

Lachit Barphukan ::: The Valour and Courage of Assam

The name Assam with its origins in the words *Asama* or invincible clearly denotes how this Northeastern land held its own for 600 years throughout India's medieval history. Ruled by the powerful Ahoms from the mid 13th century, the name of the legendary general Lachit Barphukan has become synonymous with the valour and courage of Assam. Lachit Barphukan, he is the symbol of bravery, courage, and strength of the people of Assam. He was the most hardworking, sacrificing and skillful Commander-in-Chief of Ahom Dynasty. For his such quality people of Assam and the world is remembering him till today.

He was born on 24 November 1622 to Momai Tamuli Borbaruah and Kunti Moran. His father was the first Borbaruah (Governor of upper Assam and Commander-in-Chief of the Ahom army) under Prataap Singha.

The Ahom kingdom was located in the Brahmaputra valley of eastern India. It was first established in 1228. Lachit Barphukan is known for his leadership in the 1671 Battle of Saraighat that thwarted a drawn-out attempt by Mughal forces under the command of Ramsingh to take over Ahom kingdom. The Battle of Saraighat for which Barphukan is popularly attributed to was fought on the banks of Brahmaputra. The day before the battle, he erected a substantial boundary of sand and soil to block the roads. This was so that the Mughals could be forced to march through the river Brahmaputra's waterways.

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In order to complete the job within one night, Borphukan assigned the task to his Maternal Uncle. In spite of this, his uncle somehow neglected his duties. After this incident, Lachit became Assam's national hero after beheading his uncle with a sword and saying, "Dexot koi Mumbai Dangor Nohoi." (My uncle is not more precious than my own country). Till today he is famous for this phrase of words, which influence the people to love his motherland.

The Mughal army consisted of 30,000 infantry, 15,000 archers, 18,000 Turkish cavalries, 5,000 gunners, and over 1,000 canons. Barphukan knew that they would not be able to defeat these vast armies with regular warfare. Therefore the brave heart used tactics of guerrilla warfare and wise terrain choices and led the Ahom army to a decisive victory.

During the time of war some elements began to retreat and seeing this Lachit Barphukan boarded a boat himself to rally his troops. Offered to be taken to safety by one of his troops, Lachit Barphukan furiously threw some of them into the water bodily despite being severely ill, loudly proclaiming that he would "die fulfilling his duty to his king and country, even if it meant he had to do it by himself". Inspired, Lachit's soldiers rallied and a desperate battle ensued on the river Brahmaputra. Lachit Borphukan was victorious. For the bravery and surprising war tactics of Ahom Commander-in- Chief, the

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Mughals were forced to retreat from Guwahati. The Mughals were pursued to the Manas river, the Ahom kingdom's western boundary. He is such a noble and gentle personality that he instructed his army men not to attack the retreating Mughal army. This type of quality makes him something different than others and a personality to remember.

Lachit Barphukan died in 25th April, 1672 in the age about 50 years. In his memory Lachit Maidam, constructed in the same year by King Udayaditya Singha at Hoolungapara 16 km from Jorhat. On the day of death of the great soul of bravery, Lachit Divas is celebrated to promote the ideals of Lachit Barphukan – the legendary general of Assam's history. By respecting bravery and courage of the Ahom Commander-in-Chief, since 1999, the National Defence Academy (NDA) has been conferring the best passing cadet with the "Lachit Barphukan gold medal."

Submitted By:-

Name of Participant : Sarika Swargiary

Age 37, Gender-Female

Designation: Child Welfare Committee, Member
Office of District Child Protection Unit.

District Udalguri, B.T.R. Assam

Mobile No 7002892655