



**Two Day National Conference**

**on**

**STATE, MARKET AND LABOUR :**

**REASSESSING THE DADAN MIGRATION IN CONTEMPORARY ODISHA**

**DATE: 17-18 JANUARY 2026**

**VENUE: CONFERENCE HALL, NEW ACADEMIC BLOCK, RUB**

**Organised by**

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
RAJENDRA UNIVERSITY, BALANGIR, ODISHA**

**In Collaboration with**

**GABESHANA CHAKRA, ODISHA**

**(33<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE)**

## RATIONALE OF THE CONFERENCE

Odisha's labour market portrays a paradoxical picture shaped by past injustices and persistent underdevelopment, as well as new developments brought about by globalisation in the neoliberal era. The state still witnesses high rates of rural poverty, agrarian crisis, and structural unemployment despite its abundant natural resources and rich cultural capital. A fractured and precarious working class has resulted from these systemic issues, and its lived realities call for renewed scholarly and policy attention.

Marginal farmers and landless workers, along with tribal workers, face underemployment, stagnating wages, and job uncertainty in agriculture, with unequal land ownership compounded by climate vulnerabilities. In a way, growth in extractive industries, infrastructure, and urbanisation is not resulting in any gainful employment for the rural poor; rather, informalisation is deepening, and precarious, poorly paid, and unprotected jobs are prevalent. The gig economy that appears to provide platforms for the youth is also replicating the older vulnerabilities of income insecurity, ineffective legal shielding, exploitative control over working conditions, etc.

What stands out as both archaic and contemporary in the labour landscape of Odisha is that of the Dadan System, contractor-mediated labour migration found across the western districts of Nuapara, Kalahandi, Balangir, and Bargarh. Initially a coping strategy for rural distress, it metamorphosed into a semi-formal system for exploitation, systematically transporting workers to brick kilns and construction sites in other states. Workers are entrapped through advance payment, coercive debts, and labour contracts shrouded in secrecy, with no concern for regulatory protection. Thus, Dadan representatives are the constant reminder of the incapacity of rural development policies to create sustainable local employment, allowing for the continued exploitation of labour within the pervasive caste-class framework.

The situated labour vulnerabilities in Odisha are closely tied to social identities. Informal and migrant workforces are dominated by SCs and STs, the outcome of long-term exclusion and dispossession. Women's labour is often underestimated and is concentrated in agriculture, construction, domestic services, and unpaid household tasks. The vulnerabilities extend to children of the migrant families through disrupted education and child labour, and into intergenerational poverty. These crisscrossing realities form systemic exclusions, curtailing access to legal redress, social protection, and entitlements flowing from various policies.

The state has tried to converge its welfare and governance interventions through MGNREGA, Mission Shakti, skill development programs, and Odisha Migration Support Centres. Digital platforms like the e-Shram portal, mobile entitlements, and inter-state MoUs were initiated to link migrant workers with social protection. However, disintegrated implementation, weak enforcement, bureaucratic red tape, and digital exclusion frustrate their efficacy. These structural inadequacies became glaringly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to massive reverse migration and exposed the economic, social, and institutional frailty of Odisha's labour system.

The evolution of the working class in Odisha is characterised by continuity and change: systems such as the *Dadan* provide testimony for deep-rooted historical exploitation, while neoliberal informalisation and nascent gig economies showcase new vulnerabilities under a similar logic of precariousness. The multidisciplinary approach is not just about reforming labour governance; it is about generating sustainable and rights-based frameworks that put development at the centre to ensure dignity, security, and alternative livelihoods for workers of Odisha so that they are released from the wheels of migration and informality.

## THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

## I: Evolving Structural Dimensions of Labour in Odisha

- The colonial and postcolonial labour recruitment regimes,
- The agrarian crisis, landlessness and rural unemployment,
- Theorising Dahan Migration in Odisha
- Genealogy and persistence of the Dahan system.

## II. Contemporary Labour Markets and Migration Economies

- Informalisation in industry, construction and mining,
- The rise of the platform/gig economy and its implications for youth labour,
- Circular, seasonal and inter-state migration patterns.

### III: The Labour Force and Intersectional Vulnerabilities

- Gendered labour in informal and migratory sectors,
- Caste and tribal location in patterns of exploitation and mobility,
- Children, the elderly and the social reproduction of precarity.

#### IV. Labour Rights, Legal Frameworks, and Collective Action

- Critical scrutiny of the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act (1979) and the new labour codes,
- Worker registration, social audits, and collective bargaining,
- Role of trade unions, NGOs and community-based organisations.

## V. Governance, Welfare and State Interventions

- Policy Evaluation -MGNREGA, BOCW, E-Shram, Mission Shakti, Skilled in Odisha, Shramik Sarathi
- Governance of migration-OMSC, inter-state MoUs, PDS portability
- Digitalisation, Datafication and Exclusion in Labour Welfare Delivery

## VI. Future Pathways and Alternative Political Economy of Labour

- Generation of rural employment, local enterprise and diversification of livelihoods,
- Lessons from Comparative Models of Labour Governance in India and the Global South
- Odisha's Vision 2036: Possibilities for a rights-based, inclusive and sustainable labour regime



## TARGETED PARTICIPANTS

- Scholars and a community of emerging researchers in the fields of Political Science, economics, sociology, anthropology, labour studies, development studies and other similar disciplines.
- Policy formulators and implementers, and other government officials.
- Trade union leaders, workers' collectives, NGOs, and community-based organisations.
- Industry representatives and employers' associations.
- Students, research scholars, and young professionals interested in labour problems.

