

## LACHIT BARPHUDAN

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### ➤ Introduction

The Hindu civilization has given birth to many sages and warriors over its long history and Lachit Borphukan is one of those warriors, whose patriotism has contributed to glorifying the Ahom Kingdom.

If we open Assam history and turn over the pages, we get to know that Lachit Borphukan is a symbol of invincible personality, courage, and struggle. His strong, selfless, and visionary leadership reminds us of the strong and mighty powers of the Assamese nation. The sentiments of the Assamese nation and the self-esteem of the Assamese people is Lachit Borphukan.

The Ahom empire was located in the eastern region of the Brahmaputra valley. It was founded for the first time in 1228. The kingdom was constantly attacked by Turkic and Afghan kings of the Delhi Sultanate and, subsequently, the Mughal Empire. Though much of India's medieval history was dominated by mighty Ahoms for 600 years beginning in the mid- 13th century, the Mughals could not touch Assam. The Mughal-Ahom battle began in 1615 and has since raged on.

In India, the Ahoms of Assam were the only rulers who defeated the Mughals seventeen times. Lachit was one of the greatest commanders of Assam and under his leadership, the Ahoms won the battle of Saraighat in 1671. In his last and decisive battle despite his illness, he inspired a dispirited Ahom naval force to fight against the Mughals.

There is a number of incidents displaying Lachit's patriotism and devotion toward his motherland. One such incident is based on the quote which means "*My uncle is not greater than my country*", he beheaded his own maternal uncle for the negligence of work, and that very incident awakened the troops and is still cited in the history of Assam as the ultimate example of sincerity and patriotism.

### ➤ **Background of Lachit Borphukan**

The passionate and unflappable Ahom warrior Lachit Borphukan, whose real name is Lachit Deca, was born on 24<sup>th</sup> November, 1622 at Charaideo in the eastern region of contemporary Assam. He was from a wealthy family, and his father Momai Tamuli Borbarua, served as the senior officer or commander-in-chief in the administration of King Pratap Singha from 1603 to 1639. He was the first Borbarua and founder of Paik Practices.

Lachit was an enthusiast and had a keen interest in an administration that pulled him towards the profession of the military at a very young age and thus joined as *scarf bearer* of the Ahom King Jayadhwaj Singha. Later, he was appointed as the Superintendent of the stable of *Royal Horses (Ghora Borua)*. Finally, he was chosen to command the army in the expedition against the Mughals, and during the battle of Saraighat, he effectively reclaimed Guwahati from the Mughals.

### ➤ **Battle of Saraighat**

Lachit raised the army and his army successfully retook Guwahati from the Mughal forces. Emperor Aurangzeb after being informed of the defeat at Guwahati sent an expeditionary force from Dhaka under Raja Ram Singh of Amber. Due to the numerical and technological inferiority of the Ahom forces, Lachit resorted to "*guerilla tactics*" which successfully withered away the Mughal army.

Ram Singh used "*deception*" knowing full well that Ahom soldiers would be easily destroyed if their commander was gone. Ram Singh launched an arrow into the Ahom Camp, bearing a note. It eventually made its way to Chakradhwaj Singha. According to the note, Lachit was given one lakh rupees to flee Guwahati. The king was furious that his commander was reportedly in discussions with the enemy, but his prime minister Atan Buragohain told him that this was a ruse by the Mughals to force Chakradhwaj Singh to replace the commander who had effectively battled the Mughals so far. After exhausting all possibilities, Ram Singh sailed to Guwahati in 1671 with a naval force up the Brahmaputra River near Saraighat, he came into an Ahom flotilla headed by Lachit Borphukan himself.

The Ahom warriors began to lose their desire to fight after being outnumbered and outgunned once more in wide space. When some components began to flee, Lachit boarded a boat personally to

regroup his forces. Despite being critically ill, Lachit fiercely tossed some of the warriors into the river, screaming loudly that he would "*die completing his duty to his king and nation, even if it meant he had to do it by himself.*" Lachit's warriors were inspired and rallied a desperate battle that ensued on the river Brahmaputra.

### ➤ **End of The Battle of Saraighat**

The Mughal army was defeated under the leadership of Barphukan and the Mughals led by Raja Ram Singh of Amber were forced to flee. Thus, Aurangzeb gave up his idea of conquering Assam.

Lachit Borphukan nipped the Mughal imperialism. His determination and patriotism saved the freedom of the Assamese people. Ram Singh had to accept defeat and left Assam on 5 April 1671.

This great hero of Assam i.e., Lachit Borphukan died about a year after the victory due to natural causes and his mortal remains lie at Lachit Maidam built in 1672 by Swargadeo Udayaditya Singha at Hollungapara, about 65 kms from Jorhat.

The battle of Saraighat is immortalized in Assamese literature and after the victory at Saraighat, the Ahom Kings ruled Assam for over 150 years until the annexation of the British in 1826.

After the death of Lachit Barphukan, Assam became a hotbed of dissension and strife, attended by constant changes of kings and ministers, assassinations of rivals, and mutilations of princes.

### ➤ **Legacy of Lachit Borphukan**

Every year on November 24, Assam celebrates Lachit Divas to remember Lachit Borphukan's bravery and the Assamese army's victory in the Battle of Saraighat..

Lachit Divas is held to promote the values of Lachit Borphukan, the great commander of Assam's history.

The Lachit Borphukan gold medal is given to the top cadet from the National Defence Academy. It was established in 1999, following a declaration by General VP Malik that the medal will inspire defense personnel to imitate Barphukan's valour and sacrifices.

On a three-day visit to Assam, President Ram Nath Kovind launched a year-long commemoration of the 400th birth anniversary of Lachit Borphukan, leader of the Ahom army and a hero of Assamese nationalism. He also laid the foundation stone for the Alaboi war memorial, a homage to soldiers who

had fought and suffered a defeat against the Mughals in Alaboi two years before Lachit's decisive triumph at the battle of Saraighat in 1671.

He sacrificed his personal comforts and interests for his motherland. His love for Assam made him rise from the lower official rank of Ghoral Barua to the top official rank of Barphukan. Barphukan is one of the five Patra Mantris in the Ahom Kingdom, a position created by the Ahom King Pratap Singha. He will always be remembered with love and respect by the people of Assam.

### ➤ **Conclusion**

With the history of a hero like Lachit Borphukan, the Assamese nation is always rich. Assamese emotions and conscience are all occupied, Borphukan's valour is a source of ideal and inspiration for the entire nation. His strong, selfless, and visionary leadership ushered a landmark change in Assamese society. He will always be a symbol of invincible personality and remembered for his heroic contribution to the history of Assam, his heroism is comparable to those of Rana Pratap Singh and Chatrapati Sivaji. He demoralized the Mughal hegemony and has been recognized as a national hero and his war tactics are studied by the defense academics with a sense of pride.