

## INDEPENDENT KASHMIR KING YUSUF SHAH CHAK AND HIS FAMILY BURIED IN BIHAR INDIA



### KASHMIR A PRISON

Abdul Ghafoor Abdul Majeed Noorani, an Indian lawyer, constitutional expert and political commentator on January 12, 2019 sums up Kashmir's bitter relation with Akbar's Mogul Empire of India in the following words:

"In no part of the subcontinent does history matter as much as it does in Kashmir. Equally, no other part has had such roaring exchanges with foreign powers, defying the British rulers, as did the maharaja and people of Kashmir. Emperor Akbar is admired throughout the subcontinent. But Kashmiris hate him for destroying their independence by invading and annexing their land in 1586. He lured its last ruler, Yusuf Chak, to India and had him killed. He is buried in Bihar. Mughal armies were pelted with stones, a time-hallowed weapon against oppressors

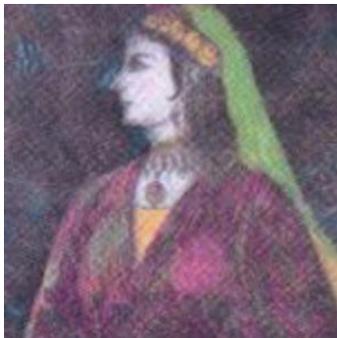
### FORGOTTEN KASHMIR KING

This 'great' Mogul emperor fought two full scale wars with then Kashmir ruler Yousuf Shah Chak (Oct,1586) and Akbar was miserably defeated on both occasions due to difficult mountain terrain and the valorous King's forces fought with. Soon after he cunningly offered the Chak king a hand of friendship and invited him to Delhi. Yousuf Shah was warned by his advisers especially by his wise queen **Habba Khatoon** not to fall into a trap but the King decided to see Akbar in the wider interest of people to spare them from further bloodshed and destruction of his country. He was betrayed by Akbar and imprisoned in Muzaffarpur, Bihar, India where he died and was later buried. Soon after Mughal's managed to rule Kashmir which lasted till 1750 A.D. Akbar exiled Yusuf Shah to Bihar and allowed him to live in the place called **Islampur** and was permitted to maintain a cavalry of 500 soldiers. Later the place came to be known as KASHMIR CHAK. Yusuf Shah died in 1592 in Odhisha and

his body brought back to Bihar to be buried in Biswak, adjacent to Kashmir Chak. The boundary wall encircles around 10 graves of Yusuf Shah Chak, his wife Habba Khatoon, and other family members. The locals believe the place symbolises the relationship between the people of Kashmir and Bihar and it should be recognised as a national heritage. Every year on December 28 people from different walks of life assemble at the grave to pay homage on the king Chak's death anniversary.

Yusuf Shah succeeding his father King Ali Shah ruled Kashmir from 1579 to 1586 was the last native ruler of the independent Kashmir. Yusuf Shah buried in Biswak village, Bihar's Nalanda District, India lies in bad state, neglected and with the passage of time will vanish due to encroachments from the local population. The local Muslim population made umpteen efforts to alarm authorities seeking protection for this historical monument but it all fell on deaf ears.

## HABBA KHATOON



Habba Khatoon lovingly known as **ZOON** (the Moon) and with the honorary title of *Nightingale of Kashmir* was born in 1554 and is known to have died in 1609. A Kashmiri Muslim poet, an ascetic was married to Yousuf Shah Chak, the last Emperor of Kashmir.

Zoon was born in a small village in Pampore Kashmir. A paragon of beauty was likened to the Moon hence in the local dialect acquired the name Zoon. Zoon belonged to a peasant family but had a natural urge to learn, read and write. She got the initial schooling from a religious cleric, a scholar and learned man of the village.

The legend goes that the emperor Yousuf Shah Chak was out hunting and while looking for a catch in the jungle he heard a melodious singing voice from under the shade of the national tree Chinar of Kashmir. Zoon was unaware of presence of the emperor but when Yousuf Shah approached her and wasted no time in proposing her and offered his hand in matrimony. The beauty queen that she was and her natural inheritance of poetic nuances gave her a distinct edge over women of that time and that is also the reason the emperor Chak was overwhelmed and loved her to the core.

She excelled qualitatively in her poetry skills which in due course of time made her into a spiritual entity and the people had no doubt in believing that Zoon was spiritually elevated and her poetry having the Divine touch. Zoon, the queen commanded respect and reverence and became so popular that she acquired the title of **HABBA KHATOON**, a title that made her into a legendary figure. Yousuf Shah the ruler with such a beautiful and scholarly wife were very content happily married and it is said that Habba Khatoon, with the passage of time, lost touch with the worldly affairs.

Moghul Emperor sending his armies into Kashmir twice was badly beaten by Chak forces and had to retreat to Delhi. Akbar thought of a plan to subdue Emperor Yousuf Shah Chak and invited him to Delhi for negotiating a peace deal. Chak emperor fell into a trap and decided to visit Delhi. His wife Habba Khatoon advised him against this decision and warned him that it was a trap but her husband had made up his mind in order to save his subjects from further misery and war.

She was separated from her husband in 1579 when the Moghul Emperor Akbar arrested Yousuf Shah Chak on reaching Delhi and imprisoned him. Chak emperor finally died in the

prison and was buried in Indian state of Bihar. Habba Khatoor became an ascetic and spent the rest of her life wandering across Kashmir's lanes and by-lanes singing songs composed by her. It is also said that she introduced in Kashmiri poetry conveying one brief thought.

Her songs (including *Meha kear czhai kith poshe daswanai* and *Czhe kamiue Soni Meani bram dith neunakhow*) are widely popular across Kashmir, frequently mournful and full of the sorrow of separation. Her tomb lies near Athwajan, near Srinagar the capital city of Kashmir. She has a profound presence in the oral tradition and is hailed as the last independent poet queen of Kashmir.

The political situation rather topsy-turvy in Kashmir due to foreign occupation and the things are not happening as they should. However people of Kashmir have vowed to have the enclosed piece of land in Bihar housing the remains of Emperor Yusuf Shah Chak transferred to Kashmir, come what may.