

"FOR THE 400TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF LACHIT BORPHUKAN"



While we all admire and eulogise freedom fighter from pre-independence era like Bhagat Singh, Subhash Chandra Bose, Mangal Pandey and their likes, yet there often lie many other historical figures with an equal bravado, who still remain hidden in the crevices of dark and about which the country knows very little about.

One such figure is Bir Lachit Borphukan, the great Ahom Chieftan who played a decisive role in retreating the mighty Mughal Army back in the 1671 Battle of Saraighat putting a halt to Aurangzeb's desire of expanding his empire into Assam. It was one of the greatest achievement of the Ahom kingdom ever and a sheer epitome of tactical brilliance, perfect use of terrain, guerrilla warfare and intelligence gathering. In fact, Assam was the only state in India which defeated 17 successive attempts of Mughal invasion.

Lachit Borphukan was born on 24 November 1622 to Momai Tamuli Borborua, the first borborua that is the 'Governor of Upper Assam and Commander-in-chief of the Ahom army' under King Pratap Singha. He was born in Charaideo to an Ahom Family. The Ahom kingdom was located in the Brahmaputra valley of eastern India. It was first established in 1228. As was the tradition in Ahom society, the young Lachit was taught philosophy and arts besides imparted military skills. The Ahom kingdom was repeatedly assailed upon by Turkic and Afghan rulers of the Delhi Sultanate and later the Mughal Empire. The Mughal- Ahom conflict first began in 1615 and continued afterwards. It was in this backdrop Lachit grew up in.

Through hard work and dedication he was consider for appointment to the position of a Soladhara Baruah (scarf-bearer) of the Ahom king. That position was the modern day equivalent of a principal secretary. Gradually Lachit was given other important positions such as Superintendent of the Royal Household Guards to the Ahom king Chakradhwaj Singha.

King Chakradhwaj Singha impressed by the attentiveness of Lachit promoted him to be one of the Borphukan. In the Ahom system of governance Borphukan was one of the five patra mantris (councillors) who possessed both executive and judicial power.

By the time Lachit Borphukan's appointment as commander, the Mughals had occupied Guwahati and had forced the Ahom's to sign the humiliating peace treaty of Ghilajharighat in 1663 which imposed harsh conditions on the Ahom kingdom .King Chakradhwaj Singha resolved to rid the entire region from Mughal occupation , a will that would be carried out by Lachit Borphukan.

Lachit Borphukan's patriotism and devotion to his land is best described by the battle of Saraighat where he even went to the extent of beheading his own uncle for the sake of his land. During the preparations for the battle he ordered an earthen wall for fortification to be constructed within one night and employed his maternal uncle as the supervisor. Later in the night when Lachit came for inspection, he found that the work was not progressing satisfactorily. When asked for an explanation, his uncle tried to cite tiredness, at which negligence of duty, Lachit became so furious that he beheaded his uncle on the spot, saying "My uncle is not greater than my country." The barrier was completed within that night and the remains of this fortification as still known as "Momai-kota Garh" or "The fortification where the uncle was beheaded."



In spite of his illness, Lachit had himself carried on a boat and with seven boats accompanying him advanced head log against the Mughal fleet. He shouted, "If you (the soldiers) want to flee, flee. The king has given me a task here and I will do it well. Let the Mughal take me away. You report to the king that his General fought well following his orders." This had an electrifying effect on his soldiers. They rallied behind him and a desperate battle ensued on the mighty Brahmaputra. The Ahoms in their small boats encircled the bigger but less maneuverable Mughal boats. The river got littered with clashing boats and drowning soldiers. Finally Lachit Borphukan's army was victorious. The Mughal were forced to retreat from Guwahati. The Mughals were pursued to the Manas river, the Ahom kingdom's western boundary. The Borphukan instructed his men not to attack the retreating army.

But this great General of the Ahom Army was finally defeated by illness on 25 April 1672 that killed him very soon after the victory at the Battle of Saraighat. Lachit Borphukan's last remains lies in rest at the Lachit Maidam built in 1672 by Swargadeo Udayadita Singha at Hoollongapar 16 kms from Jorhat. On 24th November each year Lachit Divas is celebrated statewide in Assam as a State holiday to commemorate the heroism of the great General of Ahoms and the victory of the Assamese Army at the battle of Saraighat.

At the National Defence Academy (NDA) Khadakwasala, Pune, every Term following the completion of training, the overall best Army Cadet is awarded with a gold medal. In 1999 the then Chief of the Indian Army General VP Malik instituted the annual Lachit Borphukan Gold Medal Award for the best cadet of National Defence Academy (NDA) to emulate the great Ahom warrior General Lachit Borphukan's heroism and sacrifice.

On 25 Feb 2022, the Hon'ble Former President of India Sri Ram Nath Kovind kick started the 400th birth Anniversary celebrations of the 17th century Ahom General Lachit Borphukan and laid the foundation stone for a war memorial and a 150-foot bronze statue of the commander at his memorial at Hoollongapar in Jorhat in Assam. Along with the statue, the memorial will also feature a 100 ft long Hengdang (Ahom sword). This war memorial 'Alaboi Ranakshetra' will be built to honour the valour of Bir Lachit Borphukan and his 10,000 troops martyred at Alaboi, Kamrup.

Lachit Borphukan's strong, selfless and visionary leadership reminds us of the strong and mighty powers of the assamese nation. The courage and the valour of the assamese nation cannot be imagined without him. Even today the courage and foresight of leadership of Lachit Borphukan is thrilled in every Assamese mind.


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