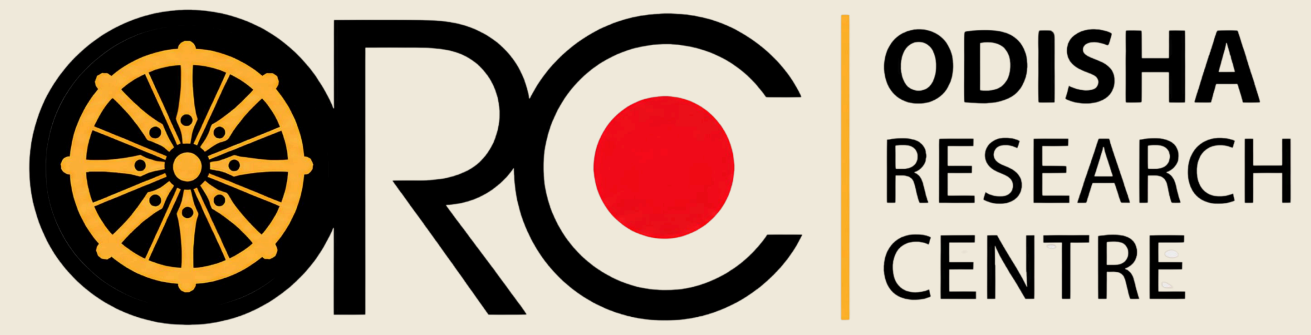




ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

Few scholars have left as enduring an imprint on the study of Odisha as **Professor Hermann Kulke**. Through his scholarship and the Orissa Research Projects, Kulke significantly widened the intellectual horizons of Odisha Studies by bringing history into dialogue with anthropology, archaeology, epigraphy, art history, religious studies and field-based research. His approach encouraged scholars to understand Odisha through the dynamic interactions of state, society, religion, economy, culture, landscape and local communities, rather than through dynasties and political events alone.

The Orissa Research Projects fostered an interdisciplinary research environment, combining archival and textual sources with archaeology, material culture, fieldwork and local knowledge. They brought questions of state formation, kingship, political authority, regional identity, sacred geography, temple institutions and community life to the forefront of Odisha Studies. This conference seeks to honour Kulke's intellectual contribution while critically examining the continuing relevance of his approaches and exploring new sources, methods and perspectives for the future of Odisha Studies.

Particular attention will be given to Saivism in Odisha as a field through which questions of religion, society, politics, culture and regional identity can be explored. Rather than viewing Saivism as an isolated tradition, the conference examines its interactions with Sanskritic, Agamic, Tantric, regional, local and Indigenous traditions. The study of Sivalinga, Bhairava, Ardhanarisvara, Harihara and Nataraja, alongside temples, shrines, pilgrimage, festivals, oral traditions and community practices, offers valuable insights into the changing religious and cultural landscape of Odisha.

The conference welcomes interdisciplinary approaches connecting Puranic, Agamic and Tantric texts, regional literature, inscriptions and temple records with archaeology, architecture, sculpture, iconography, folklore and ethnography. The sacred landscape of Bhubaneswar and the Lingaraj Temple, as well as lesser-known shrines and community traditions, provides an important setting for examining the interaction of Saivism with Saktism, Tantrism, Vaishnavism, tribal and Indigenous traditions. Saivism will also be considered as living heritage, encompassing ritual, festivals, devotional practices, oral traditions and cultural memory, alongside contemporary questions of heritage conservation, tourism, urbanisation and digital documentation.

Bringing together historians, anthropologists, archaeologists, Sanskritists, Indologists, art historians, scholars of religion, sociologists, folklorists and heritage specialists, the conference aims to create a genuinely interdisciplinary and international forum. It seeks to extend the intellectual tradition associated with Hermann Kulke while using Odisha's Saiva heritage to explore broader questions of history, society, religion, culture, identity, continuity and change.



