

Jodha: A Reality Or A Fable

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It was researched by many historians that the imaginary name Jodha first appeared in the late 19th century when Colonel Tod mentioned Jodhabai in his book named 'Annals and Antiquity of Rajasthan'. Colonel Tod was inspired by the folk literature of Rajputs. According to the director of Oriental Public Library in Patna, Mr. Imtiaz Ahmad records that "Akbarname mentions Akbar marrying a princess of Amer but clearly her name is nowhere Jodha". She is named as 'Mariam Uzamani' which is not a name but a title. Further it is mentioned that Mariam Uzamani is a title given to the mother of Prince Salim. Jodha has not been mentioned anywhere.

As stated by some Rajput historians, Akbar was married to Harkhabai alias Heer Kunwari, the elder daughter of the Bharmal, the maharaja of Amer, in Fatehabad i.e. Fatehpur Sikri on 6 February, 1562. Prince Salim was her son. As stated in the Rajputana records, Princess Jodhabai was the daughter of Rana Udai Singh and in that case she was only three years younger than Prince Salim and so no way can she be his mother. Professor Satish Chandra in the history book of class eleven on medieval India of NCERT claims that Jodha was by no means Akbar's wife but in fact she was married to Salim, Akbar's son. As per the folk lures and legend, Akbar was married to Raja Bhagwan Das's Sister and was Jodha Bai.

She gave birth to a son by the blessings of sufi saint Shaikh Salim Chisti. He was named Salim after him. The reality is still obscure. Jahangir in his memoirs, The Tuzuknama or Jahangirnama, never mentioned the name of his mother. Although he mentions the names of many of his father's wives.

We find only one reference to her mother in his Jahangirnama:

"When my mother came to the time of delivery, he (Akbar) sent her to Shaikh's house and I might be born there."

It is also said that Jodha Bai was actually sister of Raja Man Singh, but this too is in contradiction of Jahangirnama in which Jahangir speaks after ascending the-

"Raja Man Singh was one of the trusted mansabdars of my father had obtained alliances with his illustrious family as much as his aunt had been introduced in the house of my father (was his wife), and I then married his sister, and Khusrau was also married to his sister Sultana-nisa Begam, the latter of which is my elder child. They were born of her before, ruler of the Bengal province." He clearly refers to Man Singh's aunt as not as his mother but his father's wife.

Alex-Rutherford, in the book 'Ruler of the World' and in the historical fiction 'Empire of the Moghul,' refers to Jahangir's mother as being Hira Bai of Amber. Jahangir writes about the birth of his brothers and sister but refers to their mothers as concubines. It's obvious that he felt, their status was as concubines and title of wives did not merit.

“Three months after my birth, Shahzada Khanam, my sister, was born of a royal concubine. She was handed over to Maryam Makani, Akbar's mother. After her then a son was again born to one of the royal concubines, and was named Shah Murad. On the night of Jumada-i-awwal 10th, A.H. 979 (September, 1572), one more child was born to the royal concubine. As his birth took place at Ajmer in the blessed shrine of the sufi saint Khwaja Muinu-d-din Chishti. That child was named Shaikh Daaniyal.”

In the case of the two daughters of Akbar, Jahangir names the wife as Bibi Daulat Shad and she was of noble lineage.

“After birth of Daniyal, Bibi Daulat-Shad gave birth to a girl whom they named Shakaru-n-nisa Begam.”

“After some time passed one more girl was born to Bibi Daulat-Shad, and he i.e.Akbar called her Aram Banu Begam.”

The historian of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), Prof Shirin Moosvi, writes that neither there is any mention of Jodhabai in the 'Akbarnama', nor in any of the Mughal documents of that period. Prof Shirin says that “Akbar did marry a princess of the the Kachhawa Rajput, Bhar Mal's daughter, but she was also not Jodhabai”. Prof Moosvi concludes that the name Jodha Bai first appeared in the mid of 18th and 19th centuries in folk lures and gradually got place in historical writings. It is really surprising that why did Jahangir not

mention his mother anywhere by name. If Jahangir would have been born to a Rajput princess of a great Rajput kingdom then for sure he would have mentioned it considering the fact that the Mughals always tried to forge on strategic alliances with the brave Rajputs.

'Ain-e-Akbari' and 'Akbarnama' of Abul Fazal's also have no reference to any Jodha Bai. There is not a single mention of Jodha Bai in Abdul Kadir Badauni's 'Muntakhib-al-Tawarikh'. There is mentioned Jodha Bai in the historical works of A.L. Shrivastav, K.L. Khurana and Munni Lal and few other historians. In the book 'Kachchawon ka Itihas', Jodha is mentioned as Harkha Bai. In other Rajputana history chronicles she is named Manmati and Shahi Bai.

In many of the Rajputana records the Rajputs have clearly objected to the matrimonial alliance of Jodha Bai with Akbar. The sub altern historians have also written that Jodhabai was in fact one of the wives of Jahangir and not of Akbar. It is just a myth of Jodha Bai being wife of Emperor Akbar and was spread by the local Muslims, especially, those guides who tell stories to the foreign visitors to Fatepur Sikri. Inside of the magnificent halls of Fatehpur Sikri, there are many structures which resemble Hindu Temples and their pillars adorned with pictures of Hindu God and Goddesses. The Muslim guides tell that one Jodha Bai was the wife of Akbar and he allowed her to continue her own practice of Hinduism. The presence of buildings like Jodha Bai Ka Rauza in the campus of Fatehpur Sikri signifies the importance of Jodha Bai in Akbar's life. This is still an issue of debate in the historians. Many Rajput organisations have taken stand against the then royal families of Jaipur and also Kishangarh on exactly which of their princess married to the Mughal and also which Mughal emperor.

Original manuscripts like Ain - i Akbari and

Rajput history of the Amber kings actually confirm that Akbar married Raja Bharmal's daughter in 1562 at Sambhar which is 100 kms from modern Jaipur but the name of the 'daughter' was not mentioned. In an interview with BBC, Maharaja Brajraj Singh of Kishangarh once said, "In our recorded genealogy, the documents of the royal family are still the most authentic and trusted records, and in our records no Jodhabai exists. Jodha was actually Hira Kunwari or Harkha Bai. I still don't know why some historians call her Jodha." The myth got popular belief when historians like Col Todd called Akbar's wife as Jodha and this was projected in the films like K.Asif's classic 'Mughal-e-azam' and Gowarika's 'Jodha-Akbar' followed by many TV serials. The Rajput community says that now it's time to set the record correct. They claim by their authenticated records that Jodha was no doubt from Jodhpur but she was married to Jahangir and not to Akbar. Prof Khangarot, a renowned historian and also the spokesperson for the Rajputana Sabha said, "No one has got the right to manipulate with history in the name of creativity or change it. Jodha Bai was actually the daughter of Maharaja of Jodhpur who was married to Salim and she was the mother of Khurram."

Historians are on the commonly agreed opinion that the name 'Jodhabai' is not mentioned in any one of the original records of the contemporary time, actually it emerged of nowhere in the 19th century and the name starts to appear in historical narratives and movies. Thus it can be said that there is no definite record of Jodha in recorded history. In fact there are just oral traditions, folk lures and myth. Prof Irfan Habib, former chairman of ICHR (Indian Council of Historical Research), says "There wasn't any historical character called Jodha Bai. It's true that Akbar married Amber ruler Raja Bharmal's eldest daughter but her name

isn't mentioned anywhere. And she was certainly not Jahangir's mother. Even Jahangir in his memoirs (Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri) doesn't mention anything about his mother's side." He also said that in any record there is no mention of Akbar's wife from Rajputana anywhere in any of the Mughal text. Be it Abul Fazal, in his 'Akbarname' or Jahangir, in his autobiography, 'Tuzk-e-Jahangiri', no one mentioned Jodha Bai as his wife of Akbar. Irfan Habib says that the myth of Jodha Bai of being Akbar's wife most probably got credence in the first half of 19th century when the historical tour guides at Fatehpur Sikri presented her Akbar's wife and unfortunately this perception is prevalent today also.

N.R.Farooqi says that Jodha Bai was in fact not Akbar's wife but actually the name of Jahangir's wife. The original name of Jodha bai was Jagat Gosain. As she was from the royal family of Jodhpur so she was commonly referred as Jodha Bai. Farooqi writes that she received important place among the women in the royal harem. Jodha bai was the mother of Khurram, Shah Jahan.

The historians have reservations over 'name' of the Rajput princess but not the 'person'. They agree that Akbar was married to Raja Bharmal's daughter of Amber but they do differ over her actual name. Jagat Gosai was born on October 1, 1542. She was the daughter of Raja Bharmal of Amber. In 1562 she got married to Akbar the Great and was one of the three 'chief queens' of Akbar. The first queen, Ruqaiyya Begum has no child and his second wife, Salima Sultan was the widow of Bairam Khan. Jagat Gosai had freedom to practice Hinduism. As per Thomas Roe, she was also involved in the active sea trade and even owned a trade ship named 'Ramiti' which carried the Haj pilgrims to Mecca.

Some of the historians have conflicting opinion. Jadunath Sarkar opines that, "Uday Singh of Jaipur married his one daughter to Jahangir. Her real name was Meera Bai and she was commonly called Jodha Bai." Prof Iqtedar Alam Khan, Former President of IHC (Indian History Congress) and also the chairman of Department of History, Aligarh University, seconds Habib's version: "It is only a the historian of Punjab, Sujjan Rai Bhandari, who wrote in his book 'Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh' for the first time that the princess of Amber whom Akbar married was in fact Jahangir's mother. But he doesn't refer to Jahangir's mother as Jodha Bai." The NCERT history book for Class XI 'Medieval India', by Satish Chandra mentions clearly on page 165 that "To strengthen his political position, Raja Udai Singh married his elder daughter, Jagat Gosain to Emperor Akbar's eldest son Salim. This Rajput wife of Jahangir was called Jodha bai"

The Head of the department of Allahabad University's department of history, NR Farooqi says, "Jodha bai was not Akbar's but Jahangir's wife and she was mother of Khurram (Shahjahan). The 80 acre garden in Agra named 'Bagh-e-Jahan Ara', had her grave. It was sold by British for Rs 5,000 to a local Zamindar who destroyed the grave to build a palace. The records are still available in the office of the Commissioner of Agra. There is a footnote on the page no.5 in the book 'History of Jahangir, by the historian Beni Prasad that 'No chronicler has mentioned the Rajput name of Jahangir's mother.'

It is agreed by most of the historian that Hira Kunwari was Akbar's first Rajput wife. She was Raja Bhar Mal's daughter of Amer. She was only the sister of Bhagwandas and the also aunt of Raja Man Singh of Amber. Hira Kunwari got married to Emperoe Akbar on 20th January, 1562 at a place called Sambhar near Jaipur as per Rajputana records. She continued to be the devotee of Lord

Krishna even after her marriage and practiced Hinduism. There is a quite accepted misconception that the wife of Akbar from Rajputana and the mother of Jahangir was named as Jodha Bai. Mariam-Uz-Zamani is the lady referred in the Tuzuk-e-Jahangiri and not Jodha. Neither Akbar in his biography 'Akbarnama' nor any other historical document of that period refers to the princess as Jodha Bai. Even 'Tuzk-e-Jahangiri', Jahangir's autobiography doesn't refer her as Jodha Bai.

Professor Shirin Moosvi, asserts that the name 'Jodha Bai' was used first time for Akbar's wife in the last half of 18th centuries in the contemporary historical writings. So it can be said that Jodha Bai was not the actual name of the Rajput queen of Akbar but in fact it was the nickname of Jagat Gosain, Jahangir's Rajput wife and also called Manmati of Jodhpur.

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