

Mariam-uz-Zamani

Mariam-uz-Zamani(Persian: مَریَم الزمانی, lit. 'Mary of the Age'^[4]), (c. 1542 – 19 May 1623) was a wife of Emperor Akbar. Her actual name is unknown, but in an 18th-century genealogy of her clan (the Kachwahas), she is referred to as **Harkhan Champavati**^[5] She is also referred to as **Harkha Bai**^[6] or **Jodhabai**, which perhaps indicates that she was a princess of Jodhpur by birth (although mostly she is said to have been a princess of Amber). Mariam-uz-Zamani was the respectful Persian title by which she was known at her husband's court. In the Mughal Empire, Muslim noblewoman who entered the imperial harem were given titles as a mark of honour (which she received only after the birth of her son) and this is the reason why her actual name is rather obscure.

Mariam-uz-Zamani was born a Rajput princess. According to some sources, she was the daughter of Raja Bihari Mal (or Bhar Mal) of Amber (Jaipur), whereas other historians infer that she was a princess of Jodhpur, because she is also known as "Jodha Bai." In 1562, she was offered in marriage to the Emperor Akbar by her father, Raja Bihari Mal. The wedding, held in Sambhar, was a political one and was a sign of complete submission of her father, Bihari Mal,^[7] to his imperial overlord, the Mughal emperor Akbar.^[5] and their inclusive policies within an expanding multi-ethnic and multi-denominational empire.^[8]

She was to become the mother of Akbar's eldest surviving son and successor, Jehangir.^[9]^[10]^[11]

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The birth of Jahangir

Born	c. 1542
Died	19 May 1623 (aged 80–81) ^{[1]} Agra,^{[2]} Mughal Empire (now India)
Burial	Tomb of Mariam-uz-Zamani, Agra^{[3]}
Spouse	Akbar
Issue	Jahangir
Father	Bhar Mal
Religion	Hinduism

Name

There is a popular perception that the wife of Akbarmother of Jahangir, was also known as "Jodha Bai"^[12]

Her name as in Mughal chronicles was Mariam-uz-Zamani. Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, the autobiography of Jahangir, doesn't mention Jodha Bai, Harkha Bai or Heer Kunwari.^[12] Therein, she is referred to as Mariam-uz-Zamani. Neither the Akbarnama (a biography of Akbar commissioned by Akbar himself), nor any historical text from the period refer to her as Jodha Bai.^[13]

Salim's mother was referred to as a royal concubine of Akbar in the book "The Empire of the great Mongol" by J.S. Holland. It is a Latin book written by Joannes De laet a Geographer in the year 1631 during Shahjahan's reign. Historian Vincent has an opinion that De laet has copied it from certain reliable Persian chronicle, but certain historians doubt the authenticity of the book.

According to Professor Shirin Moosvi, a historian of Aligarh Muslim University, the name "Jodha Bai" was first used to refer to Akbar's wife in the 18th and 19th centuries in historical writings.^[13] According to the historian Imtiaz Ahmad, the director of the Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library in Patna, it was Lieutenant-Colonel James Tod who first mentioned Jodhabai in his book *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*^[14]

"In the Akbarnama, there is a mention of Akbar marrying a Rajput princess of Amer but her name is not Jodhaa," says historian and director of the Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library Imtiaz Ahmad in Patna.

Akbarnama doesn't reveal the identity of Jahangir's mother. The mother of Jahangir to be Raja Bharmal's daughter was recorded only in one book of the Mughal era. That book is *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh*, written by a Punjab Historian Sujan Rai Bandar, during Aurangzeb's reign in 1695. There is no detailed information about the author. He had written about the history of Hindustan, in which Mughal history was just a part of the book. Sujan Rai mentions in his book that the Amber princess, the third wife of Akbar was Salim's mother. First of all Amber princess was the fourth wife. He had missed the second wife who was the granddaughter of Munim Khan whose wedding was celebrated in 1557. He had missed it because he was not in the Mughal court. Since most of the information in this book is authentic and no other book reveals the identity of Jahangir's mother historians are forced to believe Sujan's statement of Jahangir's mother.

Professor N R Farooqi, a historian of Allahabad Central University states that Jodha Bai was not the name of Akbar's queen instead it was the name of Jahangir's wife Taj Bibi Bilqis Makani the Princess of Jodhpur, whose real name was Jagat Gosain.^{[12][14][15][16][17]} of Amer (modern day Jaipur). She was the granddaughter of Raja Prithvi Singh of Amer. Rajkumari Heer Kunwari was also the sister of Raja Bhagwan Das of Amer, and the aunt of Raja Man Singh I of Amer.

Marriage

The background of this marriage was, that when Akbar was proceeding to Ajmer (for offering prayers to the tomb of Moinuddin Chishti) Bihari Mal had approached Akbar and had told him that he was being harassed by his brother-in-law, Sharif-ud-din Mirza (the Mughal *hakim* of Mewat), on account of Sharif-ud-din's conflict with Bihari Mal's elder brother, Suja. Bihari Mal, who had only a small following agreed to pay *peshkash*, and given as hostage his son and two of his nephews, but Sharif-ud-din was not satisfied and wanted to destroy him. Akbar insisted that Bihari Mal should submit to him personally. It was also suggested that his daughter should be married to him, as a sign of complete submission. Once, this had been done, Akbar asked his brother-in-law, Sharif-ud-din, not to interfere with the raja.^[7]

The marriage, which was a political one, took place on 6 February 1562, while Akbar was on his way back to Agra from Ajmer (after offering prayers to the tomb of Moinuddin Chishti) at the imperial military camp in Sambhar, Rajasthan, instead of the bride's natal home in Amber (which was only 80 miles away). This was a sign that the marriage was not of equals and indicated Bihari Mal's family's inferior social status.^[18] The marriage with the Amber princess provided the service of her family throughout the reign, and offered a proof manifest to all the world that Akbar had decided to be the Badshah or Shahenshah of his whole people i.e. Hindus as well as Muslims.^[19]