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

THE KULKEAN AFTERLIFE

ORISSA RESEARCH PROJECT III

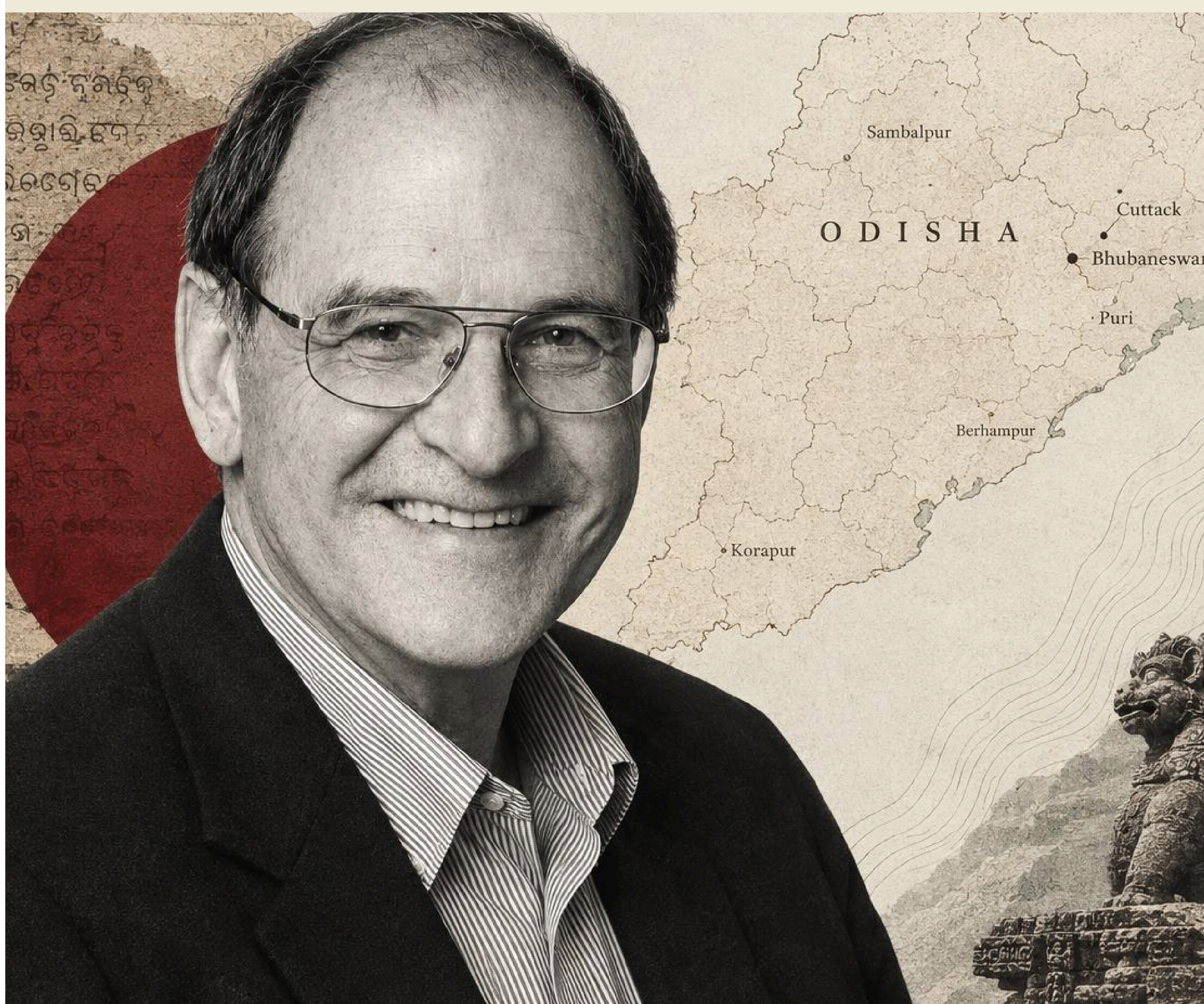
Śaiva Landscapes toward
Cartographies of the Unthought

 7-9 January 2027

 Utkal University, Vani
Vihar, Bhubaneswar,
Odisha, India

Organized by

Utkal University
in collaboration with
Odisha Research Centre



ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY

UTKAL UNIVERSITY, established on 27 November 1943, is the oldest university of Odisha and the 17th oldest university in India. It emerged from the aspirations associated with the formation of modern Odisha and has played a central role in the development of higher education, research and intellectual life in the State.

The University's present Vani Vihar campus in Bhubaneswar covers approximately 400 acres and is located in the heart of the capital city. The foundation stone of the present campus was laid by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, in 1958, and the campus was inaugurated by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the second President of India, in 1963.

