

A Different Freedom Fighter, Biju

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Biju Patnaik, during his formative years, was highly influenced by Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das and Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das. He was also attracted by Mahatma Gandhi which led him to the freedom struggle for this nation.

He took active part in Quit India Movement of 1942, along with Aruna Asaf Ali and other socialists and was involved in underground activities against the British rulers. He was imprisoned by the then British Government from 1943 to 1946 and detained in Red Fort, New Delhi, Ferozpur, Lahore and Cuttack etc jails.

He was brave. His flying skills were highly appreciated. He landed the plane boldly which boarded first platoon of soldiers in Srinagar against the Pakistani radars in 1947. The first Prime Minister of this country, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru affectionately used to call Biju as 'India's buccaneer'. Former Prime Minister, Mr.I.K.Gujral recalling Biju, admitted his

versatility and daredevilry. According to him, Biju Dada, became a living legend in his young life.

When Biju was working for Royal Air Force, his house was the centre for underground freedom struggle. Dr.Ram Manohar Lohia, Jay Prakash Naryan Aurana Asaf Ali and other socialists used to launch their struggle from Biju Patnaik's house. Even Biju carried them by plane to various destinations. Biju was not only an pilot, but was head of Transport Command of the Royal Air Force of Southern Asia of Britishers. Several times, Biju narrowly escaped death while in plane.

A noted trade union leader and former Defence Minister Mr.George

Fernandes, thus remembered Biju, 'He made a significant contribution in 1942 movement and at the last of the movement, when he was arrested; he escaped from the death sentence. It is not necessary to discuss right now as to how he



Biju Pattnaik with his father Laxminarayan

managed to escape. It was his luck and luck of the country that he managed to escape for he had yet to deliver many things for the country.

After independence the emergency was declared in this country and many leaders were in jail. Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a veteran leader (also former Prime Minister) in his condolence references in the Parliament on 21st April, 1997, mentioned. 'I also got the opportunity to work with him for a brief time-period, however, I shall always carry this regret that I did not get the opportunity of being in his company at the time when he was put in Rohtak jail during the emergency. Those who were with him in prison relate how he bore all the hardships in the prison stoically and as a good companion helped the other inmates to pass that crucial time... A Prison in such a place where the true personality of a person comes to the fore and his real nature comes out. Shri Pilu Modi was also in the same prison as Biju Babu. Both were from rich families and were used to high standard of life. But when they were imprisoned, they did not air any grievances to make any complaints. Probably this

was the result of the qualities he had developed as a pilot during the Freedom Struggle.

Biju Patnaik was known for his patriotism and bravery not only in India, but also abroad. He was associated with the Indonesia Freedom Movement and was honoured by the Indonesian Government and got the title as Bhumi Putra (Son of the Soil). At the risk of his life he had then brought the Indonesian Premier Mr. Sultan Saharir to New Delhi by plane during the Freedom Struggle in Indonesia. After our independence Biju was closely associated with the Nepalese Democratic Movement in 1953.

Biju Pattnaik's role as a freedom fighter should be written in our Indian history as he was associated with the building of the fortunes of this country.

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