

## Biju : A Dynamic Personality

*Sarat Kumar Kar*

Biju Patnaik, though a house-hold name in Odisha yet there was a time, when he was rather lesser known to Odisha and Odias but better known to the British Indian Rulers. As a dare-devil ace pilot of the British empire, he was being trusted the most from among the natives. Paradoxically, he was equally trusted and better known to the underground freedom-fighters like Netaji Subhash, Jayaprakash, Lohia and Aruna as their most daring patron of under-ground activities.

At last the cat was out of the bag when his art of camouflaging was detected and he was detained along with the top freedom fighters. Not as a political prisoner but as a most dangerous traitor of the British Empire, he was chained hand and foot like an Andaman (Kala Pani) detune. He was forced to drink urine when he asked for water in jail. One can't imagine such misery and plight of a person who was enjoying his life with choicest drink, dance, mirth and laughter as one of the ace pilots of the British empire.

The decision of British to free India, at last, ended his jail life which otherwise would have ended his life like that of any other national martyr.

He came back to Odisha on the advice of national leaders specially of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to strengthen the Indian National Congress

in Odisha. He helped the then Odisha Congress leaders like Shri Biswanath Das, Dr. H. K. Mahtab and Nabakrushna Choudhury in building the state of Odisha. In every important steps of Odisha Government, he had a major role to play, including establishment of the first industry in Odisha like O.T.M. Even great projects like the Hirakud Dam and Rourkela Steel Plant were granted to Odisha by Mr. Nehru due to his persuasive initiative and drive.

During the dawn of freedom he was entrusted with many epoch-making secret parlours and consultations by the then Prime Minister Mr. Nehru including Azad Kashmir aggression and the Nepal insurgency by the democrats. He was entrusted with the most adventurous task of rescuing a few important national leaders of Indonesia from the clutches of the Dutch and bring them to New Delhi for participation in an international conference. This won him the most prestigious title of honour "BHUMI PUTRA" of Indonesia.

During the Indo-Chinese war, though he was the Chief Minister of Odisha, he virtually acted as the adviser of Prime Minister Nehru in response to his invitations, in all important matters relating to defence. He was sent to the U.S.A. as the Prime Minister's special envoy to discuss with

the American military authority regarding the situation arising after the Sino-Indian war. Thus he was enjoying the utmost confidence of the first Prime Minister of India, in matters of administrative, diplomatic and defence strategies though he was not a member of his cabinet. He was elected as the most popular leader of Odisha, and as its Chief Minister was entrusted with the task of building a new Odisha. In addition to that he was helping and advising the most powerful Prime Minister as and when needed by him. This evoked the jealousy of many national and state leaders and politicians. He was the victim of a series of political anger from many quarters. But nevertheless his strength, stamina and will power as a Statesman helped him to withstand everything and created fear and respect for him among many leaders.

He was tall and physically well built as a sportsman and since his young days was bestowed by nature with a strong will power and sportsman's spirit. This in politics made him taller than any compelling counterparts and adversaries in dealing with the issues and affairs of the State and Nation. But he is the tallest among Indian politicians probably with three exceptions (i.e. Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru and Netaji Subhash). The combination of Mr. M.K Gandhi, Mr. Subhash Chandra Bose and Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, can be termed as a three-in-one combination.

He liked Mahatma Gandhi, who was a humanitarian, benevolent and a broad visionary with a mission to raise the poor, the neglected, the women communities, the untouchables and the unprivileged minority.

He was daring, adventurous and ardent fighter for India's freedom with legendary skill like that of Netaji Subhash and even risked his life and career for that purpose.

He was an able administrator, advisor and a man full of vision to build the nation with a statesman-like zeal and ability like that of Nehru. In fact, he was extremely close to him and co-shared his ideas in building a modern India. Nehru had immense confidence in him for which he sent his daughter Indira and Biju together to execute some of his exclusive ideas concerning party and government into action. This enviable position and relation with Nehru cost him very dearly after Nehru's death.

So he had the requisite quality and charisma of Nehru which made him widely known in India and lovable in Odisha in spite of hostility and adverse propaganda against him by different parties having their self interests.

I have described the many unknown facts and legendary achievements of his career in many public meetings and have replied to the adverse comments of his adversaries and their prejudices propaganda. But, precisely, in conclusion I have no hesitation to record that in his personality he combined the noble quality of Gandhi, the daring adventure of Subhash and the vision and statesmanship of Nehru. He is thus a colourful personality, a unity of three-in-one. Such a gem of India, Biju Patnaik, who had been honoured by the Indonesian Government for his role in the Indonesian freedom struggle and honoured by the Russians for his services in the Second World War against the Nazis, has been conveniently forgotten by Indians.

I therefore have made a humble endeavour through this article, to resuscitate this august name 'Biju Patnaik' to make the world aware of his dynamic and towering personality once again on his Birth Centenary.