

## Biju Patnaik : Architect and Builder of Modern Odisha

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Biju Patnaik was a towering and multi-dimensional personality no less than a colossus in every sense of the term. This legendary leader and idol of the masses had almost a hectic and uninterrupted political career serving his state and the country in different capacities. The uncrowned hero of Kalinga, maker of new Odisha and formidable personality of Odisha politics, Biju Patnaik, was born on March 5, 1916 at Cuttack, Odisha. Indeed he was luckily to be born in a patriotic family. Lakshminarayan Patnaik, father of Biju was a natural inhabitant of village Nuagaon in between Bhanjanager and Belluguntha of Ghumushar area in Ganjam. Ghumushar has been a most important nerve centre of Odishan literature and culture. Village Nuagaon that is situated a few miles below the Kalinga hill is the undying testimony of Kalinga region. Ghumushar is known outside for its unique contribution to the Oriya literature. The tribes of Ghumushar had given a tough fight to the Britishers for a long time during 1766 to 1880. In short, the history of Ghumushar is the endless story of rare glory, greatness, glitter, glamour, patriotism and rebellions all through the pages of history.

Laxminarayan Patnaik came to Cuttack and settled in Tulashipur area in a house known as Anand Bhawan. Very soon Laxminarayan associated with the leaders of Odishan renaissance and became a pioneer of the

formation of the Odisha movement. His wife Ashalata Devi, came from a Bengali family who had sacrificed their lives in the struggle for freedom. Brothers of Ashalata Devi-Bijayasri, Deva Prasad and Anand Prasad were the revolutionary youths who along with Surya Sen were responsible for the Chittagong Armoury Raid of 1930.

Biju inherited the undaunted spirit of his patriotic father and mother. Biju Patnaik's life had, indeed, been one of challenges and adventures. These traits in his character led him to many spectacular achievements. Biju Patnaik was described by Julian Huxley in his memories as "a remarkable Indian whose adventures will surely fill a book," and by Nehru as a man of "energy and certain ability". He became an ace-pilot. During World War II he did not join the Indian Air Force which attracted many young Indians but became a dare devil transport pilot when the British commandeered all commercial planes into a sort of Air command. As he flew these military transport missions, he undertook cloak and dagger ventures to help Indian revolutionaries such as Jayaprakash Narayan, Arun Asaf Ali, Achyut Patwardhan, Manu Bhai Shah and others fighting against the British rule.

During those war days he met a Kashmir girl, Gyan, in Delhi where they played tennis. They

had earlier once met in her sister's place. Very soon they got married in 1939. When the Dutch were at the throat of the Indonesian Republic, Biju Patnaik flew secret missions into the Indonesian Republic and at the instance of Nehru brought Sjahariar, the Prime Minister and Mohammed Hatta, the Vice President of Indonesia.

In the summer of 1947 Biju flew to Jogjakarta on his helping mission. When Biju was ready with his Dakota plane, his wife Gyan was ready too. She went with him to invigorate his spirit who had left behind her a few months old baby.

To reach Jogjakarta Biju had to fly over Jakarta, the capital of the province of Batavia, which was under Dutch control and he was well aware that the Dutch might try to shoot down his Dakota plane. The next day, on his enroute to Jakarta, he was surrounded by Dutch planes. But Biju flew the Dakota to such heights that, the Dutch pilots could not match their aerobatics and finally the Dutch pilots moved away from the Dakota. As luck would have it, Biju and Gyan returned safely after completing their mission.

Apparently, Biju was far ahead of his time and society and also most of his party colleagues in thought and ideas. Much before he became the Chief Minister of Odisha, he had a thorough knowledge about science, economics, politics, geography and history. The new Odisha is the confluence of ancient Kalinga, Utkala, Odra and Kosala. Biju knew very well where the Kalinga was? The Vizag copper grant of 1126 AD depicts that Chodaganga Dev conquered Odisha and assumed the sovereign title of "Lord of Sakala Utkala". He established his capital at Jajatinagar and later on shifted to Abhinava Varanasi Katak (Modern Cuttack) in 1212 - 1213 AD. Bhanjanagar, the birth place of Biju's father was