Utkal University is a teaching, research and affiliating university with postgraduate departments spanning the Humanities, Social Sciences, Sciences, Commerce, Management and other areas. It has historically served as a major centre of scholarship and intellectual exchange in eastern India.

The University is therefore a particularly appropriate venue for an international conference examining Hermann Kulke's contribution to the study of Odisha, regional history and South Asian historical processes.

HERMANN KULKE, ODISHA AND THE ORISSA RESEARCH PROJECTS

Professor Hermann Kulke (1938–2021) was a distinguished German Indologist and historian of South Asia whose scholarship made a significant contribution to the study of Odisha, regional state formation, religion, and historical processes in South Asia. His work was characterised by an interdisciplinary approach that brought together history, anthropology, archaeology, religious studies, epigraphy and field-based research.



Kulke is particularly associated with the Orissa Research Projects (ORP), which created an important platform for collaborative and interdisciplinary research on Odisha. His scholarship encouraged the study of Odisha beyond conventional dynastic and political narratives, drawing attention to the interaction of state, society, religion, economy, culture, landscape and local communities.

The proposed conference seeks to revisit this intellectual legacy, not merely as a commemoration of an eminent scholar, but as an opportunity to examine the continuing relevance of his approaches and to explore new directions for Odisha Studies in the twenty-first century.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Scholars, researchers and practitioners are invited to submit abstracts for individual papers. Abstracts (maximum 300 words) should clearly indicate the title, key themes, methodology, and a brief biographical note of the author.

Please send abstracts to:
utkal.kulkeconference2027@gmail.com

A working paper (4000- 5000 words including references) is to be submitted after the abstract acceptance status is updated to you via email. The detailed guidelines will be communicated on the same email.

THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

- Professor Herman Kulke and the Intellectual Legacy of the Orissa Research Projects
- Evolution of Odisha Studies- Historiography and Historical Anthropology
- State Formation, Kingship, Political Authority and Regional Politics
- Religion, Ritual and Political Culture in Odisha
- Saivism in Odisha: Texts, Traditions, Theology, Institutions, Rituals, Folklore and Sacred Landscapes
- Saiva Temples, Architecture, Sculpture, Iconography and Material Culture
- Saivism: Tantra, Saktism, Vaishnavism and Indigenous Traditions and Lived Religion
- The Future of Odisha Studies: Comparative, Connected and Transregional Perspectives

The conference ultimately seeks to place **Odisha Studies** in a broader national and international intellectual conversation. In doing so, it will acknowledge the foundational contribution of Professor Herman Kulke, critically engage with the legacy of the Orissa Research Projects, and encourage new generations of scholars to develop fresh questions, sources and methods for understanding Odisha's past, present and future.

Important Dates	
Last date for abstract submission	10 November 2026
Notification of acceptance of abstract	15 November 2026
Last date for submission of working paper	15 December 2026
Conference dates	7-9 January 2027

Registration:

Registration will be done at the venue on the dates of the conference. The registration fees for conference participants in Rs. 1000 (INR).

VOICES FROM ACROSS THE WORLD



01

KEYNOTE

Dr. Annette Schmiedchen

Humboldt Universität zu Berlin

GERMANY



02

KEYNOTE

Prof. Peter C. Bisschop

University of Leiden

THE NETHERLANDS

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03 IRELAND
Prof. Lidia Guzy
University of Cork

04 DENMARK
Prof. Uwe Skoda
University of Aarhus

05 ITALY
Dr. Stefano Beggiora
University of Venice

06 USA
Dr. Elizabeth A. Cecil
Florida State University

07 JAPAN
Prof. Yoko Yokochi
Kyoto University

08 THE NETHERLANDS
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University of Leiden

09 GERMANY
Dr. Roland Hardenberg
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10 INDIA
Prof. Jyotirmaya Tripathy
IIT Madras

11 INDIA
Prof. Dominic Goodall
École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO)

12 JAPAN
Dr. Gouranga Pradhan
Zen University

13 JAPAN
Dr. Komatsu Yasuhiko
Aoyama Gakuin University

14 JAPAN
Dr. Aoyama Yasuhiko
Aoyama Gakuin University

15 INDIA
Dr. Umakanta Mishra
Ravenshaw University

16 ITALY
Dr. Daphne Reguiesse
University of Padova

17 U.K.
Dr. Angie Dharmarj Savicks
University of Portsmouth

18 PHILIPPINES
Prof. Jofefe B. Santarita
University of Phillippines

ODISHA:
A LAND OF HISTORY, CULTURE AND
KNOWLEDGE

Odisha occupies a distinctive place in the cultural and historical map of India. Formerly known as Kalinga, Utkala and Odra, the region has witnessed major historical processes involving state formation, maritime exchange, Buddhism, Jainism, Hindu traditions, temple culture and interaction between tribal and non-tribal societies.

