



Short Review Paper

Political career and achievement of Biju Patnaik

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Abstract

Biju Patnaik dominated both Odisha and Indian political scene for at least four decades of 20th century. A Pilot turned politician, later became a popular leader. He served as the Chief Minister of Odisha for two terms in 1961 and 1990 and Minister of Steel, Mines and Coals in the Central Cabinet of Morarji Desai from March 1977, to Jan 1980. He was responsible for laying the basic infrastructure for development of Odisha. So many industrial Developments took place under the banner of Biju Patnaik. His role to rescue Sultan Sjahrir of Indonesia and Kashmir Problem of 1947, were two commendable achievements of that great leader. His contribution in different areas is matchless. He will be remembered forever by Odia people.

Keywords: Early life, political career, promotion of industry, education, his reforms.

Introduction

Mr. Bijoyananda Patnaik is popularly known as Biju Patnaik. He dominated in Odisha's state (India) politics nearly six decades out of which; he was in Jail for about thirty months for his active role in Quit India Movement. Biju Patnaik is a unique character and favourite leader among the people of Odisha till today for his adventurous work and political reforms. He was undoubtedly a great Legislator, Political Leader, Pilot, Freedom fighter and above all a reformer of modern Odisha. His political activity since student life was full of adventurous work. During his student life, he set his journey on cycle from Cuttack to Peshwar located now in Modern Pakistan. Later on, he joined Indian National Airways and became a Pilot¹. He played very crucial role in the World War-II and the Kashmir War of 1947 as a Pilot in the Indian Air Force. Taking risk his life, he brought the Indonesian Premier Mr Sultan Sjahrir and Achmand Sukarno to New Delhi by Dakota military air craft during the time of Indonesian freedom struggle against Dutch colonialism. He had served as the Union Minister for about three years and about seven and half years as the Chief Minister of Odisha in two terms² (23.06.1961- to 02.10.1963 and 05.03.1990 to 15.03.1995). From a daring Pilot to great Indian political leader, Biju Patnaik is remembering by generations of people not only in Odisha but outside India also.

Life of Biju Patnaik

Bijayananda Patnaik is popularly known as Biju Babu among the people of Odisha. He was born on 5th March, 1916 at Cuttack in the erstwhile capital city of Odisha located in the eastern part of India. His ancestors hailed from Bhanjanagar region in Ganjam district of southern Odisha. Ganjam district is a fertile ground for its rich culture. Biju's ancestral homeland,

Bhanjanagar is famous for Upendra Bhanja, the well known Odia poet of the late medieval period who boasted of the dignity and greatness of the Oriyas³. His father was Laxmi Narayan Patnaik and mother was Ashalata Ray. His father had served in judicial service and also great nationalist leader of Odia Movement. Biju Patnaik did not face any kind of financial difficulties during his early life; and had received inspiration from his father to be fearless in his life. The name of spouse of Biju Patnaik was Gyan Patnaik. Biju Patnaik had two sons and only daughter. His elder son Prem Patnaik is a well known Delhi based business man and younger son Naveen Patnaik who followed the way of his father and ruling Odisha since 2000 by forming a regional political Party, named Biju Janata Dal. Gita Mehta is a well known novelist and an author of many books.

Biju Babu was a brilliant student during his student career but did not express his interest to pursue higher education. Biju Babu started his early education at Christ Collegiate School and then studied at Ravenshaw Collegiate School situated at Cuttack in Odisha. Biju Patnaik was a student of science in Ravenshaw College, Cuttack. Mr. Patnaik exhibited all the quality of leadership in other curricular activities during his student life. He discontinued from B. Sc. degree and undergoes training as Pilot. He became a Pilot in British India, but actively participated in the Indian Independence struggle. His days as a Pilot are more memorable and thrilling for his historic Indonesian operations to assist in Indonesian independence struggle⁴. The lavish presents that the Indonesian government offered him in 1950 and the high praises that the Indonesian Government showered on him there after establish his quality and calibre as a Pilot, as a politician and as a states man. Biju Patnaik flew to java and rescued Sultan Sjahrir out on a Dakota military aircraft reaching India with safe via Singapore on 24th

July 1947. For this act of Bravery, Biju Babu was given honorary citizenship in Indonesia and awarded Bhumi Putra⁵ the highest Indonesian award rarely granted to a foreigner.

His Political Career

He started his political career and joined Odisha politics. In the year 1947, he was elected to Odisha Legislative Assembly from Cuttack in central Odisha. In 1952, he elected from Bhanjnar Assembly Constituency and in 1957 from Jagannath Prasad Assembly Constituency both situated in Ganjam district of Odisha. In 1961, he became the president of Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee. In the same year the Congress Party elected Midterm Assembly Elections under his leadership. In that election, Congress Party secured absolute majority of 82 seats out of 140 seats⁶ in the Odisha Legislative Assembly and formed the Government. He won from Choudwar Constituency. He became the Chief Minister of Odisha for two years and later resigned from Chief Minister's post on October 2, 1963 because of Kamaraj Plan. Thus the first tenure as Chief Minister came to an end abruptly contrary to the hopes and aspirations of the people of Odisha.

