

He dreamt too big, says Madhu Koda's family

The son of a farmer should have remained a farmer, but Madhu Koda dreamt big, says the bitter and distraught family of the former Jharkhand chief minister who has been arrested for alleged money laundering.

Father Rasika Koda, who lives in Patahatu - where Madhu Koda was born - in West Singhbhum, feels his 'son's decision to join politics was a mistake'.

'I had tried to convince him not to join politics, but he said he wanted to serve the country and society. How could I stop him from doing so? He had been sleepless since he joined politics and his thoughts were a chaos. It landed him in controversy,' said Rasika, a 62-year-old tribal farmer.

Fate has come a full circle for Madhu Koda, an independent MP who was Monday arrested in Chaibasa, the town where he attended the Tata College in 1988 before dropping out.

Koda, 38, said to be a loving husband who often helped his wife in the kitchen, is alleged to have amassed nearly Rs.400 billion in personal wealth through dubious deals.

'A farmer's son should have remained a farmer. He was good at farming and was a welder. He could have got a job at the Steel Authority of India and lived a normal life. But he dreamt big and failed to live it up,' his sister Sumitra Birua said.

His father Rasika, a former employee of the Indian Iron and Steel Co who now tends to his little agricultural plot, said: 'I don't believe he has amassed so much money. The investigation will unearth the truth. I am sure he was in bad company.'

Rasika, who lives in a small house with his wife Kunikui, said 'it was a conspiracy plotted by Delhi to malign his son'.

Koda's life reads like a rags-to-riches tale from Bollywood. His father forced him to give up college because there wasn't enough money and ordered the 'young Madhu to find a job to fend for the family'.

A disillusioned Koda, who wanted to join the army, became a labourer instead in an iron mine at Gua. He lugged lumps of iron ore for a promised sum of Rs.20.50 per day.

Koda harboured memories of corruption and exploitation at the mines. 'They would get our thumb impressions against payments of Rs.20.50 and would pay us Rs.16. It left an impression on me,' he had told the media.

His modest lifestyle is believed to be a 'result of his Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) grooming'.

He contested the 1996 polls on a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ticket. He later won the Jagannathpur seat in West Singhbhum in the 2000 assembly polls as a BJP candidate.

In 2005, after he was denied ticket by the BJP, Koda contested as an independent and won the

Jagannathpur seat again. But he decided to support a National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government led by Arjun Munda.

Koda was made the minister of Mines and Geology. In 2006, he withdrew support to the Munda government. The Congress decided to make him the chief minister as a consensus candidate. Koda resigned in 2008 after the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha withdrew support to his government.

His younger brother Rajesh, a contractor in the West Singhbhum mines, echoed father Rasika. 'My brother is a target of non-tribal politicians,' he said.

Koda's wife Geeta, who is contesting from the Jagannathpur assembly seat on a Jharkhand Navnirman Morcha ticket in the ongoing assembly polls, was not available for comment.

But Rasika said: 'I do not support my daughter-in-law Geeta's entry into politics. After all, Jharkhand politics comprises the same set of corrupt people.'

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