existence with effect from 1st January 1967, the date from which the new Utkal University Act came into force. The jurisdiction of Utkal University, which had earlier covered the whole of Orissa, was redefined in the new legislation.

After the establishment of the two new universities, the management of the Evening Colleges at Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Sambalpur and Berhampur were taken over by the State Government. The Engineering College at Burla was handed over to Sambalpur University. Utkal University opened a few other Post-Graduate Departments such as Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Botany, Oriya and English during the years 1966-69 in its new campus at Vani Vihar. The Department of Sociology and Labour Welfare was set up in 1970, which in 1974 was split into the Department of Sociology and the Department of Labour Welfare (now re-named as the Department of Personnel Management and Industrial Relations). The Department of Geography was opened in 1970.

The Post-Graduate Department of Law (LL.M.) was started in the year 1973. The Department of Geology, which was functioning earlier in Ravenshaw College, was shifted to Vani Vihar in 1977. The Departments of Library and Information Science and Business Administration were opened in 1981 and 1984 respectively. A Computer Center was established initially with an IBM-1130 computer donated by the University Grants Commission in 1970, which has subsequently been replaced by an WIPRO-LANDMARK system at a cost of Rs. 16 lakh provided later by the UGC. The Computer Center, while facilitating research work undertaken by various departments of the University earlier, offered a Post- B.Sc. Diploma Course (DCA) in Computer Application from 1983 to 1997. In 1990 the University opened the Department of Computer Science and Applications. After the separation of the Computer Centre from the Department of Computer Science and Applications in 1998, the Centre is now functioning under the direct administrative control of the P.G. Council. Chairperson, P.G. Council is the Prof-in-Charge of the Centre. New buildings for the Computer Centre, Academic Staff College and Jubilee building have been constructed. Besides, new buildings have been constructed for the Department of Pharmacy, Integrated MCA Department, Population Research Centre and the Department of Womens' Studies. In 1996, Departments of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Public Administration were carved out of History and Political Science Departments respectively. A new Biotechnology department started functioning from 2002 in the P.G. Department of Zoology.

At present, the University has twenty-seven post-graduate teaching and research departments in the campus. The University has also offered 15 sponsored courses, and three UGC sponsored innovative programmes besides three constituent institutions: Directorate of Distance and Continuing Education, University Law College at Vani Vihar and M.S. Law College at Cuttack.

Seventeen P.G. Departments of the University have been granted Departmental Research Support/Centre of Advance Studies status by the University Grants Commission. During the XIth Plan period the University Grants Commission has accorded Colleges with Potential for Excellence (CPE) status to five colleges under the University which entitles them to receive significant funding support from the Commission.

In 1998, two more universities - North Odisha University and Fakir Mohan University-came into being to meet regional aspirations and facilitate further development of higher education. Utkal University has now jurisdiction over 9 districts, namely Angul, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Jajpur, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Khurda, Nayagarh and Puri. Thus, the University exercises territorial jurisdiction over an area measuring 24,973 sq. kilometers and caters to the for higher education needs of a population of more than 110 lakh.