## OUTCOMES EXPECTED

- Understanding the evolving structure of the labour economy and working class dynamics in Odisha.
- Academic insights on migration, informalisation, and class formation.
- Evidence-based policy recommendations for inclusive labour governance.
- Enhanced academic-policy-community linkages for labour welfare and rights.
- Prospects for selected conference papers to be published as an edited volume or policy report.

## IMPORTANT DATES

- Submission deadline for abstracts: 10th December 2025
- Notification of Acceptance: 20th December 2025
- Submission of Full Papers: 31st December 2025.
- Date Seminar: 17-18 January 2026

## CALL FOR PAPERS

The original and authentic papers are invited from academicians, practitioners, research scholars and students. The given sub - themes are indicative but not exhaustive. Research papers covering any other topic related to the main theme of the conference are welcome. **The paper presenters can also present their papers online through Google Meet.**

## GUIDELINES FOR PAPER SUBMISSION

- The entire paper should be in Microsoft Word format only.
- The abstract should not exceed beyond 300 words and a maximum of 5 keywords can be added at the end of the abstract.
- The maximum length of the submission is 20 pages and limited to 5,000 words.
- Use Times New Roman 12-point font, double spaced. References may be single spaced.
- Abstracts and Full papers may be submitted sent to Email ID: conference.gabeshanachakra@gmail.com.
- Each paper can be submitted to only ONE thematic session.
- Submitted papers must NOT have been previously presented, scheduled for presentation, published, or accepted for publication by any other source (journal, publisher or any other organization).
- If a paper is under review at the time of submission, it must Not appear in print before the Conference.
- No changes in the paper title, abstract, authorship, nor submitted document can occur after the submission deadline.

## REGISTRATION FEE

- Academicians /Faculties/ Research Scholars/ Paper Presenters: Rs. 500/-
- Payment may be made to Account No- 450502010006900, A/C Name- Gabeshana Chakra
- Bank: Union Bank, Chandrasekharapur Branch, Bhubaneswar (IFSC Code: UBIN0545058)
- All Candidates are required to register through the given Google Form
- Registration Link: <https://forms.gle/AxQW7Mwt7UFVgPs46>
- The registration fees will cover food and seminar materials only.
- No accommodation will be provided by the organiser and the participants need arrange their own accommodation well in advance.
- No TA/DA shall be provided to the participants for attending the conference.

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# ABOUT RAJENDRA UNIVERSITY

Rajendra University is a UGC recognized State Public University situated in the city of Balangir. It is one of the oldest and prominent educational institutions in western Odisha and established in the 1944 as a college by Maharaja Rajendra Narayan Sighdeo, the ruler of the erstwhile Patna State and the former Chief Ministers of Odisha. This College was subsequently upgraded to a Post Graduate College in 1978 and granted autonomy in 2002. Due to continue academic excellences, it was upgraded into a affiliated University on 1st September 2020. Sprawl over 200 acres, it marks the grandeur of greenery in its entire campus. The meditative scholars of the university boast of its library, which is one of the oldest and most affluent in the state of Odisha. Since its inception, it has been consistently acting as a hub of knowledge for teachers and students, those who have been recognised worldwide in different domains of society. In addition, it is marked as a centre for disseminating the knowledge of local culture, tradition, and ways of life to the world. The University functions under the administrative control of the Higher Education Department of the Government of Odisha, and is granted jurisdiction over the Colleges of the revenue districts of Balangir and Subarnapur.

## ABOUT DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

The Department of Political Science is one of the oldest department of the university and was established on 3rd July 1944. The department was upgraded to a Post-Graduation Department in 1981 and emerged one of the oldest PG colleges in western Odisha. To promote the research activity, the M. Phil. course in Political Science was introduced in the academic year 2017 -18. The Department has taken adequate steps for the improvement of teaching, learning, and evaluation and conducts seminars and symposiums at frequent intervals to enhance the standard of the students. The students were encouraged to undertake research projects and academic publications. The department also conducts field studies, workshops, group discussions, and study tours periodically to enhance the standard of the students. Its alumni spread across the globe and occupied important academic and professional positions within India and abroad.

## ABOUT GABESHANA CHAKRA

Gabeshana Chakra is an academic initiative of scholars and social workers interested in the study of Odisha from multiple vantage points, in inter-disciplinary and comparative perspectives keeping in view people’s aspirations for equitable, just, secular, democratic and sustainable social transformation. Its annual conferences held in different parts of Odisha bring together researchers and activists to deliberate on specific themes based on their investigation and field experiences. It leads to publication of papers, policy proposals and books in Odia and English. Started in 1994 at Utkal University Campus in Vani Vihar, Bhubaneswar, Gabeshana Chakra has held conferences in Berhampur, Khariar, Baripada, Rayagada, Paradip, Rourkela, Keonjhar, Bhawani Patna, Rourkela, Angul, Cuttack, Puri, Delang, Koraput, Sambalpur and other towns of the State. The Silver Jubilee conference at Nabakrushna Choudhury Centre for Development Studies, Bhubaneswar in 2018 was a high point where a young generation of trained researchers took active part and gave the initiative a new momentum. It launched its research wing, Development Research Institute (DRI) in 2010 to systematically engage in academic projects. The DRI regularly conducts seminars, undertakes research projects and publishes occasional papers, monographs and a journal.

## IMPORTANT CONTACTS

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