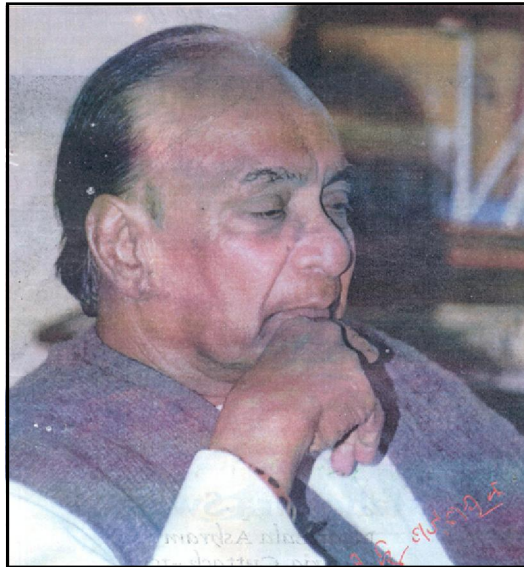


## Biju Patnaik : An Illustrious Son of Orissa

*Hemanta Kumar Nayak*

Bijayananda Patnaik, popularly known as Biju Patnaik could become a legendary hero in his life time. He could prove that greatness does not descend to a man automatically, it is acquired by hard labour, perseverance and sacrifice. He distinguished himself as an Aeronautical Engineer, Navigator, Pilot, Industrialist, Freedom Fighter and above all a Statesman of National and International repute.

On 5th March, 1916, Orissa has given a great son to its soil by the parentage of Smt. Ashalata and Shri Lakshminarayan Patnaik at Cuttack. After receiving science education at Ravenshaw College, Cuttack, he entered into the Aeronautical Training Institute of India and Delhi Flying Club. Being an adventurous youth he captained University Team of hockey and football in his college career. He was trained to become a distinguished pilot and navigator. He joined Indian National Airways as an ace pilot and also served as the chief of the Air Transport Command in the years 1940-42.



Bijubabu joined the Quit India Movement in 1942 and became a leader of underground Congress Movement alongwith Jaya Prakash Narayan and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia and underwent imprisonment during 1942-45. During his participation in the Indian Freedom Struggle Biju Patnaik came in contact with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and became his trusted friend. He maintained contact with Nehru and consulted him whenever required. He was also instrumental in signing the Linggadji Agreement on 25th March, 1947 which brought an end to the Dutch rule in Indonesia. Pt. Nehru entrusted the task to

Biju Patnaik to create international public opinion against the Dutch and also persuade the friendly countries to raise the issue before the U.N.O. Biju Patnaik sprang up to instant action. He braved all hazards and rendered his best of service to the people of Indonesia at their crucial hour of need. He flew to Java and brought Sultan Sjahrir aboard from Java islands on 22nd July, 1947 by his own Dakota and reached India via Singapore

on 24th July. It is reported that his wife Mrs. Gyan Patnaik also accompanied him in this perilous mission. This noble and heroic deed of Biju Patnaik was duly recognised by the Indonesian Government for his act of bravery at such crucial and critical juncture. He was awarded "BHOOMI PUTRA", the highest Indonesian award and a rare distinction ever granted to a foreigner.

Biju Patnaik also played a very significant role in the historic Jammu & Kashmir operation in 1947. At such critical juncture there appeared Biju, infuriated, yet committed to the cause of the nation. The prestige of motherland was his prime consideration rather than anything else. He always took up the task as a challenge and his efforts were successful. He was able to land the first platoon of troops at Srinagar Airport on 27th October, 1947 at 10.00 a.m.

Bijubabu became the Chief Minister of Orissa in 1961 and Union Cabinet Minister for Steel and Mines from 1977 to 1979 and Union Minister for Steel, Mines and Coal from July, 1979 to January, 1980. He was the member of the Lok Sabha from 1980-85. He became the Leader of the Opposition in the Orissa Legislative Assembly from 1985-89 and was sworn in as Chief Minister of Orissa for the second time on 5th March, 1990.

"International Kalinga Award" is the contribution of Late Biju Patnaik. He has

instituted this Prize for the popularisation of science among the common people, which is monitored by UNESCO. Bijubabu was quite conscious of holding the banner of Kalinga high. He named his airlines as Kalinga Airlines and all his industrial establishments are named after Kalinga. People of Orissa are really proud of Biju Patnaik for his endeavour to organise a voyage to the Indonesian island of Bali to commemorate the glorious sea-fare tradition of the people of Kalinga.

The people of Orissa mourned his death most grievously. The mortal becomes immortal for his undying legacy and he still lives in renewed vigour in the hearts of millions of people of his state as well as his country. Biju Patnaik departed on 17th April, 1997 in New Delhi and the normal activities stalled due to break down of the emotion of Oriya people in Orissa. Lakhs of people rushed spontaneously to take part in the funeral procession jamming the entire 59 km road from Bhubaneswar to Puri. That shows the greatness of a man, an illustrious son of Utkal Janani.

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