

## Biju Baboo : The Pride of Modern Orissa

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India is proud of the chivalrous and stately personality of Biju Patnaik. His career was eventful and glorious not only for Orissa but for the whole India and the world at large. He was a benevolent statesman par excellence and ranks very high in the annals of mankind. Unlike other politicians, he was the ruler of the hearts of his people and as such his mission was not to appease but to please his fellow countrymen. Verily his life was a saga of strife and glorification. By his dynamic activities he made life of his people lively and vigorous.

He was born at Cuttack in 1916. His father was Laxminarayan Patnaik and mother was Ashalata Devi. His mother Asalata Devi hails from a revolutionary freedom fighter's family. His father's ideal, fearlessness, sense of nationalism and wisdom sharpened Biju's personality to withstand the test of time.

Morning shows the days. From his school days Biju Baboo blossomed as a versatile genius. He began his education in Mission High School under the affectionate guidance of Mr. O.J. Millman, the Headmaster. Biju emerged topper in studies and extra-curricular activities. In 1932 he passed out in 1st division in the entrance examination of Patna University and took his admission in Ravenshaw College, Cuttack. He broke earlier records of the college in games,

sports and all other extra-curricular activities and became the idol of students and blessed pupil of the teachers.

After passing out I.Sc. from Ravenshaw College Biju Patnaik joined Aeroplane Flying Club. In those days it was a very costly affair. By that time his father has retired from service. Seeing the indomitable spirit of his son, Laxminarayan left no stone unturned to get him admitted in the flying club. God was gracious and Biju was destined to become a famous pilot. At that juncture a job assignment as the Dewan of



Paralakhemundi State was bestowed to Laxminarayan Patnaik by Maharaja Krushna Chandra Dev.

Biju completed his pilot training and carved out a permanent niche for himself as the most courageous and brave pilot of the country. For this he is famous as 'Great Patnaik' of Orissa. Many of his friends fondly called him 2nd Kharavela and hero of modern Kalinga.

As a student Biju Baboo marched to Peshawar by cycle with two of his friends Amar and Bhramarbar in 1932. In those days when there was no good road communication, it was a big challenge for him. Nothing is impossible to a willing heart. Without fearing the then jungle route, he completed his cherished mission with success and spread the message of Nationalism and adventurism from the brave land of Kalinga to Peshawar, the ancient city of Taxila.

Biju Baboo joined Imperial Royal Air Force as a pilot. In a short time he earned name and fame as an astute pilot. He was a born freedom fighter. So the luxurious life of did not satisfy him. The thought of freedom of India from the British yoke dominated his mind althrough. For sometime he was in dilemma, whether to join the terrorist movement of his maternal uncle's family for freedom of India or to join non-violent movement of Mahatma Gandhi. Ultimately he joined the later movement. While in service he secretly transported various leaders to secret destinations in disguise. Freedom fighters like Jayaprakash Narayan, Aruna Asaf Ali, Asok Meheta, Ram Manohar Lohia and Achyut Patvardhan were helped by Biju Patnaik on several occasions. Amidst hectic activities, he married Gyan Devi, daughter of an aristocratic Kashmiri family in 1939. His father-in-law's "M.N. Radhakrishnan and Co.Ltd." was a famous company of India at that time. In 1943, three

years after marriage, Biju Baboo was arrested by the British Government and imprisoned in the Red Fort of Delhi for his nationalist activities. Later on he was shifted to Firozpur jail and then to Cuttack jail. In 1945 he was freed from imprisonment. By that time, for his sacrifice and bravery he was famous all over India and had intimate association with most of the political stalwart.

Biju Patnaik was a rare personality of valour, bravery, heroism and indomitable spirit. In 1947, under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, sometime in May and June, the 1st Asian Congress was held in India. In course of the meeting, Pandit Nehru observed that Nationalist Government of Indonesia under Dr. Soekarno was being harassed by the Dutch Government as the Dutch had control over most of the ports and air stations of Indonesia. Nehru looked at Biju Patnaik and requested him to help the Government of Dr. Soekarno.

He made a series of discussions with the representatives of Indonesian Government and in his Dakota plane, he virtually made several air raids and surprising adventures to Indonesia throwing dust into the eyes of Dutch authority. He played a key role in transporting leaders to Java, Sumatra and Jakarta to establish rapport and co-ordination among leaders. At the cost of his life he lifted Dr. Muhammad Hatta, the Vice President of Indonesia from the hills of Sumatra. At the dead hour of night he airlifted Sultan Sjahrir, Premier of Indonesia and his Commander from hills of Java Islands to British Singapore on another occasion for the success of Indonesian freedom movement, and brought Sultan Sjahrir to Delhi.

For his rare contribution to the freedom movement of Indonesia, President Dr. Soekarno of Indonesia drafted out a gift package of 500 crores to Biju Patnaik. But the great Oriya hero

returned the gift with humility as the token of India's good will for the people of Indonesia. Later on Indonesia conferred on Biju Patnaik the highest honour of the country "Bhoomiputra Award" for his yeomen service to their cause.

Biju Baboo is the maker of present day Orissa. He introduced an era of Industrial revolution in Orissa and founded several industries like Orissa Textile Mills, Kalinga Tubes, Kalinga Refrigeration etc. at Chaudwar. He established Orissa Flying Club in Bhubaneswar. He extended mining activities to Joda and Badbil in Keonjhar district. Under his dynamic leadership the port of Paradeep, National Highway, Express High way. Rourkela Regional Engineering College, Sunabeda MIG factory, Charbatia Military Air Force station, Balimela Dam Project, Regional College of Education, Bargarh Cement factory, Agriculture University, Talcher Thermal Plant, Burla and Berhampur Medical Colleges have been established in Orissa.

He was elected to the Orissa Legislative Assembly for the 1st time in 1946 from Cuttack. Since then he has never looked back and was a key figure of Orissa polity. In 1961, under his leadership National Congress Party came to power in Orissa with thumping majority. He was elected Chief Minister. He was Chief Minister for 14 months which is considered to be the most formative period of modern Orissan history.

Some people are born great, some have greatness thrust upon them and some other achieve greatness by themselves. Biju Baboo, the household name in India, Indonesia and Orissa has achieved greatness by himself.

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