Akbar took many Rajput princesses in marriage. The rajas had much to gain from the link to imperial family. Akbar made such marriages respectable for Rajputs.^[20] However, it is noteworthy that Akbar's Rajput wives (including Mariam-uz-Zamani) did not play any political role in the Mughal court.^[21]

In 1569, Akbar heard the news that his first Hindu wife was expecting a child, and that he might hope for the first of the three sons promised by Sheikh Salim Chisti, a reputed holy man who lived at Sikri. An expectant Heer was sent to Sheikh's humble dwelling at Sikri during the period of her pregnancy. On 30 August 1569, the boy was born and received the name Salim, in acknowledgement of his father's faith in the efficacy of the holy man's prayer. Though she remained a Hindu, Jodhabai was honoured with the title Mariam-uz-Zamani ("Mary of the Age") after she gave birth to Jahangir.

Her niece, Manbhawati Bai or Manmati Bai, daughter of her brother Bhagwan Das, married Prince Salim on 13 February 1585. Man Bai later became mother to Prince Khusrau Mirza^{[22][23]} and was awarded the title of Shah Begum by Jahangir^[24]

Religion

Akbar did not convert any of his Hindu wives to Islam and permitted the Hindu inmates of his harem to perform their rituals in the palace, and even participated in them sometimes.^[25]

Family advancement

The Rajas of Amber (who came from a very small kingdom) especially benefitted from their close association with the Mughals, and acquired immense wealth and power. Of twenty-seven Rajputs in Abu'l-Fazl list of mansabdars, thirteen were of Amber clan, and some of them rose to positions as high as that of imperial princes. Raja Bhagwan Das for instance, became commander of 5000, the highest position available at that time, and bore the proud title Amir-ul-Umara (Chief Noble). His son, Man Singh I, rose even higher to become commander of 7000.^[26]

The dual policy of Akbar towards the Rajputs - of high rewards for those who submitted and relentless pressure on those who opposed - paid rich dividends and, soon all of Rajasthan came under his control, except for the region and territory under the great Rajput ruler and chief contender to Akbar of that era, Maharana Pratap . Around the time Ranthambore submitted, Kalinjar surrendered to the Mughals, within three months, Jodhpur, Bikaner and Jaisalmer also submitted, with the royal families of Jodhpur and Jaisalmer offering princesses to the Mughal harem.^[26]

Jahangir's reign

Although she may have enjoyed a certain status in Akbar's imperial household after giving birth to the heir, she gained prestige only during Jahangir's reign (as the emperor's mother), after he had succeeded Akbar as Mughal emperor in 1605.^[5] During the reign of Jahangir, she was amongst the most prodigious women traders at the Mughal court.^[27] No other noblewoman on record seems to have been as adventurous a trader as the Queen mother^[28]

Mariam-uz-Zamani owned ships that carried pilgrims to and from the Islamic holy city Mecca. In 1613, her ship, the *Rahīmī*, was seized by Portuguese pirates along with the 600-700 passengers onboard and the cargo. *Rahīmī* was the largest Indian ship sailing in the Red Sea and was known to the Europeans as the "great pilgrimage ship". When the Portuguese officially refused to return the ship and the passengers, the outcry at the Moghul court was quite unusually severe. The outrage was compounded by the fact that the owner and the patron of the ship was none other than the revered mother of the current emperor. Mariam-uz-Zamani's son, the Indian emperor Jahangir, ordered the seizure of the Portuguese town Daman. This episode is considered to be an example of the struggle for wealth that would later ensue and lead to colonization of the Indian sub-continent.^[29]

She was known to receive a jewel from every nobleman "according to his estate" each year on the occasion of New Year's festival.^[27] Like only a few other women at the Mughal court, Mariam-uz-Zamani was granted the right to issue official documents by Jahangir, called firmans, usually the exclusive privilege of the emperor. Issuing of such orders was confined to the highest ladies of the harem such as Hamida Banu Begum, Nur Jahan, Mumtaz Mahal, Nadira Banu Begum, Jahanara Begum etc.^{[27][30][31]} It was quite common for women of noble birth to commission architecture in the Mughal Empire, so Mariam-uz-Zamani built gardens, wells, mosques and other developments around the countryside.^{[27][32]}

These courtesies and largesses demonstrate the amount of respect and love Jahangir held for his mother, Mariam-uz-Zamani. A number of royal functions took place in the household of Mariam-uz-Zamani like Jahangir's solar weighing,^[33] Jahangir's marriage to daughter of Jagat Singh,^[34] and Shehzada Parviz's wedding to daughter of Sultan Murad Mirza^[35]

Death

Mariam uz-Zamani died in 1623. The grave itself is underground with a flight of steps leading to it. Her tomb, built in 1623–27, is on the Tantpur road now known as in Jyoti Nagar. Mariam's Tomb, commissioned by her son, is only a kilometre from Tomb of Akbar the Great

The Mosque of Mariam Zamani Begum Sahib was built by her son Nuruddin Salim Jahangir in her honour and is situated in the Walled City of Lahore, present day Pakistan.



Tomb of Mariam-uz-Zamani,
Sikandra, Agra

In popular culture

- Jodha Bai is the lead character in the Indian epic film Jodhaa Akbar (2008), directed by Ashutosh Gowariker. Aishwarya Rai played Jodha Bai.
- Jodha Bai is the title character in the Ekta Kapoor's fictional drama Jodha Akbar (2013). The character is portrayed by Paridhi Sharma^[36]

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