located in the Kalinga region. The shift of their parents from Kalinga to Utkal or Odra had a great emotional impression on his body and mind. No body taught him to feel proud of being as Kalingan. It came naturally and the general ambiance of his father encouraged that proud. He found Kalinga most interesting in him. The Kalinga Empire became a reality for him. He established his own Airlines christened as Kalinga Airlines. He also established Kalinga Tubes, Kalinga Refrigerators Corporation, Kalinga Iron Works, published Kalinga Oriya daily, founded Kalinga Trust, and introduced Kalinga Prize. When Biju set up the Kalinga group of Industries in the late 40's that were the hallmark of his entrepreneurial mind and the perception of a new Odisha. As an ardent industrialist people called him the "Birla of Odisha". But he lost his mundane life and precious wealth in politics. Had not in politics he could have maintained the status of a TATA, BIRLA or AMBANI. That was the reason he never groomed his children to play politics. He could not see politics as the posterity of his family but literature. His daughter Gita scripted many novels such as 'Karma Cola', 'Raj', 'River Sutra' and 'Snakes and Ladders'. Naveen Patnaik is also a versatile genius in literature. The influence of his patriotic father, the environment and atmosphere of his cosmopolitan family has tremendous impact on his mind. His books reflect his deep interest in Indian cultural history and tradition. 'A second paradise' dealt with Indian culture, 'A Desert Kingdom' with Indian history and 'The Garden of life' with India's environment and traditional knowledge. All these three books were published not just in India but also widely acclaimed in the USA and Britain.

### **Biju Patnaik's Reign : An Era of Development**

The 1961 mid-term poll raised the possibility of an end to political instability, as the

Congress Party under the dynamic leadership of Biju Patnaik emerged victorious with a stable majority. The election result was a surprise to many. For the first time in the electoral history of the State, the Congress Party under the leadership of Biju Patnaik secured absolute majority by capturing 82 seats in a House of 140 polling nearly 44 per cent of the total votes. Biju Patnaik who flushed with his magnificent victory in the 1961 election was awarded with the Chief Ministership of the State but appeared to think too much of himself. He gave an impression that he was all-powerful to do anything he likes. He made many promises of bringing about industrialization in the State. However, due to his strong initiative, the construction of Paradeep Port and Sunabeda MIG factory was started. During his tenure as Chief Minister, the Lok Sabha elections were held in 1962. That was a big opportunity for Biju Patnaik to demonstrate his leadership before the party High Command. In the election, the Congress could win 14 seats and a massive 55.5 per cent of votes. The Ganatantra Parishad whose vote share was 29 per cent in the last Lok Sabha election suffered badly with only 17.4 per cent votes. Thus, the massive victory for the Congress Party in the Lok Sabha election during the Biju Patnaik's tenure as Chief Minister clearly demonstrated his full control over the party and the confidence he enjoyed from the people of the State despite factionalism in the party and opposition of the Mahatab group after he became the Chief Minister.

In Odisha, Biju Patnaik embarked on this path of industrialization and development almost with a reckless abandon. In fact, his first spell of chiefministership in the 1960's was an era of industrialization and development. Ambitious and enterprising as he was from his boyhood, Biju Patnaik always cherished a dream to industrialize Odisha and turn himself into a top-flight industrialist by setting up large industries in his state

without any help from capitalists like the Birlas, Dalmias or Tatas and show to the people in Odisha that it was possible for them to take up big enterprises on their own. After becoming a member of the State Legislative Assembly Biju showed restlessness to develop industries for him. And with Mahatab at the helm of affairs in the state Biju had no difficulty in obtaining state patronage. Mahatab tried to give him all legitimate help from government side. With such help Biju set up Orissa Textile Mills and also Kalinga Airlines. Soon he set up other industries like Kalinga Tubes, Kalinga Iron Works, and Kalinga Refrigerator Corporation and in fact became monarch of an industrial empire in Odisha.

All his earnings and income derived from his business activities were invested in Odisha for the purpose of setting up industries and development of scientific and technical education in Odisha. In 1947 he founded a Public Charitable Trust called the Kalinga Foundation Trust which established the chair of Geology in the Utkal University, the international Kalinga prize for popularization of science.

It is obvious that in the late forties both Mahatab and Biju Patnaik came close to each other for their mutual interest. By 1950 Biju had practically become the principal financial prop of the party and Mahatab always encouraged him to remain as an industrialist without cherishing any political ambition.