The State's cultural landscape encompasses monumental architecture, classical performing arts, crafts, literature, tribal traditions, maritime heritage and vibrant living cultural practices. Odia, one of India's Classical Languages, represents an important component of this cultural heritage.

Odisha's historical and cultural diversity makes it particularly relevant to interdisciplinary scholarship on early Indian history, regional histories, cultural interaction, state formation and South Asian civilisation—themes closely connected with the intellectual legacy of Hermann Kulke.

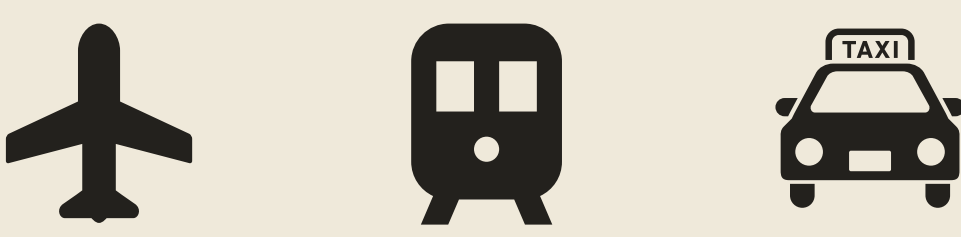
BHUBANESWAR: THE TEMPLE CITY
AND GATEWAY TO ODISHA

Bhubaneswar, the capital of Odisha, is a city where an ancient civilisational landscape meets a modern and rapidly developing urban centre. The city's historical roots extend back to the early historic period, while its identity as Ekamra Khetra is closely associated with its remarkable Hindu, Buddhist and Jain heritage.

The city is particularly renowned for its Kalingan temple architecture, including the magnificent Lingaraj Temple, Mukteswar Temple and Rajarani Temple, while the nearby Udayagiri and Khandagiri caves provide important evidence of Odisha's ancient religious and cultural history.

Bhubaneswar became the capital of Odisha in 1949 and subsequently developed into a major centre of education, research, governance, culture and commerce. Its location makes it an ideal gateway for exploring the wider historical and cultural landscape of Odisha.

LOCATION AND CONNECTIVITY



Bhubaneswar is situated in eastern India and serves as the principal gateway to Odisha. The city is well connected by air, rail and road with major Indian cities. Biju Patnaik International Airport (BBI) is located approximately 6 km from the city centre and provides regular connections with major cities including New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and other important destinations.

Bhubaneswar Railway Station is an important railway junction with connections to Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and other major cities. Odisha also has an extensive road network, with National Highway 16 providing an important north–south corridor through the State.



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Utkal University

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Utkal University

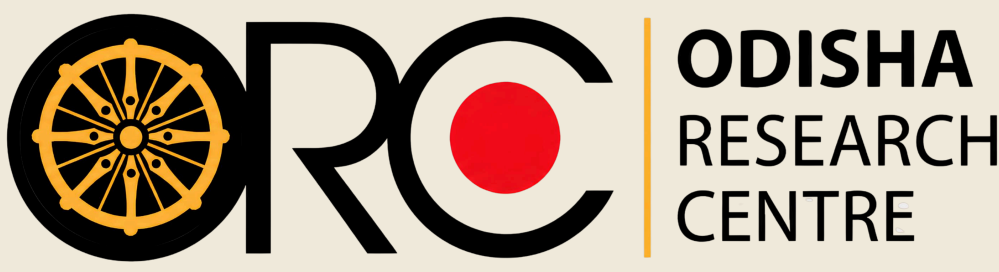
For all correspondence, please contact:

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*“Revisiting the Past
Rethinking the Present
Re-imagining the future”*

