

Lachit Borphukan: The Valiant Soldier of Assam

Lachit Borphukan's name shines like the sun not only in the history of Assam but also India. His story of patriotism is a guiding light for the bravehearts of the country. Lachit defeated the Mughals and drove them outside the boundaries of Assam. He is remembered today as one of the greatest warriors of Assam and India. The way he led a regional infantry in a mighty war and came out victorious, speaks volumes of his leadership skill, war strategies, and bravery.

Early Life:

Lachit Borphukan was born on 24th November, 1622 in the Ahom Kingdom. His father Momai Tamuli Borbarua was the Commander-in Chief of the Ahom Army during the reign of the emperor Rudra Singha. The name of Lachit's mother was Kunti Moran. The Borphukan family was a powerful and reputed family in the Assam of those days. Being the son of an army head and born with a legacy of repute, Lachit, from his early childhood was taught the lessons of discipline, leadership, and patriotism. He admired bravery, truth, and honesty among his fellow people.

Life in the Army:

When the king Chakradhwaj Singh appointed Lachit Borphukan as the Supreme Commander of the armed forces in 1667, he started upgrading the skills and weapons of his Army. He also collaborated with the Nagas, the Jaintias, and the Kacharis. In 1667, the Mughal forces led by Mir Jumla-II, attacked and captured Guwahati, the then Pragjyotishpur. But the spirited army of Lachit fought bravely and won the war against the Mughals and their allies thereby defending the throne of Guwahati.

Battles with the Mughals:

The Mughals, in order to build their stronghold on the north-eastern region of India, invaded Assam many a time. In 1667, a mighty army of 30,000 soldiers was sent to Assam by the Mughal King Aurangzeb under the leadership of Raja Ram Singh. His army was so big, it is said, when Lachit assessed their strength, he was worried and uttered, "How will I save my king and people. What will happen to the future generations?"

However, the valiant Ahoms, under the headship of Lachit, took to guerrilla warfare techniques, utilized the favouring climatic conditions and exploited the naval means to defeat the Mughals once again. Thus, they saved Guwahati and the people of Assam.

The Battle of Saraighat:

The famous Saraighat battle against the army of Ram Singh was fought in 1671 near the present Saraighat bridge on the Brahmaputra River. The terrain was tactfully chosen by the Ahoms. The

Mughals being weak on the naval front, were tricked into following the river route where the dextrous Ahoms utilized the downstream advantage and defeated the Mughals with a small force.

In this war, something happened that has found a spot of repute in the history books of Assam as well as India. The Mughal forces led by Ram Singh, were inching forward to capture Assam. To hinder the move of the Mughals, a barrier was being constructed. Lachit's own maternal uncle was looking after the work.

In the night hours Lachit visited the spot and came to know that the workers were taking rest with the work still unfinished. Any strike from the enemy side could be dangerous. This was a grave mistake. Lachit got angry and beheaded his own uncle saying, "Momai dekhhot ke dangor no hoi." [My uncle is not above the country.] The workers hurried up the work and the obstruction wall was completed immediately after. Such an incident of commitment to duty, order, and promptness is rarely found in the history books.

The Mughals, finding a tactical hindrance, tried to explore the water way through the Brahmaputra. But they had to face the upstream conditions. Also due to adverse weather conditions, the Mughals lost the battle.

Lachit's Commitment to the Motherland:

At one point in the battle, the Ahom soldiers were despaired. Lachit was sick and the mighty Mughal army was marching ahead every moment. There was also a trap set by the enemy to prove that Lachit was resorting to treason. However, the king was convinced by Atan Burhagohain, the *Rajmantri Dangaria* that Lachit's commitment to the motherland was beyond doubt. Lachit said to his soldiers, "I'll fight for the nation. My health is not superior to the country. If any of you wants to go back, you can. But please inform the emperor that his general fought till the end and obeyed the king's orders." Hearing this, the soldiers' zeal revived and they were immediately ready to fight. Even with falling health, Lachit fought the decisive battle of Saraighat with a fleet of a few boats only. Using guerrilla warfare techniques, he handed defeat to a big army.

Death:

Unfortunately, after the battle of Saraighat, the brave leader of the Ahom Army got severely sick and died a year later in 1672. His divine soul rests in peace at Hoolungapara, 16 kilometer away from the city of Jorhat in Assam.

Conclusion:

Lachit's name will always be remembered in the history of Assam and India with great honour. We, the Indians, are proud of the brave son of Assam, Lachit Borphukan. The NDA (National Defence Academy) awards Lachit Borphukan Gold Medal to its best cadet every year. Lachit Borphukan's birth anniversary is celebrated every year on 24th November to commemorate the service that the great martyr provided to his motherland.

Lachit's life gives a message. We are so busy in our own lives that we do not find time to think about our fellow beings. If our country is unsafe, how will its people be safe? Is it not our duty as good citizens

to lead a disciplined life and live a part of it for the service of others? Reminiscing Lachit's life and works fills our hearts with love for the motherland. When the mighty army of the Mughals was marching towards Assam, Lachit was worried about his king, people, and the coming generations. He thought about his country's safety day and night, prepared plans, collected weapons for his army and boosted the spirit of the soldiers. In addition, he garnered support from friendly neighbouring countries.

Learning from the valiant soldier of our nation, Lachit Borphukan, let us take the solemn pledge to contribute to the unity and integrity of our country in every possible way and to every possible extent.