

Queen of sheba: mystery or reality

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King Solomon was a man of great wit.

So, Queen of Sheba decided to visit him to test his wisdom. She visited Solomon with two flower garlands. One is of real flowers while the other is made of artificial flowers. These flower garlands were asked to distinguish individually. Solomon was having a hard time. Then, he asked his slave to open the window facing a large honeycomb, with the finest quality honey.

Within a few minutes, the bees came and sat on the real garland. This made Solomon to recognize it immediately. Then the Queen presented him some rare gifts. But who was the Queen of Sheba? For 30 centuries, the Queen of Sheba has baffled people. Did she really exist? If Yes, then where is the land Sheba? Was she a queen, a noble woman, a witch or simply a seductress? Did she marry Solomon? Innumerable questions surround the personality of the Queen of Sheba.

And the field is open to research and controversy till now. The name ‘ Queen of Sheba’ appeared in the Bible, in the 10th chapter of The First Book of Kings. Her story is told in the following way, “ And when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of Lord, she came to probe him with hard questions. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bore spices, and with very much gold and precious stones”. “ King Solomon answered Queen of Sheba till she was satisfied.

She was pleased with his answers and presented him with her gifts of gold, spices and precious stones. After that, she returned to her own country with her servants. The question arises whether Bible can be taken as the base for historical truth? The first half of the First Book of Kings is the story of 40

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years of Kings. And this is the written story of King Solomon. In the 19th Century, she played another role.

In Gustave Flaubert's "Temptation of Saint Anthony" (begun in 1846 and completed in 1874), the Queen is made to represent lust. She attempts to woo the hermit Anthony in the desert near Thebes. First, she tempts him with her wealth. When Anthony was not impressed with her wealth and riches, she tempts him with her body. When Anthony is not tempted by her physical charms also, she reveals a deformed foot and goes away. While in the Koran, the Queen is called to the court of King Solomon after a brief exchange of letters between them.

In the Jewish Book of Esther, she is supposed to have met the king in a room with glass floor. She has hairy feet in the story. This hairy feet in later stories turns into a hairy body- a mark of a demon. In addition to all these stories, some of the Jewish stories also identify the queen with Lilith, a demonic seductress. According to the Islamic Myth, Solomon married a Sheba. He converted her into a Muslim and then married her.

She is called Bilkis in Islamic Tradition. The Temple of Moon in Yemen is also called the Haram Bilkis, meaning The Palace of Bilkis, the Queen. The inference is obviously to the Queen of Sheba. The natives of Sheba worshipped the Sun, the moon, and Venus. Their system of government by Priest Kings was similar to the Sumerian System.

And their writings and alphabet were similar to those of the Phoenicians.

Sheba was protected from all sides by desert. In 24 BC, Roman Army under Aelius Gallus invaded Sheba, but many soldiers died from heat and thirst. It

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was only four centuries later that the region could again be attacked. There are lots of tales about the Queen of Sheba. But hardly any facts emerge from Sheba, the land, the place.

Many of the stories which surround are far away from rationality; her mystery still attracts and haunts the people.