

**SPEECH OF SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE, FORMER PRESIDENT
OF INDIA ON THE OCCASION OF CELEBRATION OF ODISHA
PARBA 2019**

I am happy to be here today amidst all to celebrate the third chapter of Odisha Parba. At the outset, I extend my greetings to the Prabasi Odias across the globe.

2. I am happy to learn that the Odia Samaj has organized Odisha Parba continuously for three years in Delhi, since 2017. Encouraged by the successful debut Odia Samaj had in 2017, they have planned to introduce new and creative segments in this year's Odisha Parba, which is being held now for three days from 15th – 17th March, at this venue. Odisha Parba has emerged as the marquee “Odisha congregation” in the country and is growing every year in significance and relevance for the Odia diaspora.

3. As it has been with the two mega events that Odia Samaj has already organised in the country's capital, this edition will bring alive the socio-cultural ethos of Odisha in the heart of the National Capital. Denizens from every nook and corner of the country would witness the unique culture, heritage, traditions, dance, melody, culinary delights, along with illustrious history and marine legacy of Odisha under one spectrum. It is a celebration, first of its kind, for the Odias and the others anywhere and probably the biggest congregation of Odias and Odisha-centric people, I am informed.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen,

4. To my mind, the theme of “**Maritime Legacy of Odisha**” is relevant. The province of Odisha, known as Kalinga in the early times was at the forefront of maritime activities of India in the past. Odia entrepreneurship and global trade started even before 350 BC according to reliable sources. Its territory extended from the Ganges in the North to Godavari in the South at different times in history. The present coastal lines of Odisha shows the signs and remnants of the glorious past. The state was also studded with natural and unique ports and harbours during ancient period. Ports play the pivotal role in the maritime activities of a country. There are references in the Buddhist literature to show that people of ancient India, especially of Odisha region were interested in maritime activities, sailing continuously for six-months and more during the time of Buddha. Theragatha speaks of merchants sailing to foreign lands like Suvannadipa and Tambapanni via the ancient Odishan ports. Hence Odisha was a major trade link in waterways. The Mahaniddeesa tells us that India's trade to the east existed with Kalamukha, Suvannabhumi, Vessunga, Verapatha, Takkola, Tamali, Tambapanni and Java. In modern times they can be identified as the entire South Asia region including the Malaya peninsula. The Buddhist literature named 'Siuki' speaks number of ports in the coast of Utkal. Odisha had bountiful forests of high-quality timber which helped in ship

construction. The natural advantages coupled with steady weather & climate, over the Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean and China Sea - aided the Odias to acquire that nautical skill and enterprise for which they were known globally and were the pioneers. The Jatakas, the Greek and Roman authors, the early literatures as well as a host of archaeological discoveries in India and abroad, have mentioned emphatically about the inland rivers, high sea trade. Trade links were established with Southeast Asia by the 1st century AD. Later findings show that 12th-century Ceylonese coins and 14th-century Chinese coins were found in Palur in Ganjam which was a major port in Odisha. Similar coins from Kotchina in Sumatra indicate a triangular trade between Orissa, Sri Lanka and Sumatra

5. In every aspect of the celebrations, Odisha Parbas should aim to showcase the “Indomitable spirit of Odia” and pay homage to the early entrepreneurs of Odisha who harnessed ingenious technologies and methods to uphold India’s national spirit. I believe that maritime trade and commerce is not and cannot be limited to Odisha, as it is an embodiment of national fervor and esteem. The underlined sentiment is that each Odia is a Banika, who is a patriot in spirit and zeal. Moreover, Odisha’s war of independence and nationalism are inseparable and has been inextricably linked to sovereignty and self-determination. Odisha Parba, in many ways, signals the rise in sub national yet Indian

sentiments with emphasis on the idea of a shared language, religion and ethnicity.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen,

6. It is a great occasion as the Odia diaspora will witness a resplendent kaleidoscope of Odisha's art, culture and culinary at Odisha Parba- a large scale festival, tipped to be one of the biggest Odisha-centric gatherings globally.

As I see all this around me - real size replicas of signature Odishan elements, a large-panorama stage at its backdrop, films presenting Odisha in diverse hues, a cultural extravaganza through its dance and music and spread of its exotic cuisines and exquisite handlooms and handicrafts, I am sure all of this will certainly bring Odisha's resplendence to the global diaspora and encourage the 'generation next', by adding vigour and vitality.

May Odisha Parba be an example for other parts of the country to showcase their diverse yet very Indian fervor through art, culture and celebrations.

Jai Hind!