The spirit of adventure that had once prompted Biju Patnaik in his young days to move to the cockpit of an airplane from the less thrilling job of a ground engineer again goaded him to grasp the wheel of the administration in his own hands and steer the state through a rather uncharted course to a bright future of his dreams. Biju employed all his organizing ability for winning the mid-term poll in 1961. In the hustings Biju

raised high hopes in the minds of the people with promises that under his rule milk and honey would flow in the lanes and by-lanes of the poor state. He used to urge the people to draw inspiration from his life- how he became a man of crores within a few years from a very humble beginning. In June 1961, Biju took over as the Chief Minister. Once at the helm of affairs, Biju tried to see that his ideas and dreams of making Odisha a modern industrial state came true. His greatest obsession was the sickening backwardness of Odisha. Naturally, he concentrated all his efforts in finding ways and means to make up the Lee way. With his great pull with the Prime Minister Nehru, Biju not only accelerated the process of development but was able to locate a number of prestigious projects in the state, e.g.- the Paradip Port, Sunabedha MIG factory, Talcher Thermal Power Plant, Balimela Hydel Project, the Express Highway and many more. The concept of Panchayat industries to boost the rural economy was given a trial. A system of competition amongst the Panchayats and Panchayat Samities was introduced. The winning Panchayats were to get small scale industries as a prize up to the value of Rs. 1 lakh each and winning Panchayat Samities were to get medium scale industries up to the value of Rs. 1 crore each. By this method in geometrical progression, the entire state would have been industrialized within a span of 20/25 years. The scheme not only received the approval and active support of the Planning Commission and the Government of India but also inspired several State Governments to take up similar projects.

These apart, Biju Patnaik was fortunate in having a Governor who was equally energetic. He was Ayodhya Nath Khosla, an eminent engineer who gave all help and encouragement to Biju Patnaik to give shape to his ideas. Khosla himself drafted a ten-year plan for the integrated development of the river basins of Odisha. The

plan covering the period from 1963-1973 was called the Odisha's decade of destiny. This was a modern industrialist's approach to a conservative bureaucracy. Truly, the state had embarked on a new adventure under his stewardship. Everything was going tempo. But it was rather strange that a man like him, who had the noble ideas of building the state's economy round the peasantry, was oblivious of a very fundamental aspect in his zeal for setting up a major port at Paradeep and to connect it by an Express Highway to facilitate iron ore movement by road. Both the costly projects proved to be a heavy burden on the state Exchequer and resulted in a lop-sided growth of the state since not much resources were left for the development of agriculture and irrigation, two most vital sectors for a poor state like Odisha, where 80% of people lived on agriculture. Moreover, by taking up the Paradeep Port Project he threw on the public exchequer a liability of about Rs. 16 crores - the amount spent on the project. The project became sort of a white elephant and Biju Patnaik had to face hostile criticism from his political opponents. The port was eventually taken over by the Government of India but the dispute over the reimbursement of the cost persisted and continued to be a bone of contention between the Centre and the State.

Due to implementation of the Kamraj Plan he had to resign from his office at the instance of the Congress High Command for organizational work of the party on a full-time basis. Thus, Biju Patnaik's resignation ended the hope of political stability. Even with an absolute majority behind it, the Congress could not provide political stability in the State and the Party had three Chief Ministers in six years. After Biju Patnaik's resignation Biren Mitra formed the next Congress Government on October 2, 1963. Biju Patnaik was made the chairperson of the State Planning Board to look after planning and development of the State, the post that he held until January 29,

1965. Soon after Mitra assumed office, the Mahatab group triggered the student movement and took active role in ousting the Biju-Biren Ministry. The Assembly was stormed by the students' mob and it was hurriedly adjourned. The Chief Minister was in tenterhooks. Within a few days, disturbances broke out all over the state causing students' agitation of a serious nature. Hurt emotionally and prompted by a desire to get rid of the administrative burden, Biren Mitra took unilateral decision to resign without consulting the Party. To revive the Congress image, the succession to Biren Mitra fell on to the head of Sadasiva Tripathy. Biju Patnaik regarded as the "Super Chief Minister" and still his sway was over the organisation. He had the final say in the matter and his choice fell on Sadasiva Tripathy, Revenue, Forest, and Excise Minister in Mitra's Cabinet. After the resignation of Sadasiv Tripathy's Ministry in 1965, Mahatab walked out of the Congress with his seven trusted lieutenants and formed Jana Congress with Pabitra Mohan Pradhan as the President to "oust Congress from power." The General Election in 1967 came off at the peak of anti-Congress wave in the country. The Congress for the first time suffered setback in so many States in its electoral history. Among the prominent Congress leaders who suffered defeat were Biju Patnaik, Nilamani Routray, and Satya Priya Mohanty along with many other ministers. The Jana Congress's electoral adjustment with the Swatantra Party was in a strong bid 'to end the misrule of corrupt Congress leaders' paid good dividends. A coalition Ministry therefore, was formed taking the members of the Swatantra and the Jana Congress Parties. Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo of the Swatantra party became the Chief Minister and Pabitra Mohan Pradhan of the Jana Congress became the Deputy Chief Minister.