Promotion of Industry

Biju Babu took a lot of steps for the rapid industrialization of Odisha under the first spell of Chief Minister. To full fill his dreams and imaginations for all round development of the state, he managed to bring an eminent engineer Dr. Ayodhya Nath Khosala as its Governor and his help and guidance were taken for planning the Major-Electrical Projects in the State. He managed to set up M.I.G. (Aero-Engine) factory at Sunabeda in the Koraput district through his lobby to Prime Minister Nehru despite the strong opposition by the then Union Home Minister Y.V. Chavan who was interested to establish that factory in his home state Maharastra. Talcher Thermal Power Plant, Balimela Hydro-Electric Projects etc. are the memorable testimonies of his successful achievement⁷. During the first tenure of his Chief Minister, a series of medium and small scale industries were set up in different parts of Odisha. Special emphasis was also given Panchayat Industries. He created Tribal and Rural Welfare Department and nationalized of Text Books. He introduced corporate system of administration as a step towards decentralization of powers of administration at Government level. The Industrial Development Corporation, Odisha Mining Corporation and Odisha Forest Corporations are three giant Corporations which were created by him⁸.

Growth of Education

There was significant development took place in the field education both Technical and General Education during the first Chief Minister's tenure of Biju Patnaik. The Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (O.U.A.T.), Sainik School were set up at Bhubaneswar. Regional College of Engineering also set up at Rourkela. For the promotion of technical education, he

arranged stipends to poor meritorious students for the first time. He made an arrangement for setting up General College in each Sub-divisional head quarter of the State ensuring that not a single poor student of state should not be deprived of Higher Education.

Construction of Paradeep Port

He had keen interest to restore the glory of sea trade for which Odisha had earned great reputation in the ancient past. Biju Babu believed that without State's own port, the rich natural resources could not be exported to other countries and foreign exchange could not be earned. Therefore, the project of Paradeep Port came to his mind and took the charge of personal interest for its immediate function. In this regard, he managed to get the support of the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to materialise his dream Project and began to construct a Port at Paradeep. At last, the Prime Minister of India laid the foundation stone of the Port on 3rd January 1962 at Paradeep⁹. After the foundation was laid by Nehru for connection of Paradeep Port, the Government of India did not clear the Project raising some technical objections. But this did not stop Biju Babu to full fill his dream for which he had sanctioned Rs. 13 cores from the Odisha Contingency Fund to march ahead with the progress. That Paradeep Port is one of the leading Ports in the Eastern India. Biju Babu also translated the idea of connecting the Paradeep Port with the rich mineral area at Daitari in Jajpur district and introduced road traffic for which the Express Road Ways came in to being, in record time. It is one of the great achievements of Biju Patnaik.

His Resignation from Chief Minister and up to Formation of Janata Party

Biju Patnaik resigned from the post of Chief Minister on October 2, 1963 making room for his trusted lieutenant Biren Mitra of Cuttack to succeed him. This was a great loss to the State and her people. In 1967 elections to the State Assembly, he contested and lost in Patakura constituency of present Kendrapara district. He was elected to Rajya Sabha in the very next year. In 1971, he contested four Assembly Constituencies and one Loka Sabha Constituency as a candidate of Utkal Congress, a Odisha -based regional Party founded and funded by him. He faced defeat all of the seats, though his Party fared comfortably in that election.

In a by-election from Rajnagar Constituency of Kendrapara district, he entered in to the Odisha Legislative Assembly in 1971. In the year 1974, he fought elections in Patakura Constituency and managed to win it. He acted as the leader of opposition Party. He was the key player in the formation of Janata Party and was the head of its Odisha State unit. In 1977, he contested from Kendrapara Loka Sabha Constituency and won. After 15 years, he tasted Government power again when he was made the Minister, Steel and Mines at the Centre under Morarji Desai¹⁰. In 1980, leaders of erstwhile Janata Party in

different outfits and camps fell before the Indira wave. But he retained the Kendrapara seat under his own control. He made a hat-trick when he retained this seat in 1984 despite the tremendous Indira sympathy wave in favour of the Congress Party.

In 1985, he resigned from Loka Sabha seat to contest Bhubaneswar Assembly Constituency and he won that seat in spite of Indira sympathy wave for the Congress Party. He made another hat-trick when he retained the seat in 1990 and 1995 Assembly elections.

Second Tenure of Chief Minister

After the gap of 27 years, Biju Babu returned to the power of state politics. His second tenure of Chief Ministership starts from 5th March 1990 which is very special for Biju Babu (Birth Day) to 15th March 1995¹¹. He was the second Chief Minister of Odisha next to J.B. Patnaik of Congress Party who complete his five years tenure and provide political stability to the state. In 1990 Election, Janata Party led by Biju Patnaik won 123 seats out of total 147 seats. Congress Party not only lost that election, but also reduced its number to ten in the Assembly.

His Administrative Reforms

The most important features of his second tenure as Chief Minister was the reorganisations of Districts raising their number from 13 to 30. Though in this direction in early 1970s, a District Reorganisation Committee had been constituted with Justice Raj Kishore Das as its Chairman, Udaya Nath Sahu and Sudhansu Mohan Patnaik, the then Revenue Secretary as members and a report was submitted by it, yet no decision could be taken during the last 20 years in this regard. His decision to raise the number of districts up to thirty greatly helped to reach the administration and its welfare measures to the common people of the state. The common people of Odisha were immensely benefited from this administrative measure.

The process of renovation of Panchayat Raj system in the state was started by Biju Patnaik. Reservation of women seats increased up to 33% in Gram Panchayat and Panchayat Samiti level of Local Self Government¹². Biju Patnaik initiated the process of emancipation of Women by giving proper representation and fair justice to women in the local self bodies. He also increased the wages of daily labour class people from rupees 10 to 25 which helped this working class people to improve their standard of living.

Industrial Units Establishment (Phase II)

He had played key role for the establishment of second Steel Plant in the State and took special interest in this regard. Lord Paul had visited Odisha at the initiative of a German based Odia Engineer Dr. Rajendra Narayan Das and several rounds of talks began with Biju Patnaik for setting up another Steel Plant at

Daitari areas of Jajpur district. The foundation stone of Steel Plant was laid in the area of Kalinga Nagar of present Jajpur district of Odisha.

Other Reforms

In order to check corruptions of bureaucrats and ministers in the administration system, he introduced Special Courts instead of existing Lokpal System. He filed cases against eleven alleged minister of J.B. Patnaik who hold office in between 1980-1990 and residence of some of the accused persons was raided and their cases were tried by the Special Courts. Even more stringent action was taken by Government against the officers who were involved with corrupt practices. One of the privileges which many officers had been enjoying for long years was occupying a Government quarters paying concessional rate of rent to Government, while letting their own houses at exorbitant rates of rent. In order to curb this bad practice, he initiated steps directing such occupants to vacate the quarters under their occupation or alternatively pay the same amount of house rent which they are getting by hiring their houses. All these reformatory steps created a furore among the Government officials.

His Charismatic Leadership

In 1996 General Election, he was simultaneously elected two Lok Sabha seats both from Aska and Cuttack Constituency, equalling the feats of P.V. Narasimha Rao, and Atal Bihari Vajpayee both were the Ex-Prime Minister of India. The political career graph of Biju Patnaik was witnessed upward and downward trend almost critically and inexplicable. He dominated both State politics and Central politics of India for a period of fifty years, whether he was in power seat or leader of Opposition. His mission and message, his ambitions and dreams make him a magnificent leader, a munificent man. Facts and statistics are not sufficient to describe him; he defies methodical data and made up analysis.

He is a multi-faceted personality, associated with full of controversies and contradictions, heterogeneities and opposites¹³. Biju Babu demonstrated pride and self-respect of the Odia people. He never bends his head before Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Morarji Desai to retain power. The only vested interest he had was the dignity and honour of the odia people. Biju Babu is the most vocal proponent of Odisha's pride and prestige, glory and greatness, self respect, self-pride, of the Odia people in the best part of the 20th century.

Conclusion

Biju Patnaik was a great Statesman, a learned person, matured political leader, social worker, champion of education (technical and women education) and above all promoter of series of industrial units in Odisha. He had also strong opposition to corruption at any level. Biju Babu is fairly well known all over

India and abroad for his charismatic leadership and adventurous Pilot¹⁴. He was a close confidant and trusted lieutenant of Jawaharlal Nehru. Biju Patnaik was the crisis manager of Nehru in different important occasion of the nation. Even, Prime Minister, Nehru sent him to meet John F. Kennedy, the President of U.S.A. to protect the interests of India from the bad motives of Chinese aggression. He played significant role during Indo-China war of 1962, that impressed the Prime Minister very much.

A Large number of dignitaries and V.V.I.Ps were attended his funeral in Swargadwar at Puri, Odisha. Three Helicopter-loads of VVIP including the then Prime Minister Deva Gowda, ex Prime Minister Chandrasekhar, A.B. Vajpayee, Krishankant, Governor of Andhra Pradesh, and so many Union Ministers, ex-Union Ministers etc. reached at Puri to bid tearful farewell to the beloved Biju. Biju Babu breathed his last on 17.04.1997, the Sudasavrata day, when millions of Hindu women all over the country were busy in worshipping Goddess Laxmi. The death of Biju Babu was a great loss to India as a whole and Odia people to be more particular. He occupies permanent place in the heart of every Odia people. His contributions in different field are matchless. He will be remembered for ever. The vacant place in Odisha politics left by Biju Babu was very soon filled by his younger son Naveen Ptanaik, leader of Biju Janata Dal who played key position in the state politics of Odisha¹⁵ since 2000.

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