

BIR LACHIT BORPHUKAN

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Lachit Borphukan

Lachit Borphukan was a general of the Ahom Kingdom, whose army he led successfully in resisting the imperial expansion of the Mughal Empire in the late 1600s.

Background of Lachit Borphukan:

Lachit Borphukan was born on 24 November 1622 to Momai Tamuli Borbarua and Kunti Moran. His father was the commander-in-chief of the Ahom army. The Ahom kingdom was located in the Brahmaputra valley of eastern India. It was established in 1228. The kingdom was repeatedly assailed upon by Turki and Afghan rulers of the Delhi Sultanate and later by the Mughal Empire.

The Mughal - Ahom conflict first began in 1615 and continued afterwards. It was in this backdrop Lachit grew up in. Upon completing his education in humanities and military strategies. Lachit was given the responsibility of serving as the Soladhara Barua, a modern day equivalent of a private secretary to the Ahom King. He held other important positions such as Superintendent of the Stable of Royal Horses and Superintendent of the Royal Household.

guards before being appointed as the commander of the Ahom army.

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

Battle of Saraighat:

Lachit raised the army and preparations were completed by summer of 1667. His army successfully retook Guwahati from the Mughal forces. Emperor Aurangzeb after being informed of the defeat at Guwahati sent an expeditionary force from Shaka under Ram Singh. Due to the numerical and technological inferiority of the Ahom forces, Lachit resorted to guerrilla tactics which successfully withered away from the Mughal Empire's powerful army.

Knowing that Ahom forces would easily be defeated if their commander is removed, Ram Singh resorted to subterfuge. An arrow carrying a letter by Ram Singh was fired onto the Ahom camp, it later reached Chakradhvaj Singha.

The letter stated that Lakh had been paid 1 lakh rupees to evacuate Guwahati. Furious that his commander was allegedly in negotiation with the enemy, the King started doubting his sincerity, but his prime minister Atan Buragohain convinced him that this was a trick by the Mughals to make Chakradhwaj Singha dismiss the commander who successfully fought the Mughals so far.

Having exhausted all avenues Ram Singh made his way to Guwahati with a naval flotilla sailing upwards of the Brahmaputra river in 1671. He came upon with an Ahom flotilla led by Lachit Borphukan himself near Saraiqhat. Once again outnumbered and outgunned in open space, the Ahom soldiers began to lose their will to fight. Some elements began to retreat and seeing this Lachit boarded a boat himself to rally his troops. Offered to be taken to safety by one of his troops. Lachit furiously threw some of them into the water bodily despite being severely ill, loudly proclaimed 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. The Mughals were forced to retreat from Guwahati.

Legacy of Lachit Borphukan:

On 24 November each year, Lachit Jirás is celebrated statewide in Assam to commemorate the heroism of Lachit Borphukan and the victory of the Assamese army at the Battle of Saraighat.

Lachit Jirás is celebrated to promote the ideals of Lachit Borphukan - the legendary general of Assam's history.

The best cadet from the National Defence Academy is awarded the Lachit Borphukan gold medal. It was first instituted in 1999 following an announcement by General VP Malik saying the medal would inspire defence personnel to emulate Borphukan's heroism and sacrifices.