New alignments started taking shape during presidential election of August 1969 in

the Odisha Congress which was also divided over the presidential poll. The followers of Biju Patnaik voted for the official Congress candidate Sanjiva Reddy while others exercised their "conscience vote" in favour of V.V.Giri who was regarded as Indira Gandhi's man. By that time, Biju Patnaik fell from the grace of the Prime Minister because of his pro-Sanjiva Reddy stand. As Biju Patnaik was defeated in the Assembly poll, he sought election to the Rajya Sabha. The Party recommended his name to the Central Parliamentary Board which rejected it and selected Narayan Patra as the Party's candidate though his name was not sent by the P.C.C. The followers of Patnaik revolted and set up T.Sanganna as their candidate. The outcome was a setback for the Congress(R) as both the official nominees' Patra and rebel candidate Sanganna were defeated. Ultimately, the High Command accused Patnaik and suspended him on May 24, 1970 along with a few of his followers. Biju Patnaik, therefore, left Congress and formed his state-based party "Utkal Congress". After the birth of the Utkal Congress, a new spate of developments took place in Odisha. Mahtab was waiting for such a situation. With Patnaik in it, he disliked Congress, when he was out, and he tried his best to enter into it.

### **Biju Patnaik in the Opposition Bench**

Biju Patnaik's contribution to India's democracy was the role he played tenaciously and repeatedly in Odisha and at national level for forming opposition unity through times of factional politics. The Indira wave virtually had no impact in the General Election of 1971 to the Odisha Legislative Assembly. The Swatantra Party secured 36 seats and the Utkal Congress of Biju Patnaik 32 seats, which after September bye-election became 36 seats. The Jharkhand, the P.S.P., and the C.P.I. secured four seats each. The CPI (M) begged two and Independents secured four seats.

Soon after the election the attempt for a Coalition Government of Congress and Utkal Congress could not succeed. A coalition government was formed and Biswanath Das assumed the charge of office on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1971 in Odisha. The government headed by Biswanath Das depended on the Swatantra Party, the Jharakhand Party and the Utkal Congress. Despite his stay outside the formal power structure, Biju Patnaik was the unquestioned master of his Utkal Congress Party and coalition government.

The Coalition Ministry came to the edge of fall down because of disagreement among the partners. By hook or by crook, the coalitions continued till June 1972. In the same time, the Utkal Congress Legislative Party under the leadership of Biju Patnaik, (this had 34 members) decided to rejoin the Congress Party. But the Congress Party admitted only 28 members of the Utkal Congress Party and the rest six members including Biju Patnaik remained in the opposition as Independent members. The Congress party, thereafter, formed Ministry with Smt. Nandini Satpathy as Chief Minister.

Thus, the Utkal Congress was again revived in November 1972 and an 18 member legislative party including the "left out" seven Biju Patnaik as the leader. In February 1973, a combined front styled as the Pragati Legislative Party with the members of the Swatantra Party, six members of the erstwhile Utkal Congress Party and the members of the Independent Congress group was formed. The Pragati Party elected Biju Patnaik as its leader and he became as the leader of the opposition. On 1<sup>st</sup> March 1973 when the Assembly was in session, the political situation took a sudden turn. 25 members of the Congress Party including two Cabinet Ministers defected from the Congress and joined the Pragati Legislative Party. The Satpathy Ministry resigned

immediately after that and the State came under President's rule on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1973.

Elections to the 147-member state Assembly were held on February 22 and February 24, 1974 in a favourable climate for the Congress. The Congress fought the election in alliance with the CPI. Therefore the fight was virtually restricted to the Congress and the Pragati combine of Utkal Congress, Swatantra Party and Samjukta Socialist Party. The emergence of the Pragati Party before 1974 elections was a significant development in the direction of bipolarization of the party system in the State. Biju Patnaik's idea of an all-India alternative was in fact realized in 1974 with the formation of Bharatiya Lok Dal.

In the years 1974 and 1975 India faced a political turmoil of enormous proportions. Around this time the issue of corruption became the biggest issue. Jaya Prakash Narayan's anticorruption movement was gradually taking unshakable roots by which time the Allahabad High Court judgment came. Raj Narayan's election petition in the Allahabad High Court made all the difference. Raj Narayan challenged Indira's victory on the ground that she committed electoral malpractice. Mrs. Indira Gandhi's electoral victory was soon giving place to Raj Narayan's court victory. With the judgment in hand the opposition gave her two options; either to quite or face countrywide agitation. Indira Gandhi was not so weak leader to abdicate power by such provocations. A disillusioned Indira Gandhi became captive of circumstances of her own making. There was no alternative, except turning to the Constitution and Proclaiming National Emergency.

On June, 25<sup>th</sup> 1975, President Fakiruddin Ali Ahmed signed a proclamation declaring a state of emergency in India on the ground of internal disturbances. Again on July 1<sup>st</sup>,

1975, the President signed another ordinance amending the maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) whereby the government could detain anyone it likes without assigning the grounds. The tenure of Lok Sabha was extended for one year. Many opposition leaders were put behind bars. At this Biju Patnaik and other leaders went to Jagjivan Ram with a suggestion that if he could come out from the Congress immediately they would support him. Biju Patnaik and Chandrasekhar spoke for the Janata Party. Nandini Satapathy and K.R. Ganesh spoke for CPI only after they had finally checked up with their erstwhile comrades. Jagajivan Ram called his supporters to reach Delhi. When many arrived Ram said that he was leaving the Congress and he was going to announce this in the Congress Election Committee. On January 29<sup>th</sup> Ram finally decided to come out of the Party.

But on January 17, 1977 Indira Gandhi announced the dissolution of the Lok Sabha and holding fresh elections to the House in March 1977. After Indira Gandhi declared the election dates all the opposition parties met in Delhi instantly. The Jana Sangha, Bharatiya Lok Dal, Congress (O), the Socialist Party, the Congress for Democracy and Bharatiya Lok Dal merged together and named as the Janata Party.

In Odisha, the Janata Party under the leadership of Biju Patnaik fought the elections in alliance with Congress for Democracy (C.F.D.) and the CPI (M). It bagged 16 (Janata 14, C.F.D. 1, CPI (M) 1) of the 21 parliamentary seats. Congress Party got only 4. In the Elections to the Odisha Legislative Assembly the Janata Party led by Biju Patnaik swept the polls while the Congress was completely routed. Out of 147 seats the Janata Party got 110 seats, Congress 26, CPI and CPI (M) one each and Independents nine. This was for the first time in the history of Odisha that a party under Biju won the election.

The most remarkable feature of poll outcome was re-emergence of Biju Patnaik as the undisputed leader of Odisha. With a landslide victory of 110 seats a Ministry was formed with Nilamani Routray, a close lieutenant of Biju Patnaik, as the Chief Minister on 26 June, 1977.

### **Biju Patnaik's Last Chance to fulfill his Dreams**

Following the election debacle of the Congress (I) in the Parliamentary elections of November 1989 at the national level in general and State level in particular. Janaki Ballav Patnaik, who frustrated the efforts of all his political rivals to remove him from the seat, owned the moral responsibility for the failure of the party in elections and as such resigned from the position on 1st December, 1989. Mr. Hemananda Biswal, a former critic, political rival of Janaki Ballav Patnaik and former Minister of Janaki Ballav Patnaik's Cabinet became the leader of the Congress Legislative Party and he took over as Odisha's Chief Minister on 5th December, 1989.

The Janata Dal led combine under the leadership of Biju Patnaik won a five-sixth majority, cornering 130 of the 147 seats with the Janata Dal alone getting 123. The Congress (I) secured only 10 seats. Biju Patnaik had played the pivotal role in the formation of National Front Government at the Centre and his contact with the Prime Minister V.P. Singh developed his image in Odisha. Biju Patnaik's appeal to the people to give him a chance at the fag end of the political career to build up Odisha of his dream had magic impact on the people. Waving of loans of small farmers' up to 10,000/- also attracted the mass. The Boffors deal of Rajiv Gandhi also had an impact on the people.

With a triumphant majority, Biju Patnaik returned as the Chief Minister of Odisha after a long gap of 27 years. His comeback was

acclaimed all over the State as the emergence of an era of industrialization. The people of Odisha also nurtured a hope of getting something from Biju Patnaik at the fag end of his life. Before the election, Biju Patanaik was too in the asking of a 'last chance' to serve the people. Biju Patnaik had cherished a dream of establishing a Second Steel Plant and empowering the women. During the Chief Ministership of Biju Patnaik, the process of liberalization, privatization and globalisation, which was started by the Centre assistance, was streamlined. More and more private investors were attracted to invest in Odisha's market. He tried his best to establish a second steel plant in Odisha and selected Daitari as the proper place for the Second Steel Plant.

When Biju became the Union Steel Minister during 1977, he tried to set up a shore based steel plant at Paradeep. But things couldn't move ahead because Moraraji Desai's government fell half way through its tenure. Biju's plan suffered a setback. When Biju Patnaik again came to power in 1990 he was overconvinced that Odisha needs another Steel Plant and it was time to give solid shape to the concept, which had failed to take off. Biju always wanted to set up the plant in Paradeep because of the exportability of the product. A South Korean Company Pohang Iron and Steel co. (POSCO) was asked to study the feasibility of a port-based Steel Plant. The team of experts, however, showed unwillingness to Paradeep. Paradeep had another disadvantages attached to it. The Dredging Corporation of India in a report had said that to develop Paradeep for a Steel Plant would take 15 years of time and an amount of 250 crores would be needed as development costs. Finally, Biju gave in and Daitari was selected to be the right place for the second steel plant. The next step he took was a joint sector company called Kalinga Steel Limited to replace Janaki Ballav Patnaik's Nilanchal Ispat Nigam. The

Kalinga Steel became the joint venture of the Government run concern IPICOL and Jindal Strips Limited was to set up the plant at Daitari. Before Jindals came the South Korean firm POSCO, had tried but backed out on the question of the place where the plant should come up. Although the investment of Jindals for a mega-project was totally beyond their corporate capability, they invested 70 crores in another project and finally they withdrew. After the oust of the Jindals, Biju Patnaik invited the Tata's to come and set-up the Steel Plant. To entrap the Tatas Biju offered many facilities. As all his efforts had gone into frivolous, he arrived in London in November 1991 to fructify his dreams. He persuaded Swaraj Paul, Chairman of the CAPARO group. Biju saw high hopes in Swaraj Paul. But his dream of 3 million tonne steel project received a severe jolt when the Germany unification came about in 1990. Without the help of congress Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, it was difficult to get foreign financial assistance directly for the Kalinga Steel Project.

When he invited the South Korean Steel making firm POHANG Company to become a major partner along with the Jindal Strips, the Central Steel Minister accused him of violating the protocol by approaching a foreign company at his own. In the meanwhile the Narasimha Rao government at centre implemented the new Indian economic policy. These were governed by the principles of liberalization, privatization. Freedom to the entrepreneurs to establish any industry or trade or business venture was encouraged. State control, licenses, and permits system were also discouraged. For Biju Patnaik this was a golden opportunity. Again he successfully motivated Swaraj Paul to shoulder the responsibility of the Kalinga Steel. On 10th may, 1992 the Bhoomi Puja was held at Jakhapura near Daitari with the presence of Swaraj Paul, Biju Patnaik and the British High Commissioner in India. Meanwhile



the Union Cabinet cleared the establishment of a giant steel plant in Odisha. Swaraj Paul was ready with the investment of money. But something happened in the midst, when Swraj Paul wanted to clarify that he was only an investor and not the principal promoter of the project as envisaged. He also said that the CAPARO group is also an equity investor and not leader as far as debt equity was concerned. Unless debt equity could be done at 3 is to 1 there was no way of proceeding with the Project. When this information reached Biju's secretariat every thing seemed to be unsettling for him. Finally, Swaraj Paul washed his hands off in the project. Three years of protracted negotiations, years of wavering and gallons of hopes all were dashed to the ground. A dream of Biju Patnaik became unfulfilled. However during the second term of Chief Ministership from March 5, 1990 to March 15, 1995 Panchayati Raj movement gained momentum under his dynamic leadership. He took a revolutionary step to reserve 33 per cent of seats for women in the three-tier of the Panchayati Raj system. As a mark of his profound love for Panchayati Raj institution the people of Odisha observe his Birth Day (March 5) as Panchayati Raj Divas.

The "son of the soil" breathed his last on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1997 at the age of eighty-one. The whole country was stunned and messages condoling his death and eulogizing his contributions started pouring in from far